



VICTORY INDIA

VOL 2 | ISSUE 4 | April 2021

An Initiative By MVI

The Military and the Media: A Match Made in Necessity?

War Room - US Army War College



The Grey Zone – Targeting the Power Grids

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Cawasji (Retd)

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Legal Advisor: *Brigadier MG Kadam*

Editorial Team

Phone No 9822809366, 9822123036, 8856997121, Email Address, colvinaydalvi@missionvictory.com, col.vinay.dalvi@gmail.com

Marketing

Osaid Butt - Phone No 9769782515 - buttosaid@gmail.com

Operations Team

Aritra Banerjee - 9004609366 - editorial@missionvictory-india.com - aritrareporter@gmail.com

Gaurav Sharma - 9619784142 - gauravreporter1@gmail.com,

Rhea Rane - 9004141845 - rhea.v.rane@gmail.com

Sannidhya Sandheer - 9810198346 - sannidhyasandheer@missionvictoryindia.com

Aryan Vats - artcaol60@gmail.com



Weik up

Life's Little Moments





EDITOR'S NOTE

Colonel Vinay B Dalvi Vol.2 • Issue 4 • April 2021

Dear Readers,

History has shown that major changes or reforms in any field happen only in desperate times. These are driven less by ideological convictions and more by sheer necessity. In the world of military affairs, it is not only the external threats but internal pressures that have driven military thinkers and analysts to break the 'status quo' and emerge with new doctrines, philosophies and revolutionary changes advocated by them after a long period of sustained study, analysis, deliberations, and discussions to reach meaningful, objective conclusions and even consensus.

The issues that constantly confront and challenge any professional military invariably concern the art and science of warfare linked to their imperative needs and requirements to improve and upgrade with the times for their arms, equipment, manpower and leadership.

It is only when the man-machine matrix effectively merges, and the military is led by resolute and exemplary leadership victory is possible at the decisive level. The last decade has seen 'The 'victory india campaign' and its online arm 'Mission victory india' relentlessly striving to enhance the quality of military manpower and officer leadership of the Indian Armed forces besides enabling enhancement of Professional Military Education (PME) and Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) of its officer leadership.

Our April 2021 issue which is our 10th volume of the victory India Magazine has several interesting articles and debates concerning the Indian Armed forces, especially the Indian Army and the challenges confronting them.

The Shekatkar Committee constituted between 2015-16 at the behest of late Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar recommended the closure of the Defence Research Development Organisation's (DRDO) Delhi based lab, the Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR), which is in charge of the services selection board (SSB), in its report submitted in December 2016 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD). MVI has published an interview of Lieutenant General DB Shekatkar, the Chairman of the Committee several divergent responses to this interview have been raised.

Several concerned veterans, qualified, experienced, and knowledgeable with the DIPR based officer selection system have not only sent their responses but given personal interviews to MVI. We have great pleasure in publishing these to enhance the awareness and knowledge of our readers about the technicalities of officer selection and how it is critically linked to training and the end user-the arms and services.

What is inside?

The first section of this issue houses our interviews on the perceived need to close down the DIPR and bring out reforms in the services selections Board (SSB), this section starts by bringing to the reader well considered views on DIPR/SSB closure, potential alternatives to the DIPR based officer selections system and closes with a highly professional piece on the office of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and challenges faced by the man helming the top appointment.

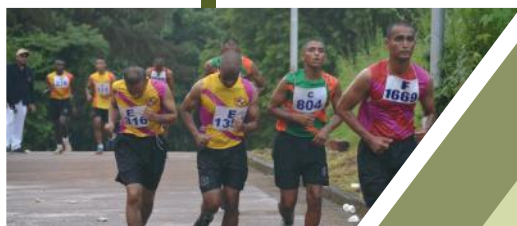
Our second section focuses on the state of military-media relations in India and lays threadbare views from both the military and media fraternities in an effort help both sides understand each other's compulsions and operating environments and find a mutually beneficial way forward for both public service centric professions.

Section three brings contemporary national security and strategic issues to the reader with our security scanner covering some of them most topical issues concerning the Indian Armed Forces and sheds light on the global military environment. Our editorial team brings the reader everything they need to know about the Anti-satellite missile technology and the geopolitical developments surrounding them since the cold war, to indigenous submarine production under project P-75 and what life is like inside India's first domestically manufactured submarine, INS Karanj!

The issue closes with top four articles published by Mission victory india as curated by our editorial team. We hope you enjoy reading this issue and emerge more illuminated on issues surrounding the organizational health of our armed forces. We are eternally grateful for the support extended to us by you the reader. Happy reading! victory india!

Col. Vinay B Dalvi, ex-Maratha LI, ex-APTC,
Editor-in-chief victory india.

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“SSBs Have Totally Failed!” Says Shekatkar Committee, Chairman; Marked for Closure in Report

Lt Gen. D.B Shekatkar (Retd) speaks about his recommendation to close down the DIPR, the DRDO lab responsible for tri-services officer selection, in his report to the MoD.

by Aritra Banerjee, Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

Mission victory India (MVI) spoke to Lieutenant General (Dr.) D.B. Shekatkar (Retd), the chairman of the Shekatkar committee, an expert committee constituted at the behest of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in 2016 under the directions of late Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar. The committee was set up to recommend a series of defence reforms, which were to be submitted in its report in December 2016.

The report, with 99 recommendations is now the magna carta for ongoing defence reforms in the country. The complete recommendations of the Shekatkar committee have never been revealed to the public as it deals with operational aspects of the tri-services,

a complete disclosure of which would jeopardise India's national security interests.

This interview looks into one particular recommendation made in the report which was the closure of the Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR), the Delhi based Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) lab responsible for conceiving and running the services selection board (SSB); the tri-services officer selection system. A system maintained by the selection board as “hallowed and beyond reproach.”

yet, the recent widely reported ‘SSB selection scandal’ in which a central

Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe found 17 Indian Army personnel, including five Lieutenant Colonels and two Major-ranked officers apart from six others implicated in the scandal, and has called into question the efficacy of the officer selection system.

Excerpts from the Interview...

Q. How and when did the present DIPR based SSB selection system for armed forces officer candidates come into being? Do you believe that it has lived up to its mission?

Ans: The DIPR, SSB system came up as a result of 1962 war. The British system was functioning mostly to assess

the loyalty, dependability, integrity of the candidates who came to the SSB for selection. Britishers had no doubt about the combat capability of Indians. However, over the period of time the requirement of the armed forces have changed with the evolving environment. Our leadership in the armed forces, the bureaucracy never bothered to re-assess the requirements. It would have been foolish to expect any interest in the political leadership, especially the MOD.

our experience of the 1965 and 1971 wars also emphasised on combat capability. There have been changes in leadership qualities required in the 21st century. My first PhD in Management science deals with the thesis 'Leadership Qualities required to succeed in 21st century'. Did the DRDO's, DIPR, ever think on these lines? Character, dependability, concerns for our rank and files became more important. We never bothered to consider the attitude and behaviour of vulnerable leaders. We never seemed to be concerned over ethical issues amongst our leaders in both government, governance, and the armed forces.

The DIPR has totally failed in perception management and we are now paying for the failure. We will continue to fail, and the nation will suffer. We also failed to assess the impact of changes in our society and its impact on the armed forces. After all our fighting and administrative echelons as well as officer cadres come from our society only.

Q. Your report mentioned the closure of the DIPR. What was the rationale behind this recommendation made and what alternatives would you propose to replace the over seven-decade old SSB system?

Ans: we examined all these issues and came to the conclusions that the Delhi based DRDO lab, DIPR and SSBs have totally failed. Therefore we recommended closure and revamping of the DIPR. Today psychologists are available outside as well. We can hire and fire them based on their performance which should be assessed by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) which is headed by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). The CDS is there to take care

of all the services. It is also for this reason that we felt that the DRDO should be accountable and answerable to the CDS.

Q. Has the SSB system been functionally linked with the diverse tri-service training requirements and can it realistically hope to meet end user requirements of all the three services separately?

The Indian Army for instance has various 'arms' and 'services' which require varying levels of aptitudes, temperaments, training requirements etc. How then can the increasingly diverse human resource needs of the military be effectively catered towards?

Ans: The present system is linked to the tri-services however the requirements of the Indian Army (IA) Indian Navy (IN) and Indian Airforce (IAF) are distinct. The air force for instance is a platform and technology-driven organisation; therefore, it is officer oriented. Furthermore, a fighter aircraft pilot has to have different psyche and temperament than say a transport pilot or a helicopter pilot. Similarly, Army Aviation Corps (AAC) pilots need a different mindset. In contrast to the IAF the IA is a manpower-oriented organisation. Man-management and killing instinct are the main criteria in the army.

Q. Does the present SSB system cater for checking unique service specific aptitudes?

Ans: No sir, how many times have the SSB psychologists and other assessors visited hard field areas like the Line of Control (LOC) Line of Actual Control (LAC), Siachen Glacier and Kargil etc to

expertly judge the mental framework of young officers (YO), and especially our cutting edge going up to colonels.

Q. If the DIPR was recommended to be closed down why is it still continuing to operate, what are the hurdles to its closure?

Ans: The Shekatkar committee made these recommendations based on our study and interactions. To implement the recommendations requires guts, a sense of belonging and concern towards funds. The DRDO's aim is just to survive, retire and get handsome pension all their life. Do they bother about anything else??

Q. Recent media reports highlight that the SSB is far from infallible. Keeping that into mind, what are your observations on the degree of objectivity and level of transparency in the SSB procedure?

Is the system fair to prospective candidates aspiring to join the defence services as officers or doing passionate and capable young aspirants a disservice?

Ans: All officers who were involved in recent case of SSB corruption and malpractices have come up through SSB system. They are a product of the same system they tried to hoodwink. How could they bluff the entire set up and system? All those implicated in the officer selection scandal, right from the Group Testing Officers (GTO), the psychologists, the doctors, and medical staff etc must be held responsible and punished severely in order to set an example. It is high time the government, governance and military leadership wakes up to prevent future disasters.

About the Interviewee

Lieutenant General Shekatkar (Retd) is a highly decorated Indian Army veteran with over four decades in uniform. He is the President of Forum for Integrated National Security (FINS) and has presided over the Expert Committee of Government of India to Re-orient India's Defence Mechanism and Re-balancing of Defence Budget. He is a scholar warrior and is associated leading defence and national security think tanks





Does The SSB System Need Overhaul? In Conversation with Brig. Rajbir Singh (Retd)

Brig. Rajbir Singh (Retd), a former SSB Psychologist & Technical Officer spoke to MVI in part-3 of this ongoing interview series on the Shekatkar Committee recommendations calling for a closure of the DIPR & its SSB system.

by Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd), Aritra Banerjee

The shekatkar committee report has recommended the closure of several defence research and development organisation (DRDO) labs, one of them being the Delhi based, Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR) which is the lab responsible for the development of the Indian Armed Forces officer selection.

The DIPR created services selection Board (SSB) has not been reviewed for over seven decades. This is despite the rapid pace of military growth and evolving trends in warfare that have taken place and also the recent news of unfortunate happenings that have brought our officer selection system under the scanner of CBI and also public awareness.

All these have resulted in the following questions being raised by analysts and journalists keen to know all the facts from qualified and experienced selectors to draw their own conclusions through the following questions.

Brigadier Rajbir Singh (Retd), a post-graduate in psychology and DIPR/SSB qualified officer who served as both a psychologist and technical officer in three selection centers and as Head of the Academic Department in the Indian Military Academy (IMA) spoke to Mission Victory India in part-3 of this ongoing interview series on the shekatkar committee recommendations calling for a closure of the DIPR and its SSB system.

Excerpts from the Interview...

Q. *Could you trace the origins of the DIPR based SSB selection system? Do you believe that it has adequately lived up to its mandate?*

Ans: The present-day DIPR started out as a small experimental board for the selection of officers at Dehradun. Wartime selection interviews were ad-hoc, and a need was felt for more comprehensive testing in line with foreign armies. The experimental board was re-designated as the Psychological Research Wing (PRW) to evolve a scientific system to select officers.

The Directorate of Psychological Research (DPR) came into existence in 1962 with additional responsibility to research related to morale, group effectiveness and leadership behaviour.

DPR was the department of MOD. In 1982 DPR became a lab of DRDO and was rechristened as The Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR). Its charter was comprehensive and onerous. Besides other research assigned as DPR, now DIPR was tasked to take on research on the effects of high-altitudes on the human mind, anthropometrics, and civil-military relations and more.

The system in vogue is nearly seven decades old. The psychological aspect is built on the projective techniques, which is the legacy of the last century's thirties and forties. Even now, the plates of the images projected in the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT) were standardised in the fifties. The concept is logical but woefully lacks validity and reliability that is the acid test of any psychological instrument. Two persons testing the same individual will reach different assessments.

For this reason, armies that started the system have moved away and are no more using this technique of projective tests. Group dynamics, the Group Testing Officers' system (GTOs), was also evolved alongside the psychological one and is still relevant. It is based on the GTO manual first designed in the early fifties with minor modifications later. It does bring out the strength and weakness to a perceptive assessor effectively.

The GTO system is still working well in the British Army selection boards with minor modification. A personal interview is the third dimension of the process. It is relevant and will always remain essential. The only reason for its low validity is the so-called Halo or Horn effect.

Here the poorly trained assessors get carried away or otherwise due to their biases for or against based on educational background, ethnicity, religious or regional affiliations. I even know of an assessor who liked tall, fair and candidates coming from good schools a lot.

He did not like those who were small-statured and of dark complexion. strict selection and intensive training of the interviewing officers (IO) is of paramount importance. It is essential because they are the senior partners

in the selection process and carry the weight of their ranks which they frequently use.

Q. The Shekhatkar Committee report had recommended the closure of several DRDO labs, one of them being the DIPR. Would you agree with the committee's recommendation? If so, why? What alternatives would you propose to replace the over seven-decade old SSB system?

Ans: The recommendation to disband DIPR is based on its total non-performance over the decades. Unfortunately, the organisation is now an integral part of the DRDO, which is doing an excellent job on several other fronts.

Hundred odd psychologists now designated as scientists have been recruited

related research and periodic renewal of testing tools of the SSBs.

Q. The DIPR had announced a 'De Novo Selection System' as an upgrade to the present system; Do you feel that the proposed system would have been a functional upgrade to the existing system, or should the status quo continue to be maintained, or scrapped entirely?

Ans: The introduction of the new testing system must go through the proper scientific process. It must be evolved after deep, widespread, and open discussion. It must start with the basic concepts, working out the qualities or officer like qualities (OLQ) needed in modern times, contents analysis, validation exercises and reliable trials. It



There is a perceived dichotomy between the requirements at the SSBs and PCTCs; File Photo

with a unique system of progression in service. They are starting from scientist A to scientist G and are well entrenched in the system.

I do not know even non-performing and defunct governmental organisation getting disbanded. It is a depressing situation but valid at the same time. The chief of staff committee (COSC) can demand accountability, and a high-powered committee must set time-bound goals related to assessment

cannot be a hush exercise designed within the four walls of DIPR.

It is a modern India now, unlike the nation of the mid-fifties of the last century. Since the so-called De Novo system has not been discussed and reviewed outside, it cannot be introduced. No experimentation of the kind of screening test will be acceptable now. The screening test introduced in 1998 has done much harm to the testing process. Thousands of the candidates suffered. I hope no such system

without in-depth review and trials is introduced for testing.

Q. Do you feel that the SSB system in its present form continues to remain relevant in the present times? Is it effective in meeting future tri-service officer requirements? Lastly, does it truly consider the requirements of the pre-commission training academies?

Ans: The SSB selection is meant to assess the essential traits and potentialities needed for the three services officers. The Airforce conducts its aptitude test for the candidates applying for the flying branch. Navy can add their aptitude test if necessary.

The only weak link in the process is the validation at the training academy level. The assessors of the SSBs need to visit the training academies to ensure that the trainers are taking care of the negative observations in respect of the candidates.

sizeable numbers are cleared, hoping that some of the OIQs found below average at the selection stage will be developed during training under the trainers' guidance. It is a matter of experience that no such development is ensured. Failing which candidates pass out with deficiencies that become a hurdle in shaping up as ideal officers.

Q. What should the tri-services do at both an intra-service level and inter-service level to review, revise, refine and re-establish their officer selection systems without the involvement or interference of the DIPR?

How would you propose they meet their selection needs in a way that is sync with their actual training needs and service requirements?

Ans: The DIPR continues to exist as there is no alternative proposed. In any case, many such reasonable recommendations continue to lie in the governmental archives. In the light of the fact that DIPR cannot be disbanded and the scientific community there existed without performance so long may not change their attitude. The services need to take decided action at their

end. The COSC must take away assessment work from DIPR.

A reputed national or international agency can be entrusted to work out an alternative to the present tests used in the SSBs. A psychological unit can come up under the MOD to guide and control the SSB testing.

Q: Explain what is meant by: 'Trainability' and 'Potentiality'. How do they influence the selection or rejection of SSB candidates? Is the entire selection process not subjective and opaque rather than objective and transparent? Especially from the rejected candidate's point of view and their trainers or feeder institutes? Should not the system apparently become more fair, transparent, and objective?

Ans: 'potentiality' and 'trainability' are used interchangeably. Potentiality means 'natural tendency or ability. It is more akin to the word aptitude. It also means 'possession of the necessary skill or power to do something. In the SSB interview, the assessors use the concept of trainability as the projected ability to be shaped as a good soldier.

The four guiding indices to subjectively gauge transformation as a soldier are; age, intelligence, motivation and self-insight into one's strengths and weaknesses. The assessment of trainability or potentiality is purely subjective and is at the assessor's whims that no one questions the assessors about it.

The system is indeed opaque and unfair to the rejected lot, who deserve to be informed of the weaknesses observed that lead to their failure. It is a fair idea that they are individually

informed and counselled to come better prepared next time. This way, they will depart from the selection centre more confident than confused and demoralised, as is the case now.

Q: An Indian Army War College (AWC) study found that the lack of mandatory physical tests in the SSB was correlated to the high wastage rates and medical relegations in the training academies. Given that physical proficiency tests are part of officer selection in militaries the world over, do you feel that the SSBs should incorporate physical tests to filter prospective candidates, and potentially reduce the relegations rates at the academies?

Ans: Large numbers of relegations and withdrawals from the training academies are due to the candidates' poor physical state. Even those who stay in the academies with restricted physical conditioning suffer stress fractures.

It is a sad scenario that Col Vinay Dalvi is consistently projecting in innumerable fora. We are aware that such cadets' real military training also suffers as they remain in a high mental stress state throughout the training period.

It also results in poor self-image, which is detrimental to the well-being of future officers. The only reason for the non-inclusion of the basic physical tests in the screening process is irrational mega procrastination of DIPR and the services Head Quarters. I find this neglect unpardonable.

(Views expressed are the respondent's own and do not reflect the editorial policy of Mission Victory India)




About the Interviewee

Brigadier Rajbir Singh, is a psychologist who has had extensive experience with the Indian Armed Forces Officer selection system. He was commissioned in the Army Educational Corps in June 1975 from the Indian Military Academy (IMA) and is a postgraduate in Psychology. The veteran has held a number of instructional appointments including one in the Army Cadet College (ACC). He worked in all the three Service Selection Centers as Technical Officer and as a Psychologist.

He retired from IMA where he was last posted as Head of Academic Department. He is presently working as a consultant in an organisation engaged in assessing the corporate managers.






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Does The SSB System Need Overhaul? In Conversation with Col. Pradeep Dalvi (Retd)

Col. Pradeep Dalvi (Retd), a DIPR/SSB qualified IO & GTO spoke to MVI in part-2 of this ongoing interview series on the Shekatkar Committee recommendations calling for a closure of the DIPR & its SSB system.

by Aritra Banerjee, Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

The shekatkar committee report has recommended the closure of several defence research and development organisation (DRDO) labs, one of them being the Delhi based, Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR) which is the lab responsible for the development of the Indian Armed Forces officer selection.

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All these have resulted in the following questions being raised by analysts and journalists keen to know all the facts from qualified and experienced selectors to draw their own conclusions through the following questions.

Colonel Pradeep Dalvi (Retd), a DIPR/SSB qualified Interviewing Officer (IO) and Group Testing Officer (GTO) spoke to Mission Victory India in part-2 of this ongoing interview series on the Shekatkar Committee recommendations calling for a closure of the DIPR and its SSB system.

Excerpts from the Interview...

Q. At the outset, do you feel that the DIPR has by and large lived up

to its mission? If yes, how? If not, why?

Ans: As per their own website their vision is to be the center of excellence in military psychology and their mission is to provide psychological support to the Armed Forces in selection, training, man machine interface, motivation to enhance mental health and operational efficiency of the forces.

over the past 70 years they have failed in their main objective of the mission enumerated above and have been just bystanders and mere spectators in the field of military psychology and modern trends.

since its establishment somewhere in the sixties they have been carrying on with whatever was handed over

to them by the British and they conveniently ignored the socio-economic changes that were rapidly urbanising the Indian youth and nation as a whole. One of the glaring examples was lack of interface with troops on ground and combat situational analysis and its implications.

Q. The Shekatkar Committee report had recommended the closure of several DRDO labs, one of them being the DIPR. Would you agree with the committee's recommendation? If so, why, and what alternatives would you propose to replace the over seven-decade old SSB system?

Ans: I agree with the proposal of closure of DIPR as recommended by Shekatkar committee. Let me enumerate the issue of DIPR and recommendation for its closure.

Problem Areas

The DIPR is located in Delhi from wherein in bulk of its scientists operate and carry out their research activity. Few scientists are located at the SSBs. The research community is permanently located at Delhi in their comfort zone with all facilities and hardly venture out to field, operational areas and are far removed from the environment in which forces operate like counter insurgency, high altitude areas of Ladakh and the far east.

The result of the above shortcoming has been conducting of theoretical research and advice rendered which has yawning gap between perception and reality on ground. Case in point is the De Novo system for selection of officers at the SSBs recommended by DIPR.

Research papers published are far and few and hardly original. Most of the papers are copied and lacking originality and are related to pleasing their bosses and advancement of their careers.

There is hardly any data available on research papers published by scientists on their website or national and international magazines, may be under the garb of confidentiality and hence their performance cannot be measured

on the work they carry out and are not accountable to the major stakeholders that is the armed forces.

Reasons for DIPR Closure

The mission objectives by DIPR are theoretical in nature and remain only on paper. They have not provided any worthwhile advice on military psychology and modern trends. They work in isolation and have never been effective in areas of man-machine interface, terrain effects, operational and peace time environment, motivation and enhancing mental health of our troops.

A recently published article of more than 800 plus cases of suicide in last

year (cdr) to handle psychological aspect of human state of their soldiers.

Some of the glaring aspects are suicides, depression, substance disorder, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Behavioral Psychology in combat and training. Furthermore, an inability to identify revolutionary changes in psychology of troops in combat and extreme environments.

Mediocre, senior officers and junior scientist and staff (with reservation quotas) at DIPR has not helped them in enhancing their reputation and strive towards their touted vision of being a center of excellence in military



NDA Cadets in ceremonials, holding their training rifle and bayonet; File Photo

seven years within the armed forces can surely pinpoint their inefficiency and lack of awareness towards the environments in which our troops operate.

A failure to identify combat and field conditions of troops by DIPR has left entire onus on the commanding officers (CO) and company commanders (COY

psychology. Lastly, you cannot heal if you keep pretending you aren't hurt!

Restructuring DIPR

Proposed structure given below is broad guideline to reorganise DIPR and side step man power of civilian scientists as per requirement by the armed

forces into their fold and hire the short fall if required essential.

Q. The DIPR had announced a De Novo Selection System, as an upgrade to the present selection; Do you feel that the proposed system would have been a functional upgrade to the existing system, or should the status quo continue to be maintained, or scrapped entirely?

Ans: A lot has been commented upon by serving fraternity, staff, and scientist on the proposed De Novo system in an attempt to project revolutionary changes in assessment and selection procedure at SSBS by DIPR. These are nothing but cosmetic changes which even scientist at SSBS resisted as it was found to be impractical and against the main principle of group dynamics.

There is no change in the psychological and interviewing technique, but an attempt was made to change only GTO techniques without giving any full proof reasoning and impact on group dynamics. status quo to be maintained till new system be put in place keeping in the latest trends of all three techniques and requirement of users (SSB, training academes, units for follow up)

De Novo Recommendations

some of the recommendations in De Novo selection system by DIPR are the reduction of SSB testing to three days. This proposition seems to be exceedingly difficult and nerve racking for GTOs. It is believed that recommendation for GTO testing has been reduced from 2 days to 1 day. It is humanly impossible for GTOs to complete the testing in one day.

The new prototype tests prepared by the DRDO/DIPR are not known and are silent over the issue. Furthermore, there have been a reduction in Officer like Qualities (OLQ) from 15 to 9? what are new OLQs introduced? Are a few OLQs adequate to test the candidates? we need answer to these questions as OLQs are back bone of the testing process.

Drawbacks with the Recommendations

some of the drawbacks of the new recommendations in my view are the reduction of GTO testing from two to one day will have adverse effect on quality of intake at the SSB. No group dynamics (Leader, situation and group) will be affected clearly in such short time with reduced tasks.

It will be exceedingly difficult and stressful for the GTO to correctly assess candidates based on their performance. candidates will not get opportunity to assess his performance of day one and take corrective course for day two tasks.

The entire concept of group dynamics needs to be clearly defined and modified based on new changes recommended Any tampering with the concept of Group dynamics needs to be authenticated by DIPR. As of now NO clear written direction have been issued to SSB from DIPR and NO batches have been put through on trial basis either at Bangalore or other SSBS.

Changes in the existing selection system is requirement of the day however we should not tamper it without extensive research and analysis. Hope DIPR is listening and making suitable changes that meet today's aspiration of candidates and existing environment and not following the concept of an old wine in a new bottle?

Q. Do you feel that the SSB system in its present form continues to remain relevant, considering the present times? Is it truly effective to meet future tri-service officer requirements?

Ans: It is time for the armed forces to look at technological interface that is going to play big role in future wars starting from infantry soldier to full-fledged weapon system.

New types of warfare and futuristic trends like unrestricted warfare, cyber and space attacks by our adversaries in crippling our war efforts is going to play big role and therefore we must put in place these parameters while selecting suitable candidates for their aptitude and leadership qualities in such environment.

A case in point is Technical entries (TES) are performing far better than their counter parts in NDA due to better futuristic warfare awareness and technological trends. The Indian Navy long back upgraded to having B.Tech officers.

Q. Is the present SSB system functionally linked with the diverse tri-service training requirements? Do you feel it realistically meets both the broad and distinct end user requirements of all the three services?

The Indian Army for instance has various 'arms' and 'services' which require varying temperaments, aptitude levels and training requirements based on the operational profile.

Keeping that in mind, how can the diverse human resource needs of a modern military organisation be effectively catered towards?

Ans: The requirement of three services is extremely diverse yet basic requirement of selection of candidates in officers stream remains the same at SSB level. For instance, the requirement of combat pilot and technical manpower dealing with maintenance of aircrafts, missiles and armament in the Indian Air Force are extremely diverse.

we therefore must identify suitable candidates at the SSB level who have common basic competency and identify specialised competency framework during their training at the respective academies.

For this suitable competency framework model needs to be identified so that efforts are not repeated and correct man power is identified at an early stage of their training. To conclude, future warfare will require highly motivated, technically aware and innovative leadership to handle extreme combat environment.

Q. What should the tri-services do at both an intra-service level and inter-service level in order to review, revise, refine and re-establish their officer selection systems without the involvement or interference of the DIPR?

How would you propose they meet their selection needs in a way that is sync with their actual training needs and service requirements?

Ans: Notwithstanding the roles identified in their mission statement, let us perceive what are the jobs actually performed by DIPR. Firstly, there is the training of psychologists, GTOs and IOs in the theoretical aspects of each technique before the conduct of ground training at SSB.

secondly, the posting or providing civilian scientist (psychologist) at the SSBS. Thirdly, to carry out technical inspection of SSBS including standardization and fourthly to carry out research on military psychology and man machine interface.

what options are available to the armed forces in event of disbandment of DIPR. Can a reorganised structure perform all above mentioned jobs and also carry out additional responsibilities of providing clinical and counseling care to military persons and their families. towards that military psychologist must advise commanders and COS on unit wellness and its performance in difficult areas and combat situations.

Reorganisation of DIPR after Disbandment

There is a need to create a Military Psychology Directorate under the aegis of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). Moving on, selective high potential civilian junior scientists could be side stepped from the DIPR to the new organisation so that they are accountable for the work they perform to the major stakeholder.

Alternatively, services of civilian psychologists could be hired to assist as stop gap measure till we train our own cadre of such officers. Furthermore, psychologists and clinical counselors need to be treated as special assets which assists the armed forces in maintaining its high morale and motivation.

Trained officers in fields of Psychology be reemployed or hired to make up the initial short fall. The creation of Military Psychology Cells to be located with formations starting from Division level to all the way to the Battalion

level in field and counter insurgency areas. This will provide firsthand experience in assessing the problem areas and issues faced by troops who are operating in harsh environment.

IOs and GTOs should be selectively absorbed after enhanced studies in psychology and not fritter away trained resources in mundane duties once their tenure at SSBS is over. Indian National Defence University (INDU) will have greater role to play once established.

The SSBS must adopt new trends and scientific instruments to assess candidates online before they report to the SSB. For instance, the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator test be administered online. This test measures four dimensions and 23 facets of personality type in an individual in a time bound manner.

Many such instruments are available to measure common competencies like measurement of OLQ and specialised competency framework required for certain assignments in combat like fighter pilots, special forces, submariners etc.

Some of the instruments which may help assessors/psychologist are, the Personality Attribute Questionnaire (PAQ). This instrument reflects and measures candidate on ten different factors; primary among them are energy, stability, assertiveness, and collaboration. These factors are very well related to the following OLQs: Liveliness, social adaptability, self-confidence, and cooperation.

The Motivational Analysis of Behavior (MAO-B). This instrument assesses the candidate's level of motivation on

various factors; viz, achievement, affiliation, control, influence, dependence, and extension. These factors are very well related to the following OLQs: Ability to influence group, courage, and initiative.

Test of Reasoning. This case study-based questionnaire is customised after in-depth study of the OLQs and new trends like ethics, moral character etc. This instrument intends to measure the following OLQs: Effective Intelligence, Reasoning ability, speed of decision, organising ability

Q: Recent media reports highlight that the SSB is far from infallible. In context to that, what are your observations on the degree of objectivity and level of transparency in the SSB procedure?

Is the system fair to prospective candidates aspiring to join the defence services as officers or doing passionate and capable young aspirant a disservice?

Ans: Overall the SSBS have performed quite admirably since its conception barring few aberrations. However, all candidates who go through the grind of five days of selection process have the right to know their short coming and area of improvement. This entire process should be transparent, and the candidate should be briefed accordingly to give an overall impression of fairness, transparency and objectivity which is sadly lacking.

(Views expressed are the respondent's own and do not reflect the editorial policy of Mission Victory India)



About the Interviewee

Colonel Pradeep Dalvi (Retd) was commissioned into the Mechanised Infantry and has served in the Army for 29 years. During his vast military career, he has held several prestigious appointments. He is an alumnus of Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), Wellington and has served with the United Nations. He has been an instructor at Army War College (AWC) and in faculty of the Senior Command Wing. Post retirement, he went on to start his

second inning with the prestigious Tata Group. He is presently a consultant with a corporate firm and a core member of the 'Victory India' campaign.



CDS: Leadership in Transition

“Straddling two domains, both military and the bureaucracy, being made the Secretary, Military Affairs too, the new CDS had his task cut out. As they say, he hit the ground running, and while setting up a new department with a difficult mix of civilians and military, it is to his credit that he did not allow inertia to overtake his intentions.”

by Air Marshal Sumit Mukerji (Retd)

Heralding in the new year in 2020 the Armed Forces were elated at the Government acceding to the long-awaited appointment of the chief of defence staff (CDS). The convenience of laterally moving the retiring Army chief into this new appointment made infinite sense, providing the office of the CDS an experienced incumbent, well versed with the goings-on of the services and the Government at the highest levels.

straddling two domains, both military and the bureaucracy, being made the secretary, Military Affairs too, the new CDS had his task cut out. As they say, he hit the ground running, and while setting up a new department with a difficult mix of civilians and military,

it is to his credit that he did not allow inertia to overtake his intentions.

But, in all this, the Government specified the rules of business and prosecuting war was not in the ambit of the CDS, which remains with the defence secretary, through the chiefs of the three services.

Given the existing spectrum of security challenges confronting India (and neither covid nor the Chinese had raised their ugly heads then), there was renewed feeling for the need for restructuring the Armed Forces through a process of well-coordinated actions which included modernisation, optimising resources, and harmonising the forces towards effective integrated functioning.

Task cut out

Mandated in one of his tasks from the Government was the creation of Joint/Theatre Commands, similar to some of the other established systems elsewhere in the world. While it would be hoped that since establishing such Theatre Commands involved the operational domains, over which he did not exercise jurisdiction, he would proceed accordingly.

However, his decision to establish an Air Defence Command and a possible Peninsular Command was a foray into the operational realm. ‘Low Hanging Fruit’ as he called them, justifying his decision, belied the essential fact that such fruits need a support structure like the ‘trunk/branches’ or Logistics,



Tri-service flags waving; File Photo

communication, networked environment, etc. Be that as it may, we respect his intentions to meet a goal set by the government.

But progress always encounters hurdles and obstructions. Crippling humanity with heavily restricted office attendance (among other things) and the constant fear of infection, notwithstanding the virtual platforms for seamless functioning, the limitations have been enormous. To add to the nation's woes and especially the military, China reared its ugly head across the crests of the Himalayas in the northern sector.

with 'all hands-on deck' to stem the encroachment, the government realised the folly of not paying adequate attention to the professionally crafted LTIPP provided by the armed forces and set about meeting some of the shortfalls for them to meet their operational commitments.

The CDS had said he would start with the Air Defence Command in 2021 and hopefully start the integration process for the Logistics and Peninsular Commands. However, it is strongly felt that in the given pandemic circumstances and security scenario, it may be wise to delay the transformation

process and therefore the cultural change-over to the integrated domain.

CDS & the Challenges Ahead

In fact, in a recent article a highly respected, erstwhile Army Commander has written "It may be prudent to pause, take a deep breath and reassess these critical issues before diving off at the deep end". This not only makes infinite sense, but the pause allows for a more graded and progressive move into the new paradigm in (as close to) a seamless manner.

Be that as it may, the entire exercise, while attempting to overcome 'turf' issues, will put immense strain on the leaders and commanders at all levels. The existing security scenario a year ago was already rife with the threat of hybrid warfare. The constant and relentless attacks on the Army have remained the pin-pricks they were intended to be.

The attack on the Pathankot airbase and the Army bases in J&K have exposed our capability to seal off our vulnerable assets. Leadership to maintain the morale of troops, retain their motivation and be 'hands-on' with them has become the need of the hour. The pandemic has raised the fear of its ability to rip through huge swathes of

military troops housed in barracks/billets. Added is the fear of exposure for those going to public areas or on leave. It has proved a huge challenge to the leadership.

But perhaps the biggest leadership challenge will arise in the transition to the integrated domain in the aftermath of the setbacks through the COVID and Chinese strife. The cultural reorientation in aligning the dynamics of each service provides a perspective wholly new in the operational environment, notwithstanding the successes achieved in joint operations in war.

The ability to identify the key areas of change and create the environment to allow for the transition will be a task cut out for the leaders. To absorb the other services, understand their ethos and culture and merge them into an integrated whole will be an exercise so complex that it must not be considered cheaply or taken casually.

In his dissertation on psychological aspects of jointmanship and integration, Charles Mark Davis expostulated, "Jointness is that which enables members of different military services to overcome their cultural and experiential prejudices and operate interdependently".



CDS Gen. Bipin Rawat with tri-service chiefs; File Photo

‘enabling’ members is primarily a function of leadership and therefore it becomes exceedingly important for leaders to imbibe the need for a joint or integrated force for the conduct of effective operations. This has to stem from trust and understanding not only of one’s own service capabilities but those of the other services and the strength of the bonding which will provide results.

Looking ahead

Understanding and trust among leaders is a direct result of formalised education and training. While each service provides the requisite training for its personnel, the factor of acceptance of another culture and ethos to foster teamwork is a whole new paradigm and needs focused absorption and progression. Professional Military Education or PME as it is called, remains the backbone and a necessity, to inculcate the correct attitude and developmental process towards joint manship and integrated warfare.

PME must be structured to train individuals to move beyond the strongly instilled cultural beliefs of their respective service and adopt new values and beliefs. Leadership training must be aimed at softening service

parochialism to not only avoid tension and acrimony but to go that extra mile to acceptance of other services’ values and ethics, thereby bringing about convergence of interests to create an effective atmosphere of jointness and integrated interdependence.

Thrusting a policy down and expecting to set up a major cultural change is unlikely to provide the desired results. The system has to develop the structure and progress, through education, into the desired domain. It would also be advisable to promote the development of integrated systems and operations of the non-combat support elements, like cyber/space/communication/intelligence/logistics.

Then proceed onto structured training programs and all these must emanate

from a well developed and focused Joint Doctrine. Leadership would find it easier to mould personnel to ‘thinking joint’ when they have been provided with an environment other than high-stress field operations.

The seamless transition will solely be the responsibility of the leadership and it would be in an area other than the operational domain, rather the psychology of the ‘man behind the machine’ to operate in an integrated environment, appreciate, respect, and understand what inter-dependability actually delivers.

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

Air Marshal Sumit Mukerji (Retd)

An alumnus of NDA and DSSC, Air Marshal Sumit Mukerji has served the IAF as a fighter pilot with distinction. He has commanded three units, a MiG-29 Sqn, a MiG-25 SR Sqn and TACDE (considered the ‘Top Gun’ school of the IAF) and also served as the Air Attaché in Washington DC. He retired in 2011 as the AOC-in-C of Southern Air Command. This article was first published in ‘Salute’ and has been reproduced with due permission from the author.





Military Media Relations: In Conversation with Former MoD Spokesperson Col. Anil Bhat (Retd)

Former Defence Ministry and Indian Army Spokesperson Colonel Anil Bhat, VSM (Retd) spoke to Mission Victory India on Military-Media relations in India, in part-I of this series covering views from both sides of the fence...

by Aritra Banerjee

Q: *How has your experience with the Indian media been in your military career?*

Ans: It began in 1988 as a major pioneering experience. After being selected in 1988 and without being given any kind of media orientation/training, I took it as it came and raised two new Ministry of Defence, Public Relations (MOD, DPR) regional offices at Imphal, Manipur in 1988-89 and at Guwahati, Assam in 1990-91.

Both these tenures were very eventful as, in addition to insurgent groups in Manipur and Nagaland, a fresh movement had begun in Assam in the late 1980s by the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), which came under

the grip of Pakistan's Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) in Bangladesh, where it had a large presence during the tenure of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party under Khaleda Zia. It was the ISI which entered the North East, thanks to ULFA, that the NE insurgency groups not only spread far and wide and it was the ISI which converted them to function as terrorists.

There was never a dull moment. My period of five years in the North East as not just a PRO but also a spokesperson for the services, were most satisfying as one was able to influence public opinion through the media, by first convincing the media in the face of criticism of the Army's role of combatting insurgency and terrorism and

second, by convincing the formation commanders at brigade and above level, including even the Eastern Army Commander, that we should maintain a modicum of transparency.

All formation commanders, with an odd exception, were quite open to taking my advice and recommendations. This is possible open only if they have confidence in the Public Relations Officer /spokesperson. For establishing that confidence the PRO must be active and have his eyes and ears open to whatever is happening and have a finger on the pulse of the media and public of the region concerned.

once this confidence is established, as and when considered appropriate,

interaction between the formation commanders and the media should be arranged. For this the media has to be assured that the formation commander is going to be open but that everything he says is not meant for quoting. What can be quoted should be clearly explained. It should be noticeably clear to the armed forces that good hospitality alone cannot assure good or positive reporting. The stand or policy of the service concerned should be sound.

Do not expect positive reporting if the service concerned is at fault on any issue or not transparent or interested only in projecting the commanders. And also, do not expect that good winning and dining will produce good copy from all, because those whose owners/editors have a contrary agenda, they will regardless.

To succeed as a spokesperson in environments like Jammu and Kashmir and the North East, calls for sound knowledge of the armed forces, the country and its military history, professional capability, and a determined effort of reaching out to the media, with a reasonable amount of transparency. It also calls for developing a 'nose for news' and communication skills.

On reaching out to the media, successful counter insurgency operations and incidents which I was disseminating in Imphal to the local media, I tried to send the same to Guwahati and Kolkata also. Similarly, while in Guwahati, I would try to send the same reports to Kolkata and even New Delhi. In the 1980s-early 1990s this was not quite easy as the telephones I functioned with were still the field "ghumatoo" pieces. The only other resource was faxing from the local telegraph offices.

I am fortunate that my efforts bore fruit. In the process of the meaningful management of disseminating info, very often I walked the tight-rope because it was at variance with short-sighted responses of the government's machinery—a combo of Defence Ministry and head of DPR MOD—my RO, ironically—being from the Information and Broadcasting Ministry (MIB).

I was truly clear in my mind about my keeping the interests of the Army/

whichever other organisation I was covering like Assam Rifles, Air Force, Border Roads Organisation and sometimes, even Border Security Force under the command of Army and the interest of the nation as the foremost. It is indeed ironic that the Defence Ministry officials were not always on the same page as the Army in what all and how much and how to disseminate information.

Q: *Do you feel that the media should play an active role in today's information warfare environment? If so, what role do you believe the media plays in IW and*



Members of the Press kitted with gas masks; File Photo

in moulding public perceptions on national security issues?

Ans: Late General BC Joshi believed that media can be a force multiplier if dealt with properly. If not, it could be a force degrader, which must be avoided/prevented. Perception management must be done diligently and in a coordinated manner by the services and ministries like the MOD and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) along with the MIB and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

Q: *As someone with extensive experience dealing with the news media from the services side, do you feel that the average journalist assigned the defence beat truly comprehends the technical intricacies and sensitivity of defence & national security issues? If not, what can be done to address this?*

Ans: Journalists are supposed to be knowledgeable on the subject they are covering. Some are and some are not so. And then they may be representing owners who have their own agenda which may not always match the organisation being projected. It again calls for hard work by the PRO and sometimes, guts and moral courage.

Q: *Despite India having a uniquely complex defence & national security environment, requiring a detailed understanding why do you think there are a lack of dedicated reporters and adequate*

training centres and programs for defence reporting?

Ans: MOD DPR organises training capsules for media. It used to be once in two years. It should be every year, which was implemented at some stage, but one does not know if it still continues to be once a year.

Q: *Do you think the Indian media is insensitive towards issues concerning the tri-services by? Do you feel that grievances of service members are not adequately highlighted? Should such grievances be highlighted?*

Ans: In recent years there have been times when the plight of adversely affected military personnel has been highlighted and yet there are cases which get overlooked by media, sometimes because it does not suit their owners/editors.



A photojournalist on the frontlines in Syria; File Photo

Q: *What shortcomings or grievances in the military would you want the media to highlight?*

Ans: In recent years one major point is that revision and raises in pay and allowances of Indian Police Service (IPS) and central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) and even civilian officers serving in organisations like Military Engineer Service (MES) have caused an imbalance in command functioning as some appointments, ranks which are junior professionally claim higher status owing to their pay drawn. Other issues are some new ideas and policies on armed forces pensions related to amount of service and early retirees - if implemented are going to cause chaos. Such anomalies must get highlighted.

Q: *In your opinion, does the establishment pressurise journalists reporting on national security issues? Would you agree or disagree with the view that there have been attempts to suppress or otherwise sanitise reports from conflict zones in India?*

How would you respond to the view that certain sections of the media are becoming unofficial mouthpieces of the Armed Forces?

On the flipside, do you feel that the media is being leveraged by both state and non-state actors

to compromise national security? Are certain publications becoming mouthpieces for hostile forces?

Ans: Both are true. In totalitarian or dictatorship states media is slave to the government. In democracies it is different. In the Indian democratic scenario, there have been elements or even some agencies which have been supporting anti-national Indians or even Indian political parties which after losing at the hustings have been trying to please anti-India neighbours/adversary/enemy countries.

Q: *Where do you stand on the age old 'Truth vs National Security' debate? How do you feel concerned stakeholders on both sides should tread in this regard?*

Ans: Today's utterly twisted politics of some Indian political parties has already compromised or even caused harm to India's security.

Q: *What advice would you like to give media personnel, to further improve media-military relations, and what advice would you like to give Armed Forces personnel to further improve media-military relations?*

Ans: The openness that we had practiced during the Kargil conflict/Operation Vijay and also quite often in J&K, before and after, has been very conspicuously missing since whatever has happened in Eastern Ladakh from May 2020 onwards. This time the Government and Army have shared much less than earlier. Access to media has also been much less. In view of China's and Pakistan's track record, intentions, tendencies, and further plans everything must be done to maintain psychological pressure on China and Pakistan through media.

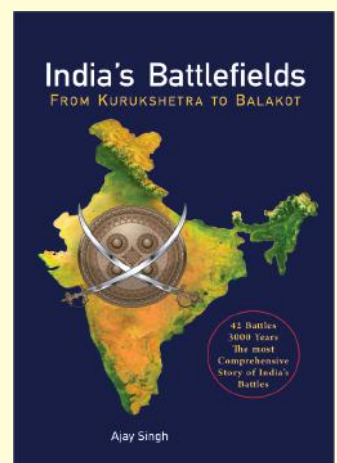
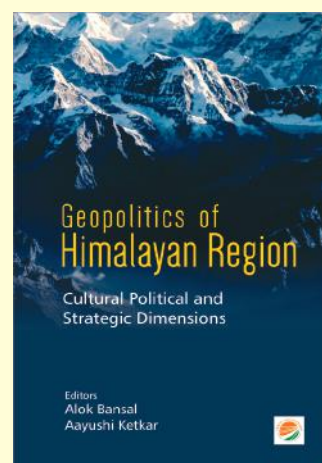
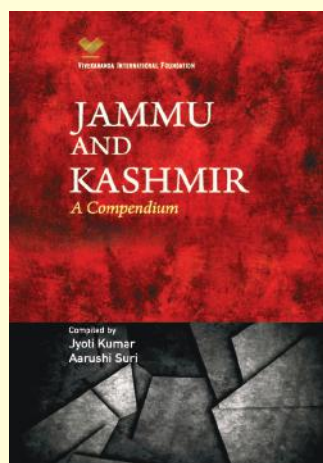
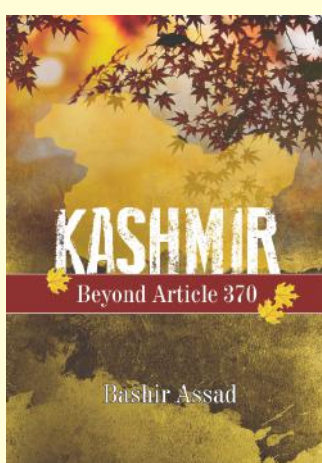
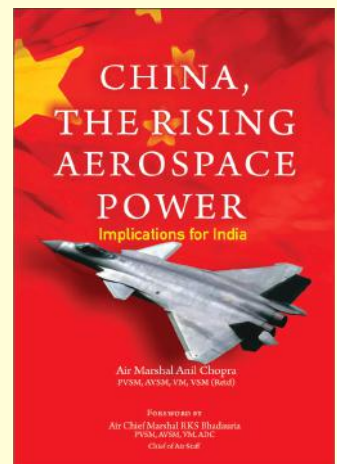
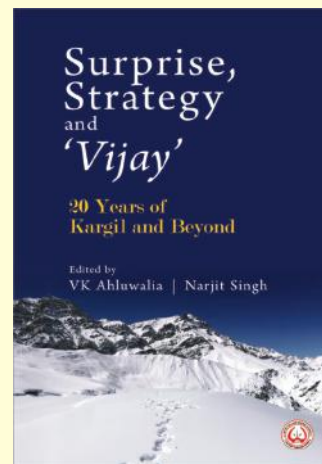
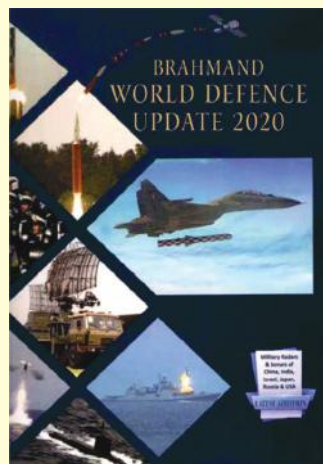
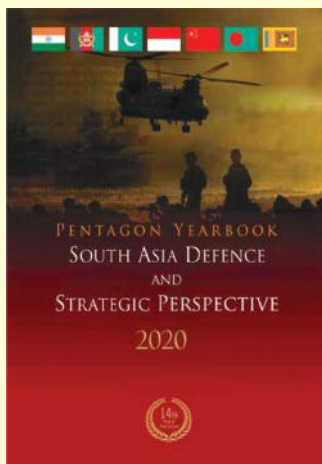
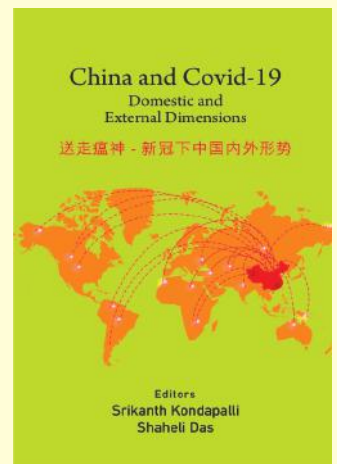
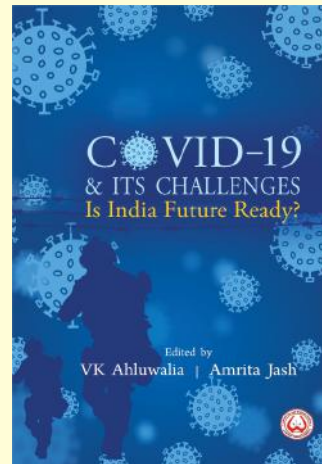
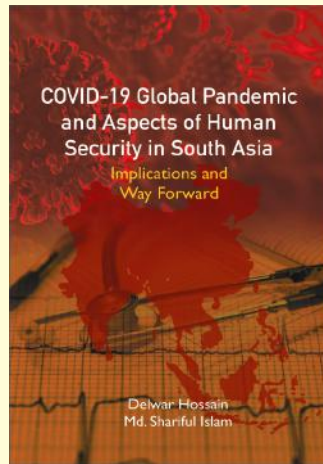
(Views expressed are the respondent's own and do not reflect the editorial policy of Mission Victory India)



About the Interviewee

Colonel Anil Bhat (Retd), a published writer, strategic analyst and former Defence Ministry and Indian Army spokesperson, can be contacted at wordsword02@gmail.com. Views expressed are the respondents own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Mission Victory India

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Military Media Relations: In Conversation with Frontier India Editor-in-Chief & Author, Joseph P Chacko

Frontier India Editor-in-Chief, and author of books 'Foxtrot to Arihant' and 'Warring Navies - India and Pakistan' spoke to Mission Victory India on Military-Media relations in India, in part-2 of this series covering views from both sides of the fence...

by Aritra Banerjee

Q: How has your experience with the Indian Armed Forces been in your journalism career?

Ans: varying. The Indian Navy used to be the most open towards media followed by a distant Indian Air Force. The Indian Army bordered hostility most of the times. At times it was felt the media was a bigger enemy than Pakistan. Attitudes have since improved. The Navy is still the friendliest one. The Air Force and Army are now a bit more open.

Q: Do you feel that the media should play an active role in today's information warfare environment?

Q: If so, what role do you believe the media plays in IW and in moulding public perceptions on national security issues?

Ans: Ideally, the media should play the intended role of being the proverbial fourth pillar. It does have a responsibility towards the nation. It is open to interpretation and is guided by the founding principle of the particular media. Jan chetna is a novel concept and media has been playing the role for ages.

Q: Can an argument be made that active participation goes against the media's impartial watchdog

function. How would you address this view?

Ans: supporting and or parroting the government line of arguments is definitely not a part moulding public opinion. The government must be questioned. The balance between Jan chetna and impartial watchdog should be maintained.

Q: As someone with extensive experience dealing with the armed forces, do you feel that the average journalist assigned the defence beat truly comprehends the technical intricacies and sensitivity of defence & national security



A journalist embedded with a military unit; File Photo

issues? If not, what can be done to address this?

Ans: An average journalist is not a defence journalist. Most media organisations, other than the defence focused media, are unable to keep a dedicated reporter for defence alone. At the same time, majority of the readership does not understand the technicality or sensitivity. An average reporter has a general sense on 'how, and 'how much' should be presented to the general reader in a palpable manner. I would rate a journalist on their ability to convey the general intent to their reader as the factor for assessing their journalistic skills.

Q: Despite India having a uniquely complex defence & national security environment, requiring a detailed understanding, why do you think there are a lack of dedicated reporters and adequate training center's/programs for defence reporting?

Ans: India does have her share of defence reporters who understand the security environment. There are adequate mass communication schools for journalism. The defence correspondents course by the Ministry of Defence is an excellent course for sensitising the journalist. I have seen some general beat journalists dedicatedly attending military events and covering them as per their readership. Of course, they have varied sense of

understanding depending upon their experience and interest.

Q: Do you think the Indian media is insensitive towards issues concerning the tri-services? Do you feel that grievances of service members are not adequately highlighted? Should such grievances be highlighted in the public domain?

Ans: The Armed Forces is a huge organisation with own grievance redressal mechanisms. Sometimes, there are institutional issues like recruitment, equipment etc. The sayahak/Batman system is a classic example of institutional issues. If media reports, the Indian Army becomes sensitive about the coverage. If media does not report it then the soldiers loose. The Armed forces consider themselves as a proverbial 'Holy cow.'

I remember when I reported about defence research and development organisation products, I was told by retired armed forces personnel to not act as a cheesy salesman for thrashy products. My view was that Indian Armed Forces should induct the DRDO products in Mark 1, 2, 3 ... statuses like the armed forces in US or Russia would do.

Q: Do you feel that the Security establishment does not cooperate with reporters covering defence & national security? Would you say

that they actively impede journalists from doing their job?

Ans: The Armed Force's public relation officers are the nodal point for journalists. They are bound by their hierarchy, which is true for organisations in general. It is up to the journalist to cover their beat which is always challenging.

Q: In your opinion, does the establishment pressurise journalists reporting on national security issues? Would you agree or disagree with the view that there have been attempts to suppress or otherwise sanitise reports from conflict zones in India? To what extent would you say such perceived muzzling of the press exists in India?

Ans: such pressures are part of the job. commercial sector does it even better through advertisement budgets. It is up to the media house to support their journalists in view of their survival. Media houses in India have various levels of survival skills and they support their journalists as per their strength.

Q: How would you respond to the view that certain sections of the media are becoming unofficial mouthpieces of the Armed Forces? On the flipside, do you feel that the media is being leveraged by both state and non-state actors



A war correspondent reporting from a conflict zone; File Photo

to compromise national security? Are certain publications becoming mouthpieces for hostile forces?

Ans: I observe media is more pliant to government of the day and commercial interests. I have not noticed pro armed force or pro hostile forces media. Even the hostile media is usually hostile to the state machinery which includes the armed forces. I am not sure if there is a dedicated anti armed forces media.

Q: Where do you stand on the age old 'Truth vs National Security' debate? How do you feel concerned stakeholders on both sides should tread in this regard? Where does one draw the line? Should a line be drawn?

Ans: I think most news can be reported except the operating capabilities of the equipment which is different from the general capability of the equipment, current sensitive deployments etc.

Q: Would you say that 'national security' is often used as a convenient excuse to bury reports which might embarrass the government of the day, or the security establishment?

Ans: Definitely.

Q: Would you say that the Office of the Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) has been a boon for timely reportage of issues concerning the Indian Army or a bane for defence reporters?

Ans: ADGPI is a good move for Indian Army PR. With social media available, more organisations will reach out to the population directly. Army promotes its organisational point of view through ADGPI. It is not substitute to media. Journalists who are dependent on press release handouts will have to scale up.

Q: What advice would you like to give media personnel, to further improve media-military relations?

Ans: media exists to serve the people and not the organisations. Objectivity must be maintained.

Q: What advice would you like to give Armed Forces personnel to further improve media-military relations?

Ans: The Indian Airforce and the Indian Army can follow the Indian Navy example of engaging media.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

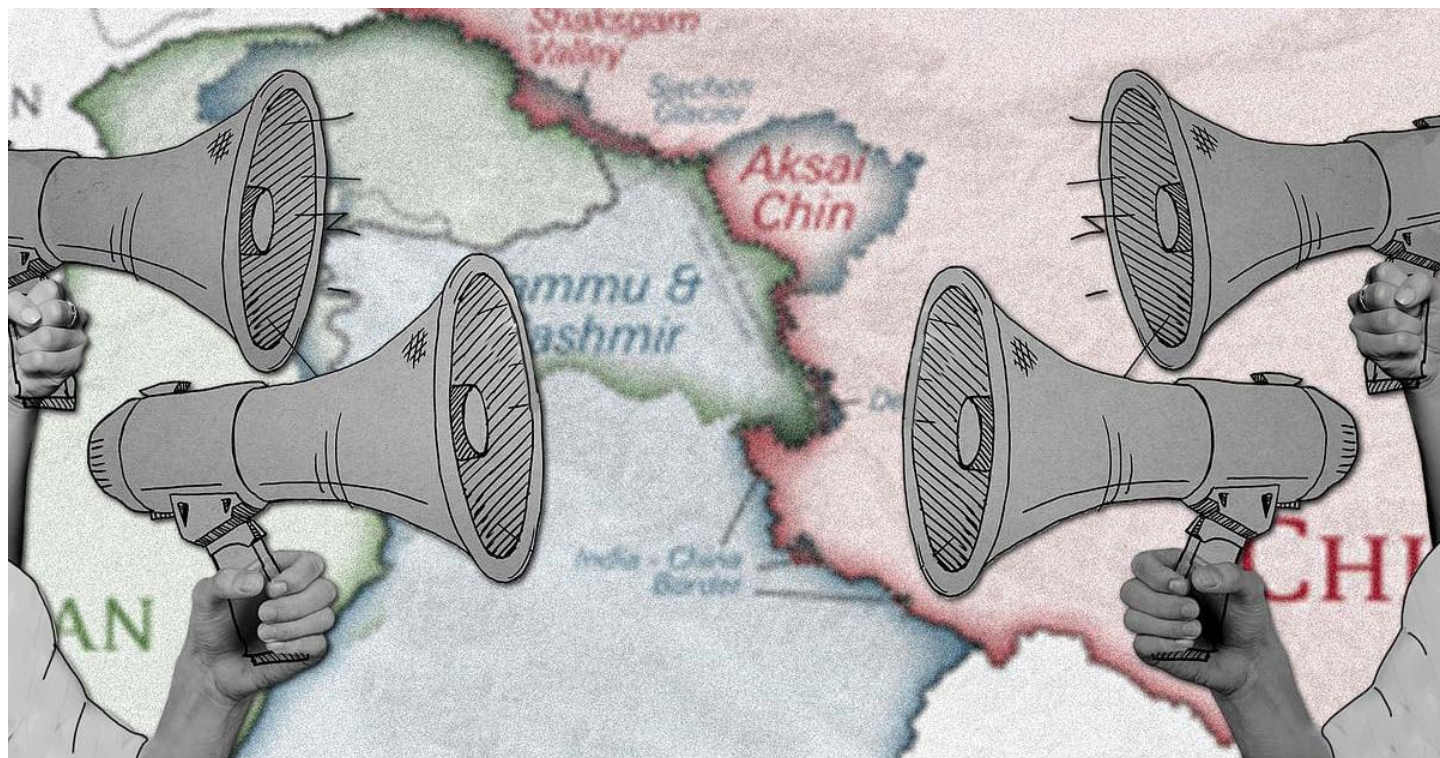
Ans: The ex-service men have a role in engaging the media for the benefit of armed forces.

(Views expressed are the respondents own and do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of Mission Victory India.)



About the Interviewee

Joseph P. Chacko is a defence journalist and author of the books 'Foxtrot to Arihant and Warring Navies – India and Pakistan'. He is the publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Frontier India, a digital media publication publishing news and current affairs. He holds an M.B.A in International Business from the Maharishi University of Management, Iowa, USA. He can be reached on email: frontierindia@gmail.com, Twitter: @chackojoseph.



Strong Military-Media Ties Vital For Nation's Security Says Former Resident Editor, Gomantak Times, Shashwat Gupta Ray

Former Resident Editor, Gomantak Times and Defence Journalist, Shashwat Gupta Ray spoke to Mission Victory India on Military-Media relations in India, in part-3 of this series covering views from both sides of the fence...

by Aritra Banerjee

Q: How has your experience with the Indian Armed Forces been in your journalism career?

Ans: My experience in dealing with armed forces has been a mixed one. It always depended upon the kind of information I was looking for. Of the three services, I have had the best working relationship with the Indian Navy. It has been incredibly supportive.

I could do, in fact I still manage to get clearances from Western Naval Command relatively easily for visiting Goa Naval Area installations to do my stories. I have managed to even interview the Flag Officer commanding Goa

Area couple of times within a span of three months.

This is something that would rarely happen in the Army or Air Force. Getting to interview the Divisional General Officer commanding or the corps commander is a rarity unless it is in Kashmir or North East.

The Air Force is also very opaque, has a lot of communication issues. If the story topic is remotely negative, then the three services simply shut shop. Even then, Navy's media engagement is far better.

Q: Do you feel that the media should play an active role in

today's information warfare environment? If so, what role do you believe the media plays in IW and in moulding public perceptions on national security issues?

Ans: I think the media has a huge role to play in the era of information warfare. It can present the whole picture as a neutral party. It can help demystify a lot of critical but jargonised subjects of armed forces. But there on ground there are several teething issues. Most importantly more often than not, the top hierarchy wants to get favourable news published or shown in the media platform.

Any negative news is perceived as insensitive and a threat to national security. Any negative news gets pushed under the carpet as a security issue. It becomes difficult to get stories from the authorities, even off the record.

In absence of authentic information, or lack of understanding gravity of the subject, journalists tend to misreport and portray a picture which is contrary to reality. This causes even more harm to the armed forces image, which widens the gap further.

The military establishment needs to stop distrusting the media and take it under its wings to help disseminate the right information and no hesitate in responding to media's query if there is some negative incident, especially in civilian areas.

The anti-social elements thrive on negative publicity, especially emanating from civilian areas. Social media is a bigger threat to national security than weapons of mass destruction. This has to be negated using the help of formal mass media platforms.

Q: *Can an argument be made that active participation goes against the media's impartial watchdog function. How would you address this view?*

Ans: No, I do not think so. The media can play active role without losing its neutrality. The media's job is to report with objectivity. If there is a positive development like the Army building schools or setting up hospitals for the civilians it should be appreciated and highlighted.

Reporting positive news does not mean that media is being controlled by the military. Similarly, if there is a negative development it too has to be reported as it is without any slant.

That does not mean that media is anti-military or a threat to national security. Like any other professional organisation, media too has its own way of functioning. Be it reporting positive or negative news, it should be done without any malice. Till the time this dictum is followed there is no

reason to believe that media is ceasing to be neutral.

The press is just a messenger of the information not the creator. The military should accept and appreciate this fact and find out means to work with the media in a cohesive manner without doubting its credentials or trying to dictate the proceedings.

Q: *As someone with extensive experience dealing with the armed forces, do you feel that the average journalist assigned the defence beat truly comprehends the technical intricacies and sensitivity of defence & national security issues? If not, what can be done to address this?*

Ans: Yes, true. Inexperienced journalists handling defence beat can be problematic. It is not easy to comprehend the critical aspects of defence reporting. A slight mistake in reporting can have serious consequences. Media organisations do not attach too much importance to defence reporting as a beat.

Political, crime and civic beats assume more importance than defence, especially in non-disturbed areas. So, the seasoned journalists consider these non-defence beats more important than defence, which is considered as "headache" as the military establishment is looked upon as non-cooperative and "difficult" to get stories.

A reporter has the pressure of filing at least four stories a day, which is easily available from non-defence beats. It is difficult to get even one story a day from the military authorities. Hence inexperienced journalists are given defence beat. But things are changing. Editors are now giving due importance to defence reporting. They are being encouraged to pursue this beat.

The Ministry of Defence has an annual defence correspondents course (DCC). This is a month-long orientation programme held under the aegis of MoD. Around 30 journalists are selected out of few hundred applications from across the country.

They are then taken to the forward base areas of the tri-services to give a

glimpse of how the armed forces deal with the enemy – logistical challenges, topography, and various other aspects. They are also given theoretical knowledge on the functioning of the tri-services. This has been a huge hit amongst media persons.

It is considered as a very prestigious course as post completion the journalists get a certificate from the MoD, which adds lot of value to the career prospects of the journalists. They are in a much better position to analytically report defence matters.

However, my suggestion is this programme should be also extended to senior journalists like bureau chiefs and editors, even sub-editors. Ultimately the bureau head and editor are responsible for assigning, selecting, and clearing news reports. If they too undergo a shorter course of two weeks, then there could be a better apprehension of the defence issues. This will then help bringing out security issues in a refined manner.

Q: *Do you think the Indian media is insensitive towards issues concerning the tri-services by? Do you feel that grievances of service members are not adequately highlighted? Should such grievances be highlighted?*

Ans: Yes, they should be taken up. But the media needs evidence and comments, preferably on record. Most of the times the media is approached without any evidence. While the grievances may be authentic but media has its own checks and balances. It is a gospel for reporters to report on such sensitive matters based on evidence, even if the aggrieved wants to remain anonymous.

Then on the basis of documents or any audio/audio-visual evidence the journalist can seek the editor's nod to go ahead with the story. Otherwise, it only becomes mere allegations, which if not substantiated with evidence, can make them liable for legal action from the authorities.

While the media is all for taking up grievances of its soldiers, it has to be supported with proper evidence. If the aggrieved helps in procuring the

necessary evidence, then one can report on such issues. One cannot use the media's shoulder to shoot their own gun.

Q: *In your opinion, does the establishment pressurise journalists reporting on national security issues? Would you agree or disagree with the view that there have been attempts to suppress or otherwise sanitise media reports? To what extent would you such perceived muzzling of the press exists in India?*

Ans: if the information is authentic and there is enough evidence to back it, then it is not possible to muzzle the truth, unless the management succumbs under the pressure. But due to social media, it is exceedingly difficult nowadays to hide the truth. It manages to get leaked out. Sometimes news is given by the official sources but unofficially because they too want the news to be out but run the risk of losing their jobs.

It is up to the knowledge levels of the journalist and the trustworthiness of the sources. The defence personnel also know very well which news should be leaked out discreetly so that it is used to their advantage. To play safe, the same sources when approached officially tend to neither confirm nor deny. But the information should be accurate.

Q: *How would you respond to the view that certain sections of the media are becoming unofficial mouthpieces of the Armed Forces? On the flipside, do you feel that the media is being leveraged by both state and non-state actors to compromise national security? Are certain publications becoming mouthpieces for hostile forces?*

Ans: For all its shortcomings, our media is still very patriotic and nationalist in nature and by no means will become "mouthpiece" of any anti-national organization. The term "mouthpiece" is very vague actually. Media is interested in its story, and more sensational it is in nature better it is because the dictum in news media is that negative sells.

Media industry revenue comes from third party organisation but depends on readership/viewership numbers. More the numbers (many times inflated) better are the chances of getting advertisement revenue.

However, it is also a norm in the news media to have all sides of the story. One must remember the fact that media is not a news creator. It is a news disseminator. The news is already created in way of a terrorist attack or some conflict in civilian area. What can be questioned is its presentation and treatment and whether the facts are in place or not.

Sometimes in the excitement to break a sensational news, sense of rationality takes a backseat. The latest controversy over Arnab Goswami's Republic channel's TRP scam and post-Pulwama WhatsApp chat leak or the coverage of 26/11 terror attack in the initial period are some examples.

Electronic media in India is yet to evolve and mature. With more than 300 news channels and over 10,000 news publications in the market, the advertisement war will grow even more intense. In this mix you add news portals then the battle for grabbing the eye-balls of readers and viewers will turn more vicious. In the process content quality will be hit.

Unless the revenue model of the media industry undergoes a change the problem with content quality will persist. This situation then gets misused by anti-social elements like Maoists who feed on propaganda, mostly unknowingly.

Q: *Where do you stand on the age old 'Truth vs National Security' debate? How do you feel concerned stakeholders on both sides should tread in this regard? Where does one draw the line? Should a line be drawn?*

Ans: In the truth vs national security debate, truth is always the casualty. It is in human nature to reject the truth as one remains in self-denial mode. This is extremely dangerous as unless one accepts the truth the corrective measure will never be

taken, and this will mean that vulnerabilities remain.

The problem here is the repercussions of accepting the truth. Instead of a rational brainstorming for finding solution to a crisis there is more blame game. Every disaster is an outcome of collective failure. But instead of going to the roots of the cause, there is a habit of treating the symptoms by indulging in kneejerk reaction.

Invariably the fall guys are the junior leadership. Fearing persecution, the ground report is manipulated and then the exact truth never is never revealed to the decision-making authorities.

Once the truth is accepted in toto then the chances are that more pragmatic reaction will follow. Otherwise, this approach of finding scapegoats for failures – like the media – will only complicate the matters and the vulnerabilities will remain. Transparency is particularly important.

Intelligence failure is often cited as reason for many of the crisis - be it cross border incursions by enemy army, terror attacks etc. So, what has been done for strengthening our intelligence gathering and taking the intel inputs seriously for all these years? How many bureaucrats have been sacked due to their inaction? How many Generals have been punished? Let's not shoot the messenger.

Truth and national security cannot be looked in isolation. Accept the truth and act sincerely towards plugging the gaps. The Kargil committee report still remains unimplemented. Had it been done, Galwan would not have happened.

National security is not a theory that has to be debated. It is an attitude that defines the strength or weakness of a nation. We as a nation are not serious about national security in its real sense.

Q: *Would you say that the office of the Additional Directorate General of Public Information (ADGPI) has been a boon for timely reportage*

of issues concerning the Indian Army or a bane for defence reporters?

Ans: The advent of ADGPI is of course a good development as it has succeeded in bridging the information gap. Especially its presence on social media has helped in real time availability of news alerts regarding the Indian Army. But then, ADGPI is an extension of Press Information Bureau, where the role is to give out information that the Army wants.

It is more a one-way information. It is not capable in handling difficult questions in case of any lapses. The ADGPI has to be prepared to take difficult questions from the press and answer their queries. Unless that happens, the stories will go one-sided and will be labelled as biased reporting.

Q: What advice would you like to give media personnel, to further improve media-military relations?

Ans: My first advice to media personnel is not to get overawed at the sight of uniformed personnel. They are public servants, who are paid from tax-payers' money to discharge their duties. Their failure means wastage of public money. Every government establishment is answerable to the people. Secondly, read.

Journalists today rely more on WhatsApp forwards than spending some quality time in reading up books on military history. There are more books and authentic websites/YouTube channels by defence veterans and experts who have chronicled various aspects/historical events regarding the geo-political scenario in the country/region and world.

Reading of good literature always helps. Thirdly, make friends with dedicated veteran officers who are tirelessly working towards bringing about a positive change in the system selflessly.

Mission victory India is the best example of it. Not all issues maybe of readers' interest. But by following such campaigns/works regularly will

help in comprehending the tricky issues of armed forces better.

Finally, it is always better to accept ignorance on a matter and make efforts in learning about it rather than making hypothetical statements that do not make sense. Learning is a continuous process. Have the appetite to learn and evolve.

Q: What advice would you like to give Armed Forces personnel to further improve media-military relations?

Ans: My advice to armed forces personnel is that do not treat the media as your foe. The media can be an able ally in fighting the information warfare if they are trusted and helped with right inputs. Be transparent. Send your able officers to attend capsule courses in news media. It is already happening.

Selected officers are sent to Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) Delhi. Other than that, there should be regular informal interactions between the formation commanders and local media editors and defence reporters.

On the lines of DCC that is conducted by MoD at national level, similar week-long courses or three-day workshops could be held at local levels. Former GOC-in-C Southern Command Lieutenant General A K Singh had taken the initiative of organising a three-day defence correspondents workshop in Pune in 2011.

This included theory sessions and visits to infantry battalion in

Aundh and armoured corps centre in Ahmednagar. Such initiatives help in bridging the information gap and strengthen defence and media ties.

Q: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Ans: The media and armed forces both are allies in the war against disinformation. Twain must meet. Both the parties need to trust each other and work in tandem, without interfering in each other's functioning process. Both are as distinct as chalk and cheese. Hence you cannot dictate terms on each other.

Yet, both have important role to play in winning the information warfare to ensure the country's internal and external security. Internal security has direct bearing on external security. Kashmir, Punjab, and North East are best examples. Advent of social media has only complicated the internal security situation.

The communal political situation has made things even worse. We have to understand that muscle-power is not the solution to internal problems. Constructive public engagement using media as the vehicle will help in diffusing lot of flaring tempers. No war can be won without local support.

Local support cannot be garnered without involvement of media. So, both are complimentary to each other. Hence both sides should be on the same page and find a common ground on how to work towards a strong nation, rising above their petty differences.

About the Interviewee



Shashwat Gupta Ray is the former Editor of Gomantak Times and is presently the founder and curator of the YouTube channel 'Uncovering India'. He is a multiple award winning defence journalist and a seasoned defence editor with over two decades of experience. It was under his leadership that GT won multiple excellence in journalism awards. Before GT, he was Assistant Editor at Sakaal Times, Pune. He has worked in reputed publications such as PTI and Tehelka and has reported

from ground zero of terror attacks like 26/11 and from other hotspots. His work has been featured in external literature on extremism. He can be reached on email: shashwat76@gmail.com, Twitter: @sgr_ray



The Military and the Media: A Match Made in Necessity?

“The press and the military are in a relationship whether they want to be or not.”

Reproduced from the War Room - US Army War College

The general public often assumes a great deal about the relationship between the media and the military. This topic has been in the news a lot in 2019, with both military personnel and journalists separately weighing in. During academic year '19 one elective specifically asked its students:

What is the state of the military's relationship with the media; what are the challenges to it; and what are the risks going forward?

This forum is intended to add to that important conversation. Seven of those students and one faculty member shared their responses and their opinions varied quite a bit.

The Media as Watchdog

Ryan Dowdy is a colonel in the U.S. Army and a graduate

of the U.S. Army War College resident class of 2019.

The relationship between the media and the military is not always an easy one. Some may even argue that the relationship is fractured, especially because of a number of high-profile missteps and coverage critical of the military. But the reality is that the relationship is on solid footing.

Military distrust of the media was exacerbated in recent years with high profile incidents involving media personalities such as Geraldo Rivera revealing tactical positions when he was embedded with a unit. Senior leaders and junior leaders alike felt betrayed by Geraldo. More recently, news anchor Brian Williams embellished (or perhaps outright lied about) his involvement in an helicopter crash in Iraq over a decade ago, claiming to be on an Army helicopter that

crashed due to enemy fire. But former crewmembers told the real story on social media, forcing Williams to come clean. More disappointment.

At other times, the military chafes at unfavorable coverage, what they view as the media airing dirty laundry. But the military must remember that this is the media's job and is a good thing. Many military senior leaders recognize and respect the media's vital role as the Fourth Estate. As the Fourth Estate, the media provides a forum for public transparency, which is necessary for legitimacy and accountability. The media is a watchdog, and it serves citizens and military leaders as well by uncovering problems that might otherwise go unknown, undetected, or ignored by the bureaucracy.

This tradition of critical media coverage holding the military accountable to the public is not new. Coverage of the

Vietnam war and of the Tailhook scandal in the early 1990s are also evidence of the media's critical watchdog role.

Critical media reporting, for example, uncovered widespread fraud and misuse of taxpayer monies in the reconstruction of Iraq. The media covered the non-partisan Congressional Commission on fraud, waste, and abuse and other reports involving government contractors in Iraq. This coverage reminded the military that it must act as a good steward of government resources. For some, the coverage was a black eye; but public exposure was vital to address the issue, reestablish legitimacy, and maintain trust with the public.

Another example of media's coverage of fraud includes the scandal that ensnared multiple senior Navy officials known as the "Fat Leonard" case. This case involved a number of top Navy officials that accepted bribes, illegal gifts, and even prostitutes for kickbacks and illegal contracts. The Navy investigated the matter and held individuals accountable, but the media's coverage of the issue no doubt helped keep the public pressure on the Navy to clean up the mess caused by some of its own leaders.

Finally, an example of investigative journalism that served to highlight issues impacting the health and welfare of our service members is a recent Reuters piece, "Ambushed at Home." This investigative series exposed to the public significant problems with on-post housing on military installations, to include lead exposure, infestations, and mold. Once public, key senior leaders in the military began to take immediate action to assess and rectify the situation. In some cases taking blame, and in others placing blame on private contractors, at no time have these leaders criticized the media for revealing to the public the poor state of some of its housing.

The military-media relationship can be tense. But without the media, the government, including the military, could run amok without any public scrutiny. Military professionals abide by principles of honor, integrity, and loyalty. In a perfect world, if we all did this, perhaps there would be little need for

the Fourth Estate or endless investigations of wartime fraud, "Fat Leonards," or "Tailhooks." While dealing with the fallout from critical coverage can be unpleasant, most military senior leaders strive for accountability and to take corrective action when needed. The media is essential in achieving accountability and regaining the trust of those we serve.

The Military-Media Relationship is Just Fine

Ian Humphrey is a colonel in the U.S. Army and a graduate of the U.S. Army War College resident class of 2019.

Ask someone about the state of the military and media relationship, and you'll get a range of answers from healthy and strong to totally dysfunctional. While there are challenges between the two, dysfunction is too strong. Currently, the relationship is reasonably healthy because both the military and media understand they must work together to meet the needs of their common customer: the American citizen. The military needs to maintain the trust and confidence of the American citizens they are sworn to protect and the media needs the citizens to trust their reporting so they listen, read and subscribe to their news outlets.

Challenges: Censorship, Expectations, Technology

There are clear tensions between the military and the media, and these are nothing new. During the American Civil War, for example, reporters from both the North and South had basically free reign on the battlefields with little restriction on what they reported. In response to the possibility of sensitive information being revealed to the enemy, commanders placed severe restrictions on reporters. This tight restriction on the media continued in World War I, but changed in World War II as the government and military shifted to trying to control the media message to report pro-military news. The media accepted this censorship in return for access through the Korean War.

But the Vietnam War strained the relationship again, and the media was

unwilling to simply report what the military wanted. The relationship had been somewhat repaired by the early 21st century, and in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the military and media made a conscious effort to work together to get important stories back to the American public. As in previous wars, embedding reporters with military units allowed the media access to front line soldiers and lent the news a level of authenticity with the audience while allowing the military to control the media's movement on the battlefield.

Embedding reporters can be challenging, though. As a battery commander in the initial combat phase of OIF, my battery was assigned a female reporter and a male cameraman from wire service. I was concerned because there were no other women in my unit, and we were unprepared for her to travel with us. The reporter also had significant dietary restrictions—a definite challenge when we were living out of our vehicles and eating nothing but Meals Ready to Eat (MREs). When my battery took casualties in early April and the cameraman broke his arm, both decided to leave on the medical evacuation vehicles. There was clear value in having members of the media embedded with units, but better planning and understanding on both sides about needs and expectations could have improved the situation.

Another area of risk is the role of technology changing the character of war. Technology is constantly evolving, and technological advances in communications technology dramatically reduced the amount of time between an event and when the media's first reports of it reach the public. Adversaries may use this information and try to target the media's desire for early and quick reporting to erode public support for the war. Both the military and the media must take extreme care to ensure accurate reporting. There are times, too, when the military's interest in limiting information flows or embargoing information works against the media's interest in rapid coverage.

Risk and Reward

The media's coverage of military and national security issues is a

double-edged sword, but one that should be wielded carefully. The media can reach millions of viewers both in America and around the world. The military can take advantage of this reach and work with their media partners to inform the public about the military's mission and national interests. The military can provide published information, press releases, briefings and videos to spread a positive message. The military can also use media coverage to help provide context and expertise for images and soundbites.

But powerful media influence can also be used against the military and United States government. American adversaries are gaining proficiency at spreading false reports and misleading information to erode public support for the military and to even recruit new adversaries against the United States. Media reports may also place the military in an unfavorable light (recall the Rolling Stone article about General Stanley McChrystal) which can build fear and distrust among the military to share information with the media.

The military and media cannot afford to have a bad relationship. If the military refuses to work with the media, then stories and events about military units and American national interests will not reach the public. If the public is in the dark, the military risks losing popular support for their efforts. If the media refuses to work with the military, then they run the risk of being blocked from entering war zones and reporting on the events that the public want to learn about. American citizens deserve a healthy military-media relationship.

It's on the military to fix its relationship with the media

Amanda Cronkhite is a post-doctoral fellow in the Department of National Security and Strategy at the U.S. Army War College.

The media and military must have a good working relationship because the military is subservient to civilian elected government, and the media is how most citizens find out about military activities. From the basic perspective of democratic theory, the military

should want the public's buy-in on its actions. But there is skepticism on both sides: the military doesn't trust the media and vice versa. Ultimately, however, the onus is on the military to fix the relationship.

No military likes the press, but all need it

The US military's distaste for the press goes back to George Washington, who derided royalist press for not being patriotic and pro-independent news for giving away military secrets to the British. And this tension is not limited to the United States. In the world's largest democracy, India, a blogger recently complained: "The media no longer just reports an event. It acts as the judge, jury and executioner, investigating every aspect of disturbance through the superficial prism of law creating more nuisance for the forces," and called reporters "impatient and intrusive" in seeking exclusives.

Some of the military's distrust of the media stems from incidents of embedded journalists' breaking operational security (OPSEC) protocols. Media portrayals of military personnel lacking nuance also do not help. Cover-ups of missteps in the relationship, such as a Marine dying because a photojournalist wanted a better picture, while rare, have also damaged military trust of media. And unfortunately in 2019, political higher-ups further fuel generalized disdain of the media. President Trump, for example, said something in the news was fake over 400 times in 2017, for an average of more than once per day. In other words, at least once per day, in 2017.

But this military skepticism of the press flies in the face of decades of political science research that shows that news organizations largely follow politicians' and other elites' official accounts of matters. This is particularly true on foreign policy. In fact, media scholars even criticize the practice of embedding journalists with troops and other organizations because it may actually limit journalists' ability to investigate or criticize those organizations, presumably resulting in more positive stories than critical ones. Embedded reporters may be too

close to the story and miss important competing perspectives. In the 2003 Iraq war, for example, one report concluded that civilian deaths were acknowledged in half the articles by Baghdad-stationed reporters, 30 percent of articles by independent reporters, but only 12 percent of articles by embedded reporters. Military fears that the media are overly harsh on the military are inaccurate. In fact, the military has outsized influence over media coverage of it, especially in the past 15 years. But the distrust continues.

Different backgrounds and values

The different realities of military personnel and journalists makes it hard for them to understand or empathize with each other. Both work in the public interest, but the people who self-select into journalism are very different than the people who self-select into the military, as evidenced by demographics and surveys. And neither accurately reflects the American populace as a whole. The differences routed in this self-sorting is further compounded by the very different expected work speeds within the two professions:

"Get it first, but first get it right." –Journalism mantra

"Never believe a first report." – Military mantra

Other cultural differences abound. The military culturally works to plan for a war 30 years in the future. News is almost definitionally about the immediate past or near future. The military rewards secrecy and planning. Reporters value freedom of information and hate to be scooped.

Recommendations

So historical distrust combined with the realities of the 24/7 news cycle might explain the state of the military-media relationship in 2019. But it remains imperative to fix it, and most of the work is on the military side. Senior military leaders and their staffs need to better understand journalism as a profession. When rushing to meet a deadline and not wanting to run afoul of libel laws, it is much more expedient for journalists and media

outlets to report who, what, when and where than to report how or why. The how and why are much tougher to explain. Instead of lamenting supposedly bad coverage, military personnel would benefit from increased training in how to help journalists break down highly complex issues into digestible news stories for a public that does not know much about the military. A former military officer now teaching in Professional Military Education (PME) has argued for widely expanded military transparency, whilst concurrently encouraging journalists to draw their own conclusions, not spoon-feeding them artificial events. This approach means fewer dog-and-pony-shows showcasing the military's toys and more answering tough questions.

Most people will never meet a high-level politician, much less have a substantive policy conversation with him or her. And membership in the military is increasingly limited to the children of soldiers, making it less likely that someone outside that group might know any military member well. For that reason, the media is an essential conduit between the military and the public, and I fear the military does not value the media's role in that relationship enough. Distancing itself from the media—as the Pentagon did when it went more than one year without on-camera press briefings before finally holding a presser in September 2019—hurts the military and the public more than it hurts the media. The military needs to address that.

The military should not trust the media

Group Capt. Lionel Mandrake, USAWC's Resident Devil's Advocate

During the 1991 Gulf War, The Nation and other media entities brought suit against the military for restricting their First Amendment access. In the so-called televised war, the media wanted more access than press pools allowed. And the media argued that granting access to the military only to friendly entities constituted viewpoint discrimination, which would be a serious First Amendment violation.

Think about that: not only did the American media want more access to the military than it was already being given, but it wanted anti-American or anti-military outlets to be given expanded (unlimited?) access as well. That's not just a big ask. It's downright moronic.

The job of the military is to protect the nation. That sometimes—often, even—requires secrecy. National security professionals are accustomed to debating and disagreeing in private but sticking to the official line in public. Journalists often try to make public what the government, companies or other entities want to keep private. That tension means the military and the media disagree and distrust each other.

The Rolling Stone problem

Ask any military officer ranked above major what s/he thinks about the media and odds are they'll bring up "The Runaway General." The 2010 profile of General Stanley McChrystal led to his removal from command. He and his officers thought they were talking in confidence. The magazine stood by its story, arguing it had not included material that was clearly "off the record." That incident highlights the cultural paradox about these two institutions: is the default setting secrecy or is the default that anything said is fair game?

But Rolling Stone is just one recent example of the military and the media not getting along. William Tecumseh Sherman, the famous United States Army Civil War general, "hated" reporters, even saying, "If I had my choice, I would kill every reporter in the world, but I am sure we would be getting reports from Hell before breakfast." Even US presidents, including George Washington himself, were leery and critical of the media. In both Sherman's and Washington's cases, the media's inability to keep a secret—and the possibility of the enemy learning plans via the media—angered the generals.

Different goals & cultures

That fundamental difference in perspective about secrecy is the heart of the problem, but not the only one. Journalists and military personnel

also have very different personalities. One reporter with embedding experience said that journalists had more in common with diplomats than with military personnel: "It is not in their natures for the military and the media to be entirely comfortable with each other. The disciplines are too disparate. The military requires subservience of the individual to the needs of the group, while the media prize independent initiative above all else."

The military is also quite diverse, while journalism is not. In fact, journalism is less diverse than the US population as a whole and has been for decades. (For example, African Americans make up less than five percent of working journalists.) How can we in the military expect white, largely urban reporters with no combat experience to accurately portray us?

Further, even if the military and the media were to work past their differing views on secrecy and hierarchy and get past their different cultures and worldviews, their goals are unlikely to ever align in the future. The RAND Corporation wrote in 2009 that the military's goals are (1) not allowing coverage to compromise national security, (2) to fulfill the minimum legal obligation it had to allow press coverage, (3) to obtain good public relations, (4) to build military credibility, and (5) to support information operations. The media's goals are completely different: (1) to gain access while (2) maintaining reporter security, (3) to fulfill the public's right to know what the military does, (4) to build market share, (5) to maintain quality journalism, and (6) to build its credibility. How does the military build its credibility at the same time as journalists' building theirs? What increases market share for the media—scandal, for example—might hurt the credibility and standing of the military.

So is the media the enemy of the people? I can't speak to that, but perhaps the media is the enemy of the military. Many military personnel rightly worry that journalists will publish anything to get page clicks, regardless of whether it breaches security, undermines public support for military missions, or even causes casualties, as happened with Wikileaks. As

long as a story about a hospital accidentally being bombed is more likely to be covered than a story about the military building a hospital, the military is right to be wary of the press.

The US military and the media need to work together

Steven Tofte is a colonel in the U.S. Air Force and a graduate of the U.S. Army War College resident class of 2019.

The U.S. military has a friend in the media. In its role as honest-broker and watchdog, the American media has been responsible, fair and decent in its coverage and treatment of the U.S. military over the last three decades. Likewise, in its role as steward of the nation's blood and treasure in wartime, for the last eighteen years America's military has made itself available, open and inviting to media coverage and questioning. This relationship is a critical one in a democratic society. Neither side should abuse or manipulate the other or take for granted the trust the American public has placed in them. This level of mutual respect is not a given, as evident by the relationship the media and military maintain in other parts of the world. In the United States, the media-military two-way street must be paved with transparency, credibility and trust.

Within American society broadly, the idea of censorship is no more. It has been replaced by transparency. Unlike the World War II era, where censoring of military information was commonplace, the military no longer operates in an opaque information space. Modern technology has made this impossible. Camera phones and social media necessitate the military be proactive about public information and be willing to divulge information. Once able to easily keep information deemed "undesirable" or a "security risk" away from public consumption, technology has forced military leaders, both civilian and uniformed, to work with media as opposed against it. Working with media in a transparent and forthright manner has enabled military leadership to stay in the driver's seat on a number of issues in recent years, such as with the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and in covering the Kosovo

conflict, as opposed to being forced in the back and becoming an unwilling passenger, as was the case in the 1960s with the Mai Lai Massacre. Proactive transparency, whenever possible, must become the central ethos for military professionals.

Alongside transparency as a key ethos is credibility. Both parties must be credible – to each other and to the public. When the public loses faith in the credibility of reporters (think Brian Williams of NBC News) or military leaders (think General David Petraeus), everyone loses. A loss of credibility on either side can cause significant damage to the institutions they represent and to the relationship between the two. Take the case of Williams. The news anchor suffered personal disgrace, but it also affected NBC News, which suffered low ratings and had to regain its credibility with the American public. When Petraeus was exposed, it brought undesired light on not only himself, but brought unwanted questioning of how the military conducts its internal business and about the personal conduct of senior officers.

To prioritize transparency and build credibility, the final foundational requirement in the media-military relationship in a democracy is trust. In times of war, especially, the military trusting that the media will protect sensitive information such as troop levels, locations and movements, is critical to the free flow of information demanded by the American Republic. Likewise, the media trusting that the Pentagon, and its officials, will be truthful in their assessments of actions, activities and operations is extremely crucial in maintaining the necessary support of the people. The media and the military are both accountable to the public and serve the public interest. The public is best served by a media-military relationship based on transparency, credibility, and trust.

Legitimacy Matters

Edgar Arroyo is a colonel in the U.S. Army and a graduate of the U.S. Army War College resident class of 2019.

states, governments and policymakers must secure legitimacy to use military

power to achieve national strategic objectives. Embedding reporters with military units has been viewed as one way for reporters and the military to establish credibility and legitimacy in reporting military news to the public, but it brings with it several important challenges. Embedding journalists with soldiers may degrade reporters' ability to provide independent information and may actually lead to degrading the military's legitimacy in future conflicts. Second, inhospitable conditions of combat and reporters living in close quarters with service members can further challenge journalists' impartiality. In one review of the conflict in Iraq, media experts expressed concerns with censorship and the fact that proximity to troops taints journalist's objectivity. Further, declining support for the press suggests that the most reliable work done by journalists comes from working independently on stories and not from embedded reporting.

To maintain legitimacy, the military should take two critical steps with regard to the media. First, it should eliminate as many controls on the media as possible without compromising operational security. Second, it should increase access and, in some cases, provide security, to ensure stories are captured from all angles of a war.

A survey of reporters in Iraq suggested there were instances of the military placing restrictions on embedded reporters. The report further substantiated that the military tried and, in some cases, successfully spun the stories to just the positive news. Journalists said that they respected imposed restrictions on information for fear of being stonewalled or otherwise banned by military sources. Eliminating controls not directly related to maintaining operational security would allow reporters to present the stories of war to media consumers who are physically distant from the war. Realistic stories would allow citizens to fully evaluate a conflict's legitimacy. Independent reporting enables citizens to hold the government and military accountable.

Journalists were also concerned about the military's lack of openness when dealing with the media by staging

events or restricting interviews. For example, in operation Urgent Fury in Grenada, the media had no access to military engagements, which meant coverage lacked context. Stories without sufficient facts and contexts do a disservice to the American public.

Further, when the DOD controls access, parts of stories may be left out. For example, many US media stories lacked an Iraqi perspective and data on civilian casualties. What if, instead, the military were to facilitate access to reporting on these perspectives and stories? Facilitating access for a journalist to reach civilian perspective in war-torn countries, or even access to insurgents or enemy combatants may be challenging, but it would bolster the media-military relationship. Stories that include these other perspectives would allow readers to draw their own conclusions about the legitimacy of the conflict whether they want to support it or not. Presenting a greater variety of perspectives (for example more from Iraqi civilians) and stories might add another dimension to public discourse about the military and, therefore, also contribute to legitimacy.

The military views the containment of the media as a requirement for force protection and information security. Commanders on the ground have historically restricted the media in many ways but eliminating or reducing controls and increasing access to the media bolster legitimacy, present the reality of war for citizens to hold policymakers accountable, and improve the military-media relationship. This new approach might be counter intuitive, but it could help synergize the information and military instruments of national power.

Critical Media Coverage, Policy, and the Human Connection

Carl Hennemann is a colonel in the U.S. Army and a graduate of the U.S. Army War College resident class of 2019.

How does the press treat the military? The answer might depend on whether you're talking about the media's treatment of the military as an institution or its treatment of men and women

who serve in uniform. This distinction matters as we assess the apparent recent deterioration in the relationship between the media and the military and consider how to mend it.

The damage to the institutional relationship began in earnest with the Rolling Stone article about General Stanley McChrystal's staff's discontent with the Obama administration. Then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates responded by placing additional restrictions on senior leader media engagements. Military personnel have also been shown to self-censor significantly, and it feels like that tendency has increased in the age of policy-by-Tweet, with even Army-commissioned studies being deemed too controversial to publish once finished. Although the relationship has suffered it can be salvaged through more emphasis on other aspects of the media-military relationship that promotes access through human connections.

While high-level media-military relationships appear strained, at lower levels a productive relationship remains in place as close relationships are formed. One key aspect of the media-military relationship is the bonding aspect or psychological condition of becoming part of a tribe. As the New York Times military correspondent, Helene Cooper, explains:

"I love checking out all the toys the American military has. I've flown for hours in the co-pilot seat of a B-1 bomber...I've done the catapult take-off and abrupt landing on an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf. I've been in Apache, Black Hawk and Chinook helicopters over Baghdad, Kabul and the DMZ, on the border of North and South Korea. I've been on an American naval destroyer in the South China Sea while it was being shadowed by the Chinese. That part of the job is just pure fun."

NPR Pentagon correspondent, Tom Bowman points out that reporters actively build human connections with those in the military to gain access, and therefore, more background on a story. He explains that connections encourage empathy from both sides and cultivate a willingness to share more information. Bowman

suggests that he likes to "sit around a camp fire with soldiers, sharing cigars, chips and dips, as a way to build trust, find connections and overcome suspicions of the press." This cozy relationship comes at a cost, though, as some claim embedded reporters are too close to their sources and are effectively producing propaganda. But when possible, the military should grant wide access to journalists to cover stories that will increase insight and transparency into the military.

The military has already made some moves in this direction, prioritizing access rather than constraining media coverage under the guise of safety, or operational security. The military's media strategy has evolved from one of controlling access through contained press pools to one that allows journalists access to high-ranking officers. Sociologist Paul Joseph argued that shifting to more human stories versus coverage of policy has been a successful strategy for the Pentagon. With this in mind, military leaders should also grant access to human interest stories that intersect with policy coverage.

If there are benefits to coverage of positive stories, such as stories showing a coalition nurse treating a small Venezuelan child on the hospital ship USNS Comfort, then must the military also allow access for more critical stories? Yes. The military must grant access to reporters covering negative stories as well. The media and the military have grown to understand each other's role through human connections that are mutually beneficial to both parties. Emphasizing these connections will allow them to develop an approach that improves the relationship despite the recent challenges.

The Military and the Media: it's complicated

Steve Yarber is a chaplain and a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army and a graduate of the U.S. Army War College resident class of 2019.

The relationship between the military and the press is complicated and based on competing interests, although both center on the idea of providing a public good. The media serves the public's



The military could enhance communication and trust by being as transparent as legitimate national security interests will allow. The media could enhance their standing with the military by being honest about their intentions and working with the government to keep legitimate national security information secret.



need to know and the military protects the public interest. But this tension sometimes means the military and the media's relationship is one of fractured wariness. Neither side fully trusts the other but each must find ways to coexist.

The military and the media have trust issues learned over the years. The American war in Vietnam was particularly trying. The Pentagon Papers are emblematic of this breach. Journalists published information about American involvement in Vietnam, going back to the Truman administration, that the government deemed classified. The Pentagon Papers' revelation added fuel to the growing anti-war movement and increased pressure on the Nixon administration to end the war in Vietnam. The media felt an obligation to inform the American public about what it understood to be lies and malfeasance. The military felt the publication endangered national security and military and government secrets.

At tactical and operational levels as well, the military sometimes believed the media framed stories incorrectly. For example, the military bristled at the Morley Safer report on the burning of Cam Ne. The military claimed Safer's story lacked context, that the village had a history as refuge for Viet Cong. Safer, though, reported what he saw, which seemed to be violation of American values by Marines for no good reason. The resulting story damaged American public perception of the military at home and reinforced the idea that the military was out of control. CBS reached out to the White House and the Pentagon for comment, but, according to Safer, the government merely denied the report despite the existence of film. The government missed an opportunity to provide

context to the report, resulting in mutual mistrust.

Healthy relationships require two-way communication. Following the Cam Ne coverage, effective communication could have provided background and enhanced the reporter's understanding of what he might see as he accompanied Marines on patrol. Perhaps the reporter was right to be concerned—the question (in this case) is not whether or not burning the village was a good tactic, but rather the implications of poor communication and understanding. The report damaged the military's reputation. The military's urge to deflect and restrict access information undermined any defense it might offer. The press then complains of censorship and demands access be restored. The result is a vicious cycle in which each side accuses the other of unfair practices.

The press values transparency and independence. Journalists believe they can accurately frame events without the military or government's help. Freedom of the press is the media's primary concern. The military, on the other hand, wants to frame stories to cast itself in the best light possible and to protect information it believes might be harmful to the nation if released. Neither side is motivated by animus, and both have legitimate concerns.

So what is the solution? The military and the press need a healthy, balanced relationship. Freedom of the press and democracy work best when the two entities work in concert with each other. How do they learn to trust each other and communicate in mutually beneficial ways? How can two entities which seemingly have nothing in common learn to work together?

Embedding reporters may be one fruitful approach, provided the journalist and the unit attempt to understand the role of the other. The embedded journalist has been sent to the unit by the editor with a purpose in mind. Most news entities in the United States are subject to the market. Research shows that people are more likely to watch flashy, easy-to-understand stories, which makes those also more likely to be produced by media personnel. That dynamic does not lend itself to telling complex narratives; but rather toward human interest stories and other kinds of soft news.

The embedded reporter must, in turn, understand the unit's mission. There should be a balance between the public's right to know and legitimate national security concerns, but embedding may give journalists the best opportunity to understand this delicate balance. Embedding reporters is not a silver bullet, but a more robust program could go a long way in bridging the gap in understanding by enhancing trust and communication. The military could enhance communication and trust by being as transparent as legitimate national security interests will allow. The media could enhance their standing with the military by being honest about their intentions and working with the government to keep legitimate national security information secret.

The press and the military are in a relationship whether they want to be or not. The American public deserves a free press and a strong, accountable military. They must coexist.

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Battle Ready for the 21st Century



वज्र

Edited by
AK Singh • Narender Kumar



**Battle Ready for the
21st Century- Edited by
Lieutenant General A
K Singh, PVSM, AVSM,
SM, VSM and Brigadier
Narender Kumar, SM, VSM**

**Book Review by Major General PK
Chakravorty (Retd)**

**Centre for Land
Warfare Studies
(CLAWS) and
Pentagon Press
LLP, 2021, 284
pages, INR 995/**

The book deals comprehensively with all aspects of combat as applicable to the Indian environment in the 21st century. It is important to quote Admiral Arun Prakash, former Chief of Naval Staff, who in the Foreword states, "By compiling and editing the valuable collection of essays the Editors have rendered yeoman service to the cause of India's national security. The book has 15 chapters which deal with various aspects of Battle and the capabilities to be developed by the Armed Forces in this century.

The opening chapter deals with the notion of victory. It covers all aspects of victory starting from the tactical level onwards to the operational level and finally at the strategic level. The next aspect it touches upon is the end state and onwards to global contemporary conflicts. Here in Operations Desert Storm (1991), Iraqi Freedom (2003), Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), Syrian conflict and Israel's mowing the lawn strategic doctrine has been explained. It would be interesting if these would have been compared with the surrender of Japan after the use of nuclear weapons at Hiroshima and Nagasaki were discussed. Thereafter the Indian context has been analysed right up to the surgical strikes. Finally the aspect of Calibrating victory in the Indian context is discussed. With China the potential exists from a flare up to a confrontation whereas with

Pakistan it would be a punitive response which may escalate into an all-out war. In the case of China there is a need to build a credible deterrence and if required a quid pro quo in selected areas. Rightly summarised there is a need to rethink victory in the current century.

The next chapter deals with dynamic military strategy. The need for a dynamic military strategy has been justified due to the peculiar nature of threats which India faces. Accordingly there is a need to cater for a dynamic military strategy that caters for a wide spectrum of future conflicts ranging from conventional to sub-conventional conflicts and multi-space domains. The military strategy for conventional conflict ideally should be based on Dissuade, Deter, Deny and Defeat. In the case of Hybrid and sub-conventional conflicts the strategy should be Disrupt, Degrade and Defeat. This calls for the Indian Army to be capable of fighting a New Generation Warfare with kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities. Undoubtedly there is a need to maintain a second strike capability in nuclear deterrence. A point to ponder with Pakistan and China having second strike capability how it impacts our nuclear strategy.

Grey zone conflict has been comprehensively tackled in chapter 4. There are four main principles of fighting

this ambiguous conflict. The aspects of tackling primarily involve identification and application of Government and civilian tools. The other aspect is to build capabilities in multi domain warfare. The next chapter deals with Technological Impact. It focuses on Data, Quantum, Robotics and Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) swarms. Technology would lead us gradually to less of open confrontation thereby transforming the character of war. Chapter 6 deals with Cross Domain Synergy in future combat. The aspect of a force being capable of operating effectively in land, sea, air, cyber and space is a must for conflicts of the future. Future wars would be in multiple domains and jointness would play an important role. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) would play an important role with the Theatre Commands. Cross domain synergy is imperative for the Indian Armed Forces. The subsequent chapter deals with crisis management and Escalation control. This is an extremely well researched paper and gives details of Herman Kahn's seminal work on Escalation. Kahn's escalation ladder has 16 steps starting from crisis and thereafter the entire matrix. The chapter thereafter deals with two events, the Kargil war and Balakot. The nuance of these events where escalation was controlled against a nuclear backdrop is brought out simplistically.

Reimagining mountain warfare is dealt with in Chapter 8. The chapter justifies the reasons to fight an Asymmetric war in the mountains. The need for accurate intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance would be the key to fight operations intelligently by suitably placing troops in areas where he is likely to address. Further use of kinetic and non-kinetic weaponry would be extremely important. Our defences must be hardened to make them indestructible against Precision Guided Munitions (PGMs). Logistics will be primarily based on the aerial route to include drones and other means. Leadership would need a directive style with minimum orders and ability to function fully delegated operations without communications.

Urban warfare is an interesting aspect covered in Chapter 9. As aptly described it is a nightmare for a soldier to fight in urban terrain. The chapter comprehensively covers the subtleties of these operations after deep research of combat in Grozny, Mogadishu, Baghdad, Fallujah, Mosul and Aleppo. The major aspects are the following:-

- Intelligence Preparation of the Battle and identification of the centre of Gravity.

- Employment of intelligence resources and weapon systems.
- Technology enabled operations to include information, cyber, AI and Air Dominance.
- Operations planned centrally and executed in a directive style on a mission mode.

Mechanised forces must isolate the objective. Decimate the objective by PGMs and Drones. Thereafter based on the terrain undertake assault by armour or ground troops. The chapter covers aspects undertaken by the Indian Army in Counter Terrorism Operations. Rightly stated Urban warfare in an Information Age requires Transformation; a change in mind set at the political, strategic and tactical levels. Operations in this mode are manpower intensive. Chapter 10 deals with the Maritime Domain. Analysis reveals that by 2030 challenges at sea are bound to escalate. An emergent collusion between a more capable Pakistan Navy and Chinese Navy with more resident capacities in the Indian Ocean Region will raise the bargaining stakes for China and embolden Pakistan to pursue Asymmetric warfare with greater vigour. There is a need to build a strong Navy for better maritime security. The next chapter deals with relevance of Aerospace Power. It has been emphatically stated that we need an optimum force structure of 30-32 squadrons against the current holding of 28 squadrons and the need for an Aerospace Command. Chapter 12 deals with the two front dilemma which is a difficult task to execute for the Armed Forces. However, contingency plans need to exist for the same. The Central Armed Police must be modernised to handle the Counter Terrorism operations.

The remaining part of the book analyses aspects pertaining to intelligence, Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Cyber, Information & Psychological operations and Disruptive strategies which deals with aspects of Smart Power.

Overall, the book is extremely well researched and must be read by officers in the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, Indian Armed Forces and Analysts in the strategic field.

Major General (Dr.) P K Chakravorty, VSM, retired is a senior fellow (veteran) at CLAWS.





Indian ASAT – Part of a Global Arms Race Triggered by US Actions?

Anti-Satellite Systems (ASAT) are modified Anti-Ballistic Missiles, the latter which knock out incoming nuclear tipped missiles. After the US withdrew from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty in June 2002 – apart from several other arms and nuclear control pacts – Russia and China began developing their own ABMs, strategic and tactical missiles, and lastly ASAT systems. Experts say the Indian ASAT is a result of this larger global arms race.

by Parth Satam

today's interconnected world does not prevent ripple effects of military strategic developments in region or country to the other. The Indian ASAT test of March 27, 2019, although backed by strong institutionalized foundations of non-weaponisation of space – as announced by PM Narendra Modi in his subsequent national address following the launch – is no exception. It is not a standalone development and is a part of a chain reaction in a world that is seeing a return to 'Great Power Contest'. It is therefore important to trace the genesis of the test to its foreign origins that spur nations to develop these capabilities in retaliation to acquisition of such by their adversaries, threatening another destructive

conflict in this age of a 'second cold war'.

The origin here was the US withdrawal from the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Defence (ABM) Treaty on December 13, 2001 that triggered a second arms race because of the acceleration it affected in Russian, Chinese and eventually Indian missile programmes. This also isn't the first time the US has pulled out of treaties meant to prevent arms races and nuclear buildups, touched upon towards the end of this piece.

Impact of the US Withdrawal from the ABM Treaty on Russia, China & India-Pakistan

realizing the never-ending technological ripostes it would trigger in countries developing advanced delivery systems (missiles) to foil the BMD in an escalatory arms race, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABMT) was signed by the US President Richard Nixon and the leader of the erstwhile Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev, at the height of the cold war on May 26, 1972.

US displeasure with the ABMT had begun showing within a decade itself, when it's President Ronald Reagan officially announced the highly criticized Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) in a televised address on March 23, 1983. The SDI, that required US scientists to primarily develop directed energy weapons like lasers and plasma beams

along with ground-based missile interceptors, shockingly also fancied space-based chemical lasers and missile interceptors housed in orbital modules. Democratic senator Ted Kennedy had described it as a “reckless star wars scheme.” Then Russian premier Yuri Andropov, after the Reagan address said, “it is time (Washington) stopped thinking up one option after another in search of the best way of unleashing nuclear war in the hope of winning it. To do this is not just irresponsible. It is madness.” The strategic community has long perceived the SDI as a precursor to the withdrawal from the ABMT.

Fast forward to September 11, 2001 when Al-Qaeda brought down the Twin Towers in New York. Interestingly, the “rogue non-state actors” – cited extensively by the President George W. Bush administration to pull out from the ABMT – were American creations themselves, and the military interventions to kill them spiralled the Af-Pak and Middle Eastern regions into utter chaos. The radical Islamic outfits were funded by the US and trained with Pakistani support in a celebrated and officially acknowledged CIA operation. Driven to give Russia its “own Vietnam,” the US directed them against the reluctant Soviet intervention on behalf of the secular government in Afghanistan.

Russia

On December 13, 2001, Bush announced his exit from the treaty, six months before the formal departure in June 2002, as per law. “I have concluded that the ABM Treaty hinders our government’s ways to protect from future terrorist or rogue state missile attacks,” Bush had said in a press conference. He had also called the ABMT a “Cold War era relic” that was “signed in a by the US and the Soviet Union at a much different time, in a vastly different world (where)...one of the signatories, the Soviet Union, no longer exists.”

He again pointed to non-state actors as the singular threat. “As the events of Sept. 11 made all too clear, the greatest threats to both our countries come not from each other...but from terrorists or rogue states who seek weapons of mass destruction. And we must have the freedom to develop effective defenses against those attacks.”

The Russians did not express outright outrage and stopped at cautionary warnings of an ensuing arms race, since President Vladimir Putin was seeking warmer ties with the US then. Reiterating the Russian position that the ABMT was a “cornerstone of world security”, he said the decision to withdraw was an “erroneous one”. The then head of Russia’s armed forces, General Anatoly Kvashnin, said the pullout “will alter the nature of the international strategic balance in freeing the hands of a series of countries to restart an arms buildup.”

The Russian themselves later responded by withdrawing from the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty-II (START-II), that restricted the use of Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and Multiple Independent Reentry Vehicles (MIRV). Come March 2, 2018, Putin had directly blamed the US abrogation of the ABMT for the rapid weaponisation between their militaries. “The arms race started when the US withdrew from the ABM Treaty,” Putin told NBC News.

On February 21 this year, Putin, in retaliation to the US fielding new missiles in Europe, angrily lashed out at the US in a national address, threatening to field his own missiles. Calling the threat serious since the missiles could reach Moscow in “only 10-12 minutes”, he said the Russian response will be “asymmetrical” where its missiles too can reach both the sites and the “decision-making centers” just as quickly, without naming the US.

Putin was speaking in context of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty from which the US withdrew on February 2 this year, on grounds of alleged Russian violation, a charge consistently denied by Moscow. Russia has maintained that the US accusations were a mere ploy to abandon the pact, to free its hands to develop new weapons. He said, “Americans should have honestly said it instead of making unfounded accusations against Russia to justify their withdrawal,” Putin said.

The weapons Putin was threatening the US with are a series of groundbreaking missiles that have taken both the international strategic community by storm.

They were the Avangard (a Hypersonic glide vehicle), Kh-47M2 Kinzhal (a nuclear capable Air Launched Ballistic Missile), the Burevestnik (a nuclear-powered nuclear-tipped missile with nearly unlimited range) and the 3M22 Zircon (a hypersonic anti-ship cruise missile). Of these, the Avangard and Kinzhal are staggeringly maneuverable at every stage in flight, capable of defeating any known BMD system.

And it is this, according to Lt Gen Prakash Menon (Retd) that exposes the invincibility of Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) systems which can “always be breached.” Menon is a former Military Adviser and Secretary to the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), and author of the book ‘The Strategy Trap: India and Pakistan under the Nuclear Shadow’.

“The attacker always has the advantage since he can find a number to bypass your BMD,” he adds. Besides, BMDs also nullify fundamental concept of ‘nuclear deterrence’, where the mere possession of nuclear weapons itself forces two countries to never use them first, since a retaliation will cause the user to take equal destruction. “It defies the premise that you are mutually vulnerable,” Menon added.

China

China notably departed from its vociferous (and often emotive) stance against weaponisation of space, when its December 2006 defense white paper had no mention of its opposition to a space arms race. In its 2004 and 2003 papers, it was going so far as to call for multilateral legally binding agreements to prevent putting weapons in space.

A May 9, 2007 Jamestown Foundation report attributed the sudden Chinese shift to “response to US government and military statements advocating the development of space weapons. Chinese strategists may believe that the United States...will eventually develop them (space weapons) regardless of Chinese actions, and that they must...create a deterrent against the US.”

The Pentagon itself had announced in December 2002 that the United States would continue the “development and



ABM Treaty between the US & USSR; File Photo

testing of space-based defenses, specifically space-based kinetic energy (hit-to-kill) interceptors and advanced target tracking satellites." sha zhukang, who had served as China's Ambassador on Disarmament Affairs, had criticized the US for "disrupting the balance" for global security and classified its actions as "hegemonistic", in reference to its withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. Hui zhang, an author on armscontrol.org, said in an article that the US withdrawal from the ABM Treaty gave it a "free hand to move forward with missile defenses, and space-based missile defenses."

However, two important US military announcements in 2001 and 2004 directly moved the Chinese to develop an ASAT programme – which was successfully tested in 2007. In August 2004, the US Air Force proposed "counterspace operations", "space superiority" and "freedom to attack and freedom from attack" in space, in its Air Force Doctrine document. Prior to that in January 2001, a US space commission headed by its former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld, recommended, "The US government to vigorously pursue capabilities called for in the National Space Policy to ensure that the President (can) deploy weapons in space to deter threats, and, if necessary, defend against attacks on US interests."

India, Pakistan & Space War Dynamics

In an interview to India Today magazine in April 2012, Dr VK Saraswat, who was the then DRDO chief, said that India had "all the building blocks for an

anti-satellite system in place." clearly, the Indian decision to develop ASAT was a counter to the Chinese capability, given their long running strategic rivalry, despite the Chinese ASAT being primarily aimed against the US. While an arms race being triggered by the US actions is just one part, India not declaring a No-First Use (NFU) in space as well is another, according to Menon. "War in space would inevitably be linked to war on earth and thus India must act as a responsible space power by announcing a policy that reduces the possibility of a space war," he said.

The Indian ASAT will also have very little impact on Pakistan, which cannot imitate the system since it neither has neither a BMD capability, nor a space programme. "Neither does it actually threaten anybody else since hitting just one satellite does not take down a country's entire space surveillance system, as there is a whole constellation of satellites for that role. The kind of kinetic energy capability needed to achieve this would be colossal. India should therefore develop 'soft-kill' and Directed Energy Weapons (DEW) like lasers etc. where you neutralize the technical capability of the satellite and not break it up by hitting it. The Indian ASAT until then remains technology demonstrator," Menon explains.

But Menon believes the Indian ASAT to be an eventual consequence of the ABMT abrogation which he calls as a "turning point". "The action of one country triggers a reaction by its adversary, setting off a chain reaction and thus there is more than a casual link here," he said. Prof Arun Vishwanath, who heads the Department of Security

studies in the Central University of Gujarat agrees. "China and Russia obviously began developing their Hypersonic glide vehicles after the US walked out of the ABMT. The Western world says an arms race or a possible nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan are an isolation but it is not so. It is always a part of a larger global competition that triggers actions from allies and their adversaries," he said.

"The Indian ASAT test has to be seen in today's context where great powers are forced into weapons technology races when their rivals are leading. China's eventual decision to conduct both ASAT and BMD tests are a result of this trend," said A. Vinod Kumar, Associate Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). "The Indian ASAT test therefore might not be a direct linear effect of the Chinese actions but is the result of a larger security dilemma where it comes up with technological counters to an adversary," he added.

What Does ASAT have to do with BMD? They are the same Missiles!

ASAT systems are primarily modified Anti-Ballistic Missile interceptors, where the same missile used to hit an incoming ballistic missile – usually a nuclear tipped one – before it hits land, is tweaked to reach outer space and knock out a satellite. So obviously, the ABM system was invented first, during the Cold War by the US and the Soviet Union. ASATs themselves came to be developed by both the Soviet Union (or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics – USSR) and the US as early as the 1950s, as both anticipated the other to strike from space.

It was the USSR to get the lead with its 'co-orbital' weapon, involving a UR-200 rocket that approaches a target overtime and explodes close to it with shrapnel, tearing through the satellite's soft body, according to a paper by the 'Union of Concerned Scientists'. The paper added that the USSR declared the system operational after conducting a series of seven tests – including five interceptor detonations – between 1963 to 1971.

After the Russian successes, the US began developing and successfully

tested the vought ASM-135 ASAT system on september 13, 1985 where a modified AGM-69 air to surface missile struck a solwind P78-1 satellite. The missile itself was launched from a modified F-15 Eagle, from a height of 38, 100 feet. The point here being that the AGM-69 was nuclear capable, able to carry an atomic warhead. Similarly, the January 11, 2007 Chinese ASAT test also used a modified DF-21 Medium Range Ballistic Missile (MRBM), called the SC-19. It had hit the chinese FY-1C polar weather satellite at an altitude of 865 kilometers. Like India, China too followed up with a statement stressing its commitment to “peaceful use of space, opposing (space) weapons (proliferation),” and assuring that the test “did not constitute a threat to any country.”

This was followed by the February 20, 2008 American ASAT test where a standard missile-3 (SM-3) was launched from an US Navy Aegis destroyer to take out the USA-193 reconnaissance satellite, that the Americans said was decaying and threatened earth with the toxic hydrazine fuel on board. The missile used, SM-3, is a ship-based missile system used to intercept short and medium range ballistic missiles. Russia too later conducted a series of successful flight tests of its PL-19 Nudol, an anti-ballistic-cum ASAT missile on 18 November 2015, May 2016, December 2016, 26 March 2018 and 23 December 2018.

The Indian missile that hit the Microsat-R satellite on May 27, 2019 (Mission Shakti) too was a Ballistic Missile Defence Interceptor, which India had tested multiple times a few years before as a part of its BMD shield project. The purpose of this section is to highlight the overlap between ABMD and ASAT systems, and that ASATs are a direct evolutionary offshoot of the ABM missile. And it is in this context (of the American withdrawal from the ABMD in 2001) that the development in Russian, Chinese and eventually the Indian ASATs should be studied.

US Hegemony?

This is also not the first time the US has walked out of pacts meant to check conventional and nuclear arms build-ups. Since 1996, the US has failed to



The anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) from 'Mission Shakti' during the Republic Day; File Photo

ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and more recently, has expressed reluctance to renew the 2010 New Start Agreement while pulling out of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The New Start Treaty signed between former US and Russian Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev requires cutting their strategic warheads to 1550.

Due to expire in 2021 and extendable by another five years, the US has been accused of procrastinating and refusing its renewal, while demanding the participation of China. Interestingly, China has an unambiguous and explicit No-First Use (NFU) policy, possesses not more than around 300 warheads and is known to keep the warheads separate from its delivery systems.

On February 2, 2019, the US announced its pullout from the INF Treaty that prohibited missiles with ranges between 500 and 5,500 kilometers. While the US points to the Russian 9M729 cruise missile that allegedly violates the treaty, Russia consistently cites the US missile defence systems in Europe that can be repurposed for offensive use. A year prior, the US under President

Donald Trump exited from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Agreement (JCPOA) – or simply the Iran Nuclear Deal – despite no evidence of Iranian nuclear buildups or uranium enrichment, as per multiple studies by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

The more recent has been the exit from the Open Skies Treaty with Russia on May 21, 2020 which coming amidst a time when the world is grappling with the coronavirus pandemic, further jeopardizes a tenuous global stability. The treaty allowed for official surveillance flights by each other's air forces over either one's military bases to observe possible military mobilizations.

Mohan Guruswamy, of the Center for Policy Alternatives, while denying any effect of the ABM Treaty on the Indian ASAT test, however blamed the “powerful US military industrial complex (MIC) for guiding their foreign and military policy in a way which will keep their arms manufacturers in business.” “Thus their pullout from treaties that keeps raising the need for new weapons,” he said.



Parth Satam

Parth Satam is a Principal Correspondent with Fauji India magazine. With his tenure in The Asian Age and Mid-Day, he has covered India's security and military establishment for a decade. He maintains a keen interest in defence, aerospace and foreign affairs. (This article is an updated version of the one published in Fauji India magazine's May 2019 issue. The author can be reached on Emails: satamp@gmail.com, faujimagazine@gmail.com, Twitter: [@ParthSatam](https://twitter.com/ParthSatam))



'INS Karanj is the Best Submarine & Crew in the World'

The Commanding Officer of INS Karanj Captain Gaurav Mehta sheds the light on its construction, the crew, and the life of a submariner in detail.

by Priyanka Chandani

As India celebrates 50 years of the 1971 India-Pakistan war over the liberation of East-Pakistan that resulted in the formation of Bangladesh, the Indian Navy which played a crucial role in winning the war, recently inducted the third scorpene class submarine INS Karanj. The name embodies the spirit of the erstwhile INS Karanj (S21), a Foxtrot class submarine which was first commissioned in 1969 in the Indian Navy under Project 641.

The erstwhile INS Karanj was purchased from the former Soviet Union, and served the Indian Navy until 2003, playing a pivotal role in 1971 war. In order to boost the Indian Navy's capabilities to further India's maritime interest in deterring the enemy, conducting intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) missions and to provide a decisive blow in times of crisis, the new INS Karanj under the

Project-75 was commissioned on 10 March 2021 in Mumbai through a formal ceremony.

The third scorpene class submarine – a diesel-electric attack submarine developed by French and Spanish maritime companies – INS Karanj, is the first submarine to be completely built in India at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) Mumbai. It is touted to be one of the most advanced conventional submarines in the world. It boasts some of the most advanced global technologies and is equipped with potent weapons and some of the best sensors in the world to neutralise any threat above or below the sea surface, making it the stealthier and deadlier submarine.

The submarine is built under the vision of India's Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (self-reliant India campaign). The commanding officer (CO) of INS

Karanj Captain Gaurav Mehta sheds light on its construction, the crew, and the life of a submariner in detail.

Excerpts from the interview...

Q: Please tell us about the indigenous factor of INS Karanj?

Ans: INS Karanj is the third boat in the series of six scorpene boats which is truly indigenous. The first two boats were built under the supervision of the French overseeing team. The P-75 contract said the technology needs to be transferred from France to India in such a manner that we can make these boats on our own. So, the first two boats, Kalvari and Khandari were the process of this transfer of technology (TOT). The Indian yard learnt the process by the French team and Karanj is the first team where there was no overseeing team, so this boat is built

in India by MDL and by our designing team.

The process of technology transfer has been done with this boat. The training part too was done by Indian Navy's submarine training team and dived down successfully. We can say that we have achieved the transfer of technology not just in the construction part but by imparting the training and we have come out better than before.

Q: How does INS Karanj stand out among Kalvari and Khanderi?

Ans: The submarine construction is extremely complicated even when you have done the building part there are challenges that you have to deal with. The first boat is always, even if it is built with the proven designs, it is an experiment. There are many lessons we have learnt from the first boat and applied them on the second boat. In this regard INS Karanj has come out extraordinarily strong as we had two boats in the past to learn our lessons from and make this one the best among all.

Also, when a boat is taken by the Navy the yard still has some liability but in case of Karanj the liabilities are too less. Moreover, India has been operating submarines since 1967 and it's been over 50 years since we have been operating submarines of different classes and from different countries.

Our first pioneers got trained in the UK, and then we got Russian submarines, then German and then French. There is a process of how other countries look at submarines and we have taken all the viewpoints such as SOPs, ergonomics, habitability, and safety. We have incorporated everything in Karanj. It comes with the guarantee that this is the best boat and crew in the world.

Q: What will be the role of INS Karanj?

Ans: We call it sea denial and sea control, which means when we put a submarine in a certain area then the enemy will not use that space and if it does then it has to bear the consequences, so we can deny the enemy. Another role is intelligence gathering. You want to know something, when you want to

lay mines or launch marine commandos or you want to defend yourself as well. You can keep it at enemy coast or at your coast for the defensive role. When the situation arises, the submarines are given different roles and all of them are capable of doing all the roles.

Q: How do you prepare your team and yourself mentally and physically to stay in unusual environments?

Ans: Submariners are an incredibly special breed of human being and I say this with full conviction. On board these vessels everything is a challenge. When you have dived you are in restriction to everything - air, water, light everything is rationed. We take a bath in four days and there is no sunlight. When you go through the process of this training you come out as a

highly motivated, and my job only is to ensure that they get what they have joined the submariner job for.

We don't have any other branch to do our job, we have to do everything by ourselves. We don't wear our ranks inside the sub, so we all are in the same uniform which makes a lot of difference. The pride is remarkably high in being submariners, and we spend a lot of time on training. I have spent a lot of time on surface and frontline ships as well. As Sam Manekshaw said, 'The best welfare you can give to your men is to train them.' We take pride in that. When they are on their professional job, they don't mind doing anything on their own.

Q: What is the mental make-up of a submariner?



Vice Adm Narayan Prasad, Retd, CMD of Mazagon Dock limited handing over a memento to Adm Karambir Singh, CNS inside the Submarine

balanced person and prepared to be in any environment.

Q: How do you keep your team motivated?

Ans: My task becomes quite easy because the entire crew coming for the submarine are volunteers. They join Indian Navy, serve on surface vessels and there are few officers who want to move ahead and brave new challenges by doing something adventurous. The job in submarines comes with higher perks as well. So, the crew is

Ans: I am yet to find weak hearted or who give up soon. Generally, submariners are strong willed and motivated. There are exceptions as well but they themselves opt out. Submariners have very tough mental make-up. Once we enter, we start enjoying it.

Q: What are the situations as a submariner you would address challenging?

Ans: I would say every day, and everything is a challenge when I am at sea. Submarines are extremely complicated



The Chief Guest Admiral VS Shekhawat, former Chief of the Naval Staff unveiling the commissioning plaque in company of the Commanding Officer Captain Gaurav Mehta, Adm Karambir Singh, CNS and other dignitaries

and there is some or the other challenge every day. At times the engines don't start, or the batteries are not working. But when you see these challenges the normal challenges become nothing. If there is any emergency, then my first reaction is to bring the crew above the water and in that situation the sub is like a ship. what is the normal state for a ship, for submarines is the worst state. Emergency of a ship is a recovered state for a submarine.

Q: How do you keep yourself and the crew engaged and entertained out of watch hours?

Ans: Yes, I have to keep my crew engaged. At times we are just asked to go and wait, and, in such situations, I have to keep them engaged. submarine is like sitting in a regular ambush for four weeks. we have schedules for watch. when one is on watch the other two are on recuperation and defect rectification. During the recuperation time we play games, read, or watch some movies. we carry card and indoor games. we keep on doing cooking and drawing competitions. You have to be very imaginative, and we encourage the crew to be creative. There are gifts

as well for the winner and that can be anything from souvenirs to even a day off from the watch that also is a gift.

Q: Any long term psychological or physical issues a submariner is likely to have?

Ans: It only makes you stronger. Yes, there are some negative impacts as the crew at times develops back issues because the space is confined, and you have to bend frequently. But when we are out, we mostly focus on our fitness.

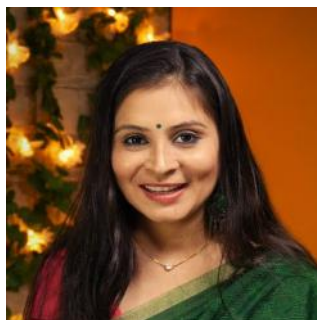
Q: How do the family members of the submariners' cope with the job?

Ans: They are the strongest people I would say.

Q: How has been the experience on-board Karanj?

Ans: It has been like raising a child. when you have a child and you think that he will never fall sick, it will be a fallacy, so there have been challenges and we as submariners have ensured that this child has grown into a formidable warrior and it can take any challenges.

(Views expressed are the authors and respondent's own and do not reflect the editorial policy of Mission Victory India)



Priyanka Chandani

Feature's writer and editor, Priyanka Chandani is a journalist with over a decade of mainstream media experience having worked in Hindustan Times, Deccan Chronicle, Asian Age and the Free Press Journal. Presently Principal Correspondent at the 'New Indian Express' she is an ardent writer who intends to venture into writing about military affairs especially for human interest stories pertaining to troop welfare. The author can be reached on email; priyankaonreport@gmail.com.

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INS Karanj & Why the Indian Submarine Building Capability will be Again Lost

by Joseph P Chacko

INS Karanj, the 3rd of the P 75 submarine building project of the Indian Navy (IN), capable of launching special forces, was commissioned on 10 March in a ceremony at the Naval Dockyard, Mumbai. During the commissioning, the focus was on the 'made in India' components of the submarine. Six scorpene class submarines are being built in India by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) Mumbai, under the collaboration and transfer of technology (ToT) with Naval Group (formerly DCN, then DCNS), France.

As per the Indian Navy, some components of the submarine were imported in consonance with the contract, but the submarine was entirely constructed by Indians. During the making of the first two submarines, INS Kalvari and INS Khanderi, the construction was done by MDL under the supervision of the Advising team from the French side. The entire labour and planning were from MDL. INS Karanj was built and commissioned entirely

by MDL with the participation of IN and the industry.

Another aspect of the Indian content was the training of the crew of INS Karanj, which was done in India. As per the contract, the first two sets of crews were to be trained in France and they will form the backbone of training of the future crews in India. This was also achieved.

But there was Naval Group participation during the building of INS Karanj and will continue till the last of the submarine is delivered. The Naval Group is ultimately responsible for building the submarine up to the contracted specification of the IN. For INS Karanj, the design and the combat system were contracted with the Prime collaborator, the Naval group.

"All the work was done by MDL under the supervision of Technical Advising Team, which cleared each stage during the construction. The IN overseeing team (INSOT) was there from the very

first boat. This was independent of the Technical Advising Team from DCN. INSOT represents the user participation during the construction more like an inspector. There were to be two teams from the DCN. 1. The Technical Advising Team, which was a small group from the design side and even smaller technical personnel to be present for the entire duration of the contract. 2. The Technical consultants who would be participants in various stages of construction and would be called depending on the type of expertise required at the concerned stage of construction.

The composition and duration of the presence of this group would vary depending on the requirements. The training for the first crew and spare crew, including the training team was done in France by the French Navy. Subsequent training in INS Satavahana.

The DCNS Technical Advising Team is as per the contract. When the contract was being negotiated, DCN was Prime



The newly designed indigenous submarine INS Karanj on display during its commissioning ceremony; Photograph by Gaurav Sharma

collaborator whereas MDL was the prime contractor," says cmde Arun Kumar (Retd) a former Indian Navy submariner who was the Principal Director Submarine Acquisition (PDSMAQ). He was the member-secretary of the Price negotiation committee (PNC) with Dharendra Singh as the Chairman when he was Addl Secy Defence Production.

Indian Submarine Building Capability may be Soon Lost

During the Q&A at the event, Admiral Karambir Singh, the Chief of the Indian Navy, said that there are three components to building a warship which includes Float, Move and Fight. India is comfortable in the first two aspects and the third it is a work in progress. He also stated that the P 75 India submarine project (P 75I) is still under progress and the efforts are being made for faster acquisition process. P 75I is a made to specs, unlike P 75 which was made to build (what is available).

As a side note, this is partially true as P 75 was not just made to build. The design met the Naval staff Qualitative Requirement (NSQR) for the Project and modified to meet Indian requirements, including the induction of the Exocet Block 2 SM39. It was also modified to launch SUT torpedo which was not envisaged in the original protocols for the combat system.

The original intent of the P 75I submarine project was to acquire a submarine from the East (Russia) and absorb the

technologies. Subsequently, the future Indian submarine will be completely designed from technologies and experience derived from the western P 75 and Eastern P 75I projects. P 75 I project now lacks the focus of the original objective and this may cost India in addition to the delays.

The P 75I project is not just going to cost the Indian Navy capability due to the decline in the submarine numbers, but also lead to India's submarine building capability loss. Even if the government takes a quick decision on the P 75I project, which is unlikely, the project is expected to take another 10 years to fructify and by then the submarine building ecosystem built at MDL will be over. It is important to note that P 75I project is already 20 years behind the schedule. The rest of the three P 75 submarines are in advanced stages of construction and hence some of the capacities are lying idle. Once the last

of the P 75 submarines is delivered by 2026, the entire capacity will be idle.

Follow on Orders for P 75 Submarines

As per the contract, there is no option clause for additional submarines, but according to standard practice India may exercise an option without competitive bidding for half the number of the original contract and this should be exercised in order to keep the submarine lines humming and fulfilling the submarine force levels of the Indian Navy. If not exercised, India will repeat the history of 1987 when India did not exercise the option for 2 HDW submarines of the Type 1500 and the submarine building capabilities were totally lost.

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



Joseph P Chacko

Joseph P. Chacko is a defence journalist and author of the books 'Foxtrot to Arihant and Warring Navies – India and Pakistan'. He is the publisher and Editor-in-Chief of Frontier India, a digital media publication publishing news and current affairs. He holds an M.B.A in International Business from the Maharishi University of Management, Iowa, USA. Twitter: @chackojoseph. This article was first published in frontierindia.com and has been reproduced with due permission from the publication and author.



The Grey Zone – Targeting the Power Grids

“Media reports suggested that the October 2020 power outage in Mumbai and neighbouring areas, which crippled train transportation, closed the stock exchange, and hampered those working from home amidst the pandemic, was sabotage.”

by Commodore BR Prakash (Retd)

A report by Recorded Future in Oct 2020, a Massachusetts-based company, which alleged that a Chinese state-backed entity systematically targeted critical Indian infrastructure installations has brought into sharp focus and turned the spotlight on the grim reality of grey zone battles in recent times. Media reports suggested that the October 2020 power outage in Mumbai and neighbouring areas, which crippled train transportation, closed the stock exchange, and hampered those working from home amidst the pandemic, was sabotage.

The power ministry acknowledged that an email was received from CERT-IN on 19th November 2020 on the threat of malware called shadow pad at some control centres of POSOCO and action has been taken to address these

threats. All systems in control centres were scanned and cleaned by antivirus.

The incident was investigated by the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC), which oversees India's cybersecurity operations in critical sectors. There is a need to analyse the implication of this new threat, identify vulnerabilities and plug the gaps quickly.

The compulsions of geopolitical competition among rival powers in their need to carve out or expand their areas of influence is increasingly being playing out in the space beyond diplomacy and short of conventional war, which is referred to as the grey zone.

The United States Special Operations Command defines grey-zone as

“competitive interactions among and within state and non-state actors that fall between the traditional war and peace duality.” A key element of operations within the grey-zone is that they remain below the threshold of an attack, which could have a legitimate conventional military response (jus ad bellum).

The concept of grey zone is not novel and has often been used in the past as a military strategy in proxy wars, low intensity conflicts and sponsoring of non-state players. Although it reflects an age-old approach, however, in recent times the advances in information technology and our growing dependence on IT have created vulnerabilities that are now being targeted by the adversary.

cyber-attacks, fake news, disinformation, subversion of democratic institutions and destroying social cohesion are the new norm in this grey zone battlefield and is being increasingly used to create new and radical spaces for its expansion.

Nathan Freier, an associate professor of national security studies at the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute, in his article "**The Darker Shade of Gray: A New War Unlike Any Other**", suggests that all grey zone strategies include unique combinations of hostile methods within and across instruments of power, traditional domains (air, land, sea, space, cyber), and heavily contested competitive spaces (e.g., electro-magnetic spectrum and strategic influence).

He also emphasises that grey zone adversaries present a menace to convention, in that the character of their competitive methods promises war-like outcomes yet fall short of military provocation and concludes that rival grey zone strategies and approaches "lie between 'classic' war and peace, legitimate and illegitimate motives and methods, universal conditions and norms, order and anarchy."

While the toolkit for grey zone operations includes information operations, political coercion, economic coercion, cyber operations, proxy support, and provocation by state-controlled forces, this article examines the dimension of cyber operations with specific reference to the vulnerability of critical infrastructure principally power grids to cyber-attacks.

With the increasing dependence on IT, the power generation and distribution network system face new and evolving cybersecurity threats. One of the first publicly acknowledged cyberattack to have caused a grid power outage was in 2015, on distribution utility substations in Ukraine, which shut off power to over 225,000 utility customers for several hours. The cyber attackers are reported to have used the BlackEnergy 2 malware to cause the grid failure.

A second cyberattack in Ukraine in 2016 was reported on an electricity control center in the city of Kiev, shutting down substations, which controlled

200 megawatts of capacity using the malware named "Industroyer" or "Crash Override". This was reported to be the second known malware specifically designed to disrupt physical systems. The first malware recognized as targeting SCADA (supervisory control and data acquisition) systems was the STUXNET computer worm, which was reported in 2010 to have destroyed centrifuges for uranium enrichment in Iran.

The US Congressional Research Service report in 2018, on Electric Grid Cybersecurity⁵, highlights the vulnerabilities in the system which are summarised below.

Cyber threats could result in direct attacks aimed at electric grid or other critical infrastructure that could impact the operations or security of the grid. Cyber intrusions on the electric grid have resulted in malware on ICS networks with the capability of causing damage or taking over certain aspects of system control or functionality.

One of the greatest cyber threats to the grid is intrusions focused on manipulating industrial control system (ICS) networks. According to the report, in 2017, the security firm Dragos (which specializes in industrial-control systems) found 163 new security vulnerabilities in industrial control devices, which it classified as typically "insecure-by-design," since they were located deep within ICS networks. It found that 61% of these vulnerabilities would likely cause a "severe operational impact" if exploited in a cyberattack.

Operational Technology (OT) systems are often used by electric utilities to monitor and control power production processes. While these technologies have been considered air-gapped (i.e., separate from IT systems), modernization of ICS networks has led to OT and IT systems becoming increasingly interconnected.

While a lot of attention has been focused on IT system cybersecurity, this is not always the case for OT networks. OT systems are often directly connected to the Internet, in some cases so that third-party vendors can

remotely connect to the system to perform diagnostics and maintenance.

In many of these instances, the OT systems are not protected by a firewall and are outdated, so they lack modern security features that would typically be used to protect an internet-facing connection (e.g. multi-factor authentication, strong passwords, logging, and monitoring).

The human factor is considered by many to be the weakest link in cybersecurity. Many cybersecurity breaches are caused by individuals falling prey to phishing or similar attacks which are used to gain credentials to access utility systems. This was the case in Ukraine, as hackers sent out malware-carrying emails. After links in the emails were opened by legitimate users, hackers acquired the credentials needed to access control and operations systems to cause blackouts at regional distribution utilities.

The report highlights that that the targeted phishing attacks are on the rise against electric utilities in the U.S., Europe, and parts of East Asia with spear-phishing attacks that employ code and infrastructure eerily similar to that used by the so-called Lazarus Group (North Korea based hacking group), the most destructive and outright criminal of the state sponsored hacking gangs.

With this as a background, let us examine the power outage in Mumbai and try and connect the dots.

Electricity generation and distribution is vital to the commerce and daily functioning of any nation. The National Grid is the high-voltage electricity transmission network in India, connecting power stations and major substations and ensuring that electricity generated anywhere in India can be used to satisfy demand elsewhere.

The National Grid is owned and maintained by state-owned Power Grid Corporation of India and operated by state-owned Power System Operation Corporation. It is one of the largest operational synchronous grids in the world with 371.054 GW of installed power generation capacity as of 30 June 2020. The system is operating through

five regional grids, Northern, Eastern, western, North-eastern, and southern grids connected synchronously.

Therefore, power grids constitute a prime target for Grey zone tactics, as it could cause huge financial losses. This is borne out by the fact that this is not the first time India's critical infrastructure has been in the crosshairs of cyber attackers. Some other high-profile cyberattacks on India's power sector include the ones at state-run Nuclear Power Corp of India Ltd.'s (NPCIL) Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP), THDC Ltd.'s Tehri dam, West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Co. Ltd, and at Rajasthan and Haryana discoms.

The recorded future report explains the details of the attacks against the Indian power sector. It identified the activity through a combination of large-scale automated network traffic analytics and expert analysis. What is germane is that the intrusion activity was undertaken using the PlugX malware C2 infrastructure in the digital space against multiple Indian government, public sector, and defence organizations from at least May 2020. This PlugX intrusion activity gained momentum after the Indian and Chinese troops faced off in May 20.

These were allegedly carried out by RedEcho, a Chinese state-sponsored threat actor group, which allegedly penetrated a total of 12 organizations, including four of India's five regional load despatch centres (RLDCs) and two state load despatch centres (SLDCs). These organizations are responsible for ensuring the optimum scheduling and dispatching of electricity based on supply and demand across regions in India.

According to Recorded Future, "The targeting of Indian critical infrastructure offers limited economic espionage opportunities; however, we assess they pose significant concerns over potential pre-positioning of network access to support Chinese strategic objectives."

The energy sector was targeted using ShadowPad, a modular backdoor that has been in use since 2017. ShadowPad is shared among other state-backed threat actor groups who are affiliated

with both the Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS) and the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

Some of these groups include APT41 (aka Barium, among others), Icefog, KeyBoy (aka Pirate Panda), Tick, and Tonto Team. There is no doubt that the timing of these alleged attacks through sponsored groups lends credence that grey zone warfare will increasingly target power grids, which are susceptible to cyber intrusions.

Even as we try to come to terms with dealing with cyber-attacks on grids, advances in technology have revolutionised how devices interconnect on the internet. IoT (Internet of Things) is the concept of connecting any device (so long as it has an on/off switch) to the internet and to other connected devices, which results in a giant network of connected devices.

This has raised new concerns about vulnerability of networks, as IoT devices have been increasingly targeted by botnet malware (whereby the hacker takes over the operation of a large number of infected devices) to launch denial-of-service or other cyberattacks.

If such IoT cyberattacks were able to access electric utility ICS networks, they could potentially impair these systems or cause electric power networks to operate based on manipulated conditions or false information. For example, a potential IoT-based attack on residential or commercial thermostats could result in false power demand

readings, causing a utility to ramp up power production unnecessarily.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that in the future more such battles will be fought in the Grey zone as they remain below the threshold of an attack, which could have a legitimate conventional military response. The zone beyond diplomacy and short of conventional war offers disproportionately large dividends compared to investments required in conventional battles. These battles are invariably played out by state-backed threat actor groups who have clandestine links with government agencies.

The toolkit for grey zone operations is constantly being evolved as new vulnerabilities are discovered. Fake news, disinformation, subversion of democratic institutions and destroying social cohesion are already being used as tools of warfare in this grey zone battlefield by rival powers try to settle scores.

Cyber operations and cyber-attacks against critical information infrastructure organisations (both public and private) is a reality now. Power grids are critical infrastructure and will be prime target for Grey zone tactics, as their breakdowns could cause huge financial losses. The need to safeguard them is essential, as they are the backbone to the economic development and growth of a nation.

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



Commodore BR Prakash (Retd)

Commodore BR Prakash is a specialist in Missile and Gunnery warfare and was the Gunnery Officer and Surface to Air Missile officer of number naval ships including Rajput, Ranvir, Prabal, Charag. He has commanded INS Ganga, INS Vidyut and was Executive Officer and Principal Warfare officer of INS Gomati and INS Kirpan. He has also served as Joint Director at Naval Headquarters and at Indian Naval Tactical Evaluation Group Mumbai. He was Commissioning Commanding Officer of INS Sardar

Patel. He was deputed to Israel for the joint development of the Long-Range Surface to Air Missile System in collaboration with Israeli Aerospace Industries later installed and successfully tested on the Kolkata class Destroyers. He is an alumnus of Training Ship Rajendra, Indian Naval Academy, and the Defence Services Staff College. He also holds an MSc degree in Applied Psychology and MSc in Defence Studies.

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Why We Won't Win The Next War!

“Have we won the battle yet? No, we are back to the status quo pre Galwan. We will still be wargaming Chinese intentions, likelihood, permutations, and combinations, with national anxiety.”

by Neil John

There is a degree of positivity in the air. Flows from the recent withdrawal of the Chinese from the forward posts, that too post the heavy winters. The jubilation is both in the political and military domain.

The use of a steady mix of both political and military means towards a desired end state seems to have worked here. There is little doubt that, when you decipher the opponent's mind, play the permutations and combinations, focus on the deliverables, the result is an end to the face off.

But did we really win the war, let's discuss the permanency of the lines drawn. Did we actually diffuse Gordon's knot.

- can we now ensure that escalation of situations due to ambitious leadership or political upheavals or

ignorance of facts and figures, will not happen on both sides?

- Has a line on ground been demarcated including the watershed, to consolidate positions that cannot or will not be altered in peace or war?
- Have occupied territories been signified and highlighted as disputed and not a status quo, that a clear message has been sent that the ownership lies with us and we will retain the options of taking it back?
- Is there a process in place that will ensure that aggressive troop buildup in the garb of military exercises will be prevented and any such action will call for pre-emptive application of own capabilities? Also, military infrastructure builds up close to its own borders and the friendly neighbouring countries will be avoided.

- Has the issue of Tibet been discussed as an alternative to Chinese claims on Ladakh and Arunachal? That in case of Chinese insistence we might just rake up the occupation of foreign land as part of the Chinese grand strategy.
- Have no-fly zones been earmarked for military aircrafts and other means (UAVs, RPVs etc) that will intrude into Indian space for whatever be the reasoning. No electronic or cyber warfare both active and passive of any kind on Indian installations or military means.
- Have we strongly amplified that attributability to instances of weaponisation of terrorist groups in border regions, especially in the North East, the analogy that it will be taken up with all international security agencies strongly?

There is little doubt that, when you decipher the opponent's mind, play the permutations and combinations, focus on the deliverables, the result is an end to the face off.

- Have we indicated clearly that the net security provider in the Indian Ocean region is the Indian government and the Indian Navy? That for increased and secured use of the SLOCs, the Chinese trade and military ships, to include submarines should be reported through a diplomatic channel.
- Have we put a spoke in the wheel of advanced technology being transferred to Pakistan? Of Pakistan being used as a surrogate to counter Indian strategic growth.
- Have we brought up the security and anti-terrorism blueprint for South Asia?
- Have we consolidated and clearly highlighted our thresholds and tolerance levels and put a process in place to solve all issues bilaterally in a non-military domain?

The questions can be unending. The Chinese are plagued with multiple problems, both internal and external. An uprising of its youth, ageing population, exposed to western styled democracies against the present ruling dispensation. Corruption in both political and military leadership. Loss of faith in the Chinese halo of economic growth. The Xinjiang problem of radicalism and home bred terrorism.

Internationally the issue of Taiwan, South China Sea, the African envelopment, the northern borders with Russia, US seeing China as a military nuisance, the Karakoram Highway not economically viable anymore due to internal strife in Pakistan, threat of terrorism and harsh winters, strengthened Indian political and military intent. The Chinese fading dream due to COVID-19.

The Chinese as per my perception as a superpower in the making will not get into skirmishes and small fights. If

they ever have to wage a war, it has to ensure complete victory and not a notion of victory. For them to cast a dye on the world platform they need to prove the significance of both the means and the will.

With the US being the provocative propagator of a monstrous China, the Chinese leadership will not waste away its time and resources if the gains are



PLA troops training for future conflicts; File Photo

not exponential. Any reduction of its economy and resources for small time military victories and territorial gains will have to wait, till its larger objective of being an alternative to the US in the eyes of the world is established.

With India while it might want to get into a military conflict of proving to the South Eastern Asian countries that it is the whole and soul of security, economy and the only regional power. Use of military might will not give him the results that he would want. Neither the assurance of a clean swipe.

Towards that end and with the growing US-India alliance and also the energy security threat with the Russians. China would like to undermine India and is likely to restrain it from becoming a regional giant. Also relegate India only to a regional identity. Keeping it militarily at bay, economically under-slung and trying to establish a dependency (make it dependent) and most of all keep it engaged by all other means short of war.

So have we won the battle yet? No, we are back to the status quo pre Galwan. We will still be wargaming Chinese intentions, likelihood, permutations and combinations, with national anxiety.

So then are we prepared for the next war, we would like to believe that we are. But the very fact that the Chinese have relented, accepted that a ploy failed will make them think harder, plan better and implement swifter. A strategic withdrawal, to re-strategise is sometimes critical to winning the bigger war. The next time they come, they will come, bigger, stronger, prepared, with increased capacities and with a definite intent.

Are we prepared?



Neil John

The author is a military analyst and commentator on national security issues. Views expressed are the author's own and do not reflect the editorial policy of Mission Victory India



Indian Strategic Thinkers: Copycats of Western Strategic Thoughts!

Most of the Indian strategic experts act as scare mongers. They paint unrealistic scenarios. They give too many capabilities to India's adversaries. China and Pakistan are made to look like invincible monsters who would eat up India within the twinkling of the eye lashes.

by Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

originality has never been the forte of Indian strategic thinking fraternity. padded with western jargon and semantics, they dish out theories which are out of sync with the regional and national realities. Most often they fail to carry out any real assessment on the myriad of security threats which India faces.

This is what has been happening to shifting emphasis on India's need for modernisation. The General Service Qualitative Requirements (GSQR) of weapons systems keep changing. Indian planners pick them up from foreign magazines. They do not work out as per demands of India's security needs. Fashionable new terms fascinate these planners.

The problem is of no forward planning, say 40-50 years hence. But qualitative requirements are laid down of 'today'

which become obsolete by the time equipment/weapon systems join the armed forces. This is why the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) has not been able to do justice to its existence because GSQR changes frequently.

New strategic policies and structural changes being envisaged in the armed forces, really expose these strategic thinkers. Take the cases of Theatre commands and Integrated Battle Groups (IBG) concepts. They are not only borrowed from United States military concepts but are being thoughtlessly applied to Indian needs. Change for the sake of change is more harmful than no change.

specialisation of forces curtails the larger manoeuvrability of forces. Indian

forces have to operate in varied terrain against China and Pakistan. Besides, the scenario changes totally when they are required to be employed in internal security. Theatre specialisation would impact their multi-role functioning.

Also, unless real amalgamation of three wings of the armed forces is carried out by standardised rank structures and uniforms, theatre commands would remain a mixture of disconcerted elements, which would affect its optimum potential. Theatre needs to be compounded with identities of all wings submerged as one big whole.

Even the proposed IBG doctrine is a direct copy from the US manuals. But Indian armed forces do not have a role akin to the US armed forces. They have to operate on a larger canvas of the world.

Furthermore, the USA has a wherewithal to execute such doctrines. A massive financial expenditure is envisaged by India to implement such doctrines. India can ill-afford such huge expenses at the current state of Indian economy.

The IBG concept is primarily a conglomeration of mechanised components. In Indian context IBG doctrine can only be employed against Pakistan. But the multiple obstacle system and fractured terrain on both sides of the border minimise the utilisation of such mobile groups.

Even the vast desert opposite Rajasthan sector, does not lend itself for such large-scale employment of IBG groups. Mountainous terrain opposite China equally denies their full-scale employability.

Most of the Indian strategic experts act as scare mongers. They paint unrealistic scenarios. They give too many capabilities to India's adversaries. China and Pakistan are made to look like invincible monsters who would eat up India within the twinkling of the eye lashes. Neighbours like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and even Bangladesh are seen as eternally working against India, if these countries pursue their own national interests.

Instead of blaming these neighbours, these strategic thinkers should question India's negligence and inability to work in harmony with the individual national interests. One must understand that these neighbours have their own aspirations for growth and development. They cannot remain bonded to you if you do not help their cause.

What is surprising is the manner in which India's issue of national security has been segregated in two tight compartments of internal and external security. It lacks a cohesive approach. And on top of that Indian strategic thinkers keep shouting about preparing for a Three front war. They forget that to fight a Three front war, India needs total integration of not only all security forces but also all the available resources.

Compartmentalisation is a major threat to effective functioning of the security apparatus. As a result of this, every wing of security forces are playing their own flute. There is no integrated approach. And the problem is further complicated

when a false narrative of an emerging form of war is given importance.

Indian strategic thinkers do not seem to grasp the concept of Brain Force Wars of the 21st century replacing the hitherto known Brute Force Wars of earlier centuries. Designer wars of today employ Non-contact doctrine through Beyond Visual Range (BVR) weapon systems. Sponsored wars in the form of insurgency by using internal weaknesses of adversaries are more in fashion than monkey dancing of forces across the borders.

It is utmost urgent that an integrated security doctrine be evolved keeping in mind the Brain Force War" and sponsored war. Indian environments have to be considered rather than copying concepts of foreign armies.

At the same time, though it is advisable not to underestimate India's adversaries, yet to accord them capabilities more than they deserve is to demoralise your security forces. Self-belief is the key to defeat an adversary. The Enemy is as apprehensive of India's capabilities as India is of its adversaries.

Face off with China in Eastern Ladakh in 2020-21 and earlier at Doka La in July 2017 in Sikkim, should give a clear indication that China was also apprehensive of Indian military capabilities. It no more thinks that it can get a la-1962 walkover. This is the lesson India must learn from the Galwan clashes in June 2020.

The occupation of Kailash range on 29 August 2020 further rattled China. It would be desirable of Indian strategic experts to stop exaggerating neighbours military capabilities, whether it was China or Pakistan. This is also applicable

to other neighbours, such as Myanmar, Nepal or even Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

Let India not get hallucinations by saying that Myanmar was getting nuclear weapons. Such wild imaginations set a wrong narrative for national security. And it would lead to wrong prioritisation of resources. The military coup in Myanmar is already under international threat to be derailed. The military Junta would not be able to sustain itself for long.

India needs to keep a watch on Myanmar, more particularly because of its Kaladan project, which links Kolkata with Mizoram through Bay of Bengal. It is an alternative route to Siliguri corridor to link North East with rest of India. It is such issues which should bother Indian strategic thinkers more than anything else.

Myanmar or Bangladesh are China's bets to make a land entry to the Bay of Bengal. This is what was more threatening to India's strategic assets on the Eastern coast than nuclear ambitions of Myanmar's military generals. Threat is from China and not Myanmar or any other neighbour, such as Sri Lanka or Nepal.

They could be facilitators of Chinese threat, which India's comprehensive security doctrine should counter. This is the job of Indian security experts to accurately assess the developing environments rather than wishy washy statements.

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



Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

Colonel Rajinder Kushwaha (Retd) is an ex-NDA, commissioned into 3 Bihar. He is a battle-hardened veteran who served in '71 War and has operated extensively in various insurgency environs across the country. He is a renowned author, and a defence and national security expert writing for several reputed publications such as 'Defence and Security Alert' (DSA), the 'Indian Defence Review' (IDR) among others. You can reach him on Twitter: @RajeeKushwaha, Email ID: rajee749@yahoo.com



Life Onboard Submarines

“Of all the branches of men in the forces there is none which shows more devotion and faces grimmer perils than the submariners.”

by Commodore Aspi Cawasji (Retd)

(Editor's Note: 10 March 2021 will forever go down the annals of history as the day the nation commissioned its first fully indigenous diesel engine submarine, christened as Indian Naval ship Karanj. The submarine is under the capable command of Captain Gaurav Mehta and his crew of elite submariners. It is thus pertinent to highlight in this issue the arduous lives and mental fortitude of a special breed; submariners, the Indian Navy's silent arm!)

When citizens think about submarines, they visualise a vessel with large glass windows through which one can see the beautiful ocean. Such submarines do exist but are for purely touristic purposes and dive to very shallow depths to show the marine creatures living on a reef.

There are other private deep-sea submersibles able to carry a few persons that are used for repairing underwater

pipelines and cables. And lastly, there are military submarines made from alloy steel or titanium which obviously do not have any windows and spend many months under the sea. These are the real denizens of the deep. These are the weapons used by countries to strike terror in the hearts of their adversaries.

Indian Navy's submarine operations have remained silently underwater, extremely secretive, that is why they are called the 'silent service'. Even hardcore of the navies of the world sailors think 'submariners' are crazy, but they do so with great regard. Any man with the dolphin pinned on his lapel deserves all the respect, for they are submariners; men who volunteer to lock themselves up in a windowless, cramped, steel contraption of a vessel to work tirelessly below the sea. Submarines are of generally two types. Attack submarines with conventional

diesel-electric propulsion and those with nuclear propulsion.

Then there are those that carry nuclear tipped missiles called SLBMs. We have one nuclear attack submarine Chakra in our inventory, one ballistic missile submarine SSBN Arihant and 13 conventional submarines in the Indian Navy. The diesel electric subs have diesel generators which charge the batteries and which in turn run the electric motors for propelling in the water.

Even today, submarines strike terror in any adversary's heart and compel them to spend disproportionate amounts on human and material resources to hunt them down. An average crew strength is about 70 men in a space which is roughly as big as a one-bedroom flat. A total of 10 officers and about 60 men of various specializations man the submarine.

submarines carry a variety of underwater weapons called torpedoes, missiles, and mines. Torpedoes are like mini submarines and are weapons that run in the water and missiles are launched underwater which then fly through the air to hit the target, which could be a ship or on land. Hence before any mission the full strength of torpedoes, missiles or mines are loaded.

since these long torpedoes must be loaded into the submarine, they are loaded from the muzzle of the very tube they are fired from. Similarly, the anti-ship or land attack missile is also stored in tubes and are nearly the same length as torpedoes. The tubes have to be kept in top condition; hence frequent maintenance needs dedicated men. Tons of ration to feed 70 men for 60 days or more is also required to be loaded for any mission which prior to sailing out.

once these are loaded onboard, the crew is ready to sail out for the mission. The preparations on the submarine are hectic. All departments ensure that they are ready for a long war patrol. Every mission that a submarine embarks on is called a 'war patrol'. Submarines are the most offensive instrument in any country's arsenal. They are always armed and positioned at the mouth of the adversary's harbours so that if a war breaks out, they will be the first responders.

with total readiness the submarine proceeds to sea leaving harbour on surface and only diving when the depths of water are safe enough to do so. This is done as close to our own coast within our own protection and fire power umbrella. All submarine movements are clandestine and with stealth making all movements in dark hours.

No one, not even the captain, knows where the submarine is going on the mission. Deployment orders are top secret. They come in a sealed envelope which the captain isn't allowed to open until he is already out at sea. This is done to maintain secrecy of operations. For the next several months, the submarine will be prowling the depths of the sea, its crew entirely cut off from the outside world, other than listening to the occasional news report which

the submarine is equipped to receive even while operating underwater.

A look at the hard living conditions onboard makes one realise that the four most important requirements of human beings namely, water, air, food and space are either short or regulated onboard. Space onboard is very cramped. About two thirds of the internal volume of the submarine is filled with equipment, stores and machinery. Only one third is free volume used for living and breathing.

During construction of submarines preference is first given to fitment of equipment and only in the balance space available place for the operator has to be adjusted.

strangely, there is water, water everywhere in the ocean but not a drop to drink on the submarine. Fresh water carried in tanks is always scarce and used very judiciously. There is no bathing and no shaving onboard. Water is only used for drinking and cooking. The occasional washing of face is permitted. Even though there is provision to convert sea water into potable water, this is only used as a last resort and not as a luxury. The crew uses disposable, medicated clothing, which they change once in four-days.

The *raison d'être* of the submarine which is its war fighting ability is the very existence of the submarine. Submarines are generally used for attacking ships, other submarines and land targets. Gathering intelligence on enemy's naval units stealthily and without being detected is another role. They are also used for dropping commandos and for clandestine warfare and lastly, submarines can be used to drop mines in the enemy's harbour mouth stealthily to bottle the adversary's fleet within their own harbours.

The periscope on a submarine is used to see objects when the submarine is just submerged below the water surface. Beyond this depth it runs blind on instruments like the radar and sonar.

Every floating object in the water has an acoustic signature. Hence when the submarine is on patrol, every acoustic noise heard in the ocean is investigated

and tracked through by the sonar. Every noise is tracked electronically with computer driven state of the art systems on digital charts or maps and assessed whether they are hostile or friendly. Submarines then carry out attacks on hostile targets.

Life on a submarine is very hard in the cramped living conditions. There are numerous valves and pipelines pertaining to hydraulics-, high- and low-pressure air, sea water and hundreds of switches for electrical equipment. There must be about 200 km of electrical cables running in the submarine with electronics of about 3000 circuit boards.

Machinery spaces are really tightly packed with pumps, motors, engines and all types of equipment which can be remotely operated from the machinery station. The most difficult task is to undertake repairs of machinery below deck in these cramped conditions. We have a full marine engineering department headed by Marine Engineer Officer and electronics and electrical department by an Electronics & Electrical Officer.

There are about 300 lead acid wet batteries in a conventional submarine each weighing at least a ton. These batteries have to be monitored, topped up with electrolyte and looked after. The space above these batteries racks is so small that a man has to crawl above them on a trolley to access them.

Due to tightly packed equipment and paucity of space, there is a perennial danger of fire hazard as also danger of flooding as the outside pressure increases by 1 Bar for every 10 m of submarine depth. In order to keep the men always alert and trained to fight fires and flooding, training drills are frequently conducted.

There is hardly enough living space on a submarine as living quarters. Firstly, there are only two thirds the number of bunks as the crew. Hence, the crew coming off duty from a shift occupies the recently vacated bunk by the others who have just gone on duty. This is called 'Hot Bunking' system as the bunk is still warm when one occupies it. There are only two toilets for about 70 men. This puts tremendous strain

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“Even today, submarines strike terror in any adversary’s heart and compel them to spend disproportionate amounts on human and material resources to hunt them down.”

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on the men as regular timings for ablutions cannot be maintained.

recreation is limited to only internal board games, cards, magazines, video movies. The same spaces used for living are also used for eating, as well as, for recreation. Even the officers mess room called the ‘wardroom’ is used in its many avatars. Apart from serving as the dining room, it also converts into a sleeping room and when required into an operation theatre.

The kitchen or the Galley is the most important place in a submarine. Being so small, just a couple of chefs have to cook a meal for about 70 thrice a day. Food is cooked on hot plates, there is no frying permitted onboard as this would emanate fumes and cause coughing throughout the submarine, also adversely affecting the electronics. Fresh vegetables are carried onboard which last for only a few days, then dry rations, tinned rations, ready to eat meals and tetra packed food and milk are used.

The utensils in the Galley are kept in slots so that they do not slide off when the sea is rough. No chapatis are permitted to be made as besides taking too much effort it would emanate fumes which is not good in the confined spaces. The chefs are the most jovial of the lot always making new dishes, baking cakes for celebrating special days like birthdays, anniversaries of the crew members. There is absolutely no alcohol allowed to be consumed onboard. Smoking is not permitted.

The submarine carries a fully trained doctor who is also a submariner who is generally an underwater medicine specialist. He has a small two bed detention room with fully stocked medical stores. Apart from treating sick men like an outpatient procedure, he is responsible for maintaining the micro-climate onboard and escape and rescue from the submarine.

He performs the duty of a psychiatrist too and will be generally the first to smell a problem with the crew. The officers dining room can be converted into an operation theatre in a matter of minutes and can be made ready to undertake any minor surgery. An emergency appendicitis operation has been carried out on an Indian submarine.

other health hazards are that of maintaining the composition of air that we breathe which has to be constantly regulated. The doctor monitors the micro climate and ensures that the oxygen levels are correct, the carbon dioxide and hydrogen levels do not go high. Besides there are other dangerous gases due to the presence of batteries. Intense smoke during fire and flooding can also cause a lot of harm and instant asphyxiation.

The other main affect on crew is that their circadian rhythm gets disrupted due to disorientation of not being able to see the sun. This causes loss of appetite and sleep disruptions as submarines are nocturnal machines requiring remaining awake in dark hours. The normal practice is to advance the watches by 12 hours hence, day becomes night and night becomes day. Artificially, daylight is simulated by white light and night by red lighting. Hence this is something like jet lag and takes the human body a few days to transition to and from.

Eye fatigue is known to affect those who see through the periscope. This happens due to frequent change in focus, different brightness, hazy objects and also boredom of seeing nothing.

other psychological factors that affect submariners are inactivity with no physical exercise as more oxygen would be consumed and more carbon dioxide exhaled. Then there are long periods of boredom with short periods of intense activity with sleep deprivation for two to three days at a time. One factor that always is at the back of the mind is that there is no contact with the family, lastly the sense of higher responsibility and danger to life makes a person more careful and on the edge as the risks are too high.

The Indian submariner has to be very special person, highly trained and motivated as he prides himself as belonging to an elite force. He is respected for high professionalism by others within and outside the Navy. He is expected to have a higher pain threshold. He is mentally conditioned to remain away from his family for prolonged durations.

A submarine in the ocean scares the hell out of people because it’s very presence can deny the use of the sea to ships. The very presence of a submarine in the water strikes terror in the hearts of the adversary.

(This article was first published in the Fauji India Magazine and has been reproduced with due permission. Views expressed are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect the views of Mission Victory India)



Commodore Aspi Cawasji (Retd)

Commodore Aspi Cawasji retired from the Indian Navy with three and a half decades of operational experience. He has been Commanding Officer of three submarines, a guided missile frigate and submarine base in addition to other important command and staff assignments. He has been awarded by the President of India, the Nao Sena Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal for distinguished service. He is

a published author on strategic issues having jointly authored a book titled “Strategic Vision 2030: Security and Development of Andaman & Nicobar Islands”. Currently, he is a visiting faculty at the New Delhi Institute of Management. He spends his time educating youth, indulges in his favourite hobby of calligraphy and is an avid vintner



26/11: Unforgettable Episode

I still remember that ill-fated day. I was working for Pune-based English daily Sakal Times. I had shifted to Pune earlier that year after working in Mumbai for three years. I had finished my day's work and was about to leave the office when I saw visuals of firing in the Fort area of South Mumbai.

by Shashwat Gupta Ray

There are certain incidents in life that remain etched in our minds. For me it was covering the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai, 12 years ago. Covering terrorist attacks is not new for me. I was working for an investigative news weekly - Tehelka in Mumbai, when on July 11 serial blasts in local trains shocked Mumbai. Later, I covered the German Bakery bomb blast in Pune. But there was a difference between these terror attacks and the 26/11 terror strike. On other instances the attacker was an unknown face in the crowd, who escaped from the site after planting the explosives. But in case of 26/11 terror attacks, there were live attackers killing people mercilessly.

Mumbai, which has been bearing the brunt of terror attacks since 1993 -- serial bomb blasts following the post

Babri Masjid demolition communal riots -- but never before had I seen such fear on the streets of Mumbai.

First bullet-ins

I still remember that ill-fated day. I was working for Pune-based English daily Sakal Times. I had shifted to Pune earlier that year after working in Mumbai for three years. I had finished my day's work and was about to leave the office when I saw visuals of firing in the Fort area of South Mumbai. My first thought was it could be a gang war spilling out on the streets. I didn't take it very seriously initially.

I returned home after half-hour, checked out the news updates. But this time I was shocked to see in the news that the then Maharashtra

Anti-terrorism Squad (ATS) Joint Commissioner of Police Hemant Karkare was killed. Soon after, news came in that more police officers and personnel were killed including Additional Commissioner of Police Ashok Kamte and encounter specialist senior Inspector Vijay Salaskar. Things had turned uglier than I thought. The casualties kept mounting. No one slept that night.

At 08:00 hours on November 27, 2008 an emergency meeting was convened by the top management of Sakal Media Group (SMG) and the editorial heads of Sakal and Sakal Times. I was also asked to attend the meeting. A video conference was conducted by the MD of SMG Mr Abhijit Pawar. After some deliberations, it was decided that I should be sent to Mumbai immediately as backup

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There are certain incidents in life that remain etched in our minds. For me it was covering the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai, 12 years ago.
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for our Mumbai bureau which had only a handful of staff. As a reporter, it was a huge responsibility bestowed upon me.

‘First time I saw terror in the eyes of Mumbaikars’

I boarded a bus for Mumbai soon after the meeting concluded. Various kinds of thoughts were churning inside my mind during the whole journey. I knew the topography of South Mumbai very well as my previous organisation Press Trust of India was located in the same vicinity.

I reached Dadar in the afternoon and boarded a local train for Churchgate station. A generally jam-packed railway station wore a deserted look. I didn't find a single soul boarding the train during my entire journey from Dadar to Churchgate. That was the first time I saw terror in the eyes of Mumbaikars who are known for their resilience. I along with my photojournalist reported to our Mumbai bureau chief Mrityunjay Bose, who directed us to be stationed at Nariman House (Chabad House), where terrorists had held a Jewish family as hostage.

Chabad house, a Jewish outreach centre was run by Gavriel and Rivka Holtzberg, who had owned the building since around 2006. I along with my photojournalist Nitin Lawate took a stock of the situation. Entire area was cordoned off, all exit routes from the building were sealed. While I could hear the sound of intermittent firing from automatic rifles emanating from Taj Hotel, there was pin drop silence at Chabad House. As the night fell, the National Security Guards (NSG) commandos who had arrived by then to take part in the anti-terrorist operations codenamed 'Operation Black Tornado', occupied the adjacent buildings and took their position.

On high alert

Totally tired after a long day, I decided to take some rest on a vehicle bonnet. I could hardly get a wink of sleep as I had to be completely alert. At the crack of dawn on November 28, rattling noise of a helicopter reverberated in the entire locality. I looked up in the sky and found a huge Mi-17 helicopter of the Indian Air Force hovering over the roof of the Chabad House for a few seconds and went back. Then there was a flurry of firing by NSG commandos from the adjacent buildings towards the direction of the room where the captors were holed up.

The strategy clearly was to provide covering fire and pin down the terrorists. Soon after, the roaring Mi-17 chopper returned, positioning itself over the roof of Nariman House. Within no time I could see 22 NSG commandos slithering down from the chopper and landing on the rooftop. The covering fire intensified as the commandos entered the building from the top. Intense gunfire ensued for an hour. Then to my horror, I saw NSG commandos had brought up an injured comrade, who was later identified as Major Unnikrishnan, who succumbed to injuries.

The gunfight continued till the terrorists were eliminated. All the occupants of the house were killed except two-year-old boy Moshe, who survived the attack after being rescued by his nanny Sandra Samuel.

It was late evening, by the time the entire building was cleared of all booby traps. The commandos came out victorious and received a rapturous applause from the people who were rejoicing on the streets. Chants of Bharat Mata Ki Jai echoed in the atmosphere. At night the politicians started arriving at the scene. But for one day, there was only one Sena on the streets of Colaba - Bhartiya Sena.

The longest 48 hours

I went to my office, filed my stories, and joined my bureau chief at Taj Hotel where the action was still on. On November 29 morning, the operation finally ended. The entire NSG team led by Brigadier Govind Sisodia managed to eliminate the terrorists. It was the longest 48 hours of my life. I was on my toes with my fellow reporters, photographers, and video journalists. We all were scared. We didn't know the bullets were being fired from which direction as it was night.

Any of us could have been hit. But the security forces - the Mumbai Police, Army and Navy did a great job in preventing the situation on the ground from spiraling out of control. The elite Marine Commandos of Indian Navy and Mumbai Police need a special mention as they executed the initial counterattack till the NSG team arrived. For me, it remains an unforgettable experience even after all these years. The experience played a stellar role in shaping me as a frontline journalist.

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



Shashwat Gupta Ray

Shashwat Gupta Ray is the former Resident Editor of Gomantak Times and the founder of the YouTube channel 'Uncovering India'. He is a multiple award-winning Defence Journalist and editor with over twenty years of experience under his belt during which he has reported from hotspots and conflict zones for reputed publications like the Press Trust of India (PTI), Tehelka and Sakal Times. His work has been featured in books on extremism. He has been a strong pillar of support to the Victory India campaign and is a pioneering member. He has also trained up and coming defence journalists in the craft and been a visiting faculty in premier journalism schools.