



VICTORY INDIA

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An Initiative By MVI

India's Stakes in a Two Front War

Major General VK Madhok (Retd)

Psychological Impact of Drones on the Battlefield

Commodore BR Prakash (Retd)

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(Retd)

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Weik up

Life's Little Moments





EDITOR'S NOTE

Colonel Vinay B Dalvi Vol.2 • Issue 3 • March 2021

Dear Readers,

The year 2020 was considered as the worst in the lives of most of us. However, not many would agree with this statement, especially those who lived through 1939-45 period of the second world war or those who saw the India-Pakistan partition in 1947 or even others who live in those regions of the world where poverty, disease and violence are part of their daily grind every year.

In the South Asian sub-continent, India has not only been combating the deadly COVID-19 virus like most parts of the world, but has its Armed forces bravely confronting the massive Chinese mobilisation on its Himalayan borders through these severe, long winter months. The Indian Army also remains committed and bogged down with Counter Terrorism operations against Pakistan sponsored terror in Jammu and Kashmir.

On the economic front also, India is waging another kind of war to provide jobs and livelihood to millions of its citizens that were adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overall, a very grim situation for the country to tackle multiple challenges simultaneously, literally on a war footing. The entire government machinery needs to come together in these most trying and testing times not only for its soldiers, farmers but all its citizens that are rightfully hopeful of a better deal, especially after 75 years of being freed from the British yoke.

This issue is the 9th edition of our Victory India Magazine and deals with some of the most critical issues confronting our Armed forces and nation. The issues per se may not be physically visible but of utmost importance to its military might to make it more formidable, resilient, and stronger through the much needed and recommended reviews and reforms to keep pace with the challenges of this 21st century.

This issue has 16 articles, essays and debates divided into four sections as follows:

This issue's Editor's picks house a diverse range of articles, from a former military attaché's account of a meeting with aggrieved ex-servicemen in faraway Vancouver, a war hero recounting hair-raising battle accounts from the '71 war, to more contemporary military issues such as the nation's preparedness for a two-front war and the covert acquisition of enemy military hardware.

Team Victory continues to shed light on the crucial subject of tactical psychology and occupational stress by bringing the reader some hard-hitting articles addressing poignant issues surrounding military mental health, combat stress and the role modern weapon systems such as armed drones have on the minds of 21st century combatants.

We continue to monitor the ongoing developments in and around our neighborhood in security scan with some hard-hitting opinion pieces touching upon burning issues such as the impact of 'Tool Kit' in the national security context, the planned United States troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and the impact of such a pullout, the ever-expanding spectrum of modern warfare and lessons our adversary learnt from their near yearlong engagement on the eastern front.

This issue ends with Plain Speak in which ex-servicemen candidly speak about their feelings of being systematically let down by organisations they have dedicated their youth to, following their departure from donning the uniform.

Victory India continues to champion the voice of the Indian soldier whether in uniform or re-atired, and genuinely appreciate the support shown by you, the reader. It is your appreciation which inspires us to bring out both the good and the bad of the Indian Armed Forces, in an effort to add to the discourse on defence and national security issues by the key stakeholder, those who have served and those serving. Happy reading.

Victory India!

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

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Locate, Steal, Repeat: Covertly Acquiring & Testing Enemy Hardware

Covertly acquiring an adversary's military platform provides obvious advantages; it can be replicated and leveraged for a nation's military applications whilst reducing the amount dedicated for R&D.

by Aritra Banerjee

In 2020, the United States of America bagged a crucial piece of Russian military hardware from Libya; successfully extracting a Pantsir S1 Air Defence system, a popular platform favoured by the Russians among other nations, back to the US for evaluation. The Pantsir recovery marked a significant intelligence victory for the global superpower. However, this was by no means the first time a weapon system was smuggled by a foreign entity and brought back to their home country, but a recurring theme in warfare.

The Pantsir is an uber-sophisticated air defence system on paper but there have been reservations on its operational performance. Regardless of the system's efficacy, the surreptitious acquisition has potentially allowed the US to garner crucial technological know-how.

Recover, Learn & Exploit...

Acquiring an adversary's military platform provides obvious advantages; it can be replicated and leveraged for a nation's own military applications. Furthermore, it may drastically reduce the time, resources, and financial investments dedicated to the Research and Development (R&D) of a similar system.

As aforementioned, getting hands-on another nation's military hardware to gain the technical edge or at least symmetry is not a new phenomenon. A notable instance is the Soviet Union's reverse engineering of the USAF B-29 bomber into the Tu-4 early into the Cold War.

Billions of dollars are gambled into the R&D of state-of-the-art military

tech, with no assurance in a program's success. There are several instances of programs being scrubbed for failing to meet guidelines or set objectives. These lead to a colossal waste of the technological, intellectual, and financial investments made on the project. On the other hand, stealing of military tech is viewed by certain quarters as more economical and reaps more dividends.

Covert acquisitions enable the saboteur to find out how the acquired system works, its technical limitations and lapses, and maybe further exploited, expanded upon, or give insights to build effective countermeasures. A classic example of this was the United States ship (USS) Halibut's successful recovery of Soviet P-500 anti-ship missile fragments from the seabed, which were reassembled, leading

America's covert acquisitions find their way inside the secretive 'Nevada Test and Training Range'. This comprises of the lesser-known Tonopah military base and Area 51.

the US towards a critical technical limitation in the soviet system.

The US found that the P-500 was purely radar-guided, not infrared as per their initial assessment. This crucial piece of information proved to be a treasure trove, empowering them to tailor-make countermeasures against the P-500, while learning more about the USSR's manufacturing capabilities.

Insights on the way a system was designed, built, assembled, the materials used, etc paint a comprehensive picture of a nation's current military capabilities and potential armaments they may possess in their arsenal or could develop. It also helps give a glimpse into why they designed a system the way that they did. While simply reverse engineering another nation's military hardware proves useful, gaining an in-depth understanding of why certain design choices were used may provide even more vital information. These insights may be leveraged to meet the country's own applications.

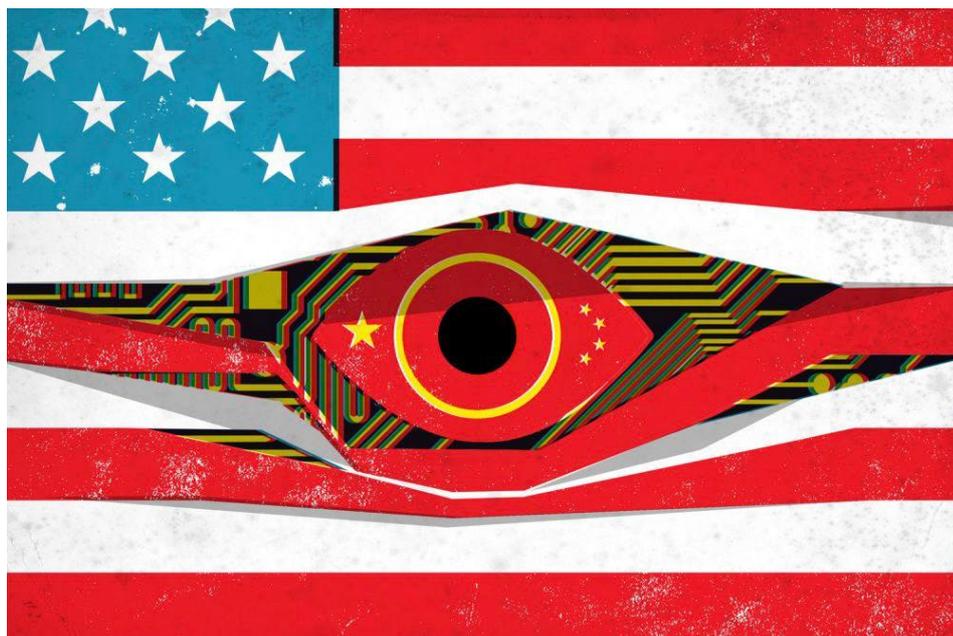
Covert Affairs...

The Pantsir S1 is only the latest air defence system the US got its hands on from Russia. America has a history of acquiring erstwhile soviet union and modern Russian air defence technology. The older S-75, S-125, S-200, OSA short-range air defence systems are some to name a few. The US has even managed to procure some long-range air defence systems like the S-300. Going by publicly available information, America had been able to directly procure the S-300V from Russia, purchase the S-300P from Belarus, and allegedly procured an S-300 PMU1 through unknown means.

The collapse of the soviet Union marking the end of the cold war set the stage for a unipolar world, making the availability of military technology from previously inaccessible

nations. The reunification of East and West Germany following the collapse of the Berlin wall, the independence of former soviet nation-states, and the Warsaw pact countries acted as buffer areas, giving the US a significant strategic advantage.

America had placed a major emphasis on the procurement of soviet aircraft during the cold war, with several notable successes. The cold war witnessed several soviet pilots who defected along with their aircraft with them to the US and its allied countries like Japan, West Germany, Turkey, and Israel, acting as hubs for the US to thoroughly inspect



China eyeing to acquire sensitive US military tech; Artists Rendition

the enemy aircraft, and in cases extract them back to the states for R&D.

The US through its external intelligence agency, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) conducted several covert operations through which they got their hands-on soviet aircraft. Operation Mount Hope III between 10 Jun 1988 – 11 Jun 1988, is one such notable clandestine operation that was carried out by US intelligence at the end of the Chad-Libyan conflict.

The CIA had covertly flown two Chinook helicopters for several hundreds of miles to covertly extract and smuggle a crashed soviet-made Mil Mi-25 'Hind-D' attack helicopter dead in the middle of the night. Despite operational delays because of major sandstorms, the operation was successful with the CIA having extracted the chopper right under Libya's nose.

NTTR: America's Testing Grounds

A lot of America's covert acquisitions find their way inside the secretive 'Nevada Test and Training Range' (NTTR). This comprises of the lesser-known Tonopah military base and Area 51. The Tonopah base is particularly intriguing as unlike 'Area 51' the establishment has historically been glanced over, and largely out of the public consciousness. During the cold war, Tonopah had housed soviet Scud missiles. The Pantsir system, supposedly loaned from the United Arab

Emirates (UAE), was also reportedly housed there.

The Tonopah base had been the official home of the 4477th Test and Evaluation (TES) Squadron. This famed yet covert squadron was responsible for the testing and evaluation of procured soviet hardware. The 4477th flew soviet fighter jets brought in by the US and had been known to test their capabilities, identify vulnerabilities and take part in mock dog fights



4477th Test and Evaluation Squadron – Group Photograph; Archival Image

with the United States Air Force (USAF) fighter jets to devise countermeasures to defeat them.

The 4477th was shut down with the end of the cold war, however, it gave birth to Detachment 3 53rd Test and Evaluation Group, flying modern fighters like Mig-29s, SU-27s among other cutting-edge aircraft with the same purpose as its predecessor.

Another notable establishment inside the NTTR is the Tolicha Peak Electronic Combat Range (TPECR), where the US reportedly tests and trains against foreign surface to air missile systems (SAM), acquired by the country. Some systems said to have been housed inside this facility are the S-125, S-200, and even an S-300. Individual radars and launchers are visible in satellite images posted online.

The Flip Side: Reverse Engineering US Military Systems

America is not the only nation-state adept at procuring another nation's military technology. Russia claimed to have recovered an intact US Tomahawk cruise missile following a supposed failed missile strike in Syria. The Russians have been known to have previously extracted Tomahawk variants used during Operation Desert Storm, the US military operation in Iraq.

The Tomahawk missiles used in Desert Storm did not have the same level of sophistication in their navigation system as compared to today's Tomahawk variants, like the one said to have been

recovered from Syria. Nonetheless, Russia's recoveries of the older renditions proved valuable.

The missile variant used in Desert Storm relied heavily on imagery stored in the missile's memory, cross-referenced with the terrain it was flying over to ensure that it stayed on course during its flight. The US military faced a major technical challenge in Iraq as the country's topographical profile consisted primarily of flat desert, with relatively few distinguishable features in its overall terrain to help the Tomahawk missiles navigation system figure out its location, going off course as a result and failing at times.

To mitigate these challenges the missiles were often flown over Iran as its mountainous terrain aided the missile's navigation system, however, despite this, some of them failed and were subsequently extracted and used by the Iranians; allegedly in the development of their Soumar cruise missile. Failed US Tomahawks have been found in Saudi Arabia, and Turkey, and the People's Republic of China (PRC) as well, with the latter, allegedly having used it to reverse engineer and design their CJ-10 missile.

Regardless of whether the recovered Tomahawk by Russia was from a failed air strike in Syria or America's older conflicts in Iraq, Serbia, etc, Russia has explicitly stated it would use it to enhance their own missile inventory. Iran as aforementioned has also had a history of reverse engineering US military technology. For instance, the country is notorious for creating

carbon copies of American Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and showing them off to the world.

Other instances such as the crash of an American Black Hawk helicopter fitted with stealth technology during the famous 'Operation Neptune Spear' inside a compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan on 2 May 2011 and the shooting down of a US F-17 flying over Yugoslavia on 27 March 1999 gave these countries the means and opportunity to gain the technological know-how on the US's critical stealth technology, possibly using it to further develop their own.

There have also been accounts of how the Soviet Union had been able to secure US and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) aircrafts such as the F-86 Sabre during the Korean War. Similarly, during the 'Taiwan Strait Crisis,' an early US Sidewinder short-range air-to-air-missile failed to explode and got stuck in a Mig-17 which the Soviets were able to get their hands on and successfully reverse engineer it and rechristen it as their own K-13 missile, which gave the USSR a major boost in the development of infrared air-to-air missiles technology.

The examples cited do not even begin to scratch the surface of the volume of documented data on surreptitious acquisitions, let alone cases which have never reached the public sphere.

Rising Concerns...

The potential risk of military technology falling into enemy hands is said to be a major consideration by nations looking to sell their military technology. For instance, there had been a lot of deliberation over the US selling or at least loaning F-35s to Taiwan, as there were concerns that critical technology could fall into the hands of the Chinese. Acquiring the adversary's weapon systems is simply invaluable. The news of the US getting a hold of the Russian Pantsir is just another instance in a long history of surreptitious acquisition, and most certainly not the last.

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

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India's Stakes in a Two-Front War – Analysis

Currently, India does not have the initiative and is not in a position to simultaneously engage both its adversaries. It doesn't have the intentions, or the resources, nor the political and military will, or the leadership to do so. Paradoxically, both China and Pakistan (combined) have the resources, reasons and will to do so. And as such, the initiative rests with them. Can they do so? The answer is yes. But 'will they do so?' is a million-dollar question.

by Major General V K Madhok (Retd)

Recently, free and vague talks besides conversations have been doing the rounds regarding the possible involvement of India in a two-front war against China and Pakistan. Nevertheless, the issue is serious and important, and cannot be wished away.

This missive attempts to cautiously deliberate and explore the following questions before drawing worthwhile conclusions. The questions are – can India get involved in a two-front war? And if so, in what capacity? Does our defence policy cater for such a situation? Are we prepared for it? Or, have we taken it for granted that such a situation won't arise? Have our two adversaries the

resources and intentions to take this initiative? In which case, what will be their strategic aim, objectives, and targets? Has such a situation arisen in the past? Should China and Pakistan take the initiative and India is caught unawares, what could be the scenario? Or, can India take the initiative to engage both our adversaries or will have to contend only with a defensive or offensive-defence posture? Will any reorganization be necessary and possible to counter such a threat?

Currently, India does not have the initiative and is not in a position to simultaneously engage both its adversaries. It doesn't have the intentions, or the resources, nor the political

and military will, or the leadership to do so. Neither does the Ministry of Defence visualize such a situation. In fact, we don't have a defence policy. And if there is one, the nation has a right to know it. Paradoxically, both China and Pakistan (combined), have the resources, reasons and will to do so. And as such, the initiative rests with them. Can they do so? The answer is yes. But 'will they do so?' is a million-dollar question.

Their strategy aim, objectives, and targets can be spelt out with great precision if they take such recourse. But that is the task for the R&AW and IB, who failed miserably in 1962 and the Kargil conflict, and even while forecasting Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

and his family's assassination after a military coup was concerned, or for that matter, the assassinations of Indira Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi.

Was such a contingency visualized earlier on? Take 1971's thirteen-day Indo-Pak conflict from 4th December 1971 to 16th December 1971 as an example. When India nearly got involved in a three-front war, i.e. against China, East Pakistan and West Pakistan! Possibility of Chinese intervention was catered for. When India launched operations against East Pakistan and also in the west, it was a risk which paid off. In the west, Lt Gen Candeth, GOC-in-C, Western Command had 11 Divisions, Armoured Divisions, 4 Independent Armoured Brigades, and 3 Artillery and Engineer Brigades, but we fared poorly at great cost to the country. If China, which wanted and still wants a unified Pakistan, had intervened, the scenario would have been different.

If at all, in the next ten years or so, should India be in a position to engage our two adversaries simultaneously, it must never be done. History teaches us about many such instances when a nation failed after indulging in a two-front war. Take Hitler's invasion of Russia 129 years after Napoleon's invasion. After conquering Europe, and still engaged in Africa, Hitler invaded Russia. His forces included 134 Divisions at full strength, 600,000 vehicles and 700,000 horses, the largest force at that time. But it ended in a disaster – loss of 800,000 troops, and Hitler's demise.

What conclusions can we draw from this very brief dissertation is that; China and Pakistan are in a position to jointly invade and cross our borders. India is only in a position to defend itself. But even to do so, some very hard work will be necessary. Some recommendations have been made for our strategic planners:

- India must have an articulate defense policy which is periodically updated.
- Our paramilitary forces must be reorganized, preferably into an

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The questions are – can India get involved in a two-front war? And if so, in what capacity? Does our defence policy cater for such a situation? Are we prepared for it? Or, have we taken it for granted that such a situation won't arise? Have our two adversaries the resources and intentions to take this initiative?

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internal security force, Border Security Force, TA, and NCC.

- Our border roads and logistic infrastructures need a major effort and consideration to enable the Armed Forces to move, live and fight.
- Territorial Army must be expanded from its current strength of 40,000 to 50,000, to at least 1,00,00,000.
- Indigenization needs a major push. We should institute an indigenization council instead of just an acquisition committee for our arms and equipment.
- Reorganize our command structure into two theatre commands – one each for the East against China, and the second one against Pakistan. Both under the command of a full General officer respectively. In which case, India will need a CDS.
- There's a need to conduct exercises against a two-front invasion and our defensive posture to counter it.
- Our intelligence agencies have fared poorly in the past, and they must be monitored and specific questions must be set for them, concerning our adversaries and their intentions.
- Our reservist system specially regarding the officer corps, is non-functional. It must be activated. Our

senior combat leaders must study those campaigns which ended in disaster, as they have much to teach. Besides, they should also read thoughts on the Art of War, by original military thinkers.

- There is an urgent need to make up officer shortages.
- Students from colleges and training institutions must be encouraged to see our borders.
- We should practice and create wherewithal to move or lift at least a division from one sector to another, when such a contingency for additional troops arises.
- Our military training institutions must make the students familiar with the organizations of Chinese and Pakistani military, and their doctrines.
- Finally, we may have to think of allies in case of a combined invasion by Pakistan and China.

These are but a few brief suggestions. But there are many, many more recommendations which can only be made by the Armed Forces HQ themselves.

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



Major General V K Madhok (Retd)

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Bara Khana in Faraway Vancouver

An unforgettable meeting with veterans to discuss their problems, mostly related to pensions, and attending a fauji get-together 11,000 km away from home.

by Lieutenant General Shankar Ghosh (Retd)

In August 2005, shortly before my assignment ended in the embassy at Washington DC, I received a call from a retired Army colonel in Vancouver who said he was the president of the British Columbia Indian Ex-servicemen Society. He complained that Military Attaches seldom, if ever, visited them, and that I must do so before I returned to India. Till that time, I wasn't even aware that there was such an organisation of Indian veterans in Canada. Intrigued, I promised I would do so, but the colonel insisted that I visit them on September 12. Thus, a month later, my wife and I landed in Vancouver after a six-hour flight from Washington.

British Columbia is an extremely beautiful part of Canada and we were looking forward to some good sight-seeing. But sadly, that was not to be! The colonel, a smart, well-dressed Sikh, informed us that the following morning there would be a meeting with our

ex-servicemen to discuss their problems, mostly related to pensions, followed by a Bara Khana in the evening. The latter really took me by surprise, because for the life of me I couldn't imagine attending a fauji Bara Khana, 11,000 km away from home.

The next day, we met with two dozen veterans, mostly all Sikhs, in a makeshift conference hall. The colonel introduced us and thereafter, it was all pure Punjabi... it was just like being back in India in a Sikh infantry battalion! Their problems were many and my Punjabi wasn't the best, so after a while, I handed over the meeting to my wife, who apart from being a Punjabi was also a senior civil servant in our government. Over the next two hours, she heard one complaint after another about non-release of pensions and the difficulties they faced getting their legitimate dues. It was all very

upsetting and we left the meeting in a rather pensive mood.

The Bara Khana in the evening was very different. Nearly a hundred veterans, again mostly all Sikhs, sat together on tables of six and eight toasting good health to each other. It was only when the master of ceremonies, a Subedar Major, came on stage, that I realised the significance of September 12. It was Saragarhi Day, of great importance to all Sikh warriors in general, and to the Sikh Regiment in particular. It would be recalled that on September 12, 1897, hundreds of Afghans attacked the British outpost of Saragarhi in North West Frontier Province. Twenty-one soldiers of the Sikh Regiment, led by Hav Ishar Singh (portrayed by Akshay Kumar in the recent film), fought to the last man defending the fort, in one of the most courageous battles in the history of warfare.



Indian Armed Forces veterans living in Vancouver celebrating India's Republic Day; Representational Image

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The Colonel, a smart, well-dressed Sikh, informed us that the following morning there would be a meeting with our ex-servicemen to discuss their problems, mostly related to pensions, followed by a Bara Khana in the evening. The latter really took me by surprise, because for the life of me I couldn't imagine attending a fauji Bara Khana, 11,000 km away from home.

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The 'josh', spirit and enthusiasm amongst these veterans from Punjab was unimaginable as the subedar Major narrated the story of the Battle of Saragarhi (which all of them would have heard multiple times before), ending in the final soul-stirring 'Bole so Nihal, Sat Sri Akal'. This was surely India, not Vancouver!

The icing on the cake was the chance meeting with Brig Darshan Singh. No cadet of the National Defence Academy during the late 1960s can ever forget the burly head of Physical Training, especially those who were kicked off by him from the 10-metre diving board and fell spread eagled into the swimming pool below. Daka Singh, as

he was then called, was sadly now a shadow of his original build, but it was such a pleasure for me to escort him to the stage and introduce him to the audience as my UstaaD! Everyone



Lieutenant General Shankar Ghosh (Retd)

The author is a Former GOC-in-C, Western Command and is a military luminary who has held several challenging & high-profile appointments throughout his highly decorated career. He is a prolific writer on National Security issues. This article was first published in the 'Tribune' and has been reproduced with due permission from the author in the larger interest of the military fraternity.

stood up and gave him a rousing round of applause.

We returned to Washington DC but my wife remained very disturbed. Over the next few months, she took it as a holy mission to ensure that our Vancouver warriors got their monetary dues. It took a while but soon after we returned to India, she received a letter from the Colonel that all the affected veterans had received lakhs of rupees as their pension arrears. What a joyful culmination of our journey to Vancouver!

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



IAF's Special Heli Borne Ops in '71: A War Hero's Battle Account!

In the war, we carried out four Special Heli Borne Operations, between 7th and 15th of Dec 71. We moved over 6000 soldiers, over 202 tons of miscellaneous equipment, right into the battlefields, even across the mighty Meghna river, nonstop, day and night, as well as evacuated hundreds of casualties of both friend and foe on the return leg.

by Squadron Leader Pushp K Vaid (Retd)

My lesser known, remembered, acknowledged or unsung history below, is about a few helicopters, pilots and technical personnel of the IAF, who rose to the occasion to help the soldiers of IV corps of the Indian Army, with embedded Mitro Bahini, to leap over the riverine and marshy areas quickly in four special heli borne operations, with no precedent or doctrine, learning on the run. In my view the helicopter operation shortened the war and contributed to the quick victory, thus saving lives and the agony of long war.

Because of Lt Gen sagat singh and Gp capt Chandan Singh, a bunch of helicopters from 110, 105 and 111 HU, air lifted over 6,000 troops and their

equipment including mountain arty bde with its ammunition - over the formidable, unfordable Meghna river to capture Dacca and liberate East Pakistan and form the democratic republic of Bangladesh.

I was aware of a clandestine guerilla warfare taking place within East Pak from sept '71. But our helicopter operations were restricted only up to the international border. EAC Air II had called my CO, sqn ldr Sandhu to Shillong in sept '71 and briefed him to train pilots for low flying and at night. Since such training was not possible at Kumbhigram due to hilly terrain and lack of facilities, the younger pilots were sent to Chabua (105 HU) to not only train low flying at night, but also

be categorised by the Mi-4 examiner sqn ldr Rama Rao.

Due to fear of attacks on Kumbhigram airfield by Paki sabres from Dacca, 110 HU was ordered to disperse all its helicopters to Aijal and Teliamura (by then HQ IV Corps) about 40 km east of Agartala airport.

From Teliamura and Aijal, during the last week of Nov to first week of Dec '71, we were extensively flying all day, all along the IV Corps frontage, for communication and reconnaissance of army senior officers as well as evacuating casualties to field hospitals.

Perhaps by 7th Dec, the IAF fighters and bombers had grounded the

Pakistan Air force. This helped the helicopters to fly safe without worrying about Pakistani fighters.

06 Dec 71

On 6th Dec 110 HU was ordered by Gp Capt Chandan Singh to move to Agartala. By afternoon hours on 6th Dec, all 9 Mi-4s of 110 HU were deployed at Agartala. On 7th Dec we were joined by 3 Mi-4s of 105 HU from Chabua, and on 11th Dec, 2 Mi-4s of 111 HU from Hasimara joined us.

07 – 09 Dec 71

At Agartala, early morning on 7th Dec, Chandan Singh briefed Sandhu and I, that we are to proceed to Kailashahar, north of Agartala, to undertake a special heli borne operation to pick up troops from Kalura, and induct them at Sylhet, both places in East Pakistan. We had many questions to ask. Chandan Singh, had planned the operation well, had made arrangements, and therefore gave us satisfactory assurances. We immediately got down to flight planning and by noontime, Mi-4s, and part of our ground support staff, positioned ourselves at Kailashahar.

In the war, we carried out four special heli borne operations, between 7th and 15th of Dec 71. We moved over 6000 soldiers, more than 202 tons of miscellaneous equipment, right into the battlefields, even across the mighty (over 5 km wide) Meghna river, nonstop, day and night, as well as evacuated hundreds of casualties of both friend and foe on the return leg.

I don't remember the exact number of soldiers we ferried, or the load we carried. It was war, there were no load manifests! Nobody was keeping a count, or weighing the load, there was no time or facility. The figures I have quoted is from a small pocket diary that I used in war, for mission planning of the entire helicopter force from approximate load tables given by army units, as also post war debrief of aircrew and operational report submitted by the unit. I still have the diary and my logbooks. The number of troops carried may also include those lifted forward, as well as those casualties lifted backward, I don't remember.

Nobody looked at the charts to see what we can carry. We just filled up the helicopter and coaxed it to get airborne. We were overloaded most of the time. I can tell you the Mi-4 helicopter was amazing, it never let us down. We were truly fortunate that we had no accidents.

I am also incredibly grateful to our engineers and technicians, who kept all the helicopters flying, all the time during the war. They had truly little resources, and they were doing all kinds of maintenance in the field, with some support from our base at Kumbhigram. Sadly, the extraordinary contribution of our engineering staff was not recognized or rewarded.

The pilots and flight engineers were all amazing. I was 30 then, and most were in their 20's. What a pleasure it was, to have all these wonderful, motivated folks, toiling with me cheerfully. Wherever we landed, the local ordinary Bengali folks would turn up in large numbers to help unload the helicopters, and offer simple food and water from their own mud pots.

We were available 24/7. We slept an odd hour here and there, wherever we could find a place, whenever there was lull in activity. We ate whenever there was food available. All pilots were eager to fly, not one pilot refused a sortie, and I don't remember anybody complaining of hunger, thirst or sickness.

Wherever we landed, there were arms and ammunition lying around, abandoned by the fleeing Pakistan army. In their youthful exuberance, I saw some of my pilots walking around with grenades tucked into their belts. It dawned on me that it was perilous, and I had to order the pilots to hand over the grenades to our army. I had no problem with the pilots collecting weapons or mementos as long as they were not armed.

On 7th Dec 71, five Mi-4s of 110 positioned us at Kailashahar by 0900 hrs. Three more Mi-4s from 105 HU, joined us at Kailashahar before noon. By then, to our big relief, Fg Offr Arun Karandikar, started positioning both petrol and kerosene fuel, as well as oil drums 15x200 ltr, in each shuttle, between Agartala and Kailashahar.

Brig Bunty Quinn, with Chandan came around 1100 hrs in a Chetak and took Sandhu and I for reconnaissance of suitable landing sites at Kalura and Sylhet. We chose large paddy fields at both places. The landing site at Kalura was just north of the railway station, adjacent to the rail and road. At Sylhet, the landing zone was about two km south west of the railway station, and two important bridges across river Surma, which led to the town and military garrison well to the right. During the reconnaissance we carefully avoided going near the railway station, town or military garrison.

Brig Quinn perhaps had a complete intelligence briefing, and did caution us, that the railway station and bridges are well defended, and that we are to keep well away during the troop induction.

We decided to follow a straight-line tack to and fro between Kalura and Sylhet, based on the assurance of Brig Quinn and the fact that we had not spotted any enemy activity during the reconnaissance. Sylhet was approx 41 km to north west from Kalura.

Past noon we moved from Kailashahar to Kalura and waited for 4/5 GR troops to arrive. The landing ground was fairly even and hard. The 4/5 GR troops started arriving around 1430 hours, with sunset expected around 1730 hrs. My briefing to all the pilots was to fill up the helicopter and get airborne keeping a gap of 3 or 4 minutes from the helicopter in front.

Every helicopter had a number, I was number one and so on. We were going to have only one helicopter on ground at Sylhet at any one time, so as not to give a bigger target to the enemy. From about 1500 to 1745, a total of 22 sorties were flown into the enemy held terrain and carried a total of 254 troops and 400 kgs of freight of 4/5 GR.

For the first and second rotation we used 7 helicopters and for the third rotation we used 8 helicopters. We had enough fuel to do three rotations each. We couldn't use all the helicopters because one was doing cas-evac from other battlefields ex Kailashahar. Cas-evac always had priority.

By the time we went for the second rotation, the Pakistan army had taken vantage positions at Sylhet railway station and began firing at us with small arms & LMGs. We could see hundreds of tracer bullets coming towards us. Due to the secrecy and surprise of our operation, the enemy did not try to hamper our operation from Kalura.

Meanwhile, Flt Lt Singla and Chandan Singh were orbiting our landing zone in Sylhet in the armed Kilo flight Alouette helicopter, keeping an eye on us at a higher altitude and also attacking enemy gun positions pointed out by Flt Lt Sharma, the FAC whom we had dropped with 4/5 GR in the first rotation.

Around 1800, well after sunset, we returned to Kailashahar and shut down for refuelling. It was pitch dark by now. When the helicopters were being checked, one engineer came and told me that one helicopter had not come back. We called him on the radio and discovered he had gotten lost. We then fired a flare, the pilots saw it, came over and landed.

Chandan Singh told us not to fly during the night because it was too dangerous, and we would be sitting ducks to the fusillade aimed at us. Perched above us in the armed Alouette, he could perhaps have seen all the bullets (and tracers) being fired at us, while we could only see the ones which came towards each of us. It was indeed very frightening.

4/5 GR had not had the time to plan for their heli-lift to Sylhet, as to who would go first and who would go next, what was to be carried with each of them, and what replenishments they required to continue fighting at Sylhet.

So, when the night flying was called off, there were just 254 Gurkhas at Sylhet, without a HF radio set, with extraordinarily little or no water, food or ammunition, no heavy infantry weapons like mortars, facing annihilation from 1 1/2 Brigades of Pakis.

After a lot of discussion between Quinn and Chandan, it was agreed to send one helicopter to Sylhet. If it came back safely, the SHBO was to restart from Kalura. Chandan then asked me

to get one crew ready. I volunteered to go. He was sure I was going to be shot down and won't come back. I went to meet the aircrew and asked for a volunteer to come with me. Every one of the pilot's put their hands up. Wow, wow. Our morale was sky high. We got loaded with essential equipment and soldiers of 4/5 GR and got airborne around midnight.

It was pitch dark, and all we had was a compass to navigate and 20 minutes of flying time to Sylhet. Of course, I knew what and where the helipad was in day time. I had no idea how I was going to find it at night, and everything looked different at night in blacked out conditions.

Luckily for us, Flg Offr SC Sharma, the FAC with 4/5 GR, whom we had dropped in the first rotation, came on the GRU radio set when he heard the helicopter and said, 'about time you guys came back'. I was so glad to hear Sharma. I asked him what the situation was like on the ground and he said it was 'quiet', and that he would light a fire for us so we would know where to land.

When I saw the fire, I headed straight for it. My briefing to the troops in my helicopter was - as soon as I landed, everybody to jump out with their equipment and I would be airborne in 30 seconds. We had removed our clamshell doors for the duration of the war, made it much easier to load and unload the Mi-4 helicopter. That also meant that there was a big hole at the back of our cabin. When I was on finals, I saw tracer bullets coming towards me from all directions, I was sure we would have dozens of bullet holes.

We landed at Sylhet, dropped our load and got airborne within a minute, climbed very quickly and set course back to Kalura where the rest of 4/5 GR was waiting. I asked my flight engineer to look for bullet holes, and a few minutes later he came back with a big grin and said that there was not even one bullet hole. I was amazed! The enemy could not see us - they could only hear us, that's why they were just firing with no target in view. I contacted Kailashahar and told the rest of the helicopters to proceed to Kalura and recommence the SHBO ASAP. I

picked up the next load from Kalura, and dropped them at Sylhet, and came running back still with no bullet holes, picked up the third load and dropped it at Sylhet.

After dropping my third load, when I got airborne from Sylhet, I noticed that our fuel gauge was showing zero fuel. The helicopter was still flying, so of course we had fuel. Three of us in our Mi-4 prayed to whoever was up there to get us back safely. We got back to Kalura without much ado, very fortunate. Four helicopters had got ready and arrived at Kalura when I came back from my third flight.

I took off from Kalura, landed at Kailashahar and switched off to check why my fuel gauge was showing zero. At Kailashahar my engineers discovered a bullet had cut the cable to the fuel gauge. That was changed quickly, we refuelled, and once again joined others and the operation continued throughout the night. We did a total of 14 sorties with 5 helicopters between 0000 and 0500. We carried 124 troops and 2500 kg equipment.

During the next day we did several flights to Sylhet. We finished moving all the soldiers and load of 4/5 GR to Sylhet by 9 Dec morning including two 75/24 Howitzers, its gun crew & pioneers, along with first line ammo, sent by Maj Onkar Goraya BM of 57 Mtn Arty Bde to Kailashahar. In addition, Chandan got everything additional asked for by 4/5 GR air dropped by a Caribou of 33 sqn operating from Kumbhirgram.

The armed Otter and Alouette remained overhead Sylhet day and night to take pot shots, targets of opportunity. Repeated air strikes were done by Hunters and Gnats during the day guided by the FAC on the Sylhet Garrison and anything that moved out towards the twin bridges north of Surma. Herein lies the tale of the incredible act of the depleted 4/5 GR who not only contained 1 1/2 Bde of Pakis at Sylhet, but also accepted their surrender a week later.

During the Sylhet ops three of our helicopters were hit by ground fire, but the crew were able to bring the helicopters back to Kailashahar and the engineers



I discovered later that there were 38 bullet holes in that helicopter! Wow - and only one person who got injured was Sidhu. Sagat was "Monk" like, absolutely unfazed, didn't even blink



were able to fix them, nobody was injured. For having volunteered to do a dangerous mission at night, acting as a guinea pig, Chandan forwarded my name for a gallantry award. I was awarded a vir chakra a few days later.

Throughout the sylhet SHBO, all the pilots flew both by day and night. Having completed the sylhet mission, by 1100 hours on the 9th Dec, all the MI-4's returned to Agartala, where other adventures awaited us.

9-10 Dec 71

The success of the sylhet operation must have given Gen Sagat Singh the confidence to now go for the jugular, at Dacca, across the formidable obstacle of Meghna river, which neither friends nor foe had deemed possible. Our second SHBO was from Brahmanbaria to Raipura, to air lift the battalion of 4 Guards in the evening hours of 9 Dec 71, over a distance of 25 km, deep into East Pak's under belly.

Another interesting incident then happened.

Sometime around 1130 hrs on 9th Dec, Gen Sagat Singh took Brig Mishra, Col Himmeth Singh CO 4 Guards, my OC Sandhu and I, in an unarmed Alouette of 115 HU, flown by Fg Offrs Sidhu and Jitu Sahi to reconnoitre a suitable landing area across the Meghna near Raipura which Sagat/Mishra had chosen from terrain map as suitable for inserting 4 Guards – our next SHBO.

On the flight out, the Alouette climbed up to 5000 feet to stay away from small arms fire. After we had selected our landing zones, two open paddy fields a km apart, about 3-4 km south of Methikanda Rly Stn, we returned. Halfway back, abeam Ashuganj, Sagat told the pilot that Ashuganj was under Indian control and that he wanted to go low to take a look at how 10 Bihar

and 18 Rajput, with 2 EBR support groups were fairing.

When we were perhaps 1000 feet or below, nearing a bund at Ashuganj, suddenly we heard "phut-phut-phut" noise, and there were bullet holes in the Alouette – at least a dozen if not more. Fg Offr Sidhu was hit by a bullet which had come through the instrument panel and went through his shoulder and got buried in the backrest behind him. Another bullet or shard of the perspex creased Sagat's forehead.

I was just two feet behind the pilot's backrest! Awfully close. Fg Offr Jeetu Sahi immediately took over controls, climbed rapidly and landed back at Brahmanbaria.

After surveying an open stadium, next to a stream south of Brahmanbaria as a suitable launch pad, we returned to Agartala, where Sidhu was evacuated to Teliamura field hospital. I discovered later that there were 38 bullet holes in that helicopter! Wow - and only one person who got injured was Sidhu. Sagat was "Monk" like, absolutely unfazed, didn't even blink. Later, we heard 10 Bihar (or perhaps 18 Rajput) boasting that they had shot down a Paki Alouette.

I then took my lot to Brahmanbaria stadium. When we landed there and shut down, we saw hundreds of dead bodies near the river side where we had landed. We asked the locals what had happened, and they told us that the Pakistan army had rounded up all the people from the village, as well as prisoners of war, and shot all behind their head before withdrawing. It was my first horrifying sight of wanton Paki genocide that left an ever-lasting impression in my mind.

For our SHBO that evening to Raipura, I split up the helicopters in two groups

of four. We had planned two landing sites, once again large paddy fields devoid of crop, across the Meghna river, about one kilometre apart. I was to go across the river, land to discharge the troops and their cargo. And after take-off, turn left to come back to Brahmanbaria.

My group of 4 helicopters was to follow me 2-3 minutes apart. The other group following was to take off and land on the right field and after take-off – go right and come back to Brahmanbaria the same way. The briefing was "no over shooting". If the preceding helicopter was still on ground, those following were to slow down, or land slightly to one or the other side. All this was to be in fading light and in pitch darkness afterwards.

4 Guards, fighting a battle on the outskirts of Ashuganj, were ordered to withdraw to Brahmanbaria. So, it was about 1600 by the time they got back and loaded the Mi-4, within half an hour. They were an outstanding organised and feisty bunch, adept at SHBOs into Bhutan in their earlier days with 111 ex Hasimara, as also with 110 in Mizoram prior to 71 war.

I was in the first helicopter on the left, with Chandan, and Coy Cdr Alpha Coy Maj Chandrakant with his troops from Alpha Company. Also on board was FAC Flg Offr Dinky Shaheed with his GRU radio set. I got airborne, crossed Meghna and landed at Raipura. 4 Grds jumped out quickly, and I was just going to pull up my collective, but my instinct told me to wait. Thirty seconds later, sure enough I saw the helicopter behind me overshoot, right on top of me. If I had pulled up, I would have gone straight into him. Very lucky day for Chandan returning with us. I didn't blink either, such things do happen in the excitement of war.

We used 8 helicopters, did 27 sorties, and ferried 4 Grds Alpha Coy and their load from Brahmanbaria to Raipura. In total, we ferried 309 troops and 2200 kgs. The FAC had quickly heaped two straw mountains and set fire to it. It burned and smouldered all night and acted as a beacon. Between 9 at night and 10 in the morning of 10th Dec, we continued the airlift, now we had 10

Mi-4s and we ferried 347 troops and 6000 kgs of load.

At about 0300, when we were loading up our helicopters at Brahmanbaria for the next shuttle across Meghna, one pilot called up on radio to say he had no load, then another, a third one and the 4th one too. I told everybody to shut down and have a break. I went to meet CO 4 Guards Lt Col Himmeth Singh, who accepted my request and started loading up and we continued our flights.

We kept flying the whole night and finished the mission of ferrying the entire Battalion of 4 Grds, Bengali pioneers, and their loads, to Raipura and returned to Agartala.

That was just the beginning. Sagat and Chandan now wanted us to cart half of IV Corps across Meghna supported by Arty and run to Narsingdi. That was to be our next destination, for our third SHBO from Brahmanbaria to Narsingdi to lift 10 Bihar, 18 Rajput, 311 Mtn Bde, 82 Lt Arty Rgt, followed by 59 Mtn Arty Rgt, and 65 Mtn Arty Regt of 57 Mtn Arty Bde. The armour (Indp Armr Sqn with PT 76s) under Maj Shammi Mehta was to swim across Meghna and race forward to catch up at Narsingdi.

10 – 14 Dec 71

All our ten helicopters proceeded to Brahmanbaria with ground crew on the 10th evening and spent the night there. There was no accommodation. So, we managed to find an empty hall near the stadium and all 60 of us, officers and airmen squeezed into it for the night. There was nothing to eat and so we slept on empty stomachs. Two more helicopters joined us from III HU on the 11th.

The task early on 11th Dec morning was to airlift two battalions (10 Bihar and 18 Rajput) and balance 311 Bde + an artillery regiment (65 Mtn Rgt) involving 110 sorties. The field guns were to be broken down to fit into the Mi-4s. Now there was no Pakistan Army in the area to worry about - so we were flying and landing together in pre-reconnoitre big paddy fields, just southwest of Narsingdi.

The first wave of Mi-4s took off from Brahmanbaria at 0530 on 11 Dec and kept flying till 0720. We had ten helicopters and did three sorties each and we carried 321 troops and 7200 kgs of load to Narsingdi. We then had a little break and refuelled at Agartala. Our next rotation started at 0915 and continued till 1145. Again, we had 10 helicopters - we lifted 252 troops and 16700 kgs of load. The load was mostly the Arty guns and its ammo. Miscellaneous logistics, including rations were being air dropped by caribous at Narsingdi with continuous top cover (close air support) by armed Otters & Chetak of Kilo Flight.

Our third rotation started after we had refuelled at Agartala around 1330. Again, we had 10 helicopters and we carried 190 troops and 24,500 kgs of load. The focus was on Arty Guns.

After refuelling at Agartala our fourth rotation started around 1730 - we had 9 helicopters, and each did one sortie and carried 54 troops and 8600 kgs of load including infantry weapon's ammunition. So total for 11 Dec 71 was 815 troops and 65,200 kgs load and we did 99 sorties.

On 11 Dec 71, we also sent one helicopter back to Sylhet for casualty evacuation. Fg Offr BK Sharma and Fg Offr PVR Murthy did the evacuation at night because it felt safer to land at night. Both pilots showed great skill and courage and evacuated 30 casualties in two sorties despite heavy ground fire. They also flew in urgently required ammunition required by troops. Z 349 helicopter came back with several bullet holes.

We continued our SHBO on the 12th of Dec from Brahmanbaria to Narsingdi. First detail had 8 helicopters and they carried 138 troops and 13,820 kgs load. Second detail: we had 4 helicopters and lifted 96 troops and 5600 kgs of load.

A total of 35 sorties were done involving 35.15 hours flying and we carried 234 troops and 19,420 kgs of load from Brahmanbaria to Narsingdi on 12th Dec.

On 13th Dec, we continued our SHBO from Brahmanbaria to Narsingdi. We did a total of 30 sorties involving 25 hours of flying. We had 10 helicopters

and air lifted 282 troops and 14,850 kgs load.

Overall, a total of 1331 troops and 99,470 kgs load was carried from Brahmanbaria to Narsingdi; that involved 164 sorties and 141.45 hours of flying.

On 13th Dec morning, Sagat Singh took Chandan and went to visit Maj Gen Rocky Hira, GOC 23 Mountain Div, trying to cross Meghna at its widest part at Chandpur. Sagat was impatient at the slow progress of 23 Div and wanted them to cross over quickly and blockade the southern part of Dacca. So it was that Sagat and Chandan planned the 4th and the largest SHBO across the widest part of the mighty Meghna to take 23 Div across.

14-15 Dec 71

In the evening on 13th Dec, when we returned from Narsingdi to Agartala, I was ordered to plan for the biggest SHBO next day from Daudkandi to Baidya Bazar and deliver 23 Div to the southern suburb of Dacca. By then the Indian army and Mitro Bahini had already reached Tongi in the north, and Demra area in the south east. They had started shelling Paki army garrison in Dacca. A recce in an Alouette helicopter was carried out to locate open fields at Daudkandi and Baidya Bazar.

We had 12 Mi-4 helicopters and positioned ourselves at Daudkandi at 0730 on 14 Dec to take 23 Div troops and their load to Baidya Bazar. However, due to marshy terrain and exhaustion, the first lot of troops arrived at only around 1030 hrs. We had made three groups of 4 helicopters each. The first group was called Black, second one was called Red and third one was called Green - no idea why we did that. Must have sounded like a good idea at the time.

Between 1100 and 1630 we did a total of 79 sorties crossing the Meghna river at its widest part and carried 810 troops and 22,650 kgs of load from Daudkandi and Baidya Bazar, a distance of about 25 km. Daudkandi is 66 km, south west of Agartala. Baidya Bazar is north of Narayanganj, southern outskirts of Dacca. A large part of 23 Div personnel crossed by boats. We

carried the rest with their stores and guns which had been left behind.

On 15 Dec 71, early morning, before a cease fire came into effect, we used 7 helicopters and continued our air-lift of the stragglers of 23 Div from Daudkandi to Baidya Bazar. We did 43 sorties and carried 402 troops and 16,650 kgs of load.

Between 14 & 15 Dec, we had ferried a total of 1212 troops and 89,300 kgs load of 23 Div from Daudkandi to Baidya Bazar in 122 sorties flying a total of 62.20 hours.

On receipt of an SOS from the army, we sent one helicopter to carry vital equipment and ammunition to Narsingdi as well as evacuate serious casualties.

16 Dec 71 Surrender Day

Back at Agartala, on the 16th morning, we heard that Maj Gen Jacob was being sent from Calcutta to Dacca to discuss surrender terms. With Paki garrisons in Dacca surrounded from west, north, east and south, no place to run to, and the whole Bengali population hostile to Pakis, we stayed tuned into pocket radios confident that by the end of the day the sun would set on East Pakistan and rise over a new democratic country called Bangladesh.

Our morale went sky high when an Avro arrived at Agartala from Calcutta with Gen Aurora, V Adm Krishnan and their entourage. Soon another Avro arrived from Guhati with Air Msl Diwan and a large number of IAF officers. Two more Avros brought journalists. By 3 o'clock Agartala was chock-a-block with Avros, Kilo Flt Dak, Alouettes from Tezpur & Bagdogra, Air Op Chetaks and Krishaks from 659 sqn, besides the valiant Mi-4s of 110, 105 and 111 HU.

Dacca runway had been severely bombed, with many large craters, and was unfit for use except by helicopters. Therefore, it was decided to fly the VIPs to Dacca in Alouettes with white seat covers. The war was over for us. Mi-4s had no seat cover and besides VIPs didn't like to fly in our cocktail shaker.

However, there were a large number of lesser men, and the press reporters. So, I

was asked to fly them to Dacca in Mi-4s. I was told that my pilots not needed for flying duties should be left behind. However, I ignored the instructions – I reasoned that after risking their lives and flying to their limit, my pilots and flight engineers deserved to see this once-in-a-lifetime surrender ceremony.

Therefore, all pilots and flight engineers, besides other personnel, who fought the war together with me were "smuggled" on board five Mi4s which followed the long line of Alouette helicopters heading for Dacca.

A tumultuous reception awaited us. Flying officer S Krishnamurthy, called "Kruts" in 110, in his exuberance also managed to "photobomb" Gen Niazi signing the surrender document in presence of General Aurora and the who's who of Indian military brass. Much to the chagrin of Gen Jacob, Kruts even had his hand over the General's shoulder, in my opinion, a right display of camaraderie and exuberance of winning a war.

We took as many reporters as we could. There were men and women reporters from so many different parts of the world. There was no restriction. We still had no clamshell doors or seat belts for passengers- they hung on to anything they could find, or to each other, can you imagine that? We made no passenger manifest!

When we landed at Dhaka, and parked next to Pak International Terminal at Tejgaon, there were thousands of

Bengalis milling about cheering us, each wanting to shake our hands or carry us on their shoulders. A multitude of cars, buses, rickshaws, cyclists, even bullock carts awaited to take us to witness the public surrender ceremony at Ramna Racecourse public surrender ceremony at Ramna Racecourse.

It was like the movies when the Americans drove into Paris at the end of WW2. It was a wonderful feeling of success and victory in war. There were so many Bengali peoples, with guns, firing in the air in jubilation. It is a wonder that none got shot. Less than two weeks after the declaration of war, the Pakistani army surrendered with over 93,000 troops.

I have no recollection of how I came back to the airport from Ramna Racecourse – just that we flew back at night to Agartala.

After Bangladesh was formed – our helicopter kept going to Dacca and other locations in Bangladesh to help the Govt of Bangladesh and Indian Army maintain law and order. Well that is another story.

The whole Bangladesh war was one of the most wonderful experiences of my life. I also had the good fortune to work with Lt Gen Sagat Singh and Gp Capt Chandan Singh – two of my heroes during that war.

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



Squadron Leader Pushp K Vaid (Retd)

Squadron Leader Pushp Vaid (Retd) is a decorated Indian Air Force veteran. During the operations against Pakistan in December 1971, he was serving with a helicopter unit deployed in the Eastern Sector. On one occasion it was decided to transport an infantry element to the sector by air. Knowing fully well that the helicopter landing area would not be adequately lit and that he would come under heavy enemy fire on landing, volunteered to undertake this mission, and successfully completed the task. Subsequently, he flew 34 more hazardous missions deep behind the enemy lines. Throughout, Flight Lieutenant Pushp Kumar Vaid displayed gallantry, professional skill, devotion to duty of high order and was conferred the Vir Chakra. He is presently living his sunset years in Scotland.



Psychological Impact of Drones in Battlefield

The psychological impact of weapons on the human mind has always been a subject of research and in recent times, it has gained further importance under the umbrella of 'Tactical Psychology'.

by Commodore BR Prakash (Retd)

Drones are the latest game changers or force multipliers in modern warfare. Drone warfare started to gain prominence when the United States cracked down hard upon insurgents and terrorists soon after 9/11, using drones to strike at targets. Since then, they have been extensively deployed for surveillance and strikes in the battle against terrorism. The last four years saw several countries using drones in their battles; Nigeria used drones against Boko Haram, Turkey used them in Syrian raids, the UK in Iraq and Syria, and the US in Libya.

The latest conflict between Azerbaijan-Armenia again witnessed their deployment in large numbers where they were tremendously effective against the entrenched troops, armour, and artillery. Azerbaijan used its drone fleet to destroy Armenia's weapons systems in Nagorno-Karabakh, enabling a swift advance and victory.

The success of drones against armour and artillery has been analysed threadbare and there is no doubt of its success as a cost-effective weapon of choice in battle against tanks and Air Defence systems. However, there is another aspect of drone warfare particularly against infantry troops, which

has not received the same attention. This is the psychological impact of these weapons on the war fighting morale of troops in the open, in trenches or entrenched in bunkers.

Unlike artillery barrages, which are generally limited by inherent inaccuracies, time and volume; drones can remain in the area for very long durations and precisely strike targets, even well entrenched targets. The psychological impact of weapons on the human mind has always been a subject of research and in recent times, it has gained further importance under the umbrella of tactical psychology. Tactical psychology is the art and science of exploiting human weakness – encouraging the enemy to run, hide or surrender. When applied correctly it increases operational tempo, saves lives on both sides, and saves ammunition. It can stop a war descending into a messy quagmire.

Leo Murray in his book, "War Games: The Psychology of Combat" has dealt with this subject giving a new perspective to understanding the human element in combat. He brings out that unlike battle morale, which he describes as a vague label that includes everything from national culture to the quality of boots, tactical psychology focusses on

what soldiers do once they are in contact with the enemy. He emphasises that tactical psychology focuses on what a front-line soldier can do to win a battle rather than looking at the things governments and generals might be able to control or worrying about the million tiny problems that no one can control.

The application of tactical psychology in the battlefield is not about making our own men fight more but making the other side fight less and give up. It is all about employing combat instruments like suppressive fire, aerial bombings, flanking attacks and fast attacks and these days' armed drones to break the will of the enemy to fight. It is sometimes about simply driving a powerful message to the enemy that they have the chance to surrender.

Like many aspects of war, tactical psychology combines art and science. The art is the practical application: all those dirty and not-so-dirty tactics that accomplish the task. The science blends psychology, history, and field experiments to quantitatively analyse how each tactic works. This analysis can help armies and soldiers mix attrition and manoeuvre more effectively.

Brigadier General SLA Marshall, a military journalist and historian, who understood the realities of combat, advocated the concept of fire ratio theory in his book *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command*; based on group interviews and concluded that fewer than 25% of men in combat actually fired their weapons. He said that the nub of battle, and therefore the outcome of war, was a simple question that a soldier asked himself when he was under fire: 'will the possible effect on the enemy of my active participation be worth the possible adverse effect on me?' This 'is it worth it?' calculation is an almost unconscious, quick, and dirty comparison of the costs and rewards of fighting. This begs the question as to 'who fights?' and the answer is 'pretty much everybody'.

If the conditions are right, then almost any man will fight but change those conditions and almost everybody will stop fighting. It is indeed this aspect of human psychology that modern weapons like armed drones tend to exploit by changing conditions to ensure that the will to fight is swiftly extinguished.

In a battle, it has been observed that men are much more likely to stop fighting when bullets pass near them, when their mates stop fighting, when their mates are killed or injured and when they get awfully close to the enemy. The attacking soldiers continue marching into enemy fire until they take 10 or 20 per cent casualties. Only at this point, will they go to ground and try to find a better way to attack. This can be related to the phenomenon of "fight"-or- "flight" response (also called hyperarousal or the acute stress response), first described by Walter Bradford Cannon, which is a physiological reaction that occurs in response to a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival.

His theory states that animals react to threats with a general discharge of the sympathetic nervous system, preparing the animal for fighting or fleeing. In its application to

the armed combat, Leo Murray in his book "War Games: The Psychology of Combat" expanded on this theory to include "Freezing" and "Fussing" and proposed a 'Four Fs' theory of freeze-fussing-flee-fight as a model for armed combat. Freezing is a kind of paralysis partly due to physiological powering-down following, and sometimes during, a period of high stress, while fussing is a tendency for people under pressure to focus on what is manageable rather than what is important. This is a useful theory because, rather than equivocating about morale or how men feel, it focuses on what they do and what makes them do it.

With this as a background, the analysis of how employment of drones could be exploited to prey and mess the human mind is more easily understood. The defining characteristic of the drone that makes it qualitatively different from the less sophisticated artillery barrage or machine gun fire is its ability of pervasiveness in the battlefield area for long durations. Drones do not enter into a battlefield like a strike aircraft or special forces team, quickly taking out the target and then leaving. Drones are omnipresent. They hover over in the area, watching, transmitting data, coordinating strikes or in some cases carrying out strikes themselves while continuing surveillance. It's like Big Brother in the sky. The soldier recognises that he is under constant surveillance and that all his movements are tracked for vulnerabilities. He subsists under the constant fear of being attacked at any time, but does not know when, unlike an artillery barrage.

Since the drone operates at extended heights above surface-to-air missile engagement ranges or is insignificantly small to be tracked and engaged by SAM systems, neutralising it is an immense challenge. Drones in the air induce a sense of both uncontrollability and unpredictability of action. Armed drones like Israeli Harpy, Harop, or Rotem can be used with pinpoint accuracy. In the future, drones can be used with swarm tactics like a hive of bees to undertake microscopic surgical strikes at precise locations killing or maiming few while spreading panic or causing others to freeze into inaction or flee from the scene.

What is the impact due to this uninterrupted drone presence? The constant noise of a drone circling overhead, combined with its potential lethality, has a profound psychological effect on the soldiers in the battlefield. While there has been a wide range of studies investigating this phenomenon particularly in its impact on civilians, no similar studies have been done on its impact on soldiers. This may be due to the primary employment of drones to combat terrorists, as borne out by their employment by Nigeria against Boko Haram, Turkey in Syrian raids, and the US in Libya. The recent clash in Nagorno-Karabakh is perhaps the first deployment in an actual war.

In the absence of such studies on soldiers, the findings of studies on civilians can form a reasonable basis for assessing the possible psychological impact on soldiers. "Living under Drones", is one study conducted by lawyers and researchers at Stanford University and New York University in the northern tribal region of Waziristan (FATA), which

comprehensively examines the impact of drones on civilian population.

The findings of this study are truly disturbing. A vast majority of people reported being perpetually scared of drone strikes, day and night. Just the constant noise above makes people experience bouts of emotional trauma and symptoms of anxiety. And these symptoms are more widespread than previously thought – there are reports of men, women, and children too terrified to sleep at night. Medical practitioners have asserted that these anxiety-related disorders amongst the people of waziristan often manifest themselves in the form of physical illness, ranging from headaches to heart attacks, even suicides.

Drone-induced anxieties are having a profound impact on the way these people live their lives. For example, people avoid daily activities such as grocery shopping, farming, and driving for fear of drone strikes. This behaviour is symptomatic of “anticipatory anxiety” – a psychological phenomenon that causes people to worry constantly about their immediate future, which is quite common in conflict zones.

scientifically and medically speaking, this phenomenon can be explained as an outcome of unpredictability and uncontrollability. The psychological impact of unpredictability of traumatic events is further aggravated by their uncontrollability. since the 1960s substantial experimental work (e.g. inescapable shock experiments with animals has shown that unpredictability and uncontrollability of stressor events lead to anxiety and fear. Exposure to such stressors causes certain associative, motivational, and emotional deficits in animals that closely resemble the effects of traumatic stress in humans⁸.

These deficits include learned helplessness – a phenomenon characterized by failure of animals initially exposed to uncontrollable shocks to subsequently learn to escape or avoid shocks that were potentially controllable in a different situation. The studies of war, torture, and earthquake survivors shows that unpredictable and uncontrollable stressors have a similar impact on humans, most commonly leading to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression. Although other stressful war events (e.g. aerial bombardment, artillery barrage) may have some of these features, few have all of them in the same pronounced fashion as drone warfare.

Anticipatory fear is another reaction that is clearly associated with the unpredictability and uncontrollability of drone strikes. such anticipatory fear is likely to be very intense and anticipation of a life-threatening event is among the most fear-evoking stressors in a war setting. There is no doubt that prolonged exposure to unpredictable and uncontrollable life-threatening events leads to intense fears in most people. Furthermore, such events also lead to strong conditioned fears that are beyond cognitive control and resistant to extinction⁸, as is the normal case in operant conditioning when the strength of a behaviour is modified by reinforcement or punishment. Prolonged exposure to this inescapable environment invariably leads to



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intense fear-induced state of total helplessness and poor or slow responses to situations. This implies that operation of drones in an area are likely to have a cumulative impact that is likely to last well beyond their cessation of the mission.

It may be argued that well-drilled soldiers are trained to fight in hostile environments and extremely demanding conditions and are to an extent able overcome their fears, and therefore the studies on psychological impact of drones on civilians cannot be directly extrapolated to soldiers. However, there are studies, which indicate that at the personal level, even well-drilled soldiers are far less effective at basic tasks when they are in contact with the enemy. A series of American and Canadian studies found it takes a man nearly 50 per cent longer to repair a radio when he thinks that artillery is accidentally dropping short around him. However, there is no doubt that prolonged exposure to stressors as drones in modern warfare does take a toll on the soldier, as other similar stressors during any war.

In conclusion, there is a requirement to undertake further studies on the psychological impact of drone warfare on the soldier to completely understand its impact on the soldier in the battlefield. But there is no doubt that the use of armed drones to visibly alter and modify fighting conditions in the battlefield to ensure that the human will to fight is swiftly extinguished will be exploited.

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

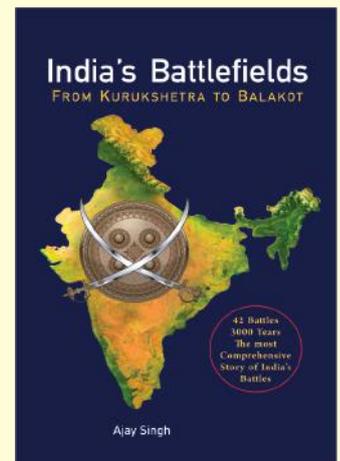
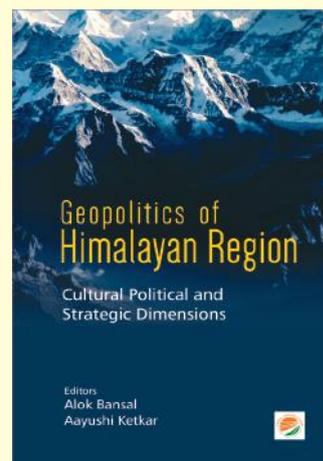
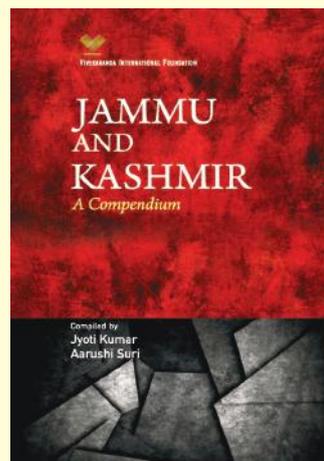
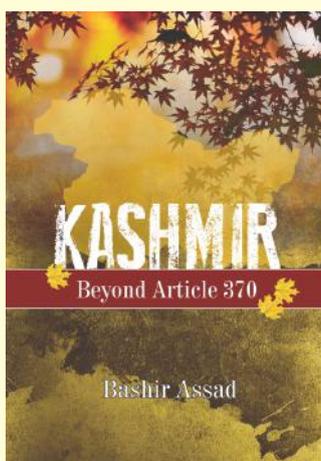
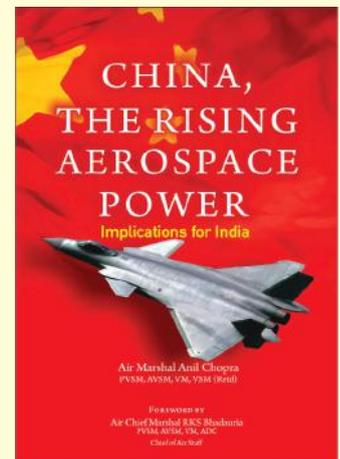
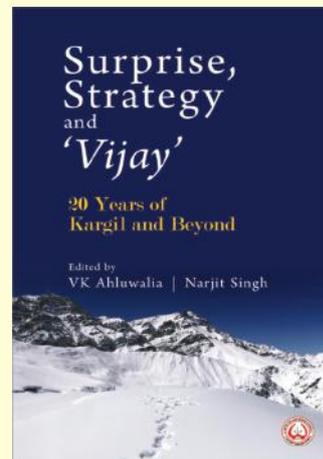
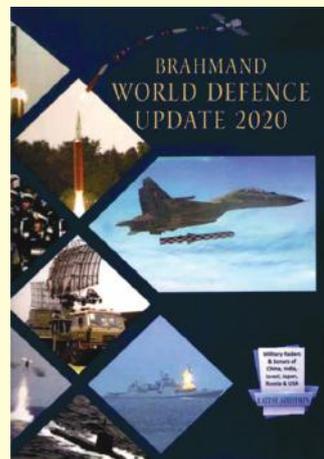
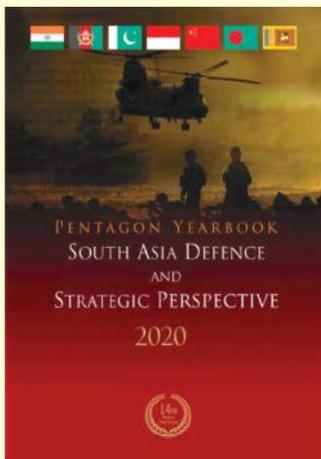
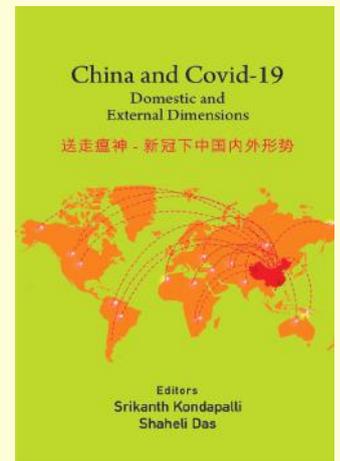
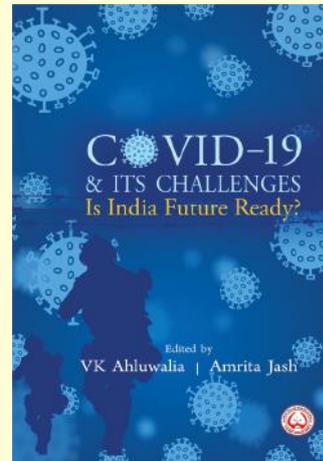
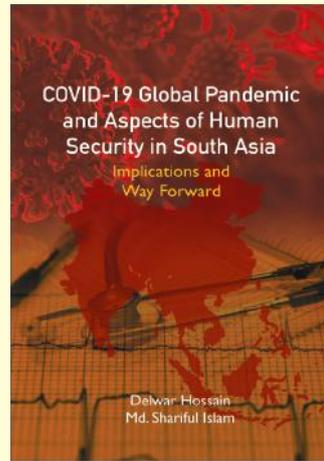
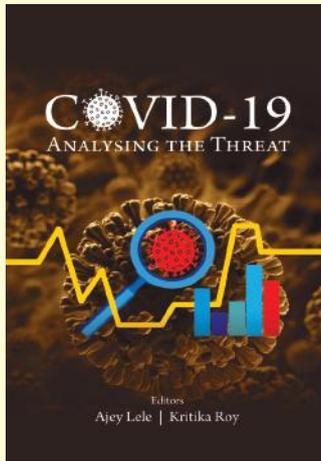


Commodore BR Prakash (Retd)

The author is a specialist in Missile and Gunnery warfare and 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 HQ 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 LRSAM in collaboration with IAI later installed and successfully tested on the Kolkata class Destroyers. He is an alumnus of Training Ship Rajendra, INA, and DSSC. He holds an MSc degree in Applied Psychology and MSc in Defence Studies and is a prolific writer.

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Interview: Addressing Military Suicide with Dr. Craig Bryan

Dr. Craig Bryan is the director of the Division of Recovery and Resilience and heads trauma and suicide prevention programs at Ohio State University. He spoke to MVI on military suicide and potential remedial measures in this exclusive interview.

by Aritra Banerjee, Sannidhya Sandheer

Dr. Craig Bryan is the director of the Division of Recovery and Resilience and also heads trauma and suicide prevention programs at Ohio State University. He is an American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) certified clinical psychologist with a Doctorate in Psychology (PsyD) with expertise in behavioural treatments (CBT) for individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

As a military veteran he was deployed to Iraq in 2009 and has since had extensive experience and expertise working with military personnel, veterans and first responders. Dr. Bryan in collaboration with his colleagues, developed and demonstrated the effectiveness of

brief cognitive behavioural therapy (BCBT) for suicidal military personnel.

He is a recipient of the prestigious Edwin S. Shneidman Award by the American Association of Suicidology in 2016, the Peter J.N. Linnerooth National Service Award by the American Psychological Association in 2013 and published more than 200 peer-reviewed scientific studies.

Dr. Craig Bryan spoke to MVI on military suicide and potential remedial measures. Excerpts from the conversation...

A view presented by US Military Psychologist Richard Doss is that there is no correlation between 'Combat

deployment' and 'suicide', that the suppression of emotions, "tough it up" attitude and lack of emotional outlets are the key stressors leading up to troop suicides. This view has its supporters while others dispute the observation. Keeping the aforementioned in mind,

Q: Do you see an observable correlation between combat deployments and suicide amongst military personnel?

Ans: This question has driven a lot of research here in the US, and what we've learned is that the answer isn't quite as simple or straightforward as we initially thought. We conducted a meta-analysis a few years ago in an attempt to answer this question and

found that there is not a correlation between deployments and suicide, but there is a correlation between exposure to death/violence while deployed and suicide risk. I've attached a copy of that study here.

A combination of 'operational and non-operational' factors have been identified as factors responsible. According to the findings in a 2007 internal report by Colonel PK "Royal" Mehreshi (Retd) on 'suicides and fratricides' commissioned by former Chief of Army Staff General JJ Singh, more than 90% of suicides were committed by Personnel Below Officer Ranks (PBOR).

The 2007 study and subsequent studies on the subject found the following:

employing jawans (enlisted men) for unsoldierly tasks, poor accommodation and sanitary facilities, administrative and cultural issues in the multi-arm Rashtriya Rifles (counter-insurgency) units, subpar clothing and rations, and poor grievance redressal mechanisms for junior personnel, inadequacies in the quality of leadership, overburdened commitments, inadequate resources, frequent dislocations, lack of fairness and transparency in postings and promotions, insufficient accommodation, and non-grant of leaves, are some service-related issues resulting in chronic stress and suicides among the enlisted ranks.

Furthermore, issues like marital discord, children's education, unwanted parenthood, illness of parents/spouse/children, financial problems and other difficulties arising out of prolonged absence of their families as causes of stress. It has also been suggested that "abusive language" by seniors and "unauthorised punishments" have been named as the triggers.

Q: What in your professional opinion is the primary factor leading to the stark contrast between the suicide rates among the enlisted ranks and Commissioned Officers?

Ans: one thing I've learned is that there typically is not a "primary factor." suicide tends to be very complex, and part of the reason we are not better at suicide prevention is because we try to find one or two key factors to target

rather than taking a more comprehensive approach to understanding and preventing suicide.

Q: Would you agree with the view that the Indian Army's Officer shortage is a major compounding factor affecting the stress levels of junior/mid-level Officers, in turn trickling down to PBORs? Could you elaborate with some observations or anecdotes from your time in service?

Ans: we do have some data from military studies indicating that occupational stressors are correlated with suicidal ideation, such as burnout, ambiguity in job roles, long work hours, etc. we've also done some research indicating that these everyday stressors probably play a bigger contributory role to suicide than trauma and other major stressors. This seems



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to be because everyday stressors wear a person down gradually over time.

Q: How do you see the acute shortage of officers affect the overall psychological stress in a military organisation; from the subunit level all the way up to the senior leadership?

Ans: related to the previous question, increased work strain and pressure on service members can increase stress as a whole. This stress is often compounded by organizational uncertainty. When no one really knows how long these conditions will last, that can facilitate a sense of hopelessness.

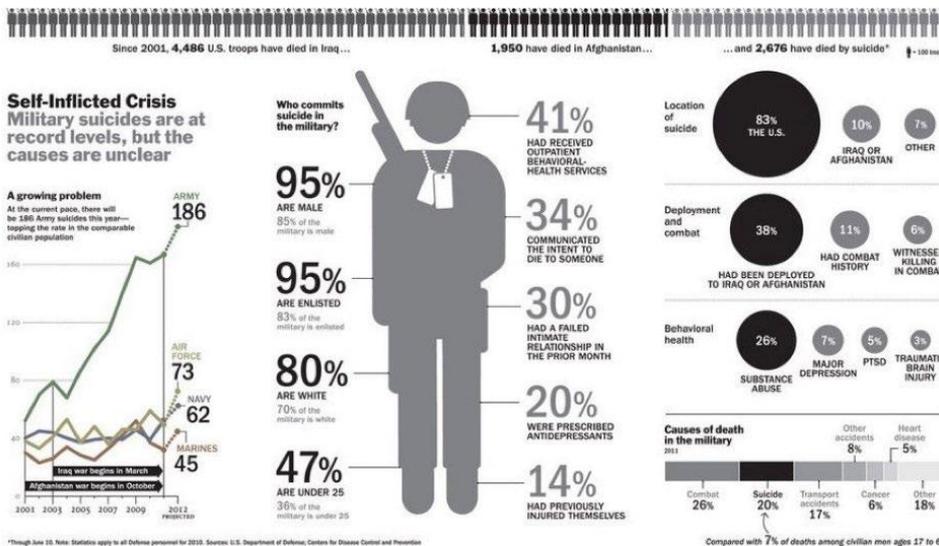
Q: How would you propose to address stress related issues in military organisations in general?

Ans: we typically recommend addressing and changing organizational factors that increase strain for everyone. Things that can improve well-being and morale include expressions of gratitude and appreciation, treating people (especially subordinates) with respect, and seeking to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity in the workplace.

Q: Do you feel that there is a need to streamline/review the 'tenure policy' (deployment duration) of military personnel, especially those serving in insurgency environments? What do you feel such a review would find?

Ans: The US military has done some research showing that longer deployments are associated with increased mental health problems and suicide. There seems to be a "tipping point" of sorts around the 9-month mark, wherein military personnel seem to do okay up until then but then after the 9-month mark, mental health problems tend to increase.

There is a perception that the 'appellate system' is inefficient, in the sense that it is time consuming, with several cases stuck in the back burner in the various Armed Forces Tribunals (AFT), thus the 'non availability of a quicker appellate mechanism' only adds to a



'Self-Inflicted Crisis' 2016 US Armed Forces data; Infographic

service-members pre-existing stress levels.

Q: Would you agree with this observation?

Ans: Yes, I would agree with the observation.

Low-intensity conflict operations (LICO) have been an evolving trend in armed conflicts, with military organisations increasingly engaged in combat environs amongst the civilian populace. Such types of operations have often been criticised for their perceived lack of aim, lack of visible success, as often cited in the case in Afghanistan in the United States context, and in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and the North East in the Indian context.

Counter-insurgency operations are often marked with significantly high casualty rates, operational and moral ambiguity, intense battle fatigue, all of these resulting in lowered troop morale and high levels of stress during, and after deployments in hostile areas.

Q: Would you say that combating non-state actors, operating within the civilian population, pose a significantly higher military mental health risk than other types of more conventional combat operations such as with an opposing conventional military force?

Ans: yes, because it contributes to uncertainty and also increases the likelihood for moral injury (e.g., killing/harming civilians instead of enemy combatants).

social apathy: the lack of acknowledgement of military service by the civilian population has been another identified factor leading to stress/depression amongst servicemembers.

Q: Do you see a correlation between social apathy and troop suicide?

Ans: I have not seen any research data, but that doesn't mean they don't exist. I have wondered about it, though, and I do think it's a possible factor.

A service member's helplessness in resolving property disputes back home is a major point of contention, in the Indian context. A soldier's long duration of absence has often aided in the unfair acquisition of the service-members land by family members/villagers. This long-standing issue has been identified as one the most significant identified stressors, leading to troop suicides.

Q: Do you see this as a uniquely Indian problem or something that affects the US Military as well?

Ans: I think these issues affect all militaries to some degree, although different cultural contexts may magnify or reduce the impact of these issues.

The abstract to your study states: 'Brief cognitive behavioral therapy for suicide prevention (BCBT) has demonstrated preliminary efficacy as a psychotherapeutic intervention that reduces suicide attempts among U.S. Army soldiers. The generalizability of BCBT's effects in other military groups

and its underlying mechanisms of action remain unknown.'

Q: How do you feel that your study will be able to help tackle the issue at hand? Do you feel that it can be replicated in other military organisations as well?

Ans: yes

Q: Given the view that BCBT's offer a key advantage over the usual PCT which is also in practice for civilians going through depressive episodes is an individualised 'Crisis Response Plan', would you recommend it be mandatory to include BCBT preemptively during the training of the recruits/officer cadets?

Ans: I don't think I would go that far. The vast majority of military personnel will not become suicidal and/or attempt suicide. Requiring them to go through a specialized treatment would not make sense and would not be a good use of resources. Consider, for example, that we do not require everyone to receive chemotherapy simply because some people get cancer, and we do not require everyone to undergo surgical procedures because some people will later acquire a fatal medical condition.

Q: Your study depends on self-reporting on the part of Marines about suicidal thoughts/attempts or recommendations by the mental health facility as a part of the outpatient procedure. For a senior officer commanding troops, what tools or methods can they apply to adjudge recommending mental health consultation to their subordinates?

Ans: we've been doing a lot of research on how suicide risk can emerge or become manifest without explicit expressions of suicidal ideation. For instance, our research with the suicide cognitions scales shows us that certain types of thoughts and statements very clearly signal increased risk for suicide even though these thoughts and statements do not include explicit thoughts about suicide.



Representational Image

we've also found that these types of thoughts are better indicators of suicide risk than our traditional assumptions like depression, hopelessness, and thoughts about death and suicide. we are therefore teaching/training non clinicians to become aware of these "coded" indicators of suicide risk that would prompt referrals for help.

Q: *In your study, to establish prevalence of suicidal thought as a baseline, there was the use of computer-based tests such as CFI, S-IAT and dot probe test, specifically aiming at bias towards suicide and death. While for the latter of the two, HRV was also used, can simply administering these tests to the entirety of at-risk force reduce the efficacy of the results? Do you advise normalising these tests at regular intervals and/or in special circumstances?*

Ans: I don't think we have enough data yet to know how effective these computerized and physiological methods could be relative to our traditional self-report methods. It's possible that these methods would be better, but it's also possible that they would be worse and/or have other unintended consequences (e.g., lots of false positives that lead to unnecessary and costly treatment).

Q: *For Emotional Regulation, the tests used were self-reported measures. How does an attempt in isolation at such self-reported measures compare to an environment like a test centre? What would be an ideal policy to preemptively reach out to those in need?*

Ans: it's likely that people will be more honest and forthright in responding if they take the tests in a private area. if you are setting up a large testing center, you would therefore want to make sure that you set up barriers between people, so they don't feel watched by others. you would also want to make sure that their responses are protected. we do have research showing that military personnel underreport problems, suicidal ideation, and other sensitive topics on screening tools when they're names and identities are linked to their responses, so maximizing opportunities for privacy will be key.

Q: *Do you see evidence in the current military working environment of stigmatisation of mental health related consultations? What can one do, both policy wise and individually, to mitigate the breeding of such issues?*

Ans: yes, although research suggests that stigmatizing attitudes are not as strongly correlated with help-seeking

as we often think. perceptions of treatment efficacy and convenience of treatment are much stronger correlates. in my opinion, the best way to overcome stigma is to emphasize that treatment works and make the consultations very easy to access: low cost, close proximity, hours/times that do not conflict with work demands, etc.

Q: *The study focuses on active-duty officers. How does one fare beyond active duty, whether early discharge or change in operational responsibilities?*

Ans: The treatments seem to work for those who have been discharged, too. we are currently conducting studies to show this scientifically, but our own experience in clinical practice is that BCBT works for a wide range of people.

Q: *Is there anything about your study which you would like to add or highlight?*

Ans: This is just the next step in our research program. we have many studies underway designed to understand why and for whom these treatments work, so I would say that the current research is not the end of the story; it's just the beginning.

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



Morale and Motivation Amidst Combat Stress

“It takes mental discipline and resilience to overcome the plan going wrong. Leaders need to understand that stress and fear will always be a part of their job. Battling the effects does not mean denying them; it means recognizing them and effectively dealing with it...”

by Rommelsque

On 8 Jan 2021, an USI backed study on “Prevailing stress levels in Indian Army due to Prolonged Exposure to Counter Insurgency/Counter Terrorism Environment” suggested that the officers face much more stress than what is faced by the jawans. Understandably, Indian Army rejected the findings made by the study saying the number of personnel who have been talked to or the sample survey is too minuscule to derive such conclusions and the morale of the troops is very high.

The anathema to the word combat stress in IA is a classic ostrich and the sand response and mind you the study talked about officers and not the troops. Can't help recalling the famous dialogue of Amitabh Bachchan starrer movie; 'Mard ko dard nahin hota' while it may be profoundly apt

for physical pain but the same may not be true for psychological pain or stress. It is one of those few things in combat that are truly consistent and relatively predictable.

There is no epiphany in this idea; Arjun refusing to pick up arms in Mahabharat can also be attributed to some form of combat stress in the mythological era and it had to be the leadership and guidance of Lord Krishna to ensure that the mental turmoil of his prodigy was put to rest.

From the primitive battles of prehistoric nomadic tribes to the politically and technologically orchestrated military operations of today, individuals are asked to perform incredible tasks that are often counterintuitive to the human psyche. Unfortunately, many of

these same stories do not have an epilogue of the proverbial day after; the heroic and brave warrior suffering a fateful tragedy. Heroism is not without cost. Traditionally, the price of war has been viewed primarily in terms of physical injury and death. It is easy to understand why.

Combat stress is finally going to affect morale and motivation of the group as a whole and this may determine the future contours of conflict wherein General Patton had said, “wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of men who follow and of the man who leads that gains the victory.” The spirit of the man who leads is the point of focus of this exposition as it's the officer cadre in the unit which invariably determines the behavioral pattern of the unit.



From the primitive battles of prehistoric nomadic tribes to the politically and technologically orchestrated military operations of today, individuals are asked to perform incredible tasks that are often counterintuitive to the human psyche.



one wise old veteran had told this greenhorn subaltern in 1996 and those words still ring true, “CO’s attitude is the unit’s attitude, the unit would mirror the CO’s mental state both in peace and war”. The morale and motivation of the Armed Forces are a direct manifestation of the officers who lead the men to battle or prepare them for it during peace.

Before we delve further into the role of officers in M2 (Morale and Motivation), it may be prudent to understand these terms. Motivation and morale are two independent concepts that are inherently related. They are intertwined as individual fibers in a rope, each unique but very similar to each other and necessarily intertwined to make something useful when each would be useless on its own. One must have at least minimally high morale to be motivated, and motivating people, when done properly, can often help to improve morale.

It is for this reason that the two are frequently able to be used interchangeably, with only subtle differences between them — differences that warrant individual treatment of the two concepts, but not individual chapters. Motivation is the degree to which a person is psychologically compelled to achieve a goal.

There are two basic types of motivation sources: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is based on internal factors — self-determination, challenge, and curiosity. Extrinsic motivation relies on external incentives to motivate such as reward and punishment.

For example, a person may feel internally motivated to improve his life by starting an exercise routine, or a unit may motivate an individual to increase efficiency by offering

performance-based incentives. In contrast, morale is the degree to which a person believes in a goal and feels that it is worth being included among those things that take precedence in his life at that time.

These two aspects involve, “increasing soldier and family resiliency: restoring balance and enhancing combat readiness and sense of belonging to the organization for soldiers and families. It would have to be achieved through “measures and services that result in a quality of life to soldiers and families commensurate with their sacrifice and service”.

This strong focus on family and additional services in the Indian Army is representative of the new socio-economic realities and metamorphosis of the idea that a soldier’s priorities will be on things other than the mission if their more immediate concerns, such as the wellness of their family, take precedence in their minds, giving an image of morale that is relative to the other factors in their lives.

One must have morale to be motivated, but people will often be motivated to do what’s necessary to achieve things that give them high morale. We’ll also see how these two things can be used to enhance forces, or to decimate them in the battlefield. The psychological forces based upon elements of morale are those that Carl von Clausewitz, Prussian military strategist, called “moral forces” in his final work entitled on war.

In his view, whereas the physical resources available to each side, “seem little more than the wooden hilt, the moral factors are the precious metal, the real weapon, the finely honed blade.” He argues that since a battle is won only when one side has conceded defeat, the goal of even violent

conflict must be to kill the enemy’s spirit, rather than their men, and that the nature of a military victory in battle is the defeat of the morale of their opponents.

Morale is shown in the degree of cohesion that the individual units of a military have, and the amount of motivation to accomplish their mission expressed through their actions. High morale cannot be achieved on its own; it must be facilitated through proper organization, coordination, management, and motivation and this is where the leadership or the officer cadre steps in.

The high-priority issues of a person must be secured to focus on the goals at hand; people must not be worried about their physiological needs, their families or possessions, or the stability of the organization of which they are a member, including the interpersonal relationships within that organization, which must, in itself, lack conflict.

These basic needs must be sufficiently fulfilled for a person to dedicate such a large proportion of their time and efforts to an all-encompassing activity such as warfare. This is described in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs which most of us have read at some point of time.

In considering the question of what leaders can do to facilitate coping with stress of military operations and maintaining the morale of a sub-unit or unit, it may be useful to take a closer look at what battle hardiness is and consider how it might operate as a motivational or stress resilience factor.

Conceptually, hardiness is a personality dimension that develops early in life and is reasonably stable over time, although amenable to change and probably trainable under certain conditions. Hardy persons have a high sense of life and work commitment, a greater feeling of control and are more open to change and challenges in life. They tend to interpret stressful and painful experiences as a normal aspect of existence, part of life that is overall interesting and worthwhile.

A notion that leaders high in hardiness may influence subordinates to think



An artist's rendition of a soldier's thousand yard stare; Stock Image

and behave in more hardy or resilient ways has been established by research and hence the importance of leaders in countering combat stress and maintaining the morale of the unit.

The key operative power of a leader is to buffer or transform stressful experiences to a particular interpretation that can be cognitively framed and made sense of within a broader perspective of 'just cause' and greater agendas as well as an essentially interesting, worthwhile chance to learn and grow. The stressful experience then can have beneficial effects instead of harmful ones. In a sub-unit, young leaders are in a unique position to shape how stressful experiences are understood by members of the team by his interpretation of experience.

In isolated posts and often thankless operations like road opening, where troops are regularly exposed to extreme stress and hazards leading to flagging motivation and low morale, junior leaders are in a unique position to shape how stressful experiences are made sense of, interpreted and understood by his sub-unit.

The leader, who by example, discussion and ideas communicates a positive construction or reconstruction of shared stressful experiences, may exert an influence on the company in the direction of his or her interpretation of experience; toward more resilient and hardy sense making.

Given the promising results seen thus far in IA, this junior leader influence process merits further active encouragement. A better systemic support would be of substantial value not just for military organizations, but

for any leader interested in promoting resilience and mental health in groups exposed to highly stressful circumstances.

stress is not necessarily bad or harmful. Positive stress (or eustress) is that degree of stress which is necessary to sustain and improve tolerance to stress without overdoing the stress experience. Positive combat stress behaviors result in heightened alertness, strength, endurance and tolerance to fight or flight response. Positive combat stress precipitates strong personal bonding between troops and leaders and the pride and self-identification which they develop with the unit's history and mission (unit izzat).

The ultimate positive combat stress behaviors are acts of extreme courage and action involving almost unbelievable strength. They may even involve deliberate self-sacrifice. Positive combat stress behaviors can be brought forth by sound military training, wise HR policies and most importantly good leadership. The results are behaviors which are rewarded with praise and perhaps with medals for individual valor and/or unit citations.

During operations, sub-unit leaders have the additional responsibility of preventing or minimizing combat stress and at the same time ensuring adequate eustress and motivation. Leaders and buddies have the responsibility of continuing to talk through especially traumatic events.

This should be done in a supportive way to individuals who show signs of distress in the after-action debriefings through personal conversations. Ardant Du Picq, a 19th century French

officer, articulated that, 'You can reach into the well of courage only so many times before the well runs dry.'

Marshal De saxe, opined that, "A soldier's courage and motivation must be reborn daily," the most important task of leaders was to understand this, to care for and prepare soldiers before battle, and to use methods during battle which recognize that morale and motivation must be renewed. Leaders must understand this human dimension and anticipate soldiers' reactions to stress and counterbalance it with their presence and charisma.

It takes mental discipline and resilience to overcome the plan going wrong. Leaders need to understand that stress and fear will always be a part of their job. Battling the effects does not mean denying them; it means recognizing them and effectively dealing with it to maintain the morale and motivation in the unit or sub-unit.

"All men are frightened. The more intelligent they are, the more they are frightened. The courageous man is the man who forces himself, in spite of his fear, to carry on." Wrote Gen Patton in his book *War as I Knew It*, Leaders must understand the human dimension and anticipate soldiers' reactions to stress, especially to the tremendous stress of combat.

Transformational leadership is considered the elixir for combat stress. As the name suggests, the transformational style "transforms" subordinates by challenging them to rise above their immediate needs and self-interests.

The transformational style is developmental: it emphasizes individual

growth (both professional and personal) and organizational enhancement. Key features of the transformational style include empowering and mentally stimulating subordinates; leaders must motivate troops first as individuals and then as a team. To use the transformational style, a leader must have the courage to communicate his intent and then step back and let subordinates operate.

Transformational style allows a leader to take advantage of the skills and knowledge of experienced subordinates who may have better ideas on how to accomplish a mission. Leaders who use this style communicate reasons for their decisions or actions and, in the process, build in subordinates a broader understanding and ability to exercise initiative and operate effectively which can reduce stress and provide purpose.

While enough has been said on the role of a young leader to handle combat stress of his sub-unit; the YO would also be experiencing stress that is off the charts. Perhaps it's competitive pressures, dysfunctional culture, poor teamwork, ethical dilemmas, and lack of HR engagement. Sometimes the stress is externally driven, sometimes it's internal, and often it's out of his control. While he may cope with it the most critical aspect for him is to develop stress resilient Emotional Intelligence (SREI) is "the ability to resist the negative influences of stress on the emotional aspects of decision making by flexing and adapting to sudden change."

When stress levels go up, a leader's ability to act in an emotionally intelligent way goes down, sometimes catastrophically. If you have low emotional intelligence (ability to express and control your emotions, as well as to understand, interpret and respond to the emotions of others), you begin to miss important information coming from your own emotions, compromise your ability to accurately assess the emotions of others, or fail to act in an emotionally appropriate way.

It's interesting that in today's environment we are advancing YOs up the ladder faster than ever before as they assume the mantle of company

commander; this new role necessitates rapid learning and that causes fear for those who step up to the challenge and create stress.

Whether we're ready or not, the shortage of officers will perpetuate and likely accelerate the rate at which less-experienced leaders are promoted into roles of greater responsibility. More and more, sub-units will

be jarred by the changing dynamics and the complexity of their roles. They will likely feel as though they have less control and will need to find ways to put trust and capability into the hands of JCOs and senior NCOs who report to them. They must, with each successive step upwards, seek information about how they can apply their skills in new ways to the



YO relaying tactical instructions to his men during an active operation; File Photo

be led by officers whose experience leaves them ill-equipped for the challenges they will face. These young leaders will encounter more stress, and they will continue to struggle to conquer the new and unfamiliar territory of bigger, higher-risk roles and responsibilities.

But fortunately, there are relatively straightforward ways that we can intervene to increase the rate of success in conquering these challenges. Organizations can take action to promote the right leaders by assessing their transitional skills prior to promotion and not be coloured by regimentation, painting clear pictures of what lies ahead, and getting senior leaders involved in the dialogue with transitioning leaders so that they can help to clarify how success should be defined.

Individual leaders must recognize that leadership transitions require reexamination of their own strengths and vulnerabilities. Most will feel

evolving paradigm world around them.

To assume that what worked before will work again is perhaps the quickest route to failure. Having a network of colleagues and peers who can provide feedback, guidance and insight is an essential element to successful transition. Taking action to educate, communicate and provide training, coaching, and guidance to the young leaders struggling with transitions can clearly make a dramatic impact on the success rates of newly promoted leaders, and can help to build the more stable leadership pipeline that IA needs to retain professional edge.

(This article has been penned under a pseudonym. Views expressed are the author's own and do not reflect the editorial policy of Mission Victory India)



The Psychological Toll of Being a Soldier

“If we want a humane and moral army, then we need humane and moral soldiers, not cold-blooded mechanical killers. Because it is only the latter who can kill, without a part of them dying as well.”

by Captain Raghu Raman (Retd)

Last week, the supreme court ruled that there is no place for a cowardly soldier in the army. The incident in question occurred in 2006 in the Kashmir valley, when the army had surrounded militants inside a cordon. During the ensuing firefight, the dismissed soldier chose not to engage with the cornered militants and instead deserted his post, because of which the militants were able to break the cordon, kill an army personnel and decamp with a machine gun.

The soldier was armed with an assault rifle and a pistol but did not retaliate with either. The honourable bench pointed out that soldiers cannot be exonerated from cowardice just because they had participated wholeheartedly in previous operations and had never displayed fear prior to this

incident and upheld his dismissal from service.

soldiers who lose their nerve during combat can jeopardise the lives of their comrades and the mission itself. Appreciating the extraordinary circumstances under which soldiers are required to function, all armies have their own frameworks of law. Court-martial field punishment includes execution for desertion, cowardice or even “running amok” (a euphemism for sheer panic).

A landmark case – one which has deep lessons for us – is the story of Private Harry Farr who was executed for cowardice during world war I at the age of 25.

Private Harry Farr joined the British Army as a professional soldier and had

six years of experience before the outbreak of world war I during which he fought on the western front, enduring some of the worst shelling during the trench war. In May 1915, he collapsed with strong convulsions and was diagnosed with hyperacusis – a condition induced by the damage to his ear caused by the shelling – which made even the smallest of noises excruciatingly painful.

This condition is also called ‘shell shock’. Despite this, he was sent back to the front where he fought in the Battle of Somme. Through the next year, he reported sick several times but was constantly turned back as there was no apparent physical injury and, of course, the number of casualties was so high that the doctors didn’t have time to examine someone who complained about unbearable noises in his head.

Harry staggered through till September 1916 when he finally broke and refused to return to the frontline. Accused of disobeying orders, Harry Farr was tried by a court-martial that lasted 20 minutes in which he had to defend himself in that state of mental condition. Farr was found guilty and sentenced to death and shot by a firing squad consisting of his own comrades on October 18, 1916.

This story, however, did not end there, because Harry Farr's family was convinced that he was not a coward. They insisted he was suffering from 'shell shock' and had little control over his mental state and though there was no obvious physical injury, he was in great anguish. Harry's wife was even denied pension as a coward's wife was not entitled to a war widow's status.

However, in 1992, Farr's family got access to the court-martial documents thanks to a campaign which revisited the circumstances under which several soldiers like Farr had been executed and were horrified to learn that Harry was sent to the front when he was in need of urgent medical treatment.

This sustained campaign eventually resulted in a government pardon for Farr – and 305 other soldiers who had been executed during the war – in 2006. Gertrude, Harry's wife who died in 1993, however, did not live to see her husband exonerated.

Every firing range of the Indian Army has these words inscribed on the firing butt. "No Pity, No Regret, No Remorse". Chants like "Ek goli – ek dushman" (One bullet, one enemy) are incanted to remove any element of pity or remorse from the minds of soldiers during their training. This is, after all, an operational requirement of the army. They need to take well-adjusted, balanced, responsible, kind men and women and convert them into cold-blooded killers.

But there is no switch in the human mind which can periodically convert a kind soldier, who rescues victims from natural disasters, into a killer and then back again, without it affecting his mental state. Similarly, long hours of hazardous duties, backbreaking terrain, solitude, separation from family, inability to address domestic issues

and uncertainty about virtually everything, takes a heavy toll on a soldier's physical and psychological wellbeing.

This can't be fixed with just increasing interactions with officers or placing accountability on commanding officers whenever incidents occur. We need to change the very DNA of a 'macho' army where not wearing earplugs while firing loud explosive rocket launchers should be considered a sign of stupidity and not machismo.

All infantry officers of our army have to mandatorily pass the commando course. As part of survival training, commandoes are taught to kill a fowl silently. There is something about wringing the neck of a living creature which makes many big and brawny commandoes squirm when they do it. It is one thing to kill dozens by releasing a bomb switch or squeeze the trigger of a sniper rifle and watch the enemy's head explode a kilometre away. But it is another thing altogether to kill, in close quarter battles, where the soldier sees, smells, touches and feels the blood and gore.

The phenomenon of post-traumatic stress disorder or PTSD, its implication on a soldier's mental state, his consequent actions and its cost to the society is being faced by countries like the US and UK. Up to 15% of US soldiers returning from tours of duty are diagnosed with PTSD. (It was 30% during the Vietnam war). In 2012 alone more than 7,500 former US military personnel died by suicide. Ironically even amongst active personnel that year, more people died by suicide (177) than those killed in operations (176).

The Indian Armed Forces too, have lost 900 soldiers to suicide in the last

seven years. To put it in context, that is almost twice the number of soldiers lost in the Kargil war (527). Our security personnel have their share of PTSD, but in a country where thousands of physically disabled soldiers are fighting the system for their legitimate dues – acknowledging and addressing psychological damage is farfetched.

Some of the measures taken by the army to address increasing suicides may help – more leave, better food and infrastructure, increasing interactions with officers and counselling sessions etc. But it is not the physical hardship alone that causes trauma.

If that were the case, the richest army in the world – the US Army – would have cracked the problem long ago. Instead, it is the inner conflict – which ironically exacerbates when troops are fighting their own citizens – that tugs the soldier's moral compass until he loses his bearing.

While no excuses should be made for genuine shirkers or cowards – as indeed was the case in this particular judgment of the Supreme Court – until PTSD is taken with the seriousness it warrants, damaged soldiers, their families and the society will continue to pay the price in perpetuity, as well the country.

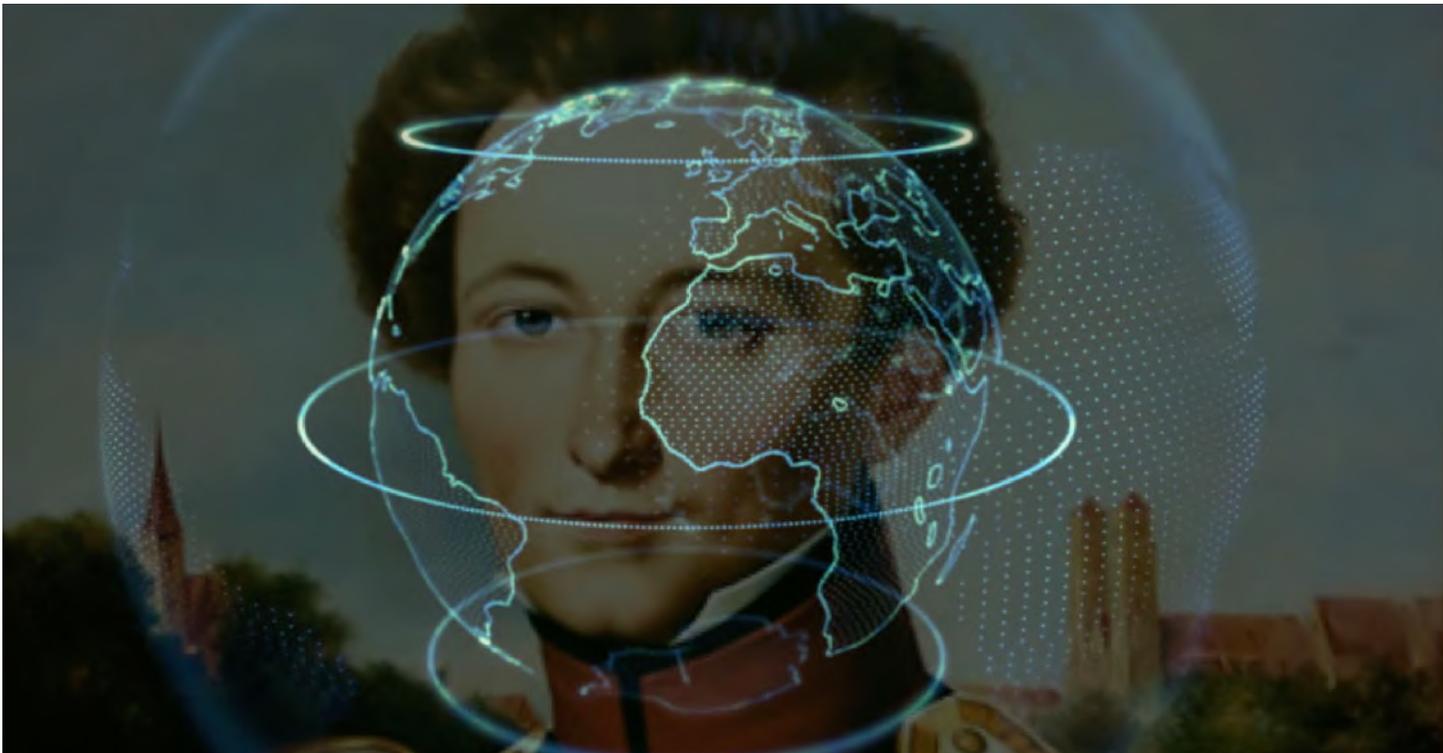
If we want a humane and moral army, then we need humane and moral soldiers, not cold-blooded mechanical killers. Because it is only the latter who can kill, without a part of them dying as well.

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



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Coping with the Expanded Spectrum of Modern Warfare: Lessons from the International Experience

“The end of the Cold War and the relative success of Operation Desert Storm had induced a sense of euphoria that the international community was geared to deal with dangers to international peace and security in a more effective manner than before. However, the experiences of UN peacekeeping in Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda, etc in the early 1990s, quickly dispelled these expectations...”

by Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar (Retd)

The United Nations, NATO and the Warsaw Pact defined the international system during the cold war period which was centered on posturing in various fields: economic, scientific, technological and nuclear. During which period, the international system took on a bipolar character that inadvertently suppressed many regional or nationalistic conflicts and the system was generally effective in preventing violent global conflicts.

There never was any real reason for the two blocs to go to war with each other. Hence the euphoria that followed the

end of the cold war would seem to be misplaced. As a consequence, many of the conclusions that the western world arrived at in terms of establishment of a new world order, were smashed to smithereens by the conflicts that raged soon thereafter in parts of the former Soviet Union, the Balkans, West Asia and Africa.

The familiar bipolar equation was replaced by what was perceived as an oppressive unipolar one, with the sole superpower setting its own agenda. The international community has

therefore for some time now been looking for an acceptable form of balance.

Two views on the causes of international conflict are worth looking at as we move ahead in the 21st century. The realist view is that “wars arise from the efforts of states to acquire power and security in an anarchic world” and pessimistically questions the usefulness of international institutions in preventing conflicts.

The belief being that strong international institutions can only exist when there is sufficient agreement among



The realist view is that “wars arise from the efforts of states to acquire power and security in an anarchic world” and pessimistically questions the usefulness of international institutions in preventing conflicts.



the great powers to allow them to exist. That disharmony among great powers makes strong international institutions impossible. The liberal view is that conflicts “are determined not only by the balance of power, but by the domestic structure of states, their values, identities and cultures and international institutions for conflict resolution”.

Proponents of this view support greater trade, since trade makes nations more inter-dependent, and so less likely to go to war. And they theorise that democratic nations almost never go to war against one another. Permit me to suggest that neither view is complete on its own.

By drawing upon elements of both perspectives, it is possible to speculate on two sources of conflict. First, power transitions often lead to conflict. ‘Declining’ nations may attempt to put down ‘rising’ competitors. (One is tempted to speculate that the USA is today in such a position). Sensing weakness, ‘growing’ nations may challenge ‘declining’ ones to secure a more favourable place in the international system. (Can there be much debate china is today doing exactly that?).

The present era therefore is one of dramatic power transitions. However, it is difficult to contest the fact that as things stand, the United States is the only true superpower, with global assets in all the dimensions of power. If the USA was truly in decline, great power conflict would be more likely. To that extent, the enduring and clearly superior position of the USA provides a degree of stability to the international system. Unless of course, it continues to over-reach in trying to run the world on its own.

second, the nature of power and the ways in which power is exercised, play important roles in causing or preventing conflicts. Economic power has

not yet eclipsed military power in importance at the international level. However, the use of military force has become both more expensive and possibly less effective.

Rising powers have fewer incentives for territorial aggression than they have had throughout most of history because the route to prestige and power in the modern era lies in achieving economic success, prowess in high technology, and well-endowed and productive human capital.

The nature of power and of power transitions therefore makes military conflict between the great powers highly unlikely at present. Adding to this stability is the fact that Europe and Japan, two significant power centres, are both democratic and closely allied to the USA. Shared values, stable expectations, and interlocking institutions have become so strong among these three power centres that wars between them are unthinkable.

Other great powers are less stable. In the post-cold war era both Russia and China are changing; not necessarily very predictably. There is little doubt that efforts by the USA, Europe and Japan to engage China and Russia in the international community and to urge them to make their intentions and military forces transparent are the best means of limiting the potential for conflicts. For a while it appeared that this policy was probably achieving some traction.

China is a signatory to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and also participates in several regional and multinational groupings. Engagement with Russia seemed somewhat promising. Notwithstanding the occasional hiccups. (Like the Georgia experience, Ukraine, and Syria). But developments over the last year or so seem to

indicate that the road ahead is somewhat bumpy, to state the least.

This could possibly be compared to the engagement approach with the ‘concert of Europe’ that was formulated in 1815. And just as that concert was undermined by domestic changes of its member nations, developments within Russia or China could threaten great power stability.

Even so, it is possible to speculate that a strong counter-balancing coalition of democratic great powers, nuclear deterrence, the tremendous advancements in technology, and the limited benefits of territorial conquest, may continue to make direct great power conflict unlikely.

The scope for regional conflicts is more than that of great power conflicts. Regional conflicts take place when one nation attempts to establish regional hegemony; as China appears to be doing today. Such conflict could well draw the participation of the great powers. Even so, in the prevailing international milieu, it would seem that the great powers are likely to be united in their view of treating regional aggressors as threats to international stability.

To that extent, regional aggressors will find few supporters. However, it is possible that some states may be willing to go it alone. Should this occur, great powers will be compelled to act to contain the threat and put down the aggression. Hence the great powers, and lesser ones, will find it necessary to maintain sizeable military capacities to deal with such conflicts.

Throughout history, revolutions in the conduct of warfare have manifested in radically different ways. In some cases, technology has come first and then doctrine was developed to use the technology in new ways. In other cases, doctrine has driven technology. In the USA today, technology appears to be driving doctrine. The revolution in military affairs, including artificial intelligence, that is the driving force today, while untested in classic warfare, has set the stage for technological innovations.

American perspectives that to lesser extent will also guide war strategies



A US Army squad in the middle of a rooftop firefight in Afghanistan; File Photo

of other countries of the developed world, deal with the ability to project forces across the full spectrum of crisis in the 21st century. The focus in a doctrinal sense envisions what is termed 'precision engagement', 'simultaneous operations through various echelons' and 'information operations'.

Precision engagement implies the ability to assess the adversary at operational and strategic depth, recognise his tactical plans, operational concepts and strategic goals, and select and prioritise attacks on targets. To that end technology will be used to give commanders wide-area surveillance and target acquisition, near real-time responsiveness, and highly accurate, long-range weapon systems.

This will enable commanders for the first time in history, to manoeuvre fire power rather than forces over long ranges, and execute direct and simultaneous attacks on key assets of the adversary while keeping own forces relatively safe from counter-attack.

Simultaneous operations through various echelons seek to exploit the increasing complexity and non-linear nature of future battlespace by striking directly at the key assets and capabilities of the adversary, in order to disrupt cohesion and bring the

conflict to an end quickly. Manoeuvres in the future will be more simultaneous than sequential, and over considerably larger spaces than ever before. The stress will be on faster, lighter and more lethal forces that require relatively small logistics footprints.

In the latter context, technologies like fuel cells and directed energy weapons become more appealing. As one was putting together this piece, an interesting headline apparently carried by India Today on 05 January 2021 drew my attention: "China's unorthodox weapons, provocative actions escalated situation in Ladakh: Defence ministry" – the report does not elaborate on what the "unorthodox weapons" were.

Information operations at the national level will be a new form of strategic warfare aimed at the adversary's socio-economic systems. Even in the relatively benign environment of the day, there are disturbing reports about the intrusion by the Chinese into the data-network of other countries including the USA.

At the military operational and tactical levels, information operations will focus on command, control, communications, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems. Overall,

because of the low levels of public tolerance for combat casualties to own forces, particularly in the western world, there will be increased reliance on unmanned vehicle and weapon systems.

In working towards such capabilities, many countries of the developed world particularly in Europe, have inevitably been forced to undertake reductions and modifications to their military forces. The stress is on more effectiveness with less numbers and reduced costs. In so far as the USA is concerned, the influence of defence industry is more than likely to enable the military to avail of technological innovations and improvements.

The European situation is different, in that it is based on the hope that downsizing of forces would be neutralised by greater integration in regional structures like NATO and ESDP, and in the joint development of defence equipment and systems. The ground reality is that the Europeans are so far behind the USA in technological capability that in the NATO structure they hardly count for much.

Europe's plea to the USA for assistance in closing the existing gap is met with unambiguous suggestions that the Europeans need to invest more in

security. In Russia, China and much of the developing world, attempts at modernisation are being pursued in varying degrees.

Looking into the foreseeable future, there appears to be little doubt that military forces all over the world are likely to be increasingly applied in roles other than classic conventional warfare. Foremost among these tasks is that of dealing with terrorism and insurgency in one form or another, whether it is against ethnic or religious groups seeking secession, terrorists promoting such activity, or drug traffickers.

To categorise this as “fourth generation warfare” as some theorists are beginning to, is somewhat misplaced. Because unlike the first, second and third generation warfare that had their distinct characteristics, counter terrorism and counter insurgency operations primarily require significant readjustment of basic attitudes towards soldiering in the classic sense, innovative use of available sophisticated technology to meet equipment requirements, and imaginative training methods.

Some militaries across the world are increasingly getting into this form of warfare, which the Indian military had already been into for over five decades. In this form of conflict, military personnel are subjected to considerably greater pressures than in conventional warfare for which they are trained, because more often than not, the soldier is required to deal with the terrorist or insurgent with at least one hand (if not both) tied behind his back.

In the sense that unlike classic combat operations where he can engage the enemy without reservations or inhibitions, in counter terrorism/insurgency operations the soldier is inhibited by the imperative that he should not cause casualties to innocent civilians or inflict other collateral damage that would cause resentment in the local population and outrage in the international community. In fact it is invariably part of the military's mandate to win over the ‘hearts and minds’ of the local populace.

The end of the cold war and the relative success of operation Desert Storm



Indian RR troops engaged in prolonged COIN-Ops in the Valley; File Photo

had induced a sense of euphoria that the international community was geared to deal with dangers to international peace and security in a more effective manner than before. However, the experiences of UN peacekeeping in Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda, etc in the early 1990s, quickly dispelled these expectations, and in fact, induced a sense of retrenchment in regard to UN peacekeeping operations for some time.

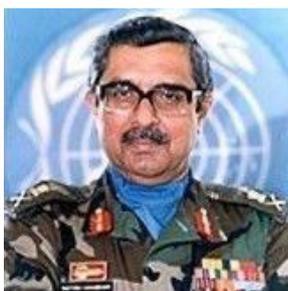
In recent years however there has been considerable resurgence in UN peacekeeping and an ever increasing demand for UN peacekeepers particularly for dealing with conflicts in Africa. UN forces are also being increasingly mandated with provisions of Chapter VII of the UN charter that call for the use of force to deal with belligerents.

Ironically, countries that have the best capability in terms of equipment and training, namely the developed

western world, seem to shy away from participation in UN operations, preferring to participate in operations undertaken under the aegis of military alliances like NATO, or regional organisations like the EU.

Allow me to conclude by stressing that what I have attempted to do is to set out a broad road map indicating the direction in which the militaries of the future will need to move to deal with the situations they are likely to encounter in coming years. No template solutions can be offered for universal application. Each country or set of countries in an alliance or regional arrangement, will need to evolve their own answers. But these will necessarily be within the dimensions of conflict I have tried to explore and the parameters that have been enumerated.

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



Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar (Retd)

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Institution. This article was first published in the February 2021 issue of the Defence and Security Alert and has been reproduced with due credits from the author.



Tool Kit: Of Traitors, Liberty & National Security!

“Where and when, the issue of national security begins, there and then, freedom of expression, liberty and democracy not only lose their shine, but they become irrelevant. Unrestricted liberty and freedom are the greatest threats to national integrity.”

by Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

Democracy, liberty, secularism and freedom of expression are nice and flowery terms as long as they do not endanger national security. Human dignity is not above national honour and prestige. In any case, humanism is no replacement for nationalism till human spirit is imbued in each individual and religion was chucked out of the human mind forever.

where and when, the issue of national security begins, there and then, freedom of expression, liberty and democracy not only lose their shine, but they become irrelevant. Unrestricted liberty and freedom are the greatest threats to national integrity. Excess leads to its exploitation by the users. Liberty

often comes with responsibility and accountability, which are generally ignored by those who misuse it.

It should be noted that freedom of expression was not a license to weaken the very foundation of a political system, which guarantees this right to its individuals. And democracy was no excuse to roam with enemies of the nation. Liberty was no visa to befriend those who wish to destroy the nation. Young or old, one ought to show this discretion.

when one collaborates or works for the enemy, it is called treason and its practitioner is described as a spy and a traitor. Treason seeks harshest and deterrent punishment to

the guilty. This is so in all nations across the globe.

How should you treat a traitor/spy, who knowingly works for the enemy? Of course, it depends as to how serious was his/her offence against the nation? what would you say of the people, who move hand in hand with those people who conspire to destroy India — whether it was the Inter-services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan or Poetic Justice Foundation (PJF)?

Terrorist organisations, who openly seek to balkanise India, cannot have any humanitarian causes. To support them or work for them, under pseudo-noble causes is to fool oneself. Isn't it a crime against

the integrity of the nation? And it is even more serious, if one knows of the consequences of such a betrayal.

Yes, I am talking about the likes of Shantanu Muluk, Nikita Jacob and Disha Ravi, who had worked out a so-called 'Tool kit' — a programme schedule to initiate violence on Red Fort, New Delhi on the nation's 72nd Republic Day, 26 January 2021 — a pious and a sacrosanct day for the Indian Republic. To say it was done in aid of farmers is to violate the basic principle of 'humanism', which professes 'non violence'.

It also does not matter if it was done for money or in support of farmer's protest if they had associated with organisations inimical to security of the nation. And P.J.F. is no friend of India with open connections to Sikh extremist organisations, whose founder Mo Dhalwal has been openly expressing intentions to cause disruptions on Republic Day. He has no regrets about it. In fact, even protesting farmers should recognise that infiltration of such elements had sullied their protests and cause.

The anticipatory and transit bail given by Mumbai High Court to Shantanu Muluk and Nikita Jacob was no certificate of their innocence and mitigation of the gravity of offence. Certainly not, if one finds that Shantanu Muluk was at Tikri Border of Delhi on this day and made videos for his foreign masters. Also, the age of Disha Ravi is immaterial, if she had known that she could be booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) act of India, for such activities. These are deliberate acts of betrayal and not innocent acts of liberty and freedom given by constitution.

Disha Ravi certainly knew what she was doing and was scared about it. This is why she had asked Greta Thunberg to delete the tool kit tweet from Twitter. The acts of these young people, Disha, Shantanu, Nikita, are no less than a 'traitor' or a 'spy' who works for the enemy for money.

Most of the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) the world over, created under the guise of a noble cause, are basically a front for espionage activities. Very few genuinely work for the real purpose they had been created. More often these noble sounding NGOs rope in unsuspecting youth with monetary gains or other temptations for their nefarious activities. They are often screened with humanitarian causes.

Most intelligence organisations of various nations do employ such tactics to destroy one's adversary.



Question arises what punishment be given to such traitors and spies who compromise national security and endanger its integrity? There is no reason to take into account young age and the silly excuse of freedom of expression. An exemplary punishment is order of the day to deter the other such youngsters falling prey to such financial allurements.

There is a case for the National Security apparatus to create an organisation to not only keep a watch internally but deal with such



Climate activists Disha Ravi (Left), Greta Thunberg (Right); File Photo

They exploit ideological/religious sentiments to recruit young people. By the time a young person realises his status, he/she is neck deep into it. Also, in this manner, most of the soldiers too, in armed forces were honey trapped too. Today, the social media explosion makes it very easy to trap such young people. But whether it is done unsuspectingly or willingly, it is an act of treason.

anti-India organisations working in foreign lands. The Research and Analysis wing (R&AW) is not effective to carry out operations not prescribed in the books. Why not have a Mossad type of organisation to deal with such threats in foreign lands? Moralities be damned!

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



Colonel Rajinder Singh Kushwaha (Retd)

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Lessons that China Learnt from the Ladakh Standoff

With India mirroring China's deployment in Eastern Ladakh, the latter did not resort to opening other fronts indicating a deep caution against over commitment. This is what also happened at Nathula (1967), Sumdorongchhu (1986) and Doklam (2017); China preferred to keep the standoffs localised. Will it do anything different the next time.

by Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd)

Everyone's favourite subject these days is the Ladakh standoff and the current status of the agreement to disengage and de-escalate. The reading public is getting a surfeit of fairly good strategic literature to remain well informed. Most issues revolve around the trust deficit with China, the possibility that China will give a pause and recommence a standoff at some other point of the long border with India, and the need for India to develop its infrastructure and its armed forces to match that of China in the eventuality of serious armed exchanges across the border. The one issue very few are looking at is the host of lessons that China would have drawn from this standoff and will no doubt analyse very deeply for the future.

It must start with the word being bandied around the most – 'trust'. By agreeing to a special engagement between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping to guide their militaries after Doklam in 2017, and then deliberately undertaking a mission to create border tension, China lost not only India's trust but that of much of the world.

There is a difference between military and political trust. For the military, deception is something to always expect as part of the profession, but international norms dictate something else when it comes to political trust. Leaders of nations, as big and important as China and India, both members of some exclusive international groupings such as BRICS and SCO, cannot

depart from understandings and agreements or use these to create military deception.

Indian analysts must emphasise this to the world and place moral pressure on China which will need to find better ways of dealing with nations who it clearly cannot bully on the basis of some presumptions. Will China attempt to create trust and reliability through greater predictability in the future. The nature of its relationship with India and its geostrategic perceptions of India's potential threats to Chinese interests may force it to look for alternate ways of conflict initiation while retaining international credibility.

China could attempt to take some measures to show how sensitive it is



Indian troops on the Karakoram Highway; File Photo

to ensuring implementation of agreements. The rapid disengagement in Ladakh appears to project this as visible proof of it. Yet we should also expect that attempts to embroil India and paint it the villain will probably gain more ground in the future.

It should be reasonably clear to China that its ability to use coercion to dictate terms to India and caution it against joining anti-China strategic equations is quite limited. In messaging the world and India on China's apparent superior military capability it would realize that it needs to do much more and perhaps run the risk of going over the top in situations on which it may have little control.

With India mirroring China's deployment in Eastern Ladakh, the latter did not resort to opening other fronts indicating a deep caution against over-commitment. This is what also happened at Nathula (1967), Sumdorongchu (1986) and Doklam (2017); China preferred to keep the standoffs localised. Will it do anything different the next time. It has an untested set of armed forces who were bested by Vietnam the last time they fought conventionally. Demonstration of their optimum ability in an all-out war is fraught with unacceptable risk; the PLA will need to find innovative means of conflict initiation on multiple fronts without resort to full war and hope to achieve its aims.

If China's aim was to dent India's strategic confidence it would have realized that it will take much more than just a standoff and border friction. In 1969 it had border friction with the then Soviet Union. The Soviets renowned for their use of massed artillery fired one of history's biggest crunches of multi-barrel rocket artillery on the PLA; it

was at Damansky Island in the Ussuri River, a salvo so big that the flow of the Ussuri changed after the explosions.

It was China which learnt its lessons from it and went on to create artillery with one of the largest missiles and rocket forces. It would recall that never again after 1969 did the PLA engage with the Soviets or later just the Russians. Would it attempt to use these tactics against India in a future standoff; punitive strikes of rockets and missiles to cause extensive casualties on Indian soldiers and warfighting wherewithal without crossing the LAC. It is food for thought because our ability to respond and neutralize remains relatively weak.

China would have observed the growing strength of information operations and influence warfare in current day standoffs. It is almost thirty years since it adopted 'war under informationised conditions.' The rising tide of alternatives to conventional war will no doubt tempt the Chinese to experiment in areas where deniability is high; that includes facets of hybrid war.

In the current situation I did expect it to use various shades of grey zone

warfare, resort to enhanced cultivation of separatist trends in the North East and use its media to brand India villain. It did not. That could be a lesson for its future strategy; that it is easier to employ indirect threats and resort to direct confrontation only when the stage is set for enhanced hybridity.

Two significant issues remain; first Pakistan and second the maritime zone. Very briefly, China will realize that initiating the Ladakh standoff without directly involving Pakistan has led to creation of perception in Indian military circles that India's focus must go to the northern borders with China, with Pakistan the second priority. Will China wish to create greater dilemma for the Indian leadership by getting Pakistan to use its calibration capability to ratchet up the threats in J&K and the western borders.

We may need to brace for that even though Pakistan has very little capability to do China's bidding. On the maritime front much has been written and spoken about the Quad and how it received a new lease due to the Ladakh standoff. China must find the strategic diplomatic leverage to prevent the actualization of the Quad which is clearly not in the interest of China's bid to contest the Indo Pacific. Seeking to appease Australia and raising Russian doubts about India's strategic partnership with the US are two domains which it can use effectively.

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Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd)

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Questioning Pullback from Afghanistan

Personal experience should guide Biden while deciding on US troop withdrawal commitments and imperatives in Afghanistan.

by Lieutenant General Bhopinder Singh (Retd)

On January 3, 1973, 30-year-old Joe Biden got elected for the first time to the United States (US) senate. On January 27, 1973, just 24 days later, a face-saving “Agreement on Ending the War and restoring Peace in Vietnam” was signed with full knowledge among the belligerent parties of what was inevitable.

This sham “peace accord” enabled the battle-weary US troops to withdraw and the last troops were airlifted on April 30, 1975 — later that day, the US ally in southern Vietnam capitulated and its leader Thieu was left fuming: “The US did not keep its promise to help us fight for freedom. It was in the same fight that the US lost 50,000 of its young men.”

Then US President Gerald Ford argued about opening the doors to south Vietnamese who had fought

on the US side. However, the young Biden insisted that the US had “no obligation, moral or otherwise, to evacuate foreign nationals”. Biden’s youthful bravado aside, the US troops’ withdrawal from the unpopular war did not end as scripted in the purported “peace accord”.

In 1995, the US troops escorted out the final remnant of the UN peace-keeping force from Somalia even as local militiamen were firing upon the withdrawing force. Banalities from the UN Secretary General, that efforts to bring peace and aid to Somalia would continue, flew in the face of the ground reality of advancing militias.

Over 100 UN peacekeepers and 42 US troops had died before the final withdrawal. Importantly, the nemesis of the UN/US force i.e. ruthless

warlord General Aidid was still alive, and gaining ground. Expectedly, General Aidid soon declared himself the President of Somalia and a full-fledged civil war broke out.

By now, Biden was no longer a wet-behind-the-ears senator and had already run for the 1988 Democratic presidential nomination. Also, as a longtime member of the US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, the immediate impact of troop withdrawal from Somalia would not have been lost on Biden.

Cut to 2011. By now the vice-president, Biden was personally entrusted the task of yet another troop pullout, this time from Iraq (Biden had earlier voted for authorising military force in 2002, then as the chairman of Senate Committee on Foreign Relations).

This withdrawal of 1,50,000 troops when the “enemy” was clearly not defeated, was to prove fatal. It created a sudden vacuum and the Al-Qaida metastasized into ISIS and, within a couple of months, the “caliphate” had emerged over most of the Syrian-Iraqi swathes.

A new dimension of global terror, regional upheaval and religious extremism was born — all fingers pointed towards a premature withdrawal of US troops, among other factors. Importantly, Biden had then personally punted on one of the most controversial, sectarian and irresponsible locals, Nouri al-Maliki, to manage the show in the absence of US troops.



US Army sniper atop an Afghanistan mountaintop; File Photo

The troops had to return to Iraq in 2014 to undo the damage of what was clearly a wrong decision to withdraw. Around the same time, Biden was pushing hard for a similar scale-down of the US troops in Afghanistan with a limited mandate of counterterrorism, like proposed in Iraq — however, President Barack Obama heeded the counsel of his Generals, who suggested otherwise.

In 2021, President Biden has inherited Donald Trump’s decisions for complete withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan and Somalia where, yet again, the “enemy” in the form of Taliban (and affiliates) and Al-Shabab, respectively, is waiting menacingly. Somalia withdrawal has already happened and the ravaged territory is again left precariously poised.

Afghanistan as the hub of regional/global terror has an altogether different portent at stake. Clearly the deadline for complete withdrawal of the troops by May 1, 2021, is staring in the face for the force of about 2,500 troops (down from 1,00,000 in 2011) and the conflated “peace agreement” with the Taliban that underwrites such a withdrawal, remains routinely and supremely violated.

The surge of marauding Taliban towards an embattled Kabul continues and herein to assume that

2,500 US troops would be able to withstand pressures that a one-time composition of 1,00,000 could not — let alone the situation when even this minuscule element departs as planned — is disastrous.

The practical logic of “counterterrorism level” presence does not hold good, as vetted by history. Blind adherence to commitments without assuming inevitabilities will deligitimise the cost in terms of lives lost, resources and rationales invested in the last 20 years, besides affording a terror-based sovereign.

A recent bipartisan US Congress-appointed Afghan Study Group has concluded a damning assessment of the Taliban’s own commitments towards conditionalities so far, and forewarned of impending bloody civil war, therefore suggesting the

abandonment/extension of the May 1 timeline. Biden must be guided by his memory and experiences of the earlier US withdrawals and the subsequent costs to the US.

its global interventions have rarely succeeded, however, leaving mid-course has always made situations worse. Timing is everything and, as things stand in Afghanistan, currently it looks ominous. Biden must rethink withdrawal commitments and imperatives in Afghanistan — personal experience should advise him so.

(This article was first published in ‘The Pioneer’ and has been reproduced with due permission from the author. Views expressed are the authors own and do not reflect the editorial policy of Mission Victory India)



Lieutenant General Bhopinder Singh (Retd)

Commissioned in and subsequently commanded 17th Rajput, the author fought in the 1965 & 1971 wars and various counter-insurgency operations in J&K and North East. He was the Military, Naval & Air Attaché for the East & South Africa Region. Later he was the Military Secretary to Presidents, KR Narayanan & APJ Abdul Kalam. He was the ‘Colonel of the Regiment’ of the Rajput Regiment, President’s Bodyguards, and the Army Physical Training Corps. He retired as the Director General of Military Training. He is currently a columnist for leading publications.



Philosophy Alone Cannot Win Wars: Where is our National Security Strategy?

“Thank you, China, for coming to the rescue of the Indian Armed Forces for the second time. It had done us a great favour in 1962 when it stopped our government from winding down the armed forces.”

by Lieutenant General PG Kamath (Retd)

what should india do in china-india standoff in Ladakh once the snow melts? Ask the foreign ministry and they would tell you; “please pray while they will placate china, appease them and agree to the loss of territory in the Depsang Plains and also on the Northern Banks of Pangong Tso.

They would also want the Indian Army to vacate from the Kailash range and play blind when the Chinese annex the range. After utter subjugation of our national interest, they will wax eloquent on “*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*’ (The world is one family). They will then brag that they have averted a war and diplomacy has won.

The philosophy of the ‘world as one family’ is preposterous to practise with China as it would be construed as the refuge of the weak. When China says

‘might is right’ do we have to meekly harp on the philosophy which is not only irrelevant but also extraneous in the geopolitical paradigm? Similarly, Gandhi’s Ahimsa has become a shibboleth at indoor seminars than a tool in real geopolitics.

so, let us shed the high-sounding philosophy and come to the reality of our neighbourhood where China is expansionist and Pakistan trades in terrorism. Both the countries have been colluding against us since 1965; however, our political leadership has always been in the limbo and in perpetual denial mode of such an arrangement.

our MoD is more at ease in slighting the soldier than preparing to take on our adversary. You must have read in my earlier article; when China had committed incursions in Ladakh in

May 2020, the Defence Secretary was lamenting on pension bills in his public discourse and igniting fires to stem the review of OROP. Look at the priority of this bureaucrat? Such are the ways of the MoD.

It is difficult for the public to believe that the MoD, whose duty it is to prepare for war has to be convinced that we need rifles, LMGs and Sten-carbines to fight a war. By the way, these are basic weapons of a soldier and the dumbest in the padded cell will tell you that these weapons are threadbare essentials to fight a war.

Can you believe, for two decades, we were without these basic weapons and even now we are in the process of getting a small percentage of our original requirements? For three decades we did not buy an Artillery Gun as Bofors

“

What should be our 'Military Aim'? It should be derived from the aforesaid political aim? We should build Military capacity to take on China in all the three sectors and make China believe that a confrontation with India is not beneficial to them and is forced to consider settling the border through negotiations.

”

was a hush-hush deal with Uncle Quatrocchi. In spite of the criticality, our babus will sit on the file and ask those in the uniform to convince them of its necessity.

Thank you, china, for coming to the rescue of the Indian Armed Forces for the second time. It had done us a great favour in 1962 when it stopped our government from winding down the armed forces. Again, it is a blessing in disguise, now as our government is on a buying spree of basic weapons, artillery, Air Defence systems, aircraft, building warships and submarines, bringing up infrastructure in border areas and revitalising our defence industries.

In late 2018, the PM tasked the NSA to craft 'The National security strategy' for the country. This ought to have been done in some form along with the constitution of India in 1949. It was a sacrilege for independent India to think of defence, let alone have any defence strategy. We were Gandhians, who shunned violence and embraced 'Ahimsa'. Due to this pertinacious belief of Nehru and his absolute lack of strategic vision; we literally gave thousands of sq. miles of our territory to China and Pakistan.

Had he asked then Maj Gen Cariappa and his team to conceive a National security strategy for India, we would have known the strategic direction which the country should pave its way and build its capacities. All the governments which have ruled our country in the past did not have any inkling of the strategic requirements of the country.

The present government though belatedly realised the lacuna and the NSA was tasked to conceive 'National security strategy' (NSS) and put it up to the CCS. To formulate it a 'Defence

planning Committee' was formed. It was put under the NSA. By the way; the NSA is already heading the 'strategic policy Group' and also the National security council. The NSA wears three hats; have you heard something familiar? Yes; Xi also wears three hats. No time to discuss it now. Now the NSA will give the same advice to the PM from three separate organisations.

strategically it would be the weakest link where the only version would be heard by the PM. Only when different views are expressed the PM will have a comprehensive strategic picture in his mind.



27 'points of dispute' between India and China along the LAC; Map for Representational Purposes

we all know; how Nehru trusted only the IB chief, BN Mullick? what came of it? A disaster for our country in 1962, the humiliation of a proud civilisation, territorial loss to the nation and losing our leadership role in Asia and in the whole world. I am glad that a CDS has been appointed, however, if he does not have access to the PM then we would not be optimising this appointment.

Now, it was the turn of the NSA to delay the formulation of NSS, let alone its implementation. It lingers on, and it was threatening to be revealed at the end of 2019. However, due to pandemic, probably, it has been delayed; you will agree with me if the NSS gets infected with corona then it could be stillborn? If I am sounding sarcastic; it is because I am!

After needlessly investing in friendship with Dictator Xi, we have realised that it was a sheer waste of time; instead, had we invested in our defence preparations; we would have been in a much better position to meet the current threat on the sino-Indian border. Only, when China meant business and invaded our territory in Ladakh did we wake up to the requirement of unearthing our list of long-pending requirements of weapons and equipment that had gathered dust in the catacombs of the MOD.

you know our finance people; even if the Chinese offensive forces are closing ground; they will still ask questions about the necessity of weapons or

critical ammunition and create untold obstacles in its procurement. However much you may criticise them for delaying the procurement, even their worst detractors cannot help but appreciate their ingenuity to raise new and novel doubts each time the file crosses their tables. Why blame the Chinese, we have enough niggers and cavillers in-built in the system to help our adversaries?

Have I digressed? What is our political aim vis-à-vis the Chinese? settle



Indian & Chinese flags; File Photo

the sino indian border based on the McMahon Line in the Eastern sector, along the Zaskar Range in the central sector and Johnson's Line in the western sector. We should pursue this aim and should be prepared to give and take to arrive at a mutually beneficial arrangement.

What should be our 'Military Aim'? It should be derived from the aforesaid political aim? We should build military capacity to take on China in all the three sectors and make China believe that a confrontation with India is not beneficial to them and is forced to consider settling the border through negotiations.

It entails that we build our military capacities and also construct infrastructures on the Sino-Indian Frontier that would enable India to launch our offensive forces to capture or threaten important cities/towns in Tibet or interdict his Western or Eastern Highways.

In the Indian Ocean, we should be able to interdict his sea lanes of communications (SLOCs) and disrupt his trade and energy supply lines. I think I will stop now, as our planners would be doing the serious task of its identification and means to achieve it.

First and the foremost is that we should expect China to launch an offensive anywhere on the Sino-Indian border. If he doesn't, so be it but our preparations have to be complete to absorb their offensive and go on a counter-offensive in the same or different sectors. In each sector, we should appreciate his ground objectives and deploy our

forces to deny them. China already is on full ballast in his propaganda that Indians have resumed the forward policy of Nehru.

Interestingly, it is accusing the Indian Armed Forces of violating a LAC more than thousand times. Apparently, it is a very poor joke and one has to strain oneself even give out a mild snigger. Firstly, when China has not even given its perception of LAC both in the Western and Eastern sectors; who and how to determine it on the ground? Ludicrous; isn't it?

Now it is left to a local commander on the Chinese side to determine and report the violation based on his individual belief and guess on the lay of LAC. Such are the ways of China! In short, it is used to bullying all its neighbours

with its whimsical demands and does not really know when to call it off?

This is the time that we should not take the Chinese threat lightly. All news emanating from the 'Global Times' the official mouthpiece of China is talking of war as a natural fallout for the alleged indiscretion by India. The whole nation has to be ready to wage a war with China if forced on us. All our industries should be able to restructure their products to make war-waging requirements for the country.

All people should be mentally prepared to contribute to the nation. The Public-Private Partnership industries have to gear up and meet the requirement of forces. The farmers' agitation is helping our adversaries. It was disheartening to see the deeds at the Red Fort on the Republic Day. You remember similar things happened during the visit of Trump to India.

Both events were planned to let down the country and indeed those who were involved are like maggots who live in the country and feed on it. Remember the quote by Oliver Kemper; "The Foundation of Freedom is Unity". I cannot believe that our country which has been a slave country for centuries still does not value our priceless freedom?

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



Lieutenant General PG Kamath (Retd)

Lieutenant General PG Kamath, PVM, AVSM, YSM, SM, Comdt, AWC retired from service on Mar 30 after a long and illustrious career spanning almost four decades. An Alumnus of SS, Bijapur and NDA, Khadakwasla, He was commissioned into the Madras Regiment in June 1973. A cerebral scholar warrior, he is a graduate of DSSC, HCC and the prestigious NDC. He has commanded an inf bn on the LoC in J&K during peak of the insurgency 1993 to 1995. He

commanded an inf bde during 'OP PARAKRAM', an inf div with operational role in the deserts and the Rann of Kutch. His repertoire of staff appointments includes the prestigious tenure of Defence Advisor to the Indian High Commissioner in Malaysia, the significant position of Add'l MS at the AHQ Chief of Staff at a Cd HQ. He has contributed immensely to op planning and trg of his formations as Chief of Staff and Brig Gen Staff of a Corps in the Eastern Cd

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The Nation and its Soldiers

“One has heard of being penny wise, pound foolish. But don’t our procedures show how our systems cheat our own?”

by Major P M Ravindran (Retd)

‘To have peace you must have intimate friends or outright enemies’ is wisdom from the ages. And I am recollecting it here in the context of our nation and its relationship with its soldiers. Soldiers do have an outright enemy only during wars. And they have not had one since 1971. So, their peace, when not at war, necessarily depends on intimate friends. And here is the rub. Since 2014, every year during Diwali, the Prime Minister of the nation does religiously take time out to be with soldiers, sharing sweets with them, exuding care and bonhomie.

But it is time some hard questions were asked: will the soldier who is fed sweets with the Prime Minister’s own hands be able to spend enough quality time with his family? Will he be able to send his children to good schools? Will he be able to provide enough security to his family back in his village while he is securing the nation in the most

difficult terrains under the most trying conditions? The answer is a big no.

Even in peace locations, a soldier hardly gets family accommodation for about a year. And once his children start going to school, he has no choice but to forego even this little facility. Because of the problems of getting admission even in Kendriya Vidyalayas, if ever they are available both at his place of posting and within accessible distance from his village. Even these problems fade into insignificance when compared to the prospect of loss of employment (read, livelihood) when his commitments are at its peak, when he is in his thirties.

Till a few years back he used to get recruited at 16-17 years of age and serve for 15-17 years. The minimum age of recruitment was raised to 18 years only because of human rights

considerations which barred non-adults from bearing arms.

The proposal to re-employ them in civil, after a pre-release training cum reorientation, has been in the pipeline for ages but has not moved an inch from that stage, in all these years. This is one of the four requirements that has been projected by the Indian Ex-servicemen Movement, spearheading the protest at Jantar Mantar since 2008.

Though currently only one rank, one pension (OROP) is making the headlines, the three other proposals include re-employment of released soldiers till 60 years of age, a commission for the welfare of veteran soldiers on the lines of Women’s Commission, SC/ST Commission and Minority Commission and including representatives of veteran soldiers in all bodies dealing with veteran’s affairs.

while it is difficult to imagine why these simple proposals cannot be implemented, it is totally impossible to reconcile with the injustices perpetrated on soldiers, who, it can be said unequivocally, are the only ones who really perform their job on a do or die basis. It all had begun with India's first prime minister, Nehru, who believed that the nation got its freedom through ahimsa and we could do without an army, at least not more than a ceremonial one.

He did not even learn any lesson from the military operations in J&K in 1947-48. When the then C-in-C, Gen Butcher, had approached him with a security plan for the newly independent nation, he had reportedly been dismissive. Gen Butcher put in his papers and returned to Britain.

And then came the debacle in 1962, when China just walked in up to Tezpur in the eastern sector and walked off. Our soldiers deployed on those borders were not even properly clothed, leave alone equipped and armed. Many died after resisting till the last man, last bullet. More died due to inclement weather.

Many army officers got court-martialed. The defence minister resigned. But nothing has been heard of the then defence secretary, who even now is officially responsible for the defense of the nation. Videos are viral on social media of how Nehru failed to even use the available Air Force to stop the aggressors in their tracks.

Her father's trauma prevented Indira Gandhi from repeating the mistake in 1971. She had wanted the then chief of Army Staff, General S H F J Manekshaw, to resolve the Bangladesh crisis militarily in April that year. As Manekshaw himself repeated many times later, he had assured her of certain defeat then. He had even told her he would opt to resign than get the army into a no-win situation. The rest is history.

But politicians would eulogize Indira as Durga and condemn the soldier who crafted the historical victory. Sam, as he was popularly known as, was given the rank of a Field Marshal but denied the pay and perks that went with it. The arrears were given to him in his

deathbed, on the intervention of the then President of India, Dr A P J Abdul Kalam in 2007.

Manekshaw is the only officer of the Indian Armed Forces who had been given the 5-star rank while in service. The other two were K M Cariappa, the first Indian commander in chief of free India, who was given the rank of field marshal in 1986, 33 years after his retirement and Arjan Singh Aulakh was given the rank of Marshal of the Air Force in 2002, 33 years after he had demitted the office of the chief of Air Staff in 1969.

Since field marshals and their equivalents hold the office for life, they are entitled to pay and perks of that rank and not pension. But it took the government 36 years to take a decision on this. But even then, it was limited to the pay equivalent to the service chiefs only. And therein lies another rub.

The service chiefs were held equivalent to the cabinet secretary. (In the warrant of precedence, 2007, the cabinet secretary is at serial 11 while the service chiefs are at serial 12) But there is no military officer of the rank of field marshal or equivalent figuring in that list.

So, if a field marshal or equivalent must be placed in the list it will necessarily have to be at ser 11 or above. And this would not be acceptable to the bureaucrats. It is the same reason why General Bipin Rawat has been appointed as the first chief of defense staff (CDS) in the same rank as the chief of Army Staff (COAS).

General Bipin Rawat has been a disaster for the morale of the soldiers ever since he superseded two officers and took over as the chief of Army Staff. Even when the share of defence expenditure as a share of GDP had reduced to 2 percent, the level as in 1962, and defence preparedness had been languishing, he had been indulging in pettifoggery on issues like free rations for officers in peace stations, taxing disability pension of soldiers etc.

Now, as in 1962, it was left to the Chinese to wake up both the bureaucrats and the

politicians from their slumber. Post Galwan, there is a spree on buying, off the shelf, items from personal arms and winter clothing to high altitude tents and drones at seller decided prices.

Even amidst this alarming situation, threatening the very integrity of the nation, and the debilitating pandemic, the office of the CDS has found time to move a proposal to increase the retirement age for soldiers, including officers up to the rank of colonel, to 57 years, with the rider that the pension of those who opt to retire earlier will be reduced proportionately. The proposal is to give only 50 percent of 'entitled' pension to those who opt to retire after 20 years of service, with 35 years of service needed to get full pension.

The absurdity of the proposal needs no elaboration. The point is that as it stands the entitled pension is 50 percent of the last pay drawn. And if you retire at a lower rank or with lesser service you get only 50 percent of the pay you have drawn in that rank and with that service. Now it is this low pension that is sought to be further reduced by up to 50 percent. There is a piece of information that has gained ground after the veterans were forced to take to open form of protest at Jantar Mantar in 2008.

That is, post 1971 ops, when the 3rd Central Pay Commission (CPC) awards were implemented the pension of soldiers, which had been 70 percent of his last pay drawn (rightly so, because of his early age of retirement and no prospect for gainful employment thereafter) had been reduced to 50 percent on the ground of economic hardship.

But unknown to most soldiers, except maybe to those at the top level of the hierarchy, the pension of civilians had been hiked from 33 percent to 50 percent. But that was not all. Full pension (50 percent of last pay drawn) would be available only to those who complete 33 years of service. In effect, most soldiers who retired as sepoy with 15 years of service, got only less than 25 percent of their last pay as pension. And this was the genesis of the OROP movement.

Lieutenant Colonel Inderjit Singh (who passed away recently) was the first one



ESM during their agitation for OROP at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi; File Photo

to sit on a hunger strike at India Gate on 22 Feb 1982, demanding OROP. Even when the bureaucrats said, 'over my dead body', Indira Gandhi had agreed to the demand but failed to fulfill it.

All the governments that followed promised to implement it but ultimately ditched the soldiers. Not only was OROP not implemented, the status and compensation given to those who had taken an oath to give up their lives in the line of their duty, were systematically brought down with every pay commission.

The 4th CPC had introduced a running pay scale for officers from captains to Brigadiers and given an additional rank pay to compensate for different ranks. The bureaucrats while fixing the new pay reduced the rank pay from the newly fixed pay and then gave the rank pay, effectively denying the rank pay.

An officer, Major Dhanapalan, working on the new pay for civilians in the Military Engineering Service, brought it to the notice of the then CoAS, General K Sundarji who simply snubbed him. It was in 1998 when Dhanapalan got posted to Kochi he could approach the High Court and demand his dues. While he got a favorable verdict at the High

court, the central Government went to the Supreme Court. Finally, Dhanapalan got all his dues.

Based on the Dhanapalan verdict many groups of officers approached the High Courts for similar relief. The apex court got all the cases pooled together and gave a verdict in favor of the officers. But many appeals, revisions, and special leave petitions later, almost a decade after, the court succumbed to the pleas of the government and directed that the arrears from 01 Jan 1986 to 31 Dec 2005 need not be paid and only the arrears from 01 Jan 2006 to be paid with a simple interest of 6 percent.

Now look at how the bureaucrats and politicians (MLAs, MPs and ministers) have given themselves OROP.

While for all the lower levels there is a scale of pay with annual increments, at the top there is only fixed pay for the bureaucrats. This ensures that all the bureaucrats who retire at those levels automatically get the same pension, always. And in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), almost all direct recruits retire at the level of secretaries to the Government of India or their equivalent.

The 6th CPC in 2006 introduced another bizarre scheme - Non-Functional Financial Upgradation (NFFU) - for the bureaucrats of the IAS and Indian Police Service (IPS) cadres. By this any member of a batch getting promoted anywhere in India would entitle all the members of that batch to get the same pay and perks irrespective of their current tasking.

Now, interestingly, even though the other Group A services also pass through the same process of recruitment, even the members of the IPS got only 2nd rate treatment in that they got the same status and perks only two years after their parallel batchmate in the IAS.

The 7th CPC has extended this NFFU to all Group A cadres. Military officers, who should, logically, be the only ones eligible for such a privilege because of the steeple pyramid nature of their structure and dearth of vacancies at the top, have been denied this simply because they are a class apart and do not come under the classification of Group A.

For the MLAs, MPs and ministers, there is no minimum service required to be

eligible for pension. For example, as per information received under the RTI Act in 2013, an MP who has served for any period is entitled to Rs 20,000/- as pension from 18/5/2009. After 5 years, he is entitled to additional Rs 1,500/- for every extra year of service. And this system has been in vogue since 09/09/1976.

Similarly, in Kerala, the MLAs were eligible for a minimum pension of Rs 6,000/- for 'less than two years of service and full pension of Rs 10,000/- on completion of a full term of five years. Thereafter, for every year or part thereof, they get a fixed amount as additional pension.

Interestingly, while Rs 129,094,352/- had been paid as pension/family pension to 3,857 MPs/family pensioners, during Dec 2012-Feb 2013, an amount of Rs 2,645/- crores had been paid by the Lok Sabha Secretariat towards the rail travel of ex-MPs during the quarter Jan-Mar 2013. (Letter No I(556)/IC/13 dated 31/05/2013 of the Lok Sabha Secretariat).

Back to Kerala again, each minister in Kerala is entitled to have a personal staff of 25 of his own choice, no qualifications, competence prescribed. And they also become eligible for life long pension/family pension after just 30 months of service. There was this minister for Health, Srimathi, who had employed her own daughter in law as a cook in her house, as her personal staff.

Kerala government, which had stopped statutory pension to its employees who have joined after 01 Jan 2014, has introduced pension for even the elected members of local bodies recently.

The betrayal of soldiers is not limited to pay and pensions. The Armed Forces Tribunals (AFT) and Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) were introduced long, long after the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) and Central Government Health Scheme (CGHS) had been in place.

While there are 17 benches for CAT, there are only 9 benches for the AFT. As per a list dated 23 Sep 2020, there are only 23 vacant positions out of 65 posts of members sanctioned. But all the benches are functional.

In the case of AFTs, there is only the principal bench at Delhi that has the full quorum of Judicial and Administrative members (2 each). While Chandigarh bench has a judicial member, Chennai bench has only an administrative member. The other benches are defunct as per data available on the AFT Delhi website, as of 23 November 2020.

While I hold the Contempt of Court Act as anathema in a democracy, the fact remains that the CATs have this power which makes their decisions more implementable. The AFTs do not have this power and hence their orders are often dumped with impunity.

The disparity in between CGHS and ECHS is also baffling. The ECHS introduced in 2003-04 with great fanfare has also proved to be a damp squib. With a smart card having biometric identification features, one was supposed to walk in and out of empaneled hospitals without any hassles in getting the required medical care. Funds were not supposed to be a problem at all. But a decade and a half later, there are many hospitals who had once got empaneled refusing to renew the contract.

The bills of private hospitals pending with ECHS are preventing many hospitals from joining the scheme. Some are taking the cost from beneficiaries promising to refund it once their bills get cleared. CGHS has facilities for non-allopathic modes of health care. ECHS does not.

To illustrate how awkward things are for old soldiers, during the pandemic it was announced that beneficiaries could buy medicines prescribed by

ECHS or empaneled hospitals from outside pharmacies. While submitting claims, observations have been raised that when substitute medicines are bought the cost must be the lowest. Just imagine the plight of a poor soldier who, in good faith, buys whatever his next-door pharmacist provides him.

How is he to know whether the medicine provided to him is the cheapest? Should he go from pharmacy to pharmacy enquiring how much a Metformin tablet would cost? And how can he be sure that, after such a strenuous exercise, whatever he has bought is still the cheapest?

One has heard of being penny wise, pound foolish. But don't our procedures show how our systems cheat our own?

Let me conclude with a humorous anecdote that is viral in veteran circles. A General had a light stroke while swimming in the Army pool. As luck would have it, only a young lieutenant was around who promptly jumped and saved him...Once out of the pool, the General, after gaining his breath said, "Look son, I am the CDS...tell me anything you want from the Army...and you will get it..." The youngster hurriedly thanked him for the nice offer and wanted to leave.... The General was too grateful and repeated his offer... The youngster slowly said, "If you really want to do me a favor...Please do not tell anyone that I saved you!"

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



Major P M Ravindran (Retd)

Major Ravindran was born in 1955 and subsequently commissioned into the 1st Unit: 7 Inf Div, Sig Regt as an officer in 1977. The author has been a regimental officer barring a short stint with the MoD. He has had vast operational experience having served in all sectors - He retired on in 1998, with his final unit being 4 Corps Engg Sig Regt. Post retirement, he has kept busy as an activist working for transparency and accountability in government. Some of his areas of interest are:

judicial reforms, justice for soldiers and the RTI act, with his articles on these subjects having been published in the media. You can follow his work at: raviforjustice.blogspot.com.



Debate: The Nation and its Soldiers, Looking after Our Own

by Colonel Vinay B Dalvi (Retd) & Aritra Banerjee

Background & Trigger

The Nation and its soldiers by Major P M Ravindran (Retd) published (in this issue) by Team Mission Victory India drew several complementary responses from our military veteran fraternity that reinforced all the issues that were raised in his comprehensive piece. After perusal of the article what

the veterans have said individually basically endorse this article and give further insight into some of the issues as per their awareness and perception.

some of the responses from veterans that were sent to the author for information have been further commented upon that have added even more depth and clarity to these issues. All the

responses received from veterans to this article are reproduced below along with comments by the author on some of these points. All these collectively add much depth and credibility to all the issues raised and are indeed a matter of concern and food for thought for our soldiers, veterans, and citizens of the country!



Extracts from Military Professionals



Gp Capt. TP Srivastava (Retd), Author & Analyst



I read through the write up twice over. Most of what is stated is factually correct. I have already expressed my views on the issue in my article 'Indian Military on the Cross (Road)'. Talking about the military looking after 'its own'; suffice to say let us look at how a dedicated set up Directorate General of Resettlement works. I was Director (Training) there. I will not comment lest it open a can of worms, the military may not be able to swallow. Maj Ravindran's stress that 'we are cheated by our own' is on

the dot. Nothing is likely to change in the foreseeable future. soldiers killed/maimed merely become part of stats



Col. J P Singh (Retd), ex Inf, Military Historian



Maj Ravindran deserves compliments for putting across clearly that 'Armed Forces are the victim of the system'. I think the script and the comments are inbuilt. However, I feel the following reasons for the victimhood. We chose armed forces as a profession voluntarily. There is an exit door always open which we don't/didn't see; why? Even Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, supposedly extraordinarily strong military leader could tell! He too was a victim of the system.

So, we are at the PM's mercy for everything. He/she can give rations to officers or can deny them whenever wishes to. The Defence Minister sacks a Naval Chief, the system does not hold the Naval Chief's hand. System gives NFU to whomsoever it wants. System sends us home at a young age, we run from pillar to post for our dues/rights, the nation does not care. Maj Ravindran is right, soldiers are eulogized during war but during peace nation finds faults with armed forces and starts belittling it. System again.

PM Modi's feeds sweets to soldiers in field on Diwali. It is hypocrisy at its best. With the sweets, has he ever given any other welfare tonic, even a little bit except lies that OROP has been given? Why should soldiers itch to get sweets from him. He should be told by them that we die for our country on the orders of our CO. We will take sweets from him and him alone. Please give it through him. After retirement, we join ongoing agitations, looking for lost opportunities, which serves no purpose.

MPS/MLAs take perks as their birth right boldly because they have the power to topple governments. They demand and get, if not they change parties and join to topple the government. The Army does not topple the government so why crib? Pakistan & Myanmar army does not crib because the system is with them.

If a Field Marshal or the three chiefs of those times could not prevail in preventing the 3rd CPC reducing the scale of pensions from 70% to 50% and the Field Marshal could not get his own pay; why blame politicians so and so. Is there even a single MP elected by ex-servicemen vote who will have one vote to topple the government? The Vajpayee government fell by one vote.

Home Minister gives welfare doles to paramilitary forces, one after the other, because they make his party win/lose.

I suggest people like you, Maj Ravindran and Maj Dhanapalan write to tell ex-servicemen to either boycott future elections or vote for NOTA. Automatically armed forces will get something before what government intends giving to other organisations. I say so after seeing the Supreme Court's attitude in OROP pending petition. Maj Dhanapalan got rank pay resolved from Kerala High Court. Elections and vote is the solution, not the agitation when the arrogant government is not even listening to the agitating Farmers.



Pointwise Comments/Clarification from the Author

"Maj Ravindran deserves compliments for putting across clearly that 'Armed Forces are the victim of the system'. I think the script and the comments are

inbuilt. However, I feel the following reasons for the victimhood. We chose armed forces as a profession voluntarily. There is an exit door always open

which we don't/didn't see; why? Even FM Sam, supposedly extraordinarily strong military leader could tell! He too was a victim of the system."

Author's Remarks: "The exit door? As an officer it is available only after 20 years and as a sepoy only after 17 years. And what is the scope for getting a job in civil in a comparable position and adapting to it? Even within the army, on re-employment, an officer had been employed only in a captain's vacancy and when I joined my first unit, these officers had to wear even the rank badges of a captain. It was much later that re-employed officers have been allowed to wear the badges of their last rank held. But even then, they have been employed in positions tenable by capt (and majors?)."

"But do they continue to draw the pay of their earlier rank? In this context a comparison with the IAS is inevitable. Take the case of status of information commissioners under the RTI Act. For a job that is simpler than that of a munsif in our judiciary, their status, pay and perks had been equivalent to that of the Chief Election Commissioner, Election Commissioner and The Chief Secretary to the state Governments. And who are usually appointed as these info commissioners? Retired bureaucrats, mostly from the IAS and IPS."

"The first Chief IC at Central Info Commn was Wajahat Habibullah, a former secy to the GOI; the first CIC in Kerala was its Chief Secy, the next two had been DGP) And the stupidity without bounds of these ICs had been exposed abundantly and I had complained to the Prez and the Governor respectively to remove them. But nothing happened. Thankfully, Modi had brought these statuses to that of Addl Secys."

"I can take some credit as I had been the only one harping on the job requirement vs status since 2007, when I could organise a protest with 12 others, against the subversion of the law by the ICs. You may see my blog at <http://raviforjustice.blogspot.in/2017/04/rti-rules-2017redrafted-by-rti-activist.html>)"

"so, we are at the PM's mercy for everything."

Author's Remarks: "A legacy of Nehru, who has been projected wrongly as an epitome of democratic values. And wasn't his daughter known as the only man in her cabinet?"

"He/she can give rations to officers or can deny them whenever wishes to. The Defence Minister sacks a naval chief, the system does not hold the naval chief's hand. System gives NFU to whomsoever it wants. System sends us home at a young age, we run from pillar to post for our dues/rights, the nation doesn't care."

Author's Remark: "I had read a report of Gen Padmanabhan, COAS, when he retired, got his ration card after 6 months of effort!"

"Maj Ravindran is right, soldiers are eulogised during war but during peace nation finds faults with armed forces and starts belittling it."

Author's Remark: "Not the nation per se, but the decision makers and the tukde tukde gangs)"

"system again."

Author's Remark: "Yes, it is the system that again lets an IAS guy from Punjab, on election observer duties to Quilon in Kerala goes to play golf to Thiruvananthapuram, and when a hue and cry is raised, is just sent back to his parent cadre. Legally they are under the administrative and disciplinary control of the Elections Commissions but when the ECs are themselves former babus why bother?"

"PM Modi's gives ladoos to soldiers in field on Diwali. It is hypocrisy at its best. With the ladoos, has he ever given any other welfare tonic, even a little bit except lies that OROP has been given? Why should soldiers itch to get a ladoo from Him. He should be told by them that we die for our country on the orders of our CO. We will take ladoos from him and him alone. Please give it through him. Nor does any officer do. After retirement, we join ongoing agitations, looking for lost opportunities, which serves no purpose."

Author's Remark: "But protesting is a democratic right, isn't it? But practically, it is just a vent for pending up frustration. If anything, peaceful protests after 1947 has only called the bluff that we got freedom through an ahimsa movement."

"MPS/MLAs take perks as their birth right boldly because they have the power to topple govts. They demand and get, if not they change parties and join to topple the govt. Army doesn't topple the govt so why crib."

Author's Remark: "The whole election process beginning with selection/nomination of candidates is a farce. It will require at least another full article to dwell on."

"Pak & Myanmar army does not crib because the system is with them. If a Field Marshal could not prevail in preventing the 3rd CPC reducing the scale of pensions from 70% to 50%."

Authors' Remark: "sorry, it was not during Manekshaw's time that the this down gradation took place. It was after his retirement"

"and couldn't get his own pay"

Author's Remark: "here, he can be pardoned, because he would have felt it belittling to fight for his dues. And we all know the controversy around his joke on the result of 71 ops if he had been with Pak army."

"why blame politicians so and so. Is there even a single MP elected by ex-servicemen who will have voted to topple the govt? Vajpayee govt fell by one vote. Home Minister gives welfare doles to paramilitary forces one after the other,"

Author's Remark: "true, look at all the additional benefits that were given post Pulwama and look at his performance as the RM now. With the flood of information don't our troops notice this 'nepotism'?"

"because they make his party win/lose. I suggest people like you, Maj Ravindran and Maj Dhanapalan* write to tell ex-servicemen to either boycott future elections or vote for NOTA"

Author's Remark: "No use of NOTA, because the original proposal that if NOTA gets majority none of the candidates who had contested would be eligible to contest subsequent election was not included in the law."

“Automatically armed forces will get something before what govt intends giving to other organisations. I say so after seeing the supreme court’s attitude in OROP pending petition. Maj Dhanapalan got rank pay resolved from kerala high court. Elections and vote is the solution,”

Author’s Remark: “they certainly are. But do we know how many soldiers get to vote in their places of posting, as has been made possible now?”

“not the agitation when the arrogant govt is not even listening to the agitating Farmers”

Author’s Remark: “This is a major point of disagreement. I am with the

Modi govt in this matter. The reforms are positive but being distorted by politicians and their sidekicks who have been acting as middlemen and reaping profits while the genuine farmers have been committing suicide.

“Unfortunately, Maj Dhanapalan had to fight his Rank Pay case alone. He could not get even a single co petitioner. And I had to stage a one man protest when the then RM, A K Antony, visited my hometown for some function. I could not get a single veteran organisation to join me, though there is no dearth of such organisation in my native town. And it was harrowing time going through the judicial process alone.”

Response: I am witness to Maj Dhanapalan raising Rank Pay anomaly with Gen Sunderji at Pune. Gen Sunderji had come to review NDA POP in 1986/87. He addressed officers in CME Auditorium which I attended. Before that Maj Gen Harbhajan Singh of Signals, who was Armed Forces rep to present case to CPC. He gave a detailed power-point presentation. Maj Dhanapalan tried to explain that we were losers by this fake benefit. Sensing truth and cheated by CPC, he asked him to meet him after the event. What transpired is not known. I think Chief could not get it rectified and hence Maj Dhanapalan had to go to Kerala HC and get relief to the benefit of us all. He too deserves to be complimented. Such officers are becoming rare.



An Indian soldier patrolling in desert environs; File Photo

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

“

True! Fact is that the military leadership which should be looking after organisational interests, lack unity, therefore, the Armed Forces suffer not only in terms of money but status, image, self-esteem, and equipment. This is not confined to the men in uniform alone but percolates down to families too, poor housing being one area amongst a long list. When my father was commissioned, the DC would come to the club, request all officers desirous of getting arm license or driving licenses renewed to send the documents through their bearer that was the respect given by civil services. Look at where we are now! Even courts pay scant regards to our cases, NFFU & OROP are examples.

Less said the better.

”

Pointwise Comments/Clarification from the Author

“True! Fact is that the military leadership who should be looking after organisational interests, lack unity, therefore, the Armed Forces suffer not only in terms of money but status, image, self-esteem and equipment.”

Author’s Remark: “unity in armed forces? can one think of a better united organisation than the armed forces? Unfortunately, the one man at the top is enabled to compromise on anything and everything, including organisational interests.”

Counter Response: “The response to my post cannot be borne as correct. It’s not one man at

the top alone who has been responsible, in case he refers to the CDS there are 3 Chiefs too & we must recall what happened in the Vishnu Bhagwat episode! The Armed Forces unlike the IAS/IPS, etc., cannot form a union or an association, all ESM associations are at loggerheads, therefore lack unity. If we cannot take a stand while in harness and do not stand united post superannuation, there can be no hope”

“This is not confined to the men in uniform alone but percolates down to families too, poor housing being one area amongst a long list. When my father was commissioned, the DC would come to the club, request all officers desirous of getting arm

license or driving licenses renewed to send the documents through their bearer, that was the respect given by civil services. Look at where we are now!” Even courts pay scant regards to our cases, NFFU & OROP are examples. Less said the better.”

Author’s Remark: “what about rank pay, which is a 100 percent entitlement? Any reason why the arrears from 1/1/1986 to 31/12/2005 was denied? worse, any babu, responsible for the fraud punished? Compare that with the Sahara case and Subroto Roy being sent to prison for not paying back almost 25,000 Cr to 1000s of depositors, in a jiffy?”

Brig. Sarvesh D Dangwal (Retd), ex-Comdt AIPT & DDGPT



It is factual and the situation we find ourselves in is partly driven by the politico - bureaucratic nexus and mostly our very own leadership at the apex level. It requires a holistic reappraisal of the situation and is unlikely to happen with any military dispensation driving it. With our courtier generals and their equivalents in the sister services of the armed forces, the drivers of change are themselves steeped in playing dumb charade with the Government of the day. Therefore, there is not much hope, which can come from within to improve the situation. The only chances of anything positive happening to improve the situation will come from the resumption of salami slicing by Xi Jinping.



Add to the Discourse, Keep the Conversation Going!

The editorial team at ‘Mission Victory India’, invites responses for the purposes of furthering this debate. Views, based on your professional experiences may be sent at: editorial@missionvictoryindia.com

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

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Indian Military Leadership on the Cross (Road)

We as officers and leaders must not forget that “individual aspirations, always and every time are subordinate to organizational requirements, needs & goals”. Sadly our ‘self’ takes over control of our senses the moment decision on issues like promotions is not in conformity with our imaginary and unrealistic expectations.

by Group Captain TP Srivastava (Retd)

Inter-service harmony, co-operation and understanding has been ‘circumstantial’ at best of times, continues to be so and is unlikely to change for the ‘better’ in foreseeable future. Undeniable and incontestable proof is the lack of any authority that the service chief holding the ‘office and Appointment’ of ‘Chief of staff committee’ enjoys. In a recent article a former service chief has written that there are rare occasions when the phrase “All three service chiefs agree.....” can be used. The chief, who has written these words, should know, for he was the COSC. Can and should there be a more severe indictment of service chiefs by one of their own kind?

cardinal failure of military leadership over the years has been their deliberate

insistence on promoting their ‘service’ related issue even when these were either irrelevant or not so relevant. Even today each service talks about primacy of its role/capability rather than preaching “Mutual Inter-Dependence”.

The colour of the uniform, always and every time, has taken precedence over the realistic military needs and continues to be so, sometimes even at the cost of sister service. Current situation is so pathetic that some major weapon induction plans are not necessarily based on ‘operational requirements’ instead the rational put forward is that a particular task cannot be met/ is not being met by sister service having such capability, hence the need for duplicity. Professional profligacy has touched a new low.

NDA bonhomie stays alive no doubt, but on personal front only. On operational issue it is alive, at best in lower ranks. The moment we reach decision/policy making appointments, the NDA bonhomie takes a back seat due to intense/undesirable/negative “in service” indoctrination received in huge quantities over the years. Words like “Primacy” and “supremacy” over the other service forces most of us to take a ‘jaundiced’ view in most cases. Misplaced sense of loyalty to the ‘colour’ of uniform we wear becomes the predominant factor, hence clouds our judgement.

Kargil skirmish with Pakistan, though celebrated as ‘victory’, primarily to remember our valiant soldiers who laid down their lives, was in fact an unqualified ‘disaster’, almost entirely

due to lack of information sharing and non-cooperation between the Army and IAF as well as civilian intelligence set up during peace time. Military leadership of the time forgot/ignored, almost deliberately, the fundamental principle of 'Active surveillance during peace time' and the nation ended up paying the price.

Even after the picture was clear about how serious the Pak incursions were, Army and Air Chief chose to go public on their 'self-righteous' stands rather than fight the war. Statement by the then Raksha Mantri, perhaps after being briefed by the then Army Chief, when he told the nation that "Pakis shall be thrown out in 24 hours" or words to that effect is a glaring, perhaps frightening testimony of the 'vision and assessment' at the highest level. The same acrimony continued even after Kargil operations were over and continues till this day.

Appointment of Chief of Defence Staff hangs in the limbo. Notwithstanding the fact that views of IAF leadership are not in consonance with that of the Army and the Navy, the harsh truth is that no (R) no service chief would like to relinquish the office of service chief and assume the charge of Chief of Defence Staff. A procedural hurdle by way of same retirement age for service chief as well as the CDS does not allow any chief to complete the maximum stipulated tenure of 'THREE' years as chief and then take over as CDS.

Myopic Military leadership ought to have realised this elementary need at the time decision was taken for the appointment of CDS to be created. There is no record, at least in public domain, of any such reservations expressed by any of the service chiefs. If indeed the reservation was expressed, why did the Military leadership accept what (it should have known) could not be put into practice and should have publicly announced non-acceptance of CDS with same retirement age as the service chief?

The appointment of Director General Defence Planning Staff (DGDPs) was created in mid-80s. DGDPs functioned for two decades yet was unable (perhaps not encouraged/allowed) to 'pen' the Joint Doctrine, almost entirely due to

collective apathy of all three service HQs. If it were not so, would someone in authority attempt to defend the indefensible and tell the nation as to why do we still not have a Joint Doctrine, which is agreeable to all three services?

Defence Procurement is in a 'Mess'. While it is agreed that MoD bureaucrats, the Raksha Mantri as well as CCS are also individually and collectively accountable/responsible for the 'Mess', Military Leadership cannot absolve itself from the issue by merely blaming the bureaucrats for all that ails Indian Military. Current state is alarming: Due to such apathy and lack of foresight none of the services have an indigent 'strike element' as on date and are unlikely to have it in foreseeable future.

Over the past ten years Military Leadership has consistently failed to ensure that allotted defence budget for 'Capital Acquisition' is used for acquisition rather than 'surrender' it with more regularity than Indian monsoons. Why is the 'Defence Procurement Board' not headed by the service chief? Did any service chief make any noise on this account when DPP-2006 was being formulated? If not, why not?

Experience (rather trauma) of the IAF in 1996 at the time of Vth CPC has obviously been forgotten, not only by the IAF but also the other services. If indeed the subsequent Military leadership had remembered it, they would not have 'themselves' recommended differential rates of Military Service Pay (MSP) for Officers and other ranks. Such belief at the highest level in the Military is not only indicative of their myopic understanding of the issue but also suggestive of their deliberate desire to practice 'Apartheid' when it came to pay and perks of Military personnel below Officer Rank (PBOR).

MSP, as the name suggests, is the right of every service personnel by virtue of being part of the Military. Why should it be different for officers and other ranks? I sincerely hope and pray that the decision makers in the Government would either approve same rates for officers and other ranks or scrap it altogether. Let the recommendations of 'officer-centric' Military leadership

not create a 'chasm' between our loyal soldiers and officers. May I caution the Government as well, that differential MSP would be detrimental to the morale of our men. On numerous occasions Government decision has not been in consonance with Military recommendation. This is one such issue on which the Government must not agree with the 'nearly insane' recommendation of Military leadership.

As if the myopic idea of differential MSP was not enough, the ongoing tirade, led mostly by senior retired officers and self-proclaimed military leaders against the recommendations of Vth CPC in the form of 'Dharnas' is the ultimate "low", military officers have reached. No military officer or other ranks have any business to take to the streets like the trade unionists.

It would have been more appropriate to take the matter through the office of serving chiefs. Or is it that we have stopped trusting our chiefs ability and concern for the overall welfare of defence personnel? The bureaucrats, with whom we seek parity, have also reacted unfavourably to some of the recommendations of Vth CPC but they have not taken to street. In fact, DoPT has taken a serving IPS officer to task for voicing his opinion in a national daily.

Indian Military Leadership has been obsessed with 'parity' with the bureaucracy and continues to be so till date. Upgradation of ranks is their only agenda without ever realizing that the 'status' of Military officer takes a beating with every upgradation without any substantial financial benefits.

The parity with 'Civilians' should be sought to provide Military personnel same retirement benefits as are applicable to every civilian, who retires at the age of 60 years, unlike in the Military, where a Jawan could, and does retire at the age of 40 years, at times earlier. Military Leadership has not considered it fit to take the case of personnel, who retire early by design and not by choice, for granting them 'Compensatory Pension' for the number of years before attaining the age of 60 years. Many in the Military hierarchy would not even understand the meaning of above recommendation.



We as officers and leaders must not forget that “individual aspirations, always and every time are subordinate to organizational requirements, needs & goals”. Sadly our ‘self’ takes over control of our senses the moment decision on issues like promotions is not in conformity with our imaginary and unrealistic expectations.



Military leadership has failed even to convince the Government of “one rank-one pension” concept agreed to in principle years back. Whether the current leadership would succeed is yet to be seen.

caste and religion free citadel of the Indian Military was seriously breached after Operation Blue Star but was well contained. However, the likes of ‘Bainsalals’ have shattered the fundamental ethics of the Military and have joined the ranks of most irresponsible persons in the country by promoting the ultimate evil that this country is suffering from ‘Reservations’ on caste basis.

Successive military leadership over decades has failed, almost voluntarily, to set up a viable Military Administrative Tribunal. Thousands of cases in various courts of the country, most of which are related to promotions and postings, is a sad reflection of loyalty of military personnel, officers in particular, to the organization and respect for the hierarchy. In principle, as a loyal soldier should the officers not accept the verdict on promotion given by a group of senior most officers of that service.

Even after reaching ‘star ranks’ the military officer is not ashamed to go to the court on missing the cut for next rank and freely resorts to condemning the organization and his/her immediate superiors as well as other officer involved in the assessment chain in public by heading for the courts. Indeed, one must make himself/herself heard but that limit, in my view, is restricted to service chief. If the representation in the form of statutory complaint, for which the provision already exists, to service chief also results in endorsing the view of the promotion

board, the individual has no rationale, at least morally, to go to the courts. Moral values are obviously on the decline.

Approaching civil courts to resolve the issues of promotion/posting is the most appalling and disloyal act on part of Military Officers. There is no doubt that on quite a few occasions Military Leadership at the highest level has been biased and an excellent officer has been denied promotion because of whim and fancy of a few at the helm of affairs at that point in time.

We as officers and leaders must not forget that “individual aspirations, always and every time are subordinate to organizational requirement/needs/goals”. Sadly our ‘self’ takes over control of our senses the moment decision on issues like promotions is not in conformity with our imaginary and unrealistic expectations. Nonexistence of a simple Military Administrative Tribunal, not the one conceived and in the process of being put into system shortly, has been the most monumental failure of successive Military Leadership. No Military Personnel must be allowed to go to the courts crying for justice on account of non-promotion/

so called repetitive posting to inhospitable areas.

If need be the Government must consider including such restriction in the Article 19 of the constitution. Military Tribunal headed by a civilian judge from any court, for which the approval has been given recently, is not the solution. No civilian judge, irrespective of his/her experience in the chair, can assimilate, absorb, understand, appreciate the reasons, and arrive at a rational judgement when considering cases related to promotions/postings.

For the military leadership to accept such tribunal is an admission of their “incapability and incompetence” to handle such cases in a fair manner. I would like to believe that a military tribunal would comprise of last five retired service chiefs (minimum one chief from each service) headed by the senior most amongst them and their decision would be final and binding on all. Military leadership is incapable of finding simple solution to complex issues.

On the emotional front too, the military leadership has failed by not even thinking of having an ‘Unknown Soldier’s Memorial’ constructed. 71 war is four decades behind us but the post 1971 Military Leadership either did not consider it fit to approach the Government or failed to obtain the approval and construct a memorial. Of course, there shall be many, who would claim to have moved the mountains but failed in convincing the powers that be. Such logic does not cut ice.

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



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