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**Beyond the
Indo-Pak Conflict**

**What Led India
to Operation Sindoor**



**Pension is Right
Not Bounty**



**Why US Defence Reform
Must Match the Speed**



**Rise of India's Military Power
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his Presence** pg 60

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Photos of PAK Destruction in Op Sindoor



A mosque damaged by an Indian missile attack in Muridke, a town in Pakistan's Punjab province

Satellite image of the Bahawalpur site



A damaged structure from a military strike at Bholari Air Base in Northern Thatta district, Pakistan, on May 11, 2025



Pak army and police attend funeral of killed terrorists

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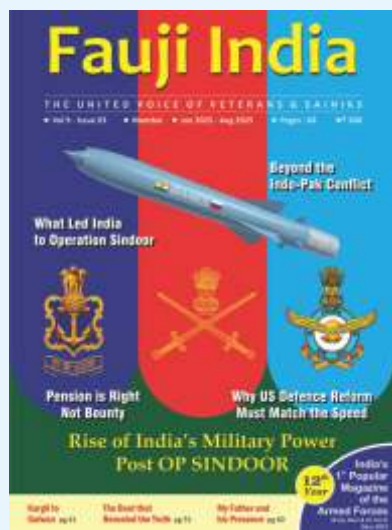
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From the Editor's Desk



We are living in the most exciting times of Bharat's history. In the past thousand years despite the Mughal rule, British colonialism and Congress shoddy rule, Bharat is rising as a third power centre in global world order. Op Sindoor was a paradigm shift in elevating India as a rising military power. Never before, in its history has Bharat been so powerful - politically, diplomatically, economically and militarily. A defining moment indeed.

This new normal has been set by the stellar performance of Bharat's Armed Forces which firstly called the nuclear bluff of Pakistan by striking its nuclear stockpile locations, devastating Pak's airfields and destroying its terror hubs. Never before, in the history post WW-2 has any nation struck another nuclear nation deep inside with such speed, precision, devastation and calibrated restraint fulfilling our politico-military objectives.

Behind the decisive success of Op Sindoor, 'Jointness' was the game changer. Efforts to braid the three services across all domains into integrated warfighting bore fruit in India's precise actions in this four-day battering of Pakistan. Also, aiding this military prowess is the 'Atmanirbhar' effort which empowered our indigenous weaponry development that proved robust in real-time war conditions. It also brought to light the inferior quality of the Chinese weapon system, US fighter aircrafts and Türkiye drones which our Armed Forces neutralised successfully.

Gen Raj Shukla examines in detail – What led India to Operation Sindoor? Operation Sindoor's greatest achievement: reinforcing India's zero-tolerance policy for terrorism. Terrorism might intensify. We must strengthen our counter-infiltration grid and anti-terror networks.

Gen Ata Hasnain with his deep understanding on J&K is sure, when he opines - While the India-Pak military conflict is on pause, the likelihood of sporadic high-impact attacks remains. Afterall, the windows of terror infiltration and recruitment still remain open, albeit under much stronger surveillance and deterrence.

The recent success in Op Sindoor brings once again the much-needed aspect – It is the MAN behind the MACHINE who weighs chances of victory. It is the training and motivation by the officer class of Armed Forces that becomes the decisive factor in war. Taking this further, it becomes imperative for the powers-that-be to look after this MAN.

On the welfare aspects of - MAN BEHIND THE MACHINE – almost all ranks of the three arms are well-looked after in terms of medical, pension etc are in place. The sole aberrations are: the released short service commissioned officers (SSCOs) and disabled soldiers who are being ill-treated by the government. The released SSCOs are discarded after being released from service, they do not get pro-rata pension and medical facility till date despite the ongoing crusade fighting for these privileges.

The Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare of the Ministry of Defence wages a litigious war on disabled military veterans, widows and old pensioners by challenging almost all verdicts passed by the Armed Forces Tribunal. It is a sad thing to see how this one govt department, with 'welfare' in its name, is indulging in target practice on the old, disabled and the infirm.

In wake of the Armed Forces delivering magnificently to the nation, we draw the attention of MoD and Modi govt to once-for-all alleviate the long-standing issues of SSCOs and disabled soldiers for their contributions and sacrifices in service to the motherland!

JAI HIND!

Capt Prasoon Kumar (Retd)
Editor & Publisher



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COVER STORY

What Led India to Operation Sindoor

LT GEN RAJ SHUKLA



Why Operation Sindoor Will Be Studied the World Over

LT GEN SYED ATA HASNAIN

Rethinking India's Narrative in the Face of Pakistan's Propaganda Offensive

LT COL MANOJ K CHANNAN



Subservient, Malleable, Gutless, Incompetent Cowardly, Slavish, Corrupt

GROUP CAPT AG BEWOOR

Why is the 'WELFARE' Department Using Disabled Soldiers for Target Practice?

COL NN BHATIA



Anecdote - 'The Boot that Revealed the Truth

LT COL THOMAS VARGHESE

My Father and his Presence

VIKRAM SUNDARJI



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Pakistan's Defeat in the May 2025 Conflict: A Detailed Account of India's Strategic Strikes and Diplomatic Fallout

OSINT (Open-source intelligence)



In May 2025, Pakistan suffered a swift and decisive defeat at the hands of India in a brief but intense military conflict. Triggered by a terror attack in Indian-administered Kashmir, India launched a series of precision strikes that dismantled Pakistan's terrorist infrastructure, air defenses, and military bases. As Pakistan's losses mounted and its counterattacks failed, its leadership turned to the United States and Saudi Arabia for diplomatic intervention to avert total collapse. This article elaborates on the key events of the conflict, detailing how Pakistan's military was overwhelmed and ultimately forced to beg for a ceasefire.

1. May 7: India Destroys 9 Terror Camps in a Single Night

The conflict began on the night of May 7, 2025, when India launched a massive operation targeting nine terror camps in Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. These camps, linked to groups like Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), were accused of orchestrating a deadly attack in Pahalgam on April 22 that killed 26 civilians, mostly tourists. Dubbed Operation Sindoor, the Indian offensive involved 80-90 aircraft, including Rafale jets armed with SCALP cruise missiles and AASM Hammer glide bombs, alongside BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles and SkyStriker loitering munitions. The strikes obliterated the camps, marking a strong statement against Pakistan's alleged support for terrorism. Pakistan denied the accusations, but the destruction left its proxy networks in tatters. The funeral saw the Pakistani military and the government standing together with a US-designated terrorist. This confirmed significant losses.

2. May 8: India Knocks Out Chinese-Made Air Defenses and Radars in Lahore

The next day, India escalated its campaign by targeting Pakistan's air defense network in Lahore. Using precision strikes, Indian forces destroyed Chinese-supplied systems, including HQ-16 air defense batteries and radar installations critical to Pakistan's ability to monitor and counter aerial threats. The loss of these assets exposed gaping vulnerabilities in Pakistan's military infrastructure, particularly its reliance on foreign technology. Residents of Lahore reported widespread panic as explosions lit up the sky, with air raid sirens unable to mask the chaos. This move ensured that Pakistan's skies were left defenseless, paving the way for further Indian operations.

3. May 9: India Flattens 11 Pakistani Airbases with BrahMos Missiles

On the night of May 9, India delivered a devastating blow by flattening 11 Pakistani airbases using BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles. Among the targets was the Nur Khan airbase near Rawalpindi, a key facility close to Pakistan's military headquarters and vital for air refueling operations. Other bases, such as Rafiqui in Shorkot and additional strategic sites, were also hit with a combination of BrahMos, HAMMER, and SCALP missiles launched from Rafale jets. The scale of the operation dwarfed the initial strikes, crippling Pakistan's air force and leaving its military leadership stunned. The precision and firepower of India's assault underscored the technological and strategic disparity between the two nations.

4. May 9: Pakistan's Counterattack Fails Against Indian Air Defenses

That same night, Pakistan attempted a counteroffensive, launching air and ballistic missile attacks aimed at Indian military installations. However, India's advanced air defense systems, including the S-400 Triumf and the Integrated Counter UAS Grid, decimated the assault. Pakistani drones, missiles, and fighter jets targeting bases in Awantipura, Pathankot, and Bhuj were intercepted or shot down, with only minor damage reported. Pakistan's claims of hitting significant Indian assets, such as S-400 or BrahMos systems, were dismissed by India as propaganda. The failure of this counterattack left Pakistan's military humiliated and its options dwindling.

5. May 9: Pakistan Launches 6 Ballistic Missiles at Delhi, All Intercepted

Frustrated by its inability to retaliate effectively, Pakistani generals escalated the conflict by ordering the launch of six ballistic missiles toward Delhi, India's capital. This desperate move aimed to shift the tide but was thwarted when India's S-400 air defence system successfully intercepted all six missiles mid-flight. The interception prevented a potential catastrophe and showcased India's robust defensive capabilities. For Pakistan, the failed strike was a tipping point, drawing international attention and raising fears of further escalation as its military strategy unraveled.

6. India Strikes Sargodha Airbase, Spooking Pakistan and the U.S.

In a bold and decisive strike, India next targeted the heavily guarded Sargodha airbase, a linchpin of Pakistan's military operations. Sargodha houses the Combat Commanders School and serves as a hub for nuclear-capable aircraft, with underground facilities nearby believed to store part of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. The strike, executed with pinpoint accuracy, demolished key infrastructure and sent shockwaves through Pakistan's leadership. The proximity to nuclear assets alarmed both Pakistani officials and the United States, raising the specter of a nuclear response. This move underscored India's willingness to hit Pakistan's most sensitive targets, pushing the conflict to a critical juncture.

7. Diplomatic Panic: Pakistan Appeals to Rubio, Vance, and Saudi Arabia

The destruction of Sargodha, combined with earlier losses, left Pakistan's military on the brink of collapse. Fearing annihilation or a nuclear miscalculation, Pakistani General Asim Munir reached out to US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Vice President JD Vance, and Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister for urgent intervention. These leaders, in turn, contacted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, and National Security Advisor Ajit Doval to broker a de-escalation. The diplomatic flurry reflected global concern over the conflict's trajectory, with Pakistan's pleas signaling its desperation to avoid further devastation.

8. May 10: Pakistan's DGMO Requests Ceasefire, Seeks Face-Saving Exit

On May 10, Pakistan's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) contacted his Indian counterpart to formally request a ceasefire. After four days of relentless losses, Pakistan's military was in disarray, its airbases destroyed, and its defences shattered. The DGMO's call came with a plea for a "face-saving off-ramp"—a way to end the conflict without admitting total defeat. With mediation from the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and 36 other nations, a ceasefire was agreed upon, taking effect at 5:00 p.m. IST on May 10. Though the fighting stopped, punitive measures like trade suspensions remained, leaving Pakistan battered and humbled.

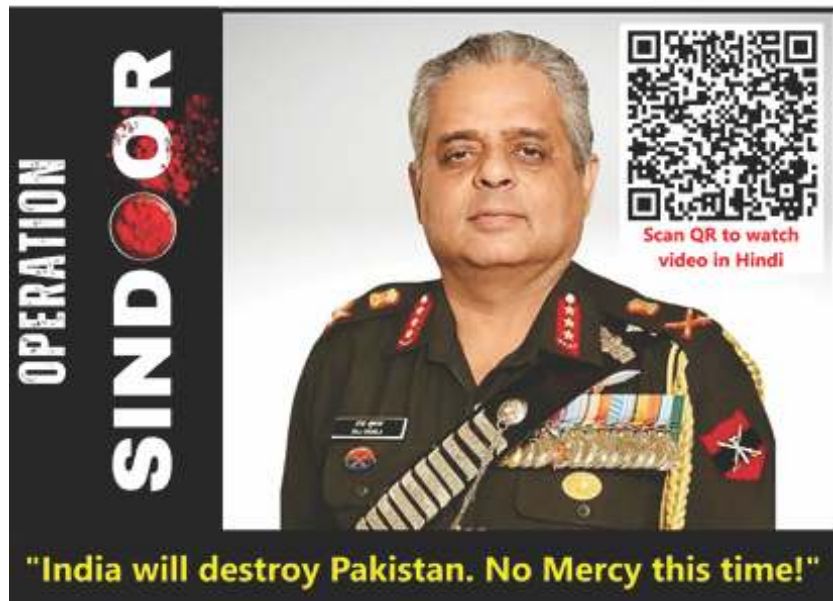
Conclusion: Pakistan's Collapse and the Cost of Escalation

Pakistan's defeat in the May 2025 conflict with India was a stark demonstration of military asymmetry and strategic miscalculation. India's destruction of terror camps, air defenses, and key bases—coupled with its ability to neutralize Pakistan's counterattacks—left Pakistan with no choice but to seek foreign help to stave off collapse. The intervention of the U.S. and Saudi Arabia secured a fragile ceasefire, but Pakistan emerged from the conflict with its military crippled and its pride wounded.

The episode serves as a cautionary tale of the perils of escalation in a region defined by tension and nuclear risk, with Pakistan's losses a testament to India's overwhelming response.

SOURCE: <https://x.com/jenniferzeng97/status/1922450898883661939?s=51>

What Led India to Operation Sindoor?



Operation Sindoor, its tremendous success, the challenges we overcame, and how India finally re-discovered the strategic utility of military force. It was a significant gain for our national security apparatus

by Lt Gen Raj Shukla (Retd)



There was growing outrage at the perception that India never responded decisively to attacks against it. We kept suffering assaults without retaliation. Pakistan stood exposed and vulnerable. If we had launched another strike within 48 hours, Pakistan would have faced total devastation. We sent Pakistan a clear message: if provoked, we would strike — but only their terror camps. We attacked with precision weapons like SCALP and Hammer, hitting targets exactly where we wanted. The Indian Air Force turned what was once a dream into reality. This battle was won by our Air Force and the formidable Air Defence (AD) shield we deployed.

When we destroyed F-16 hangars at Bholari in Sindh, Pakistan realized it was cornered. We crippled their airfields. What happened to their nuclear weapons? Nothing. We exposed the hollowness of their nuclear bluff.

Today, we discuss Operation Sindoor, its tremendous success, the challenges we overcame, and how India finally re-discovered the strategic utility of military force. It was a significant gain for our national security apparatus.

To fully grasp this, we must travel back to Operation Parakram, which began after the December 13, 2001, Parliament attack. Following the attack, both Indian and Pakistani armies were mobilized along the borders. A war-like situation seemed imminent. In May 2002, terrorists attacked the Kaluchak military station in Jammu. Yet, for various reasons — which we will soon discuss — no retaliatory strike was launched on Pakistan. After both the Parliament and Kaluchak attacks, India held back.

A similar mood of helplessness and frustration resurfaced after the Mumbai 26/11 terror attacks in 2008. Once again, there was no military retaliation. Veteran journalist Arun Shourie captured the public sentiment by saying, "It's no longer an eye for an eye — it's both eyes for a tooth, the whole jaw for a tooth."

There was deep anger as India seemed to absorb blow after blow without response. Some even mocked our Air Force, claiming it merely flew from Gwalior to Ambala and landed without crossing the border. The nation's pride was bruised.

In this atmosphere, veteran officer KPS. Gill, who had courageously fought terrorism in Punjab, offered a

professional piece of advice: "You will never win the war on terror merely by chasing terrorists. You must overwhelm the adversary and attack the sources of terror."

This background is essential because between Operation Parakram and Operation Sindoor, there was a dramatic shift in India's strategic posture and operational doctrine. Operation Sindoor turned the despair and caution of the Parakram era into a bold new strategic reality.

Where once India hesitated to use its military might, Operation Sindoor showcased its effective deployment. This isn't my claim alone — it's acknowledged by international observers, even by Pakistani commentators, and confirmed by satellite imagery from Maxar Technologies. India decimated Pakistan's airfields at Bhulary, targeting F-16 hangars at Noor Khan airbase, and places like Peshawar, Sargodha, and Rafiqui. Pakistan was laid bare. Had we continued for another 48 hours, the country would have been obliterated.

This was not reckless escalation — it was a carefully planned escalatory ladder. India communicated clearly that we would act against terror camps, not civilian areas. Thanks to precision airpower, we struck specific targets with remarkable accuracy.

We began with terror camps, then moved to military targets, methodically controlling the escalation. Throughout, escalation dominance remained firmly in India's hands — a vital military strategy. Every strike was planned two steps ahead. This was a masterclass in crafting and managing an escalatory ladder.

For the first time, we also struck the real source of cross-border terror: Punjab. Places like Rawalpindi, Bahawalpur, and Muridke — epicentres of terror infrastructure — were targeted. I've personally commanded a corps in Bhatinda, so I know how dangerous these centres were. This time, we destroyed Bahawalpur's training academy — complete with firing ranges, obstacle courses, and lecture halls. It was a terror university.

Simultaneously, Pakistan's Air Force, or 'Fizaya', was drawn into a Chakravyuh (complex battle formation). As their aircraft responded, our formidable air defence wall held firm. I was personally astonished by the effectiveness of our air defence. S-400s, Akash, and Trishul systems, integrated with AI-enabled detection and engagement networks, created an impenetrable barrier.

Despite Pakistani efforts to neutralize our S-400 systems at Adampur, they failed. AI-enabled

command and control systems ensured superior response times. The Chakravyuh trapped Pakistan's air force and its airbases were devastated by our Brahmastra — a combination of BrahMos missiles and precision airstrikes from Sukhoi-30s, Mirages, and Rafales.

When we struck Noor Khan Air Base, Pakistan's military leadership panicked. Their nuclear command authority was alarmingly close to the blast zone. Hangars, drone launch pads, and their air defence systems were obliterated. Pakistan realized its vulnerability. Its DGMO sought an emergency communication with ours, essentially seeking de-escalation — though a formal ceasefire was not declared.

The devastation was immense, visible in Maxar's high-resolution imagery. Pakistan's air superiority — its only military advantage — was neutralized. And notably, we had yet to deploy our army's strike formations or naval fleet. Had those been unleashed, Pakistan's existence would have been at risk.

This is the triumph of Operation Sindoor. More importantly, India shattered Pakistan's nuclear bluff. Recall May 2002 after the Kaluchak attack when General Kidwai and Hamid Gul rattled their nuclear sabres, threatening to use weapons not for museums. The West, fearing a subcontinental nuclear war, pressured India to de-escalate. America even evacuated its diplomats. Pakistan's terror masters escaped accountability.

This time, however, their bluff was called. Despite India's strikes deep into Pakistani territory — destroying airfields and command centres — nothing happened to their nuclear weapons. Their bluff lay exposed.

Now, Pakistan faces a strategic dilemma. Earlier, it would shield its terror proxies under the cover of nuclear threats. But India has demonstrated that any support for terrorism will invite a direct conventional military response. They must now choose — terror sponsorship or survival against India's conventional might.

I believe this is Operation Sindoor's greatest achievement: reinforcing India's zero-tolerance policy for terrorism. However, we must remain vigilant. Pakistan will recover, perhaps acquiring Chinese J-20 stealth fighters. Terrorism might intensify. We must strengthen our counter-infiltration grid and anti-terror networks.

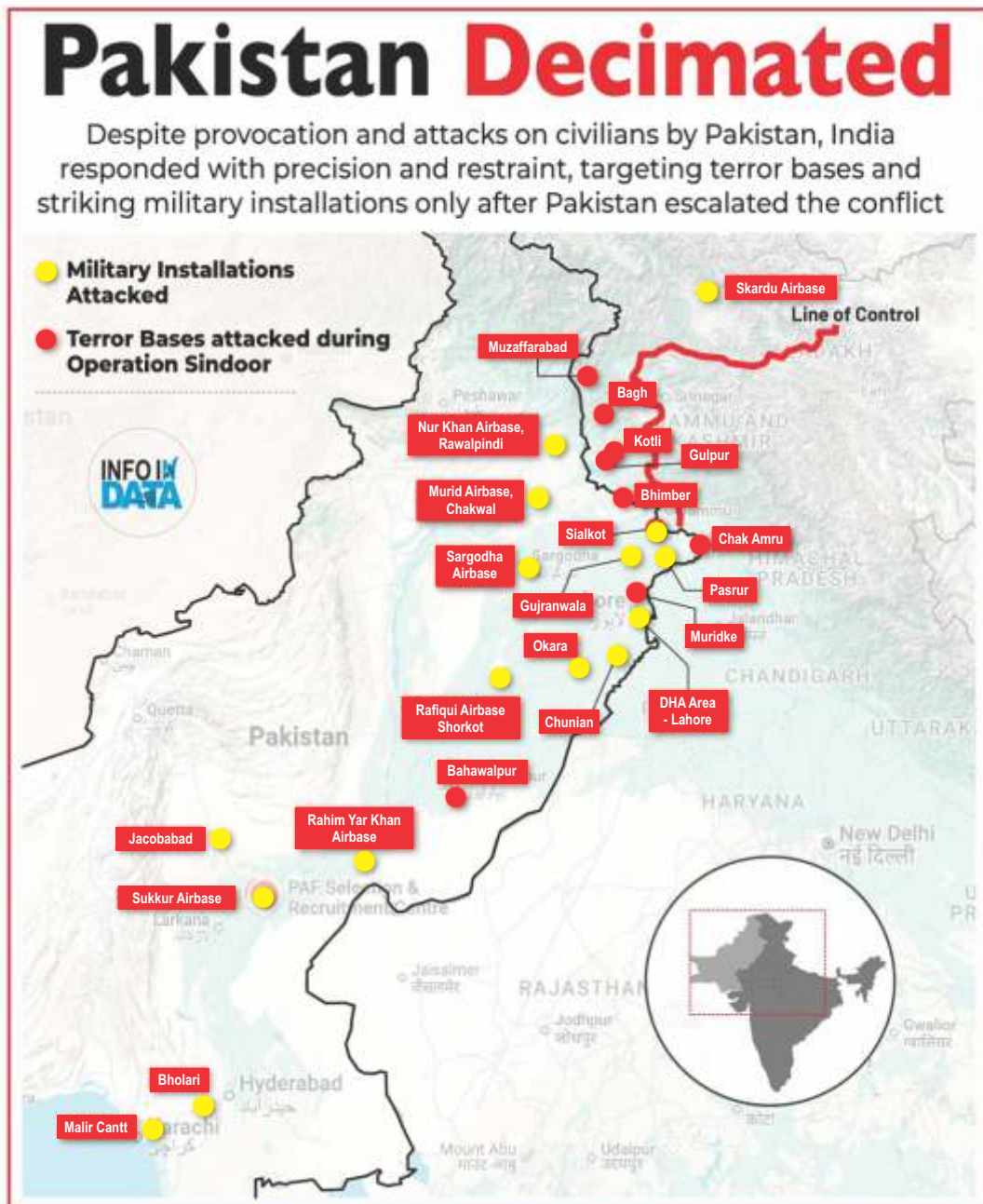
This is only the beginning. Our national security challenges — especially from China, Turkey, and Pakistan — will grow more sophisticated. A rising

India will face mounting dangers. Calls to increase defence spending to 4-5% of GDP are timely and justified. Without technological empowerment and military modernization, we cannot face the future.

In conclusion, Operation Sindoor was a resounding success. But it also teaches us that our

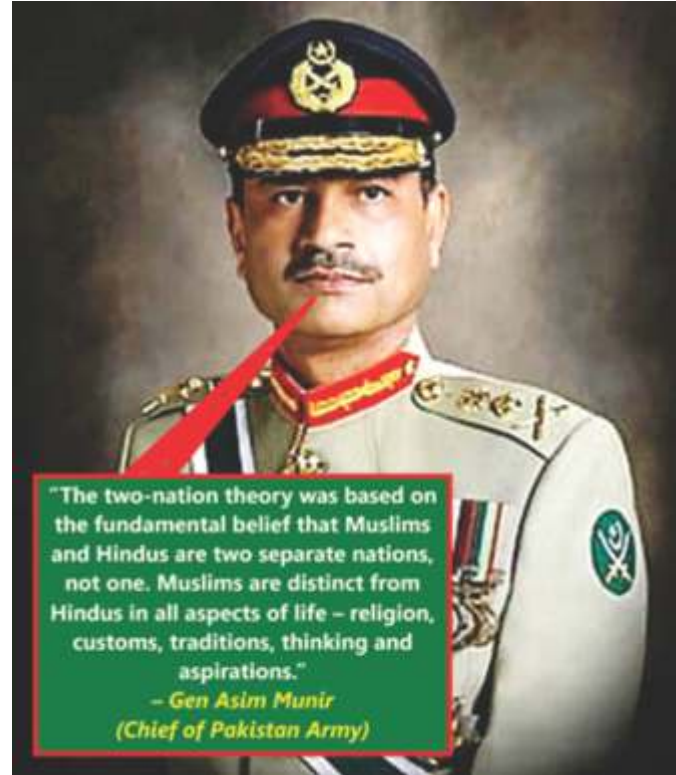
military systems require both qualitative and quantitative upgrades. If we achieve this, I am confident India's zero-tolerance policy toward terror and its strategic contests with China will ultimately culminate in victory. A secure, resilient, and powerful India will emerge.

Lt Gen Raj Shukla, PVSM, YSM, SM, ADC is former General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Indian Army's Training Command (GOC-in-C ARTRAC). Post retirement he has been a member of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). This article is a transcript from a CFTV podcast, reproduced here with permission of author. He can be reached at Email: rajshukla35@yahoo.com



Why Did the Pak Army Chief Make Such Virulent Religious Statements?

by Brig BL Poonia (Retd)



Recently Gen Asim Munir, the Pak Army Chief made a few virulent, divisive and damaging religious statements concerning Hindus and Muslims. On April 17, 2025, he made these statements at a 'Convention of Overseas Pakistanis' in Islamabad, followed by reiterating the same at Pakistan Military Academy, Kakul in Abbottabad, poisoning the young minds of the future officer cadre. He also highlighted the importance of religion-based two-nation theory, enunciated by Jinnah. Since that was an eight-decade old, outdated and failed concept, which in any case has no relevance today, where was the need to dig up the old graves? But what is more important was the fact, that within less than a week after his hate-filled provocative speech, he orchestrated the Pahalgam massacre on April 22.

It is not that he doesn't know the ground reality. He knows everything, and knows it too well. But he is a follower of Mohammad Ali Jinnah's ideology; a die-hard religious fanatic, and a staunch Hindu-hater. Incidentally, he is not the only one; majority of the Pak Army Generals, Pak politicians, Pak-based militant groups and the fanatic lot of the Pak population, are a

product of the same ideology. Moreover, the Pakistani Generals are still suffering from the unbearable pain of the humiliating defeat of 1971 war. That is their Achilles heel, which troubles them 24x7.

Now let's recollect what Mohammad Ali Jinnah had told Lord Mountbatten prior to Partition, "The Muslims of India, were a nation with distinct civilization, language and literature, art and architecture, laws and moral codes, customs and calendar, history and traditions. India has never been a true nation. It looks that way only on the map. The only thing the Muslim has in common with the Hindu is his slavery to the British." And that exactly, was the essence of Gen Asim Munir's speech.

Mohammed Ali Jinnah was suffering from TB, an incurable disease those days, which he kept as a closely guarded secret, lest the decision of partition was postponed, as his count down had begun. He had been living for three years on 'will power, whiskey and cigarettes'. Jinnah, the only obstacle between Lord Mountbatten, the Viceroy of India, and Indian unity was under a death sentence.

Gandhi urged Jinnah not to insist on Pakistan, and

told Nehru and Patel, "Give Jinnah all India instead of just a part he wanted. Give the Muslims the baby instead of cutting it in half." But he could not budge Nehru and Patel. There was a limit to the price they were prepared to pay to keep India united by handing over power to their foe, Jinnah. They did not share Gandhi's conviction that partition would invariably lead to terrible violence. As per Lord Mountbatten, Gandhi was the only leader who had appreciated the horrors of bloodbath that were to take place during partition, and that was all the more reason, why he opposed partition tooth and nail. Broken-hearted, Gandhi reported to the Viceroy that he had not been able to carry his colleagues with him. Lord Mountbatten later revealed that an echo of his distant anguish still haunted his voice.

Lord Mountbatten said, "I did not realize how utterly impossible my task in India was going to be until I met Jinnah for the first time." Mountbatten was ready to grasp at any straw to avoid Partition but Nehru and Patel refused to bend down and place 300 million Hindus under Muslim rule of their rival, by asking Jinnah and his minority Muslim League to form a government.

At that time, Jinnah's burning ambition was either to grab the opportunity of becoming the Prime Minister of India, by arm-twisting and blackmailing Nehru and Patel on the issue of partition, in spite of the Muslim League being in absolute minority, or alternatively, to create a separate nation and become its head. Unfortunately, the foundation of Pakistan was based on the bloodbath of two million people, and 15 million displaced, not to forget the Direct Action Day (16 August 1946) during which Jinnah organized the massacre of Hindus of Calcutta, through Huseyn Suhrawardy, which continued for a week and spread over to Noakhali and other parts of Bengal and Bihar.

However, having succeeded in creating Pakistan, he set out on a dangerous path of invading his neighbouring states, aimed at territorial expansion. Accordingly, he attacked the independent state of J&K in October 1947, which immediately joined India to defend itself. However, Jinnah succeeded in annexing POK by the end of 1948. Similarly the independent state of Kalat was attacked in March 1948, annexed to Pakistan, and renamed - Baluchistan.

The very foundation and existence of Pakistan is based on religious fanaticism, opportunism, merciless, horrendous and catastrophic bloodbath, and forceful occupation of territory of her neighbouring states; the only justification being nothing more than a common religion. Now Pakistan

having become a renowned rogue state, the very survival of any government there depends on using religion as a weapon. India-hating has been its theme since partition, and to keep the Muslims of India on their side, the emphasis is laid on Hindu-hating.

This helps Pakistan to create a rift between the Hindus and Muslims of India, which suits it very well. It is a well-orchestrated plan to encourage, deepen, and widen the rift on religious lines. That is why the Pahalgam killings were specifically aimed at highlighting Hindu-hatred, with a view to divide the public of J&K in particular, and the rest of India in general, on religious lines. Pakistan has always misused religion to unite itself and divide India. Hence, we need to be extra-cautious of falling into the dangerous trap laid by Pakistan. If we fall for it, we would unrealizingly help Pakistan to succeed in its nefarious designs. Hence, we need to control our emotions on this account at least, and promote Hindu-Muslim unity.

Gen Asim Munir got his early religious education in a traditional Islamic seminary in Rawalpindi, the Markazi Madrasah Dar-ul-Tajweed, from where the seeds of religious indoctrination were initially sown. But he is not an exception either, since all Pak Generals have been brought up in a similar environment. The Pulwama attack on February 14, 2019, was orchestrated by Gen Munir, when he was the Director General Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan. Having held this appointment, he specializes in the field of ruthlessly orchestrating mass murders in India.

Mountbatten observed, "It wasn't that Jinnah didn't see the point. He was an evil genius and a psychopathic case, hell bent on Pakistan." The same is applicable to Gen Munir. He too sees everything clearly, but like his predecessors, is hell-bent on destroying India, through Pak Army's well-orchestrated strategy of 'bleeding India through thousand cuts', a strategy that was formulated during late 1980s.

The first step of this strategy implies physically bleeding India, by causing blood-shed through incidents like Chattisinhapura massacre (2000), the Parliament attack (2001), Kaluchak attack (2002), Mumbai massacre (2008), Uri attack (2016), Pulwama attack (2019), and Pahalgam massacre (2025), each a shocking act of violence, only to divide, destabilize and demoralize India. In fact, it is a diversionary tactic of uniting the public of Pakistan by diverting its attention from the plethora of problems it is facing. And more importantly, to avenge the humiliation of

1971 defeat, by keeping the issue of Kashmir alive.

Unfortunately, the complete inaction by Dr Manmohan Singh government after the Mumbai massacre in 2008, raised the morale of Pakistan Generals, political leaders and terrorist outfits. Mr Digvijay Singh tried to prove it as an act of Hindu terrorism, by openly announcing it, followed by releasing a book written by Aziz Burney, a Pakistani author, titled - 'RSS ki Sazish - 26/11'. It was released by Digvijay Singh, both in Delhi as well as in Mumbai. And to highlight the issue, Aziz Burney was honoured by Dr Manmohan Singh.

And the worst was yet to come; Dr Manmohan Singh government did not take any retaliatory action against Pakistan; not even a symbolic one, to avoid displeasing his party's Muslim vote-bank. While the reasons for his limitations are well known, this proved to be a morale boosting factor for Pakistan, and it was shamefully shocking that Dr Manmohan Singh government tried its level best to cover up the Mumbai massacre, by trying to prove that Pakistan had no role in it, and Kasab was a Hindu terrorist. No wonder, Pakistan has left no stone unturned to destabilize Modi government, which unlike Dr Manmohan Singh government, believes in retaliating in an appropriate manner.

The Pak strategy of 'bleeding India through thousand cuts', is not restricted only to mass murders of Indians, but also involves destroying India in every manner, by dividing the public on religious lines, encouraging secession of states like J&K and Punjab, creating and fueling insurgencies, destabilizing India's economy by pushing in fake currency, creating sleeper cells, and keeping the issue of Kashmir alive by orchestrating a series of bloody incidents like Chattisinhapura, Uri, Pulwama and Pahalgam, from time to time.

Since the eruption of Pak-sponsored militancy in J&K in 1990, the Kashmiri separatist leaders tried of make J&K a part of Pakistan, after affecting ethnic cleansing of Hindus and Sikhs from Kashmir valley. However, the Muslims of Baluchistan have been struggling for their independence since 1948. Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) is their militant wing, which wants to liberate it from Pakistan.

Now Pakistan is facing an existential threat. Khyber Pakhtunwa province is perpetually involved in militancy since long, Baluchistan is fighting for its independence, and the demand for separation of POK keeps coming up from time to time. Financially, Pakistan is on the verge of bankruptcy, and the public of Pakistan is facing the brunt of unsurpassed

inflation. Interestingly, the general public of Pakistan has been appreciative of India's progress under the Modi government in every field, and it has been cursing its own government for ruining its economy and creating an image of it being a rogue state. The public needs food, water, electricity, education, medical care, employment, and a decent life, much more than the manufactured hatred for India, based on religious grounds. After all, how long can it survive on hatred of the Hindus of Hindustan? And imagine the condition of the Hindu citizens of Pakistan.

Hence to divert the attention of Pak public from the real problems it is facing, Gen Asim Munir has fired a salvo through Pahalgam massacre, to unite the Pak public against India, and divide the Indian public on religious lines. And if India retaliates, it will help unite the Pak public all the more. His aim is to kill two birds with one stone. It is a salvo fired in desperation, that in case Modi carries out some retaliatory action, as he did after Uri and Pulwama attacks, Gen Munir Asim would be able to handle it effectively by already having taken precautionary measures well in advance. This time Pakistan was well prepared to counter India's surprise element. However, what Gen Munir didn't realize was, that the retaliation this time could be different in nature, and far more stronger.

The diplomatic measures announced by India, and the retaliatory measures announced by Pakistan are nothing more than symbolic gestures. These will not have the desired effect on Pakistan; not even one percent. Even the impact of holding Indus Water Treaty in abeyance, would be negligible in the foreseeable future, since India has not yet built adequate infrastructure to store water, to prevent it flowing into Pakistan, to make a drastic difference. Pakistan's violent reaction to this announcement is based only on the fear of its long-term ramifications.

Hence presently, Gen Munir has all the reasons to feel safe and sound. But when Modi announced a tougher action for this dastardly act, to teach the perpetrators of this heinous crime an appropriate lesson, Gen Munir and a few others have already dispatched their families to some foreign countries. The ethos generally practised by the Pak Army Generals including a few ministers, are based on the credo : "Your own safety, welfare and comfort come first, always and every time." This is an open secret.

Unfortunately, the strong worded warning by Modi has created a high degree of suspense. What exactly he would do, no one knows. But both India and Pakistan are anxiously waiting for some kind of kinetic retaliatory action. While both the neighbours are in a

utter state of suspense, Modi is left with no choice but to live up to the expectations of the Indian public to pacify its highly charged emotions, by teaching Pakistan a lesson in the language it understands. If he fails to do so, he will lose the image, he has so painstakingly built since 2014. Hence Modi has to act in a decisive manner as expected of him, so that the public of India gets convinced that it has a strong, capable, daring and decisive leader, up to whom it can look up to, with unflinching faith and unshakable pride.

If he takes a bold decision, the entire nation will stand by him, and even the opposition will have no choice but to support him, because the punishment for opposing him could be devastating. Moreover, it will make Pakistan realize, the cost of its mischief being disproportionately heavy. In fact, that is the only kind of action which can make Pakistan behave, or else it will keep indulging in such mischiefs time and again, and end up having the last laugh, every time.

While the levers have already been locked, the plans have to be discussed with the Defence Minister,

National Security Advisor, Chief of Defence Staff, the three Service Chiefs, and adequate preparations have to be made. Moreover, the international support of the nations that matter, has to be gathered. It can't possibly be a hurried knee-jerk reaction in isolation, nor is an all out war a desirable option.

Though the public does understand these constraints, yet the nation expects the Prime Minister to punish Pakistan in such a convincing manner, that it has to think a thousand times before embarking upon inflicting another wound as a part of its strategy of bleeding India through thousand cuts. Nothing short of such an action can make Pakistan behave, nor pacify the highly charged public emotions of the Indians.

Well, while the public has a right to expect, it is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to decide, since he is the one who knows what is the best course of action in the given circumstances. Hence the public shall also honour the decision of the Prime Minister, because it has full faith in him, that his decision, whatever it is, would be in the best interest of the nation.

Brig BL Poonia, VSM (Retd) is an ex-NDA officer, commissioned in 2nd Battalion Brigade of the Guards (1 Grenadiers) in Jun 1974. He commanded a Rifle Company in Nagaland in an insurgency infested area, as well as during Exercise Brass-Tacks in the deserts of Rajasthan, and commanded a Battalion (26 Assam Rifles) deployed in Nagaland. He commanded an Infantry Brigade in the Western Sector and was the Deputy GOC of a Mountain Division in the Eastern Sector. The last appointment he held was – Deputy Director General Recruiting (Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa).

From Vietnam to Saudi Arabia, Countries Are Queuing Up to BUY BrahMos after Operation Sindoor



Operation Sindoor has put the BrahMos missile system in the spotlight. The Indian military used the cruise missile to great effect during its strikes on Pakistan – the first time it has been used in combat, creating tremendous havoc deep inside enemy territory.

India, in January 2022, signed a deal for the BrahMos cruise missiles with the Philippines. Now, 15 other countries are also eyeing the missile.

Vietnam wants the BrahMos missiles for its army and

navy. The deal with India is estimated at \$700 million. Malaysia is eyeing BrahMos missiles for its Sukhoi Su-30MKM fighter jets and Kedah-class warships.

Thailand, Singapore, Brunei, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Venezuela, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Oman have also expressed varying levels of interest in the BrahMos missile.

The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile is the cornerstone of India's missile arsenal. The BrahMos missile is manufactured by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture between India's Defence Research and

Development Organisation (DRDO) and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya.

It can be launched from submarines, ships, aircraft and land. The BrahMos missile has a range of nearly 300 kilometres. It can carry a warhead weighing between 200 and 300 kilos. It flies at a speed of 2.8 Mach – nearly three times the speed of sound.

Why 'Operation Sindoor' Will Be Studied The World Over



This essay attempts to distil only the early and most visible lessons from Operation Sindoor across different domains – strategic, operational, technological, and informational. Operation Sindoor presents a case study in calibrated coercion. The challenge for large militaries today is to manage escalation while remaining credible. India walked that tightrope effectively

by Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain (Retd)



In the midst of two ongoing conflicts – Ukraine's prolonged war of attrition and Israel's intensive campaign in Gaza – the world has now witnessed a third theatre of modern military conflict: the India-Pakistan standoff with India's Operation Sindoor. While brief in duration compared to the grinding wars of Eastern Europe and the Middle East, the significance of Sindoor lies in the speed, sophistication, and multi-domain nature of India's military and political response. The lessons from this operation are both immediate and instructive, not just for India, but for militaries and policymakers across the globe.

Such a transformational campaign, even though short in duration, will probably be studied avidly to cull out relevant lessons over a longer period of time.

Strategic Clarity and Political Messaging

One of the standout features of Operation Sindoor was the clarity of political intent. In previous India-Pakistan confrontations, strategic ambiguity often marked India's stance. This time, the messaging was

unambiguous – Pakistan's attempts to stoke cross-border terrorism through networked proxy groups, for the sake of regaining any of the space that it has lost, would meet a proportionate but decisive response from a spectrum of choice India retained.

Importantly, India managed escalation without triggering a full-blown war. Sindoor demonstrated an evolved doctrine of punitive deterrence, calibrated to avoid nuclear thresholds – a lesson that has relevance for other nuclear-armed dyads, such as North and South Korea.

Civil-military synergy (fusion) was another quiet success. Decision-making appeared swift, coordinated, and insulated from public hysteria. This stands in contrast to fragmented responses seen in other democracies under pressure.

The fortnight when Pakistan kept waiting for a response added to its dilemma, though some claim that it helped Islamabad prepare its counter-response. Clearly, the time lag helped with better decision-making, target-selection and calibration, all in our favour.

Operational Agility and Jointness

At the operational level, Sindoor demonstrated the Indian military's growing ability to conduct integrated, cross-domain campaigns. While details remain classified, early reports suggest that air, ground, and special forces (in waiting) operated with tight coordination. The ability to strike key logistical hubs, training camps, and communication nodes on the Pakistani side – all without significant collateral damage – indicates an intelligence-rich and technologically proficient operation.

One lesson echoed from Ukraine is the value of speed and initiative. Indian forces reportedly acted within tight windows, leveraging precision munitions and real-time ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance). The tempo of the operation gave little time for adversarial adaptation – a principle long emphasised in Western military thought.

The Indian Army's Air Defence arm (AAD), a comparatively low-profile entity in earlier matrices, displayed an attitude and capability far above its weight. Its integration with the Air Force was effective and calls for even closer networking in the future.

Technology, Drones, and Cyber Capabilities

Modern warfare increasingly hinges on technological superiority. Sindoor, like the Ukraine war, underlined the centrality and importance of drones, both for surveillance and kinetic effect. India's investment in electronic warfare (EW) and cyber capabilities also appeared to bear fruit. Pakistani communications and some air defences appeared effectively degraded during the brief exchange, highlighting the non-kinetic layers of modern conflict.

For developing countries watching this unfold, the message is clear: asymmetric capability in the form of drones, jamming, and cyber sabotage can serve as force multipliers even in conventional battles.

Logistics, Communications and Resilience

Another key takeaway is logistics. As seen in Ukraine, no operation can succeed without secure and mobile supply chains. Sindoor revealed the short, high-intensity nature of the engagement and stressed the importance of pre-positioning and redundancy.

Some of these are lessons that advanced militaries have long internalised. For India, Sindoor validated some ongoing reforms, including for theatre commands and logistics flexibility. I do foresee a re-emergence of the 'theatrisation versus jointness' debate because the effectiveness of 'jointness' was felt

quite remarkably, particularly in the field of air defence. Centralisation of resources, particularly in the air domain, was a distinct advantage.

Significance of Land and Maritime Warfare

This is the first time that India has responded in a conflict situation without placing its ground forces in their deployment areas. This is a huge departure from the past. So, is our obsession with defending each inch of territory now a thing of the past? The willingness to defend with a minimum and deterring the Pakistan land forces from undertaking any adventure has been a new normal. Yet, from the immediacy of imagery or perception, there should be no impression that land or maritime warfare has been diluted in our context. Every war has its own dynamics, and none can really predict the next one.

Battle of Perceptions

One of the defining aspects of any 21st-century conflict is the war for narratives. India's handling of the information domain during Sindoor showed greater maturity than in past conflicts. Controlled information release, measured language from official spokespersons, and timely briefings ensured credibility. However, the media was shrill and with insufficiently corroborated information most times. It may have helped with the maintenance of national morale, but it also triggered negative sentiments at the time of the ceasefire. Official advisories to the media may be in order in the future.

By contrast, Pakistani attempts at disinformation were swiftly countered, both by Indian agencies and independent digital verification communities. This underlines a modern truth: winning the battle of perceptions is often as important as winning territory.

Like Ukraine's use of social media and Gaza's polarised visual narrative, India's experience reiterates that strategic communication must now be woven into operations right from the outset. Perhaps a coordination authority at the national level is required.

Lessons from Ukraine and Gaza

Ukraine has taught the world about the power of resilience, decentralised command, and tech-driven defence. Gaza has revealed the brutal challenges of urban warfare, tunnels, and asymmetric resistance. Operation Sindoor, though different in scale and terrain, offers complementary insights.

It shows what a limited but effective conventional response can look like in a nuclear-shadowed

environment. It demonstrates hybridisation and combining conventional force with information ops and cyber tools. Suspending the Indus Water Treaty of 1960 can be treated as an act of political warfare, contributing to hybrid war. Political warfare is defined as the use of political means to compel an opponent to do one's will, often without overt use of military force. The treaty is one of the few examples of continued Indo-Pak cooperation despite hostilities. Tampering with it signalled India's anger, something not attempted in the past. It introduced uncertainty into Pakistan's planning and water security. It also helped demonstrate India's political will and willingness to undertake risk.

For the global community, it is a reminder that modern conflict is no longer just about tanks and troops. It's about tempo, technology, and trust – in your political leadership and your military.

What the World's Militaries Can Learn

For advanced armies – whether in NATO, East Asia, or the Middle East – Operation Sindoor presents a case study in calibrated coercion. The challenge for large militaries today is to manage escalation while

remaining credible. India walked that tightrope effectively.

For middle powers, the message is to invest in command integration, drone warfare, ISR capabilities, and domestic resilience. Even a short engagement can have profound diplomatic and security consequences.

Above all, Operation Sindoor reiterates that the military is the one lever of national power that must be precise, prepared, and aligned with the national narrative at all times.

This essay only scratches the surface of what Operation Sindoor means for India's defence posture and for the study of modern warfare. As more operational details emerge, deeper analyses will follow – of battle readiness, inter-service coordination, and regional impact.

But the early lessons are clear: India has moved past reactive defence into a doctrine of assertive, restrained response. The world would do well to take note – because modern wars are evolving, and Sindoor may just be a glimpse of how future conflicts will unfold.



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India's Decisive Blow in Operation Sindoor: Why the US is Angry?

by Victor Von Solanki

During Operation Sindoor, India is reported to have destroyed at least eight F-16 fighter jets and China's four JF-17s, delivering a devastating blow to Pakistan's air capabilities with virtually zero Indian casualties.

This military feat has not only showcased India's rising technological and strategic prowess but also rattled the United States for another reason: the F-16.

Until late 2024, the US had been aggressively lobbying to sell its ageing F-16 fleet to India, a deal New Delhi wisely refused. India's clear rejection of the F-16 platform and subsequent neutralisation of the very same jets in real combat has sent a strong message not just to adversaries, but also to defence manufacturers globally.

The implications are far-reaching:

- The credibility of the F-16 as a frontline fighter has taken a significant hit.
- India's preference for indigenous and diversified defence platforms over U.S. imports is now validated.
- The US arms lobby, which sees South Asia as a key market, is left furious.

Operation Sindoor isn't just a military success: it's a statement of independence, both strategically and diplomatically. India has shown the world that it won't be a pawn in someone else's defence economy.

Will Pakistan Behave After Op Sindoor?



"Will Pakistan Behave After Operation Sindoor?" The very title of the article is a big question raised by Brig BL Poonia. The author analyses it by going deep into the history and root causes of the problem, that led to various wars fought since then, followed by multiple massacres orchestrated by Pakistan, finally leading to Operation Sindoor. The article explains this complex question with utmost clarity, which would leave a few or no doubts in the minds of the readers.

by Brig BL Poonia (Retd)



Well, this is one question every citizen of India wants to know? To know the answer, we need to understand Pakistan's psyche and the past record of its conduct. The biggest punishment it ever received was during the 1971 war, when East Pakistan was converted into Bangladesh, and 93,000 Prisoners of War were made to surrender. But did Pakistan start behaving after that? Yes, it did, but only for a short span of 17 years, ie from 1972 to 1988. Thereafter it started with its dangerous, deadly and nefarious scheme of terrorism in J&K. Pakistan is not a nation to be trusted.

The Curse of Having Notorious Neighbours

The biggest curse of life is to have a notorious neighbour. India has been suffering Pakistan since 1947 and Israel has been suffering its equally notorious neighbours since 1948. Israel was first attacked by all its neighbours in 1948. Once again it was simultaneously attacked by all in 1967, but it routed their combined military might, whom it defeated decisively. But did they behave after that? No. They again attacked Israel in 1973. While this war ended up in a stalemate, they once again attacked Israel on

October 7, 2023, which escalated into a full-fledged war resulting in decimation of Hamas and Hizbollah. But can we expect the adversaries of Israel to behave now? No; they will never do so. They will attack Israel at the first available opportunity after reorganizing themselves, with a greater vengeance. The same applies to Pakistan.

Pakistan is a notorious neighbour; in fact, it is the biggest rogue state on planet earth. It is a cancer which can be controlled but has no permanent cure. On top of that, it is in possession of nuclear weapons. While India follows the doctrine of 'no first use', Pakistan is used to threatening India by flexing its nuclear muscle every time after it indulges in human massacres. While the control over the nuclear button in India is exercised by the elected head of the government, in Pakistan any fanatic and irresponsible Army Chief may press the same, to avoid the humiliation of a military defeat. So while dealing with this immature, irresponsible and a rogue state, nuclear threshold has also got to be kept in mind.

But How Do We Deal With This Deadly Disease?

This is another pertinent question, "In dealing

with Pakistan, are we treating the disease or only the symptoms?" Well, to treat a disease, we need to diagnose the same. The disease in this case is the common psyche of Pakistan's frustrated Army Generals, its fanatic religious leaders, the government of Pakistan, Pakistan's political leaders, and various leaders of the militant groups that have been nurtured by Pakistan since 1980. The humiliation of the Pak defeat during the 1971 War troubles them more than anything else. So they want to avenge the same by capturing J&K, just because it is a Muslim dominated state.

India tried to treat this disease during the 1947-48 War, 1965 War, 1971 War, and 1999 Kargil Conflict, but found that the very psyche of Pakistan is a deadly cancer, which has no permanent cure. This was evident from the major symptoms that manifested during the last 25 years, starting from Chattisinhapura massacre (2000), Parliament attack (2001), Kaluchak attack (2002), Mumbai massacre (2008), Uri attack (2016), Pulwama attack (2019) and Pahalgam massacre (2025). Since the year 2000, India had postured to attack Pakistan only once, ie after the Parliament attack in 2001. However, this military stand-off got called off due to international pressure. So ultimately, it amounted to letting off Pakistan without any punishment.

Treating the Symptoms

This obviously encouraged Pakistan to continue with its nefarious activities with an increased degree of confidence, especially when Dr Manmohan Singh government failed to make even a symbolic gesture of retaliation after the Mumbai massacre of 2008. Unfortunately, this government didn't even protest verbally, leave apart retaliating militarily, and the worse was that it tried to suppress the role of Pakistan by terming it as Hindu terrorism orchestrated by RSS.

The book 'RSS ki Sazish - 26/11', authored by Mr Aziz Burney of Pakistan was released by Mr Digvijay Singh in Delhi and Mumbai to give it a wide publicity, and to highlight the issue, Mr Aziz Burney was honoured by Dr Manmohan Singh. Moreover, in its efforts to cover up Pakistan's role, this government tried to prove that Kasab was a Hindu terrorist, till he got apprehended and owned up the truth. What better reaction could Pakistan have expected from the Government of India? As a consequence, it acted as a morale boosting factor for Pakistan, since it reinforced the impression, that the nuclear threat by Pakistan was proving to be an effective deterrence to prevent India retaliating against it. Even now, should Dr

Manmohan Singh (posthumously), alongwith Mr Digvijay Singh, not be tried on the charge of 'Betrayal of Public Faith'? In fact, this is a serious offence amounting to treason.

While Modi government did raise the level and scale of retaliation after the Uri and Pulwama attacks, by launching surgical strikes and air strikes across the LoC on Pak militant camps, even these actions did not make Pakistan suffer adequately for the crimes it had committed. The militants who got killed due to the Indian retaliation, were in any case meant to die in Indian territory sooner or later. The only difference was that they died in POK. But Pakistan lost nothing at all, as it has no dearth of volunteers for the so-called jihad against India. Hence, Pakistan even denied any action having been taken by the Indian Defence Forces, which was strongly supported by the opposition party leaders of India. Again, what better cooperation could Pakistan have expected from the Indian opposition leaders?

Why China Supports Pakistan?

During the 1950s and 1960s, while Pandit Nehru ruined our relations with China, Pakistan displayed a far-sighted approach by strengthening her relations with China. Brig John Dalvi has rightly mentioned in his book - 'Himalayan Blunder', "Nehru's short-sightedness and negligence with regard to China is remarkable when judged against his far-sightedness in world affairs."

After the 1965 War, Pakistan's Senator (late) Ghulam Faruque, who was Commerce Minister and Defence Advisor to Gen Ayub Khan, told Chou-En-Lai in 1966, during his visit to China, that the nearest outlet for China's trade with Gulf was Karachi, not Shanghai. Chou-En-Lai sent for a map, studied it, and asked him, "When can our Engineers meet?" "As soon as I get back to Islamabad", he replied. And thus was born the strategic Karakoram Highway, connecting China and Pakistan. This was after we had completely ruined our relations with China by fighting for Aksai Chin and Thagla Ridge in 1962, the territories which actually belonged to China, based on a manufactured claim by Pandit Nehru in 1954.

Karakoram Highway is an engineering marvel, no less than an economic asset comparable to Suez Canal of Central Asia, bestowing Pakistan, strategic and economic benefits of great magnitude. This 774 kilometre long highway, completed in 1978, connects Havelian (Pakistan) to Kashgar (China). Through this, it provides China an access to the Arabian Sea via Pakistan. Now China has constructed Gwadar Port,

along the Arabian Sea, on the southwestern coast of Balochistan, which is strategically positioned at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, just outside the Strait of Hormuz, through which a significant portion of the world's oil passes.

So why should we be surprised when China supports Pakistan? After all, Pakistan has always remained China's all-weather friend. China's support to Pakistan is based more on its friendship with Pakistan, than China's enmity with India. Moreover, China has invested a lot in Pakistan.

Why Does The US need Pakistan?

To Pakistan's good luck, its geo-strategic and geopolitical location makes it equally important, both for the USA and China. Though USA and China are each other's arch rivals, yet both need Pakistan in equal measure. For Pakistan, it is a blessing in disguise. The USA also needs bases in Pakistan, especially along the Arabian Sea to secure the sea lanes to Gulf countries.

No wonder, during 'Operation Sindoor' the USA did not side with India, in spite of India being the victim of Pahalgam massacre and Donald Trump being a good friend of Modi. It tried to remain neutral, in spite of the fact that Osama bin Laden was found sheltered in a Pak military cantonment, even during the period when Pakistan was receiving aid from the USA to contain terrorism. We should realize that national interests invariably take precedence over ethics and personal friendships. Today the US needs Pakistan.

Since mid-1950s, the USA supported India by giving aid through its PL 480 Scheme, since its interest was to weaken China, by encouraging India to fight a war against it. Having achieved its aim by 1962, it armed Pakistan by equipping its Armoured Division with US Patton tanks, which it used against India during the 1965 War. Even during the 1971 War, the US supported Pakistan by posturing the presence of US 7th Fleet in the Bay of Bengal.

In Pakistan there is a popular saying, "Pakistan survives at the mercy of three As : America, Army, and Allah." And interestingly, among these three, America plays the most significant role, followed by the Pakistan Army. However, the public is completely at the mercy of Allah.

Who Made Pakistan An Epicenter of Militancy?

It was the USA, and USA alone who was responsible for making Pakistan the epicenter of militancy. In 1979, when the Afghanistan government was unable to handle militancy, it invited the USSR to do the

needful. The US could not tolerate the presence of Soviet forces in Afghanistan, nor could it get involved directly. Hence it asked Pakistan to train Afghan militants using American weapons, ammunition and equipment to fight the Soviet forces. Immense financial and military aid started pouring in, with latest weapons like Stinger missiles. Gen Zia-ul Haq was the President of Pakistan and Ronald Reagan, the President of the USA. Pak ISI trained the militants in their own territory, and launched a jihad by pumping in 20,000 Afghan and Pak militants into Afghanistan who fought for more than nine years from December 1979 to February 1989, forcing the Soviet forces to withdraw. Pakistan thus became a super specialist in training and churning out the most deadly, die-hard, and dangerous terrorists.

The singular aim of the US was to avenge the humiliating defeat suffered at the hands of USSR during the Vietnam War. Having achieved its aim, the US left all its arms, ammunition and equipment in Pakistan only, which it later used in J&K, against India.

This experience of Afghanistan, gave immense confidence to Pakistan Army, which asked itself : "If our ISI trained militants could force a superpower out of Afghanistan, why can't we force the Indian Army out of J&K, using the same militants?" However, they needed local leadership and public support in J&K, which they got in ample measure through Jamat-e-Islami party of J&K.

How Pak Trained Militants Got an Entry Into J&K?

Since 1984, Shri Rajiv Gandhi was the Prime Minister of India and Farooq Abdullah, the Chief Minister of J&K. In J&K, they ran a coalition government. However in 1987, Jamat-e-Islami emerged as the most popular political party across J&K. They were sure of coming to power, but Farooq Abdullah rigged the State Assembly elections and formed a coalition government with the Congress.

This injustice came as a big shock to Jamat-e-Islami party, which it wanted to avenge. Hence it approached Pakistan to help them out. Pakistan was just waiting for such a golden opportunity which it got on the platter, that too at the right time. The rigging of elections acted as a spark on dry tinder. So Pakistan quietly sent across trained militants, arms, ammunition, and equipment to J&K, and the Jamat-e-Islami cadres provided the required public support. At that time, no one suspected this move, since peace had prevailed in J&K till 1988. Initially they started by hitting at soft targets like the local police and the

CPOs, but in January 1990, Pakistan orchestrated an ethnic cleansing of the Hindus and the Sikhs from Kashmir valley. President's rule was imposed immediately. And thus started the militancy in J&K, which continued at a high pitch frequency for the next three decades, till the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019. Farooq Abdullah immediately escaped to London.

OPERATION SINDOOR

The Pahalgam massacre of April 22, 2025 led to an unprecedented surge of public emotions, which could not be ignored. The whole nation was seething with anger, expecting revenge. The public wanted a convincingly tangible punitive action which could be seen and felt. Moreover, the government was also fed-up of Pakistan's cunning and shameless mischiefs from time to time. This was the seventh major incident since 2000. So India retaliated by launching 'Operation Sindoor' with effect from May 07, 2025. Initially India hit and destroyed nine militant camps in POK and Pak Punjab. It also included the militant camp in Bahawalpur, which is 100 kilometres across the International Border. Based on the Pak response, India upgraded its retaliation by launching missile strikes on all important Pak military airfields, rendering the same unusable. Thus by May 10, 2025, Pakistan was crippled and rattled completely.

As per some reports in social media, the Indian Air Force hit a missile at the entrance tunnel of Pak nuclear facility at Kirana Hills near Sargodha, which the government is of course denying. This is when Pakistan approached the USA, who could not even believe that India had such a high precision capability. The DGMO Pakistan Army immediately contacted DGMO Indian Army on hotline, requesting for a ceasefire. Since India had achieved its aim, it agreed to the ceasefire proposal of Pakistan. Pakistan then immediately sought help from Egypt and the USA for controlling the nuclear radiation that had leaked out. In fact, this shook-up Pakistan completely.

Aim and Achievements of Operation Sindoor

It had a two-fold aim:

- To punish Pakistan convincingly through a tangible kinetic action, with a view to pacify public emotions.
- To draw the Red Line of tolerance, which Pakistan will no longer be allowed to cross.

Through a strong retaliation, India delivered a credible slap against terrorism, which has now forced Pakistan to review and reshape its strategy.

The Red Line has now been drawn making it clear that use of terror as an instrument of statecraft will be

met with firm, visible, and punitive consequences. For Pakistan, the lesson is clear, that continued reliance on non-state actors followed by outright deniability, and nuclear blackmail, will no longer immunise it from punitive consequences. Cross-border terror will invite cross-border consequences.

Though terrorism in Kashmir does not have a military solution per se, since fundamentally it is a political problem, yet to keep it under control, the security forces have an overwhelmingly important role to play.

Which All Countries Supported India?

Russia, Israel, UK, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Japan and Nepal supported India, but USA remained neutral, and the European Union did not go beyond condemning the Pahalgam massacre. Out of the 57 countries of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), only three supported India. And Turkey, where India was the first country to reach with humanitarian aid during the earthquake in February 2023, was the first country to openly send military aid to Pakistan.

The countries supporting Pakistan helped it get a loan of Rs 8,500/- crores on May 09, 2025 from International Monetary Fund, even after the Pahalgam massacre. If the USA wanted to stop it, it could have done so, by exercising the influence of its weightage of vote share. But it didn't.

Can We Now Expect Pakistan to Behave?

No, we cannot. The only answer is to remain prepared, further strengthen our defence capability against Pak missile attacks, and improve upon our offensive missile launching capability to punish Pakistan, whenever it indulges in any act of sabotage or human bloodshed in Indian territory. Any act of terrorism has to be considered as an act of war, and the Indus Water Treaty, which is presently held in abeyance, needs to be abrogated. Also we need to construct dams over Rivers Indus, Jhelum and Chenab, to prevent free flow of water to Pakistan. Pakistan must pay the price for its sins, or else it will keep screwing our happiness, mistaking our decency for weakness. We must always remember, that eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.

Conclusion

Brig Mohammad Yousaf, the Pakistani ISI Officer in-charge for training the militants to fight against the Soviet forces deployed in Afghanistan during the 1980s, had described the strategy adopted by Pak Army, in his book - 'The Bear Trap - Afghanistan's

Untold Story', as follows: "Death by a thousand cuts - this is the time-honoured tactic of the guerrilla army against a large conventional force. In Afghanistan it was the only way to bring the Soviet bear to its knees; the only way to defeat a superpower." And this precisely is the tactic, Pakistan had adopted against India since 1990, that is - for the last 36 years.

However, Pakistan should remember that Kashmir is not Afghanistan, where a foreign Army was operating. Kashmir being an integral part of India, it is

the Indian Army which is guarding its territory. 'Operation Sindoor' should drive home this lesson, hard into the minds of Pak Army Generals. Now they, in any case, have been forced to review their strategy of 'death by a thousand cuts'.

And as far as India is concerned, let's not forget what Zarathustra had said in the sixth century BC, "Life is an eternal struggle between the good and the evil forces." Hence, we will have to continue fighting the evil forces of Pakistan; there is no other option.

Brig BL Poonia, VSM (Retd) is an ex-NDA officer, commissioned in 2nd Battalion Brigade of the Guards (1 Grenadiers) in Jun 1974. He commanded a Rifle Company in Nagaland in an insurgency infested area, as well as during Exercise Brass-Tacks in the deserts of Rajasthan, and commanded a Battalion (26 Assam Rifles) deployed in Nagaland. He commanded an Infantry Brigade in the Western Sector and was the Deputy GOC of a Mountain Division in the Eastern Sector. The last appointment he held was – Deputy Director General Recruiting (Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa). He can be reached at email: blpoonia@gmail.com

Who is IAF's Niketa Pandey? Supreme Court Backs Wing Commander Who Took Part in Operation Sindoor



Wing Commander Niketa Pandey is an officer in the Indian Air Force who joined through the SSC route in the year 2011.

The Supreme Court on 22 May 2025 stayed the release of Indian Air Force (IAF) officer Niketa Pandey, who joined through the Short Service Commission (SSC). The top court observed that the uncertainty faced by officers about their long-term career prospects is concerning and should be addressed through an updated policy.

The apex court was hearing a petition filed by wing commander Niketa Pandey, who was granted an extension until June 19, 2025, after completing her initial 10-year tenure. In her plea, Pandey requested to remain in service until a special selection board decides on her application for permanent commission.

Who is wing commander Niketa Pandey?

- Wing commander Niketa Pandey is an officer in the

Indian Air Force who joined through the SSC route in 2011.

- She has held a crucial role as a fighter controller and contributed significantly to operations like Operation Sindoor and Operation Balakot.

- Niketa Pandey has contributed for more than 13 and a half years of service in the armed forces.

- She has completed multiple rounds of evaluation for permanent commission and awaits a final opportunity to be assessed by a third selection board.

- Pandey is the first IAF SSC officer to get a stay on her release from the force. The top court had previously issued similar relief to over 50 women SSC officers in the Army on May 9.

Background of IAF officer Niketa Pandey's case

Pandey, represented by senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy and advocate Astha Sharma, argued that she was chosen for Operation Sindoor due to her strategic skills and experience.

In her application, she mentioned, "Despite women officers been inducted in the Indian Air Force since 1992 which is more than 30 years now, still the only available option provided to them at the inception for induction is via the SSC whereas their male counterparts have an option to be commissioned as both SSC and Permanent Commission."

Source: HT

Beyond the Indo-Pak Conflict: Rethinking the Relevance of Conventional Warfare



by Col Vikram Singh, Veteran



The Indo-Pak dynamic has long been defined by a history of full-scale wars, border skirmishes, proxy operations, and covert destabilisation efforts. However, in the 21st century, warfare has evolved, becoming less about ground occupation and more about strategic influence, deterrence, and psychological dominance. India, as a responsible regional power, has responded not with predictable escalations but with restraint calibrated by national interest and long-term security objectives. This approach, while subtle, reflects a mature military doctrine that seeks not only to safeguard territorial integrity but to preserve peace through strength, intelligence, and influence.

Traditional conflict—tanks rolling across borders, battles waged in open fields—has been supplanted by a new battlespace. It is a battlespace where perception matters as much as firepower; where the enemy may be invisible and the frontline, virtual. Against this backdrop, India's military thinking has pivoted. The question is no longer about how to win a war, but how to prevent one—how to shape the environment so that war becomes unnecessary.

India's Calibrated Military Response: A Strategic Posture, Not Reactionary Impulse

India's handling of cross-border provocations—particularly the 2016 surgical strikes and the 2019 Balakot air operations—illustrates a paradigm shift in the military-political interface. These operations were not acts of vengeance but acts of calibrated messaging. They were designed to impose costs on adversaries without breaching the threshold of conventional war.

Such strikes were meticulously planned, executed with surgical precision, and publicly acknowledged—not for political mileage, but to deliver a psychological blow. The operational success of these missions did not rest solely on firepower but on intelligence fusion, jointness among services, and the element of strategic surprise.

The Indian Army, while operating under political restraint, demonstrated its capacity to execute quick, punitive missions within a narrow window of strategic ambiguity. This balancing act—dominating the tactical space without triggering strategic instability—epitomises modern military professionalism.

Limits of Traditional War: Strategic Fallout and Regional Repercussions

The nuclear overhang in South Asia makes traditional war not just undesirable but dangerously

escalatory. Any full-spectrum conflict with Pakistan risks rapid vertical escalation, drawing international scrutiny and possibly third-party intervention. Moreover, conventional war in this theatre no longer guarantees favourable end-states. Occupying terrain does not equate to neutralising threats when the adversary uses asymmetric tools, non-state proxies, and hybrid warfare tactics.

Military thinkers and planners must, therefore, account for a larger operational environment—one where conventional capabilities are constrained by political, economic, and humanitarian consequences. In such a milieu, brute force may yield tactical wins but strategic losses.

Furthermore, modern conflict blurs the lines between peacetime and wartime. Grey zone operations—ranging from disinformation campaigns to economic subversion—are becoming the preferred method of statecraft. Against such dispersed and layered threats, traditional war machines may often find themselves irrelevant or misapplied.

A Modern Doctrine: Influence, Vigilance, and Deterrence

The Indian military establishment has increasingly embraced a modern doctrinal approach—one that relies not just on hardware, but on hybrid strength: the ability to project power, influence adversaries, secure cyberspace, and foster internal cohesion.

Key pillars of this emerging doctrine include:

1. *Influence and Perception Warfare:* In modern conflict, narrative is as powerful as ordnance. India's strategic messaging, especially post-strike transparency, aims to influence not just the adversary's calculus but also reassure domestic audiences and global stakeholders. Psychological operations, media briefings, and strategic communication are no longer peripheral—they are central to military success.

2. *Real-time Intelligence and Surveillance Superiority:* Timely intelligence—whether HUMINT, SIGINT, or TECHINT—is the lifeblood of surgical operations. India's investments in space-based reconnaissance, drone surveillance, and AI-assisted analysis are reinforcing decision superiority. Precision targeting, risk mitigation, and mission agility all depend on accurate, layered intelligence.

3. *Cyber Defence and Technological Dominance:* The new frontier of war lies in cyberspace. Adversaries are increasingly targeting critical infrastructure, military

networks, and public morale through cyber intrusions. India's armed forces are integrating cyber commands, offensive cyber capabilities, and AI-driven surveillance to secure this domain and deter malicious actors.

4. *Diplomacy and Strategic Partnerships:* Military strength must walk hand-in-hand with diplomatic leverage. India's engagement with the QUAD, strategic logistics pacts, and defence interoperability exercises like Malabar and Yudh Abhyas reflect this alignment. Deterrence is not just about having the means—it's about having allies, influence, and access.

5. *Internal Vigilance and National Resilience:* Counter-terror operations, anti-radicalisation efforts, and border management are national security imperatives. A strong homeland defence posture—fuelled by cooperation between military, paramilitary, and intelligence agencies—is vital to offset low-intensity conflicts and internal destabilisation.

Shaping the Battlespace Without Kinetic Dominance

Victory in future conflicts will not be defined by enemy surrender or territorial capture. It will be defined by the ability to deter aggression, maintain internal peace, and safeguard critical assets—without firing a shot.

The Indian military is evolving into a force that shapes the battlespace rather than simply reacting to it. Wargaming, red-teaming, scenario planning, and cognitive dominance now form the new grammar of deterrence. Training academies, doctrine divisions, and strategic studies units are focusing on joint operations, cognitive warfare, and non-kinetic engagement models.

Even within operational theatres like Kashmir or the Northeast, the emphasis is shifting from brute enforcement to population-centric stability operations. Tactical empathy, community engagement, and integrated civic-military response plans are ensuring that the armed forces remain a force of stability, not suppression.

Human Behaviour, Military Psychology, and Future Preparedness

Understanding human behaviour—within ranks and among adversaries—is pivotal in conflict planning. Morale, unit cohesion, leadership under stress, and decision-making in ambiguous situations determine operational outcomes more than strategy on paper.

The Indian Army, Air Force, and Navy have all institutionalised psychological resilience training. In high-altitude deployments, counter-insurgency operations, or naval deployments, the ability to operate under psychological duress is mission-critical.

Simultaneously, understanding the adversary's behavioural patterns—cultural motivations, strategic preferences, escalation thresholds—offers predictive insight. Behavioural intelligence, embedded analysts, and cross-disciplinary research are being increasingly integrated into military planning.

From Firepower to Forward Thinking: The New Metric of Strength

India's strength must not only be measured in ballistic ranges or fighter sorties—it must be assessed through preparedness, agility, and moral clarity. In an era where wars are as much about bytes as bullets, about minds as much as missiles, forward thinking defines superiority.

This is not a call for demilitarisation. It is a call for militarisation of the mind—a mindset that values strategy over spectacle, partnerships over posturing, and influence over incursion.

The National Defence Academy, Staff Colleges,

and Strategic Forces Command are already adapting their curriculum to reflect this change. Leadership training now includes modules on cyber conflict, space security, hybrid threats, and ethical command decisions in asymmetric environments.

Conclusion: A Military Worthy of the Future

India stands today at a critical juncture in its strategic journey. Hemmed in by hostile neighbours, yet buoyed by internal strengths and global partnerships, it must now look beyond reaction and towards anticipation. The wars of the future will be silent, ambiguous, and psychological. And they are already underway.

To prevail, India must continue to build an adaptive, intelligent, morally upright, and strategically bold military—not a war machine but a war deterrent, not a symbol of aggression but a guarantor of peace.

The world respects strength. But it admires restraint. And in choosing when and how to exercise that strength lies the true test of a modern military power. India has passed that test—quietly, resolutely, and with honour.

Col Vikram Singh, commissioned into the Armoured Corps, is a seasoned security and risk management expert with over 30 years of distinguished service in the Indian Army. A decorated officer and academician, he has led high-impact operations, modernisation initiatives, and disaster relief missions, with expertise spanning counterterrorism, administration, and advanced security technologies. He can be reached at Email: vikramsa.singh@gmail.com



Rethinking India's Narrative in the Face of Pakistan's Propaganda Offensive



In the evolving battlefield of global geopolitics, narrative warfare has become as crucial as military might, with Pakistan mastering perception to recast itself as a victim rather than a perpetrator of terrorism. India must shed reactive diplomacy and adopt a strategic, coordinated narrative offensive to reclaim its voice and credibility on the world stage.

by Lt Col Manoj K Channan, Veteran



In the battlefield of geopolitics, words are weapons, narratives are strategies, and perception is power. Diplomacy, at its core, is managing international relations by negotiation, persuasion, and strategic messaging rather than coercion or conflict. It is as much about subtlety as it is about strength. Yet, too often, our approach to diplomacy has been reactive, driven by domestic sentiment rather than strategic foresight.

The Illusion of Preaching to the Choir

Diplomacy is not what happens in televised briefings or the echo chambers of social media. It's not the foreign minister sermonizing on global platforms, parroting the same grievances we've grown used to hearing within our borders. While this rhetoric may resonate with domestic audiences, it lacks traction in the international arena.

The global community, especially in the West, is not swayed by emotionally charged appeals or repeated accusations unless a coherent, consistent,

and credible narrative backs these. Our messaging must evolve. It must be more than a lament; it must be a compelling articulation of interests, ethics, and evidence—eloquent, polished, and persuasive.

Pakistan: The Master of Perception Warfare

Despite its economic fragility and internal instability, Pakistan has crafted and projected a remarkably potent narrative. Once widely considered the epicenter of terror networks, it has now repositioned itself as a frontline victim of terrorism. This narrative pivot is no accident—it is a result of sustained, strategic, and often cynical diplomacy.

Pakistan's information warfare has been sophisticated. They've taken a quote from Hillary Clinton—"You can't keep snakes in your backyard and expect them only to bite your neighbors"—and weaponized it to frame themselves as victims rather than perpetrators. Incidents like the Army Public School massacre, attacks on mosques, and other high-profile terrorist violence on their soil have bolstered

the narrative. By highlighting their suffering, Pakistan has successfully blurred the lines between the terrorists it once nurtured and the blowback it now faces.

This repositioning has made Western policymakers more sympathetic. Despite longstanding knowledge of ISI's complicity with jihadist elements, the prevailing sentiment now increasingly views Pakistan as a state caught in the crosshairs of forces it can no longer control. And that suits their geopolitical goals just fine.

The West's Convenient Amnesia

It would be naïve to assume that the West's acceptance of Pakistan's narrative is accidental. For decades, the West—especially the United States—has had a hand in cultivating Islamist extremism for strategic gains, from the Mujahideen in Afghanistan to proxy forces in Syria. The “War on Terror” has often been more about optics than outcomes.

As a result, when India calls out Pakistan's role in fostering terrorism, it is brushed aside. Why? Because admitting Pakistan's culpability would be admitting their own. And the West, still addicted to transactional geopolitics, finds it easier to maintain the illusion of Pakistan as a necessary partner.

The recent \$314 million package to maintain Pakistan's F-16 fleet is a glaring example. While officially touted as a counter-terror investment, it effectively boosts Pakistan's conventional capability against India. This duplicity cannot be ignored. Add to this the cryptocurrency pipeline allegedly flowing into Pakistan for dubious ends, and the West's complicity appears less like negligence and more like a calculated choice.

India's Diplomatic Deficit

India has been outpaced in this domain for all its strategic heft and growing global footprint. We've failed to shape the narrative while focusing on military preparedness and border security. Our consistent portrayal of ourselves as victims of cross-border terrorism has grown stale. It lacks nuance and, worse, doesn't inspire international action.

The real challenge lies in failing to distinguish between the terrorists attacking Pakistan and those attacking India. Though both operate under radical ideologies, their sponsors, objectives, and operational theatres differ. Indian diplomats must highlight how Pakistan has used terror as a state policy—a deliberate, strategic choice, not just a blowback from extremist elements.

Pakistan's Proxy War: Low-Cost, High-Dividend

By leveraging non-state actors, Pakistan has created a low-cost strategy to keep India militarily and diplomatically engaged. Terror attacks force India to maintain a substantial counter-insurgency grid in Kashmir, draining resources and attention. All this while Pakistan denies state involvement, cloaking the attacks as “freedom struggles” or “jihadist actions.”

They've found strategic shelter under the ideological narrative of Islamic solidarity, particularly for the “Kashmiri cause.” This façade has gained traction in parts of the Islamic world and has also found echoes in Western liberal spaces under the guise of human rights discourse.

The Way Forward: Seizing the Narrative Initiative

Indian diplomacy must transition from a defensive stance to an offensive one, not in aggression but in articulation. The National Security Advisor and the Prime Minister's Office must redefine our approach to narrative construction. We must invest in:—

Strategic Communication Cells. Dedicated teams trained in information warfare and narrative shaping to pre-empt and counter disinformation.

Leveraging Diaspora Diplomacy. The Indian diaspora is influential and embedded in the West's policy-making, media, and academia. This network must be activated to reframe India's global image and expose Pakistan's duplicity.

International Collaborations. Build coalitions with countries similarly affected by proxy terror—Israel, France, the UK, and African nations. Create a united front against state-sponsored terrorism.

Academic and Cultural Engagement. Fund research, documentaries, and cultural products that expose the ideology behind jihadist terrorism and its state backers.

The Endurance Race, Not the Sprint

Pakistan may have sprinted ahead in the early phase of perception warfare. But this is not a 100-meter dash—it's a marathon. Narratives evolve, truths emerge, and global patience wears thin for double games. India must play the long game: consistent, principled, and data-driven diplomacy that builds credibility over time.

Every act of terrorism must be linked back to its roots with hard evidence. Every diplomatic forum must be used not for lamentation but for leadership. As an aspiring regional power, India must stop asking for sympathy and start commanding respect.

Pros and Cons of Current Diplomatic Engagement

Pros

- India has maintained a restrained and mature posture, avoiding escalation.
- The international community broadly acknowledges India's growth as a responsible democratic power.
- Engagement with multilateral forums (G20, Quad, BRICS) has raised India's global profile.

Cons

- Our narrative remains reactive and lacks the finesse needed for global persuasion.
- Pakistan continues to benefit from Western aid and diplomatic space despite its terror links.

- India's counter-narrative efforts remain fragmented and underfunded.

Conclusion: Turning the Tide

The battlefield has changed. Bombs and bullets matter less than bandwidth and beliefs. In the information age, wars are won in minds long before they are fought on borders. India has the truth on its side, but truth alone is not enough—it must be told with precision, power, and purpose.

Diplomacy today is about dominating the narrative. If we are to undo Pakistan's propaganda offensive, we must accept that we are in an endurance race. In the era of information, minds win wars long before borders do relentless pursuit of the truth. The time to act is now.



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India's Wake-Up Call: Why US Defence Reform Must Match the Speed of Modern War



by John Spencer & Vincent Viola



The United States is in urgent need of fundamental defence reform. Not just adjustments. Not just marginal gains. A full-scale overhaul. The wars of today—and the even more brutal ones looming on the horizon—will not be won by the slow, the bloated, or the bureaucratically constrained. They will be won by those who can think faster, build faster, and fight smarter—and above all, by those who master the physics of lethality required on the modern battlefield. Right now, that's not us.

The goal of modern war is no longer to prepare for indefinite, grinding campaigns. The objective is clear: wars must be won quickly and decisively with superior military capabilities. That demands a defence ecosystem built not just for speed—but for scale. The United States has fallen into the trap of believing that one magic platform, one exquisite system, can win future wars. It can't. Winning will require modularity, volume, redundancy, and continuous adaptation—built into a system that is ultimately faster, leaner, and more efficient.

That means rapidly identifying battlefield requirements, acquisition, research, iterative development and manufacturing, and deployment across an industrial base designed to surge—not stall. India just proved what that looks like.

America's Acquisition Pipeline Is Too Slow for Modern War

The war in Ukraine laid bare a staggering truth: America's research, development, and deployment cycle is operating on a timeline the battlefield no longer respects. Ukraine's defence since 2022 has leaned heavily on western systems like Javelins anti-armor system, High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), and air defence Stinger missiles—but even this modest proxy war pushed US defence production to the brink. The Pentagon had to scramble to restart dormant Stinger lines. Javelin production was capped at peacetime capacity. HIMARS launchers, though effective, were too few, too expensive, and too slow to replenish.

Perhaps most telling was the US military's inability to produce enough artillery shells to keep pace with battlefield consumption. In a high-intensity war, the need for hundreds of thousands of shells per month has outstripped America's industrial capacity. Instead of ramping up quickly, the Pentagon found itself reliant on stretched supply chains, outdated manufacturing infrastructure, and timelines measured in years—not weeks.

Since 9/11, many of the most effective frontline battlefield solutions—the real “tip of the spear” technologies—haven't come through the formal acquisition pipeline at all. They've come from outside

it. Programs like the Rapid Equipping Force, Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statements (JUONS), and commander discretionary funds were built as temporary workarounds to bypass a system too slow and too rigid to meet battlefield urgency.

These stopgap authorities allowed private firms and battlefield commanders to field lifesaving tools—from counter-IED gear to surveillance drones—without waiting for years for approval. But these were improvisations, not reforms. The result is a two-track system: an official pipeline too bureaucratic to fight a modern war, and an unofficial one too fragile to scale. Instead of codifying the agility created in wartime, the US let it dissolve in peacetime. The US has been surviving on battlefield duct tape—when what we need is a complete redesign.

These are not exceptions—they are symptoms. The US acquisition model, built around Cold War cycles and peacetime audits, is too brittle to support the demands of wartime replenishment, rapid adaptation, or scalable production under fire.

Cost Structures Are Unsustainable

The US is not just too slow. It is also too expensive. American weapons are among the most advanced in the world—but that edge is being priced out of viability. A single Tomahawk missile costs up to \$2 million. A single HIMARS launcher costs over \$5 million. Meanwhile, adversaries and allies alike are building systems with similar or superior battlefield impact for a fraction of the cost. Iran's loitering munitions, for instance, cost a fraction of their US counterparts.

Drones are the new artillery shells of the modern battlefield. Armies don't need dozens—they need thousands. Cheap, expendable, and ubiquitous, drones must come in variety and volume to swarm, surveil, strike, and survive. But the US defense industry has not embraced this truth. Instead, it continues to push costly, exquisite platforms built for yesterday's wars.

Even US President Donald Trump recently criticized America's drone cost structures, pointing to the disparity between Iranian drones that cost just \$40,000 and a US defence contractor's \$41 million quote. "You look at these drones they're sending in," Trump said. "They're good, they're fast, and they're deadly." But we don't need to copy Tehran. Better models already exist in allies like Israel and India.

America's Defence Industrial Base Is Captured and Uncompetitive

The core of the problem is industrial. America's defence manufacturing process is dominated by a small cartel of primes that, while capable, have little incentive to drive innovation, reduce cost, or adapt quickly. There is no real market competition. This is not competition—it's cartelized domination. And the consequences are on display.

US defence giants produce exquisite systems, but often at boutique pace and boutique prices. There is no agile, scalable, layered, fast-response production network. No real surge capacity. The primes effectively control the process from design to deployment, and they are not optimized for the speed or scale of modern war.

Contrast that with what Ukraine has done.

Since 2014, the Ukrainian Armed Forces have been experimenting with a hybrid defence model—a national military seasoned with western ideas, supported by a scrappy, innovation-driven defence industry. The result? In less than a decade, Ukraine has transformed into a global pioneer in drone warfare and real-time target acquisition—out-innovating larger militaries by adapting commercial technologies into lethal, battlefield-ready systems. Their adaptation of commercial drones into loitering munitions and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) platforms came not from billion-dollar defence firms, but from battlefield ingenuity and necessity. It emerged from necessity, competition, and survival in war.

An example: by 2023, Ukraine had developed and deployed autonomous unmanned systems, capable of AI-assisted target recognition and strike coordination—leveraging edge computing to execute missions without constant human input. These drones can identify enemy vehicles, transmit coordinates in real-time, and engage targets under human-supervised autonomy—blurring the lines between ISR and direct action. This isn't theoretical: Ukrainian operators are already integrating AI-driven systems into daily battlefield use, often outpacing the doctrinal and technical experimentation of far larger Western militaries.

Critics may argue that Ukraine's transformation was driven by wartime necessity—that the U.S., not facing an immediate existential conflict, lacks the same urgency to overhaul its defence model. That's precisely the problem. Waiting for catastrophe to force adaptation is not a strategy; it's a gamble. The US has the unparalleled advantage of learning from others' wartime experience without suffering the same losses.

Ukraine's improvisations were born of desperation—but their effectiveness has now been validated. For the United States, mimicking that innovation should not require a crisis. The smarter path is proactive reform, not reactive scramble. In war, time is the one resource you can't buy back.

India's Operation Sindoor: A Blueprint for What Comes Next

India, too, offers a compelling model. In 2014, after its own moment of strategic introspection, New Delhi launched the "Make in India" initiative—reforming its defense sector around domestic production, self-reliance, and strategic speed. A decade later, that investment paid off in Operation Sindoor.

Operation Sindoor was more than a swift and precise military response to another cross-border terrorist attack. It marked a strategic inflection point. In just four days, India used domestically developed systems to strike hardened targets across the border with precision, speed, and overwhelming effect. No US systems. No foreign supply lines. Just BrahMos missiles, Akashteer air defence units, and loitering munitions designed or assembled at home.

India's overwhelming success demonstrated something more enduring than airpower. It validated a national defense doctrine built around efficient domestic industrial strength. And most significantly, it delivered a clear message to its strategic rival. Pakistan—a Chinese proxy by armament, alignment, doctrine—was completely outmatched. Its Chinese-made air defence systems could not stop, detect, or deter India's precision strikes. In Sindoor, India didn't just win. It demonstrated overwhelming military superiority against a Chinese-backed adversary.

The BrahMos missile—a supersonic cruise missile co-developed with Russia but now largely manufactured in India—costs approximately \$4.85 million per unit. While more expensive than the older U.S. Tomahawk (\$1 to \$2.5 million, depending on the variant), BrahMos delivers unmatched speed and kinetic impact at nearly Mach 3—a distinct performance advantage. Meanwhile, India's Akashteer system—an AI-integrated air defence control and reporting network—is being fielded at a fraction of the cost of U.S. systems like NASAMS or Patriot. With a contract value of just \$240 million for a full suite of integrated capabilities, Akashteer exemplifies India's ability to deploy high-performance, scalable systems without the financial burdens typical of Western platforms. Together, these investments reflect a strategic model built on

capability, speed, and cost-efficiency—one the United States would do well to study.

India's drone usage during Sindoor reinforced the point. The SkyStriker—an Israeli-developed loitering munition assembled domestically—and the Harop, a long-range autonomous loitering munition, proved critical to India's ability to identify and strike key terrorist targets with precision.

This wasn't theory. It was execution. These systems were not boutique prototypes—they were deployed, tested, and validated in a real war.

Meanwhile, Pakistani defences—built largely around older Chinese systems like the LY-80, HQ-9/P, and FM-90—were powerless to detect, deter, or respond to the strikes. In the skies over Pakistan, India didn't just dominate. It redefined regional deterrence.

India has already moved from 30% to 65% domestic sourcing in defence capital procurement, with a goal of 90% by the decade's end. It increased capital outlays for domestic production from \$6 billion in 2019-2020 to nearly \$20 billion in 2023-24. It allowed up to 74% FDI in defence, bringing in foreign partners while building indigenous capacity. India didn't just talk about reform. It executed it. And it won.

India has become a master of the physics of lethality. The United States can learn from their success and model some of their changes for its own needs.

The Strategic Choice Before America

India's success—and Ukraine's innovation—should be a wake-up call. They are building the warfighting models of the future. The US is still operating with Cold War machinery and Gulf War assumptions.

If the United States wants to remain a global military power—let alone deter China—it must reform:

- **Rebuild the acquisition process** around speed, iteration, and field feedback, not static 10-year programs.
- **Break up defence industrial monopolies** or at least introduce real competition and alternative suppliers.
- **Shift focus from perfection to effectiveness** from gold-plated systems to scalable, rugged, modular platforms.
- **Treat allies like India and Israel as co-equal production partners** not just buyers or tech recipients.

The next war won't give the US five years to prepare.

It may not give the US five months. The lesson of Operation Sindoor is not just that India is rising—it's that the United States can fall behind.

We cannot deter a war we are not prepared to fight. And the US cannot win a war it can't afford, can't scale, and can't keep up with. The time for US defence reform is not coming. It's already late.

The power of the United States in World War II didn't just come from the bravery and quality of its soldiers or its decentralized battlefield leadership—though those were essential. It also came from something we've since allowed to atrophy: an industrial base that was flexible, innovative, and shockingly fast. America's military industrial complex could adapt, surge, and produce at a scale no enemy could match. The US has lost that edge.

To meet the speed of modern war, reform cannot be confined to factories and procurement cycles. It must extend to how we learn. The United States should establish permanent, deployable learning teams—designed not to sift lessons from media reports, but to gather them directly from the ground.

These teams must operate forward, embedded where history is unfolding: in urban combat zones, in drone labs, in dispersed logistics hubs. From Ukraine to India, battlefield truths are being written in real time. The US must capture them not passively, but through deliberate collection, analysis, and integration into our own systems—with one goal in mind: making the US defence ecosystem the most efficient, adaptable, and dominant in the world.

To deter war with China—the world's largest military by active personnel, with approximately two million soldiers, and a population over four times the size of the US—it won't be raw numbers that determine the outcome. It will be a holistic defence capability: a system that can innovate, produce, scale, and fight at speed. That is the true challenge. That is the reform we need. To lead again, America must not only revive its defence industrial power—it must master the physics of lethality at scale, speed, and sustainability.

And the clock is ticking!

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Inventor of 5G Technology, Indian Navy Officer

When we lost Kukri and Kukri sank, we realized that one of the problems was the sonar. This was a foreign ship. The sonar was not made for Indian waters.

So, the Indian Navy started its indigenization journey. It had begun much earlier, but we said we must build an Indian sonar. Now, the man who built the Indian sonar up subsequently was a great guy called Commodore Arogyaswami Paulraj.

Designing the sonar for Indian Navy made him subsequently become one of the greatest scientists of the world. Today, if all of you are using mobile phones, it is because of 4G, 5G. The heart of 4G, 5G is something called MIMO, multiple input, multiple output.

Guess who is the inventor of MIMO? It's Commodore Arogyaswami Paulraj of the Indian Navy. So, these are some of the great consequences of war.

Arogyaswami J. Paulraj (born 14 April 1944) is an Indian-American electrical engineer, academic. He is a



Professor Emeritus (Research) in the Department of Electrical Engineering at Stanford University.

He joined the Indian Navy at age 16 through the National Defense Academy, Khadakvasla Pune and served the Indian Navy for 26 years. Paulraj received a B.E. in electrical engineering from the Naval College of Engineering, Lonavala, India, and a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, New Delhi, India.

His invention (1992) for exploiting multiple antennas at both ends of a wireless link (MIMO) lies at the heart of the current high-speed WiFi and 4G and 5G mobile networks, and has revolutionized high-speed wireless services for billions of people. MIMO boosts data rate by creating parallel data streams, multiplying throughput by the number of antennas used.

Subservient, Malleable, Gutless, Incompetent Cowardly, Slavish, Corrupt - Are These the True Attributes of Military Leadership in India?



by Group Capt AG Bewoor (Retd)



The Indictment

Over quite a few years, veterans of all hues, dispositions, preferences, ranks, specialisations, tastes, orientations and predispositions; have been severely castigating both Govt and military leadership. These experts and authors, all well settled veterans, find serving generals / air marshals / admirals (GAA), lacking in courage and uprightness, and say so in print as well as on TV. They allege that most officers spend their time in keeping seniors happy, by means fair and foul, which ensures promotion to general officer rank.

These critics mention names of officers who did India proud and lament that such people are unavailable today. It is alleged that; manipulation, favouritism, nepotism, subversion, corruptness, iniquity, unfairness are no longer proscribed, which implies it is encouraged. These are very malicious charges against the complete officer cadre of India's Armed Forces. Many allude to a steady deterioration in quality of military leadership at apex appointments.

This is a severe indictment of most, if not all veterans, because it is the veterans themselves, including these fault-finding veterans, who have permitted this to happen. It is said that Armed Forces have spawned officers who will not speak up for the benefit of the Service, and such officers are the ones

who become Three Star leaders. Writers say that near the apex level, officers sabotage reputations of colleagues who are an impediment to their advancement.

Once again, if this be indeed true, than all these veteran-critics are culpable of neglect and dereliction because they have ensured that such officers rise in the hierarchy. But that is not what these worthies are saying. They are whitewashing their deeds and bashing the current military leadership. A very pleasant pastime as is obvious. Pity.

The Incumbents are Worse than the Worst

All authors are veterans with illustrious careers. Many promote the necessity for veterans, especially from apex positions, to write about maladies, degeneracy, rottenness, depravity, corruption, cowardice that sadly prevail in the Services. These very experienced veterans, in their writings and on TV should surely show us realisable and accomplishable solutions. But these veteran-authors assert; the present incumbents are not able to articulate, implement and follow through such solutions because the current military leadership is not capable of reliable visionary foresight.

The veteran-authors add that serving GAA are preoccupied in self-preservation, have an insatiable

appetite for promotions with willful disregard for their Service, brother officers, the men they put into battle and of course their families. Dear readers, have any of you ever read such grievous indictment of the current top leadership of Indian Armed Forces? And for more than two decades. Has such a situation come to pass without any indication that the system is coming apart? For surely, if this is what our apex military leaders are doing, the schemes, organisation and arrangement of our Services must crumble before us.

All projects, operations, recruitments, camaraderie, fellowship, cohesiveness has to implode in front of our eyes. Then why is it not happening? Or is it happening but we decline to see it? Could it be that so many of us refuse to see this disaster in motion? Or is this a false alarm? The next vexing question that must be answered is this, how come the top leadership of the Army/Navy/Air Force has suddenly taken a nose dive, right after these illustrious veteran-author critics retired?

Does it not indicate that during their tenure at the apex, everything was hunky-dory, and quite abruptly in the immediate months after they retired, things degenerated into chaos? If this be true, then does it not speak volumes of the incompetence, disinterest, callousness, laziness, ignorance of the veteran-authors own performance at the apex? How did they give licence to and tolerate such mediocre officers to rise to so high a level and cause untold permanent damage to the Service they love so much? Unexplained and unusual is it not? Then what is indeed taking place?

The Assassination of Our Leadership

Without being predisposed, a reading of the foregoing should dismay and horrify all of us, our families and the Indian nation should be panic stricken that their safety, izzat and security is in the wrong hands and the Indian State is in life threatening jeopardy. The coast line is like a sieve, the airspace is easily punctured and the enemy can walk into India anywhere, anytime without resistance.

It would be correct for readers to leave India and find a secure destination where anyone except the Indian Armed Forces is deployed. The character of Indian military leadership has been assassinated quite openly, and for years too. However, the assassins have only accused, they have given no proof. For the proof does not reside in the accusation, but in the collapsing of the framework of the Indian Army/Navy/Air Force. Unfortunately for the assassins, this wonderful structure stands firm, resolute, unflinching, shining and

certainly indestructible.

And there are very solid reasons why this writer says so with conviction. It is not easy and simple to destroy the complex composition of India's Armed Forces; either from within or from the outside, many have tried and failed.

Arbitrariness does raise its ugly head, but gets chopped off because sound wisdom prevails. Subterfuge to buck the system for personal gain happens and many perpetrators gets exposed and finds themselves in the dock. Indeed a few do get away because of the silence of the many, protected by the cowardly superior, which does include these critics who are lambasting the GAA. Of course, such aberrations will happen in any enormous organisation like the Indian Armed Forces. This weakness occurs with regularity in most Govt of India services, be they civilian, quasi military, para-military, and indeed in all Militaries the world over. But there is much more to be said.

Who is the True Culprit?

All veterans, and where permitted serving officers, must expose any rot in the system with the design and intent to create remedy. But I have a quarrel with those who vilify the current leadership, which has been recently vacated by the authors, as it reveals a clear disassociation with this current leadership. If today's Three Star commander is otiose, ineffectual, lazy, work-shy, indolent, cowardly, and preoccupied in self-protection, how in heavens name did he get there right under the noses of all of you who are saying so? Many authors have correctly stated; that such undesirable characteristics, are clearly manifest at the level of Commanding Officer, and possibly earlier.

If that be so, and the veteran-author accuses the system for letting such a man rise, then this very veteran-author is the 'system' that tolerated, encouraged, and countenanced the rise of this unsuitable man to Three Star status. The number of veterans at Three Star level who bemoan and deplore the existing system that permits the unfit 'Colonel' to rise to an unfit Lt Gen is fascinating. It is also enigmatic because these very Three Star officers who are now shedding tears, have been intimately involved in the rise of that unfit Colonel to an unfit Lt Gen.

It is inconceivable that so many Colonels are able to slip through the net cast by our general officers to catch and eliminate the corrupt, incompetent, cowardly Colonels, and that too for the last three decades? The Three Star veteran-author is the problem, not the solution. To now take shelter behind

the curtain and blanket of retirement, and wash his hands off the rise of this non-visionary unsound Colonel to become a C-in-C, is a blunder made willingly without due diligence by the veteran-authors.

Their uniforms are stained with absence of conscientious application and courage to expose the undesirable officer and ensure he does not rise. And yet there is GAA who has prevented it, and are still preventing it. To thus cast into dustbins, our incumbent military leadership is criminal and tantamount to disturbing the existing equilibrium from which the veteran-author has just exited. It is this veteran who needs to search deep in his heart, as to who is unfit or better who was unfit to hold that Three Star position? The incumbents or the predecessors?

Political Patronage on the Rise

Many veterans blatantly accuse their seniors, juniors and contemporaries of seeking political patronage and protection to rise in life. This is not a rare development of recent times.

Bureaucracy, civilian or military, have invariably sought patronage of political masters. It happened in Rome, Athens, Babylon, Patliputra, London, Berlin, Kabul, Cairo, Beijing, Moscow, Paris and Delhi in years gone by and happens today. The incompetent, unprofessional, weak minded, cowardly, disenchanted, falsifier, yet fiercely ambitious officer; possibly inspired and by a wife with matching attributes, will resort to such avenues. But to brand a majority of today's C-in-Cs and PSOs and second rung Three Star officers, as doggedly pursuing this shameful path of political patronage is unjust, invalid, unsubstantiated and certainly false. For one, the political leadership is not very familiar of our systems and there are checks and balances to keep political interference to the minimum in promotions and appointments.

Yet it will happen, that is the beauty of the civil-military equation, it is not watertight, cannot be so, and possibly should not be impermeable. Political heavyweights with their civilian advisers revel and get vicarious pleasure in being able to intervene and interpose into matters military, especially promotions. The Neta does it in all bureaucracies, including IAS/IFS/Police/Intelligence/ Judicial and such cadres. It is sad commentary that veterans, and especially the very recent ones, ignore these facets of military-politico-bureaucratic equivalences.

It is manifest so openly and without hesitation by all protagonists; that to show surprise that it actually

happens; makes one look askance at the strategic comprehension of such commentary. How a Three Star general of yesterday, can brand today's generalship as "weak", without taking a major part of the blame upon him is astonishing and baffles logic. Some veteran-authors have argued that public debates on erosion of status of officers, substandard weaponry, unfair pay & pensions, is because of poor generalship. What precisely is the weakness and poverty of thought and deed, that all our serving GAA have demonstrated, because of which our pensions are not exactly what we demand? How have these serving leaders failed if desired weapons have not come into service? Does a public debate on matters military signify the collapse of our military process that is in truth still robust?

The veteran-author who powerfully vilify today's senior military commanders, need to take a tax break, and hold back their free-flowing criticism because it is very much applicable to each one of them and in good measure too. When this dawns on them, as it must, then a thorough re-look at their accusations will have to be made. Many veterans glibly exhort the Chiefs and their immediate juniors to threaten resignations en masse; if weapons are not bought, if civil-military equations are not reinstated, if salaries and pensions are not raised to the demanded levels.

How many of these veteran-authors were willing to put in their papers if their Corps / Armies did not get what they personally had demanded from their Chief? Chiefs of Armed Forces do not resign; one Chief did, and then was persuaded by political-bureaucratic powers to rescind his decision, with abundant embarrassment all around. Civil servants resign, general managers resign, district collectors resign, judges resign, police commissioners resign, vice chancellors resign, train drivers resign, bus conductors resign, but Chiefs of India's Air Force / Army / Navy do not resign, they stay on to fight for their Service. Always.

Seniority or Selection?

Lamenting about Seniority versus Selection to the appointment of a Chief is another favourite theme for veteran-authors. The bottom line always is that the Govt selects the man who is weak, malleable, has secrets to hide, barks more than he bites, seeks post-retirement gratification, has an average service record and is not likely to rock the boat.

Thus, the veteran-writers are swift in damning anyone who is appointed Chief but is not the senior most Lt Gen at that time. For them the stark dictum is;

Seniority is always paramount and must overwhelm all else, including touchstones like war / battle experience, personal conduct, ability to integrate matters of national dimensions into the military canvas and the measurable performance while in the Three Star positions. For them, the senior most of all Lt Gens / Vice Admirals / Air Marshals must become the next Chief come what may. For if that does not happen, it means that the one who is appointed Chief has tweaked the system, sucked up to the politico-bureaucratic combine, will sell the Service down the river, and will canvas for a lucrative post-retirement diplomatic / gubernatorial posting.

They then talk of General Thimayya as one hell of a strong general, and that people like him are sadly not there. Readers do not miss the gentle hint that some of these veteran-authors belong to the Thimayya strain. The fact is that Thimayya superseded two Lt Gens and was made COAS in 1957 when India was just 10 years old.

The cabinet of that time did not hesitate to make a selection to appoint an Army Chief, even though the previous three appointees were senior most when they were made COAS. There was no hesitation or fear in the hearts of the political leadership that this act by govt would upset and demoralise the Indian Armed Forces. Yet today, such action in a robust 70 years old republic is stigmatised as demoralising? Detect and notice the dichotomy and incongruity of the philosophy being promoted by these veteran-authors, is it in harmony with their distressed writings about poor general-ship? How come what was good for India by making Thimayya chief; was not good for India when Rawat was made chief? Same to same is it not? What about Vaidya vrs Sinha? What about Karanbir vrs Verma, what about Polly Mehra vrs M M Singh?

The irony is that the veterans who deplore and bewail the disregard for seniority in the appointment of Chiefs, have themselves superseded many seniors in their journey from Colonels to Lt Gens. That is of course quite in order according to them; after all they had proven their superior capabilities when compared to their seniors, so they deserved to supersede those below par seniors, quite in order is it not? But this method of selecting the best must not and cannot be applied for making Chiefs.

Unusually odd logic that defies analytical inference, which is expected from veterans. In all countries, whether with pluralistic or controlled societies and systems, not just military, but all apex appointees, are selected by the highest decision-making political bodies in that country, and the

chosen person need never be the senior most serving man. How can the veteran-authors who have exhausted much energy and space in questioning the process of appointing Chiefs ignore and disregard this truth? Much of the writings of veteran-authors who are belittling and condemning generalship today, can be simply cast away as rubbish.

Not for of any other reason but because; these accusations with their defects, demerits, fractures, flaws cannot stand scrutiny to cold logic. Besides, how can flawed leadership of current generals be singled out for criticism, without the veteran-authors taking upon themselves all, if not most of the blame for this malady?

But not one of these critics who profess leadership qualities and analytical acumen will accept even a small part of the blame. Kya Karen Bhai?

Self-Contemplation and Inward Examination

How intensely with serious contemplation have these veteran-authors examined the indictment they have proffered onto their successors? The first thought that must spurt is that the Power to Abuse is much more Fearful than the Abuse of Power, and this Power to Abuse has been exercised brutally by them. War has been defined as a Trade for the Soldier, a Profession for the Officer, but to the General it is an Art. This Art blossoms by intellectually and sympathetically discerning and interpreting the Trade of the Soldier and the Profession of the Officer.

It takes much effort, which veteran accuser has looked at this aspect deeply and then unleashed his tirade? For the Lt Gen who did not become Chief, the pertinent universal advice is – 'Teach Me to Win if I May, but If I Do Not Win, then Teach Me to Be a Good Loser'. This principle applies to all of us who radicalise the non-adherence to seniority, when Chiefs are appointed. Before the Veterans key-in words and hurriedly hit the Send button, pause and reflect that in all professions, and more so in the Armed Forces, Character is of greatest importance, much more than brains, experience, and opinion of oneself. What happens to that character, when we indict our successors in so grievous a manner? By branding Indian generalship as incompetent, slavish, gutless the authors have denounced their own ability to wage and win wars.

How can these veterans forget that should this state of affairs indeed be true, then these very veterans have failed to train their successors during peace, so whose incompetence is truly revealed by these indictments? True and irresolute security of a military formation lies

in Resolution of the general to do it right, every time, even when no one is looking, and knowing this fact is the cornerstone of generalship. But so many generals do not wish to recognise this fundamental foundation, because there is so much comfort in not knowing the substructure of leadership.

As is so often quoted, Comment is Free while Facts are sacred. Holding an apex appointment assures the freedom to comment at any time on any subject with a controlled captive audience, which seeks both knowledge and wisdom from the GAAs. But life has taught us this; Knowledge tells us that the Tomato is a Fruit, but Wisdom cautions; you do not put Tomatoes into a Fruit Salad. Many of us veterans are guilty of relentlessly and bare-facedly commending ourselves for many things that should not and cannot honestly be placed into our bowl of success.

But behind the screen of retirement such bombast goes uncontested, and that pretension is pardoned by others. Regrettably, we forget that generosity and persevere in overstating our achievements which is a useless activity, as we know that Being Useful is the Rent we Pay for taking up Room on Earth.

Our inward scrutiny has to reveal this bitter truth about spreading poison; the Poison of a Scorpion is in its Tail, that of a Fly is in its Head, of a Snake in its Fangs, but of a Man the Poison is in his Whole Body. The restraint that we need to entertain in our speech, interjections, prose, declamations, arguments, words and thoughts, must fulfil the universal acceptance that Discontent is Senseless. Wither our ability to discriminate? Where is our "vivek"?

What Do We Truly Want?

Many GAAs are abundantly capable of conquest, but admirably unequal to running that conquered or inherited empire. That is the ditch which most veteran-authors fall into when chastising the current crop of apex military leadership. Running an empire means first of all finding the correct successor and preparing him for that succession, in that venture the veteran-authors have failed. Slandering and smearing those who are today filling the posts they held yesterday, is unacceptable in any hierarchy and certainly the Armed Forces. One glaring cause for this grim painting about today's GAAs is because of the Open Assessment Culture in the Indian Army.

The author has been educated about this by a battery of army officers, his colleagues at DSSC. An extremely cosy system if true, but debilitating for the Army. If indeed generalship / admiralship / airmarshal-ship in our Services is as fractured and bankrupt as avowed by these authors, and as they allege has been so for the last few decades, then how come the Indian Army still fights and wins everywhere?

Why are aircraft not falling out of the skies like leaves during 'patjhad' (fall)? Why are our ships not floundering and sinking in the oceans that wash our shores? "The courageous and notable performance of our Air Marshals / Generals / Admirals during OP SINDOOR demolishes all accusations made by these veteran critics. Bharatiya Fauji Netretvita, Drust Hai" (Indian Armed Forces' leadership is on right course).



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Is India Quietly Learning Hybrid War from Russia and China?



by Lt Col Manoj K Channan, Veteran



India's denial of Petrapole transit to Bangladesh marks a strategic shift from moral diplomacy to calculated coercion. As the China-Bangladesh-Pakistan axis grows, proxies like the Arakan National Army may offer India a covert edge in the new Great Game of South Asia.

India has long resisted using proxies as a tool of statecraft, preferring overt diplomacy, moral posturing, and conventional deterrence. However, the strategic environment in South Asia is changing rapidly. India must reconsider its playbook as the China-Pakistan-Bangladesh axis emerges and flexes its muscles. While controversial, the denial of transit facilities to Bangladesh for exports to Nepal and Bhutan via Petrapole signals a long-awaited recalibration of Indian resolve.

The “Petrapole signals” are far more than a logistical choke or diplomatic gesture—they are a carefully calibrated message. Petrapole, Asia's most significant land customs station, is a trade lifeline and a barometer of India-Bangladesh bilateral sentiment. Whether through port enhancements, delays, or denial of access, every movement through this corridor carries geopolitical undertones. In 2024, the opening of new land infrastructure at Petrapole was read as a gesture of goodwill and commitment to trade valued at \$14 billion annually. Conversely, the recent denial of transit rights is a clear signal of assertive recalibration.

Such moves also affect symbolic space. The daily

Petrapole-Benapole retreat ceremony, modeled on Wagah, is meant to signal harmony. A disruption here or cooling of its warmth would reverberate through diplomatic and domestic channels alike.

India's response cannot remain confined to traditional lanes in this complex matrix. This policy assertiveness must now extend into covert, asymmetric, and psychological dimensions.

China's model of using economic, cyber, diplomatic, and military proxies is well documented. Russia's use of "little green men" in Crimea redefined hybrid warfare. India, surrounded by multiple fault lines and restive borders, must consider cultivating local and regional allies to develop strategic depth. The Arakan National Army (ANA) and other similar ethno-nationalist movements offer a unique opportunity to simultaneously secure Indian interests and support groups striving for autonomy or justice in their nations.

Key Takeaways

Petrapole as a Signal Post: India's control over trade and transit at Petrapole serves as both an economic lever and geopolitical barometer in its relationship with Bangladesh.

Strategic Shift: Denial of transit facilities marks a decisive move from passive diplomacy toward calibrated coercion.

Symbolism of Ceremony: The Petrapole-Benapole retreat ceremony metaphorically represents the state

of bilateral relations—its tone and conduct send powerful cues.

Expanded Toolkit: To address evolving challenges, India must deploy a mix of traditional and non-traditional tools, including proxies.

India's security responses must be agile, constantly reviewed, and adaptive to shifts in regional alliances. The need for a dynamic strategy is paramount in the rapidly changing geopolitical landscape of South Asia, emphasizing the urgency and importance of India's security responses.

The Strategic Case for Proxy Engagement

Understanding the strategic benefits of proxy engagement in South Asia is crucial for India's regional security. This approach could significantly enhance India's strategic depth by aligning with forces that share common interests, rather than hiring mercenaries. By leveraging proxies like the ANA, India can effectively extend its influence and counterbalance the growing power of its adversaries in the region.

A strategic proxy is not a mercenary but a force that shares overlapping interests. In the case of the ANA, the alignment is organic. The ANA has effectively pushed both the Myanmar Army and the Bangladesh Army out of the Naf River region. It now controls a 270-kilometer border zone, including territory near the volatile Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). It has demonstrated its ability to conduct independent operations, control territory, and regulate cross-border commerce—seizing cargo vessels and detaining borderviolators.

For India, whose Northeastern states remain vulnerable to both physical isolation and psychological alienation, leveraging the ANA could serve three objectives:

1. Dismantle the BD-China logistical nexus through the disruption of CHT-based infrastructure.
2. Deny Bangladesh and China the freedom to Project influence westward toward Tripura and Mizoram.
3. Create a parallel lever to counterbalance China's support to Northeast insurgent groups.

Why the Arakan National Army Matters

The ANA represents the armed wing of the United League of Arakan (ULA), which seeks greater autonomy for the Rakhine ethnic population in Myanmar. Unlike the Rohingya insurgent groups, the ANA maintains a distinct identity, and its ideological framing is rooted in ethno-nationalism, not Islamist extremism.

The ANA has been increasingly assertive:

1. Controls large tracts of the western Myanmar coastline.
2. Maintains its governance mechanisms and taxation systems.
3. Has successfully resisted both Tatmadaw offensives and Bangladeshi intrusions.

Its control over the Naf River and its reach toward Teknaf, close to the maritime gateway of Chittagong, give it immense strategic utility. An ANA-led disruption in CHT would significantly dilute Bangladesh's ability to function as a corridor for Chinese logistics.

From Doctrine to Deployment: Crafting the Indian Strategy

India must take a page from Putin's Crimea strategy—but with democratic nuance. The following steps could be taken:

1. *Covert Support Channels:* Through backchannels and humanitarian fronts, India can provide the ANA with logistical support, non-lethal aid, communication systems, and tactical training. ANA fighters can be trained in fieldcraft, ambush tactics, and intelligence-gathering using India's counter-insurgency expertise from the Northeast.
2. *Secure Intelligence Coordination:* The ANA can be an advanced human intelligence network to monitor Chinese movements near CHT, Bangladesh's port facilities, and key energy and telecommunication corridors.
3. *Psychological Operations (PSYOPS):* Deploy disinformation campaigns and digital operations to amplify ANA's victories, weaken Bangladesh Army morale in the region, and raise the political cost for China in investing further in Bangladesh's military infrastructure.
4. *Cyber Deterrence:* Support regional hackers to disrupt pro-Bangladesh Chinese telecom grids and defense logistics. Promote independent digital platforms controlled by groups like ANA to tell their version of the narrative.
5. *Private Military Contractors (PMCs):* India could explore discreet partnerships through PMCs to serve as buffers between the Indian state and operational ground realities. These entities can provide the ANA training, logistics, and supply chain facilitation without directly attributing to the Indian government. This avoids overt fingerprints and ensures plausible deniability, limiting international blowback and preserving diplomatic flexibility. Any engagement must be under the strict strategic oversight of the

Government of India to avoid rogue operations.

6. Leverage of Indigenous Insurgent Groups: India could also consider the calibrated use of groups such as the NSCN(IM) in the Naga Hills and the PLA in Manipur. These groups have operated for decades in the region, possess intimate terrain knowledge, and are well-networked across borders. Other influential groups like ULFA (United Liberation Front of Asom), KNF (Kuki National Front), and NLFT (National Liberation Front of Tripura) could also be considered under similar frameworks. Their alignment with India's regional goals can be explored under formal peace accords with clear deliverables. As part of any peace arrangement, India can help such groups achieve their political and cultural aspirations in neighboring lands without compromising Indian sovereignty. This would lend strategic cohesion to the larger proxy initiative and ensure India's security agencies maintain operational control.

Learning from Pakistan: Strategic Depth, Not Strategic Overreach

India must not repeat Pakistan's mistake of treating proxies as permanent force extensions. The TTP (Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan) eventually turned against its creators after being used by Pakistan's deep state. India must ensure that the groups supported are:

- Ideologically aligned.
- Limited in mandate.
- Subject to periodic assessment and recalibration.
- Proxy Engagement: Ensuring Strategic Oversight and Control

Proxy Engagement: balancing Aspirations with National Interest

A key caveat in proxy warfare is the risk of blowback. Hence, proxy selection must prioritize groups with defined objectives and shared threat perceptions. The ANA fits this matrix. Additionally, India could explore strategies with:

- Chin National Front (CNF). Operating in western Myanmar, with cultural links to Mizoram.
- Chakma Rights Movements in Bangladesh and Arunachal Pradesh. These groups face discrimination in both Myanmar and Bangladesh and look to India as a natural ally.

Supporting these groups must come with clear red lines

- No attacks on civilian populations.
- No collaboration with Islamist or narco-terrorist

networks.

- Complete strategic alignment with Indian objectives.

Legal and Ethical Plausibility—India need not openly admit to supporting proxies. It can operate through:

- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) focused on human rights.
- Regional religious and cultural bodies sympathetic to these movements.
- Unofficial third-party governments that serve as intermediaries (e.g., Thailand or Vietnam).

International pushback, particularly in forums like the WTO or UN, can be countered by highlighting Bangladesh's alliance with China, known for suppression of ethnic minorities. Moreover, the ANA's opposition to Bangladeshi and Chinese intrusion strengthens India's position as a counter-balance rather than an aggressor.

Policy Recommendation for Decision-Makers

To ensure that the initiative always remains with the Government of India and avoids unmanageable blowback, the following steps are recommended:

1. Establish a National Proxy Engagement Cell under the National Security Council Secretariat to oversee all operations.
2. Mandate legal oversight and budgetary scrutiny through the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).
3. Initiate backchannel engagement with the ANA leadership to evaluate their long-term political vision and reliability.
4. Frame a Proxy Engagement Doctrine, defining India's red lines, escalation thresholds, and disengagement protocols.
5. Ensure operational deniability through regulated PMCs, NGOs, and human rights conduits.
6. Wargame the proxy strategy regularly under NSCS supervision, recognizing that such initiatives are dynamic and not static. Leadership must remain ahead of the curve, ensuring the target country remains in a decision dilemma.

Towards Strategic Autonomy Through Asymmetric Power

Strategic depth is not always geographic—it can be psychological, informational, and paramilitary. With the Bangladesh-China-Pakistan nexus tightening, India must break out of its moral hesitation and embrace strategic realism. Proxies like the Arakan National Army offer India a silent but potent force

multiplier. With calibrated engagement, India can convert fault lines in its neighbors into lines of defense.

This is not about war—it is about positioning. It is

not about conquest—it is about containment. India's road to Eastern security may not be paved with formal treaties but with informal alliances that allow it to stay one step ahead of its encircling adversaries.



Lt Col Manoj Kumar Channan (Retd) was commissioned in 65 Armoured Regiment in August 1983 and took Premature Retirement in April 2007. Since June 2016 has been an independent defence business consultant with an interest in aerospace, defence as well as geo-strategic developments. He can be reached on Email: manojchannan@gmail.com

Raksha Mantri Releases CDS Gen Anil Chauhan's Book on Indian Military Evolution



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on May 23, 2025 was present at the launch of "READY, RELEVANT AND RESURGENT: A BLUEPRINT FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF INDIA'S MILITARY", a book authored by Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan. The book talks about the ongoing transformation of India's armed forces, focusing on jointness, integration, and self-reliance to address the challenges of 21st-century warfare and uphold national security.

The book, a collection of articles by General Chauhan, lays out a vision to build a future-ready military aligned with the national goal of a "Sashakt, Surakshit, Samridh aur Viksit Bharat" by 2047. It highlights long-term reforms to foster interoperability amongst the services, optimise military resources, and modernise the forces to counter emerging threats.

"This book is just the beginning of nuanced thoughts," said CDS Anil Chauhan, expressing hope that

the ideas within would stimulate further discourse on military transformation.

The roots of this reform date back to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address at the 2014 Combined Commanders' Conference, where he outlined the need for a modern, joint force capable of securing India's interests across both traditional and emerging domains. Acting on this vision, the government in 2020 established the Department of Military Affairs and appointed the first CDS to enhance synergy between the three services.

Amid shifting geopolitical dynamics and the unpredictable nature of future conflicts, CDS Chauhan stressed the importance of developing India-specific solutions rooted in the country's strategic culture. Highlighting this, the book includes a piece on "Ancient Indian Wisdom and its Relevance in Modern Strategy and Statecraft", underlining how India's heritage continues to inform its global outlook and military thinking.

Kargil to Galwan: Enduring Leadership Traits



This article by Lt Gen DP Pandey, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM, former GOC 15 Corps and Comdt AWC was published earlier by CLAWS and now being republished by MVI with the author's permission due to its relevance in the present times. It will surely benefit many new readers who haven't read it in the past, the military officers and veterans, have a lot to gain from the unique insight provided on the subject and linked issues. The article highlights the 'Kargil Conflict (1999), Galwan Clashes (2020) and the two decades apart with Enduring Military Leadership Traits.' - Col Vinay Dalvi, Editor MVI

by Lt Gen DP Pandey (Retd)



Certain leadership traits transcend timelines, civilisations, continents, ages, terrain, enemies, nature & character of warfare and evolving geopolitical environment. At times, it is perceived that rapidly changing technology in the strategic and tactical realms may impact traditional values and traits of leadership. Post analysing two conflicts two decades apart, this article discusses certain enduring leadership traits that need to be nurtured in current and future leadership across the spectrum.

The senior leadership during Galwan incident (2020), both civilian and military, were in their prime of youth and at tactical levels when Kargil Conflict (1999) was forced upon India.

The Kargil War of 1999 and the Galwan Clash of 2020 were pivotal events in India's military history, with each carrying valuable lessons on leadership in the face of adversity. While the contexts and adversaries in both conflicts were different, the core

leadership qualities, required to navigate these challenges, have remained constant. This article explores the leadership traits drawn from the Kargil and Galwan clashes, highlighting essential qualities and competencies that leaders must develop to address modern military and strategic challenges.

It was the phase when, in the Indian subcontinent, geo-political influences and interferences were becoming more intimate with both India and Pakistan declaring their nuclear status in 1998 and India being termed as a pariah with severe sanctions being imposed. The government in the Centre was a minority one 'hanging by a slender thread'. This was also the period wherein the legacy media, fresh from the experiences of the two Gulf Wars, was creating a critical space to inform and influence strategy and operations through manipulation of public opinions locally and internationally.

Live telecast and reporting from the frontlines at

the tactical level of warfighting—brutal and yet sensational and exciting, although new in the Indian subcontinent but desired by the population. More importantly in India, the civilian and military domains had just started to merge at the strategic levels, ushering in a whole-of-nation approach in the aspects related to national security. The manifestation of this synergy, rudimentary though, successfully uprooted and pushed back the Pakistan Army from the rarified atmosphere and unscalable heights of Kargil Sector.

The important facets of geopolitical environment viz. centrality of information warfare and civil-military fusion underwent momentous transitions from Kargil to Galwan, just two decades apart. Firstly, India was being sought after for world leadership role with Covid Vaccine diplomacy and as an emerging strong economy with majority and muscular government in power. Secondly, in the information environment, the world had become flat with social media and other digital spaces available to the common public to engage and inform national and world leaders.

No information could be hidden from the prying eyes on the dark web or satellites. It drew everyone with a mobile into the conversation of information, intelligence, strategy and operations including influencing the future course of actions to be taken, compelling belligerence to sane actions, by the national decision makers. Deception, misinformation and disinformation were part of the campaigns targeting the gullible common citizenry, within the two countries as also across the world. The media dissection of the event of Galwan highlighted a shift in information warfare, where shaping strategic narratives became crucial. Thirdly, on the civil – military front, the evolution was made significant with the facet of synergy compelled by a strong government in the center.

Yet, the only enduring constant was the public perceptions regarding the response of the Indian leadership at the strategic levels, both civilian and military, was found to be sluggish, indecisive and irresolute in response to the emerging situation, wherein the tactical leadership responded with alacrity. Interestingly, two common factors emerge in terms of leaderships two decades apart. First, the government in power was led by BJP, albeit in minority as a coalition during Kargil conflict and in absolute majority in Galwan incident. Secondly, the Chiefs of the Army Staff during both incidents were from the Sikh Light Infantry Regiment.

The situations surrounding Kargil conflict and Galwan clashes are different in terms of enemies, scales of troop deployments & engagements and eventually casualties, but they have enduring similarities of intelligence failure, being deceived and surprised at strategic levels and delays in robust responses. All these can be attributed to failure of leadership and structures, for not reading the strategic intent of enemy correctly and being complacent. The public debates and multiple studies post both the events have blamed the strategic leadership for many failures. However, given the democratic structures inherited by the political, bureaucratic and military of the times, one would argue that responses were well considered, robust, firm and with far reaching favourable tactical, strategic and geopolitical outcomes. Based on few essential leadership qualities/ competencies in adverse geopolitical environments, the strategic responses can be examined during the Kargil conflict and the Galwan clash.

The Evolution of Military Strategy: Kargil and Galwan

In 1999, the Kargil War unfolded during a time when the (now) senior leadership of the Galwan clashes were junior leaders who were directly involved in the conflict and were just beginning to grasp the significance of national security. The conflict marked the beginning of a shift towards a more integrated, whole-of-nation approach to security issues, particularly regarding the relationship between civilian and military domains. India successfully pushed back Pakistani forces from the heights of Kargil, and the media, through live broadcasts, played an instrumental role in shaping the public's understanding of the conflict (Kargil War Review Committee Report, 2000). In following years, India continued to strengthen its position, countering Pakistan's provocations with greater assertiveness.

However, over next two decades, while India-Pakistan relations were managed significantly, tensions with China escalated, particularly along the India-China border in the Ladakh region as well as the Eastern Sector. With incidents such as the Doklam standoff in 2017, it became clear that China will adopt a more aggressive stance. At the time of the Galwan clash, most military leaders should have predicted the fallouts of faceoffs that resulted in the clash leading to casualties.

Both Kargil and Galwan were different in terms of geography, adversary, and scale, yet they shared key

similarities, such as intelligence failures, strategic surprises, and a reactive rather than proactive approach. Though outcomes, even after being surprised were favorable to India, they came at avoidable costs, in terms of loss of human lives, prestige of being unable to predict the behaviour of the two known sworn enemies and negative effects to the economy. These shortcomings and the consequences can be attributed to failures in leadership, who were unsuccessful to interpret correctly the enemy's strategic intentions and allowed complacency and deception to cloud judgment.

Takeaways

1. Leadership, at all levels, must hone their skills for crystal gazing and understand the emerging geopolitical conditions, particularly those of the sworn competitors or enemies.
2. Education in strategy at all levels is as essential as that of tactical skills. Strategy has far-reaching impact in terms of range and depth. While a considerable time and energy is spent on tactics of developing leaders, it has an impact in short term and along a narrow bandwidth.
3. Pre-emptive and proactive actions, to deter opposition to start a move, is imperative for which developing "coup d' oeil", as Clausewitz states, is important.

Intuitive Thinking, Tolerance for Ambiguity and Foresight

Kargil War: Prior to May 1999, the prevailing consensus among political and military leaders was that, a war between nuclear-armed states, particularly India and Pakistan, was untenable. This belief, coupled with the warm personal relationship between the two nations' Prime Ministers, contributed to a failure to understand Pakistan's strategic intentions. Pakistan's objective was not only to disrupt India's strategic routes such as the NH-1D road, in which they failed, but also to internationalise the Kashmir issue, where they succeeded (Kargil War Review Committee Report, 2000). However, in the long term, India gained in geopolitical stature for its robust military response and also for being a responsible Nation.

Galwan Clash: In 2020, both India and China had strong leadership. Diplomatic engagements such as the Wuhan and Mahabalipuram summits had set the stage for a reduction in tensions. In fact, just days before the Galwan clash, military commanders from both sides had engaged in dialogue aimed at de-escalation. Due to such diplomatic efforts and positive

military engagements, India failed to read the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) true intentions, thus leading to the surprise clash. Several strategic factors, such as India's rising economic power, opposition to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's domestic narrative of national rejuvenation, likely played a role. India's over-reliance on diplomacy and dialogue failed to address these factors. While robust proactive response by occupying the strategically important Kailash Ranges, mobilisation of strategic forces and application of all elements of DIME, resulted in eventual disengagement and restoration of status quo ante in May 2020 with respect to patrolling and domination, the relationship and trust levels between the two countries have hit the lowest levels. China came out to be the biggest loser in global standing in terms of being an 'unnecessary irresponsible muscular action' as a military force, howsoever modern and large, it can be contested and is not to be feared.

Takeaways

1. Future leaders must be well-versed in not only military affairs but also in political, diplomatic and economic landscapes.
2. Intuitive decision-making, similar to financial market analyses, blends expertise, gut feeling, data, and should be employed with a sense of responsibility and ethical integrity.
3. Both conflicts underscore the need for robust intelligence capabilities to prevent surprise attacks and misjudgments.

Courage to Take Bold Actions

Kargil War: Throughout the Kargil conflict, India maintained escalation control, strategically responding to Pakistan's provocations without crossing critical lines. The surgical strikes, including the 2016 Uri and 2019 Balakot operations, demonstrated India's growing assertiveness on the global stage.

Galwan Clash: On the northern borders, however, China controlled the escalation. The scars of the 1962 Sino-Indian war, combined with China's economic rise and military modernisation, gave birth to a psychological hesitation within India's leadership. This resulted in flawed strategic approaches, such as neglecting infrastructure development in border regions and over-relying on diplomatic dialogue. However, the aftermath of the Galwan clash saw a recalibration of India's approach, marked by bold strategic moves like the occupation of the Kailash range and revisiting of the engagement rules.

Takeaways

1. Trust within the military hierarchy plays a critical role in empowering junior leaders to take bold decisions. A shift towards a more agile leadership structure, as evident from the direct involvement of senior commanders in tactical decisions, highlights a growing awareness of this need.
2. Historical figures like Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw and Captain Vikram Batra exemplify how courage and bold decision-making can lead to strategic advantages.
3. In future conflicts, it is essential for staff officers and junior leaders to help senior leadership make bold decisions, guided by thorough analysis and contingency planning.

Adaptability, Agility and Information Warfare

Kargil War: During the Kargil conflict, the Indian military demonstrated adaptability by amending its engagement strategy in line with the government's directive to not cross the Line of Control (LoC). Concurrently, diplomatic efforts were mobilised to expose Pakistan's actions on the global stage (Kargil War Review Committee Report, 2000). The direction of the Government to the military and the change in strategy indicated to the world that India was a responsible nation with its Military firmly under civilian control. It also informed the robustness of the military to change strategy and apply operational directives as per the need of the geopolitical environment. This led to a positive shaping of the attitudes of the world and militaries towards India (Pandey, 2008). The legacy media played a major role in shaping the Indian Narrative including that of as a responsible Nation and Military wherein the bravery aspects were shown to the world through interviews of the combatants from the frontline. Additionally, publicised visits of the National Leaders and senior military officers including the Chief of the Army Staff multiple times, in close ranges of the combat areas, also drew appreciation from the public thus developing the positive media narratives to get the Nation behind the Military.

Galwan Clash: Following the Galwan clash, India displayed strategic agility by increasing troop deployments in key areas, altering rules of engagement and initiating operations in the Kailash ranges. The Military took bold and resolute actions on the ground by diverting substantive forces to the Northern Front while maintaining balance elsewhere and declaring China as enemy number one. It helped shape the mind of the Chinese decision makers to

avoid trouble which would have difficult consequences. The government also worked to de-escalate tensions with China through diplomatic, economic and informational engagements (Sharma, 2022). The exploitation of the information terrain, particularly in the social media domain, remained sluggish with responses emerging from individual and international accounts. India was quite behind the curve in the information domain but made up eventually.

Takeaways

1. Military leaders must anticipate second and third-order effects of strategic actions and be prepared for the unexpected, with creative solutions that accounts for the complexity of modern warfare and geopolitical and economic environment.
2. With the rise of social media and digital platforms, leaders must also be adept at managing narratives and public perceptions, ensuring the integrity of military operations and avoiding the manipulation of public sentiment.

The Influence of Socio-Economic Changes on Military Leadership

The military leadership in India has witnessed significant socio-economic changes in the past few decades. Despite these shifts, core military values such as courage, integrity and "service before self" remains deeply ingrained in the armed forces. However, the changing socio-economic landscape has led to shifts in the attitudes and behaviors of junior military personnel, particularly those from the millennial and Gen Z generations.

Qualities of Gen Z: Members of Gen Z, who now constitutes a significant portion of military personnel, exhibit tech-savviness, a strong sense of social responsibility, and an emphasis on work-life balance. They are more likely to challenge traditional hierarchies and prefer collaborative working environments. However, they may also exhibit impatience for results, a tendency to prioritise personal time, and a transactional approach to relationships.

Strengths of Gen Z: Gen Z members bring a high level of technological proficiency, confidence, and physical fitness— all of which are assets in modern military operations. Their focus on independence and integrity aligns with the values of the military, but they may require guidance in professional etiquette and communication.

Strategies to Engage Gen Z: To effectively engage

this generation, military leadership must strike a balance between autonomy and directive leadership. Providing regular feedback, involving Gen Z in decision-making, and recognizing their contributions will foster a sense of value and motivation in them. Leading by example and demonstrating ethical leadership will further instill trust within the ranks.

Conclusion: A Blend of Tradition and Innovation

Reflecting on the lessons from the Kargil and Galwan conflicts, it is clear that leadership in the military must evolve to meet the changing dynamics of warfare. The key leadership attributes— intuitive

thinking, courage, adaptability and the ability to take bold actions— must be honed and integrated with contemporary insights on technology, media & information management, and generational shifts in personnel.

As military institutions look ahead, the challenge will be to combine the timeless values that have sustained the armed forces with the innovative strategies and leadership approaches required to navigate an increasingly complex and unpredictable global security landscape. By doing so, the continued resilience and effectiveness of the Indian Armed Forces in the face of modern threats will endure.

Lt Gen Devendra Pratap Pandey, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM is a retired general officer of the Indian Army. He was the Commandant of the Army War College, Mhow. He was the General Officer Commanding of the Srinagar based 15 Corps.

Historical AWACS Kill by India; Deep inside Pakistan

Pakistani Saab 2000 Erieye AEW&C was shot down by Indian S-400 in a 300+ km range kill during early May conflict.

The EurAsian Times has learned from reliable sources that the Indian S-400 has created a world record by securing the longest kill by a Surface to Air missile by hitting an aerial target at 314 kilometers. With the launch, the SAM took out a force multiplier of the Pakistan Air Force's Saab Erieye-2000 flying radar.

This was Second AWACS lost by Pakistan during the conflict with India. Earlier, Pakistan's Air Marshal Masood Akhtar (retired) disclosed that the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had also lost another AWACS aircraft during India's 'Operation Sindoor' on the night of May 9–10 to a BrahMos missile strike.

"They (Indian forces) fired four back-to-back Brahmos surface-to-surface missiles... surface-to-surface or air-to-surface, I am not sure. The (Pakistani) pilots rushed to secure their aircraft, but the missiles kept on coming, and unfortunately, the fourth one hit the hangar at Bholari (airbase), where one of our AWACS was standing. It was damaged and casualties were also reported..." he said in an interview.

The Indian S-400 surface-to-air missile also managed to shoot down multiple air-launched cruise missiles and drones fired from Pakistan.

The S-400 has been designed to engage targets up to



400 km away using 40N6 missiles, but it also deploys the 48N6 missile with a 250 km range. The S-400 is prized for its ability to engage up to 80 targets simultaneously, and its high situational awareness provided by multiple complementary radars, which allow it to engage stealth targets reliably.

Source - Eurasian Times

Quantum Randomization: A Politico-Military Doctrine for India



This visionary piece was written by the author before 2017 and published by Mission Victory India as part of the vol. 4 of the Victory India Campaign Compendium titled 'Beyond The Victory India Campaign' (2018) as Chapter 28. It was also published in Jan 2017 issue of 'Fauji India' Magazine. What was advocated by the author, Col PK Royal Mehrishi, in 2017 / 18 wasn't taken so seriously then, but since launching of OP SINDOOR and its after effects have revealed its critical importance to the Armed Forces and nation.

by Col PK "Royal" Mehrishi (Retd)



Since our Independence (1947) we as a nation are often exasperated and sometimes at our wits end in adopting measures to deal with a hostile and errant neighbour like Pakistan. We have gone through four wars, achieved decisive victory in all, held 93,000 Prisoners of War after 1971, yet the attacks by way of cease fire violations and terror proxies continues unabated at the behest of Pakistan. Do we have a national doctrine to respond to challenges thrown at us? What then is the way forward for the next 20 years?

Our basic problem always has been the predictability of our response. Sample the following:

- We have a no first use of nuclear weapon policy.
- We are a responsible nuclear power.
- We are a professional army who do not commit barbaric acts (like mutilation of a soldier's body)
- We are a peaceful nation.
- In thousands of years of our national history, we have never attacked another nation nor coveted others land or territory.

The overall narrative is to speak/posture from a high moral ground with predictable responses. Anger

and over the top exhibition of emotions whenever we are attacked, raucous debates in the media and finally acceptance of casualties as an act of God (karma/kismet/ fate). Is this the response that will get use even a semblance of peace at our borders?

Answers to our problems lie in implementing a few principles of Quantum Physics. One of the principle is randomness – “One of the most surprising and (historically, at least) controversial aspects of quantum physics is that it's impossible to predict with certainty the outcome of a single experiment on a quantum system. When physicists predict the outcome of some experiment, the prediction always takes the form of a probability for finding each of the particular possible outcomes, and comparisons between theory and experiment always involve inferring probability distributions from many repeated experiments.”

In all discussions and debates on military doctrine, we hear of our response “going up the escalatory ladder”. This itself is predictable. No one has ever spoken of a response which could be unpredictable,

out of proportion (to punish), asymmetrical or in a geographically tangential landscape. Let me explain, a soldier is martyred in Poonch sector, our response invariably is to punish Pakistani bunkers or posts along the LoC in and around Poonch or thereabouts. Our aim seems to contain the cease fire violation by the adversary in the same geographical plane /area.

The first of the Indian military doctrines ever thought and tested in an exercise (Op Brasstacks) was the Sundarji doctrine (1984-2004) named after General Krishnaswamy Sundarji, which envisaged seven holding Corps along the borders and three strike Corps (camping in the interiors) to mobilize and render sledgehammer blows to puncture through enemy defence line and penetrate deep to destroy Pakistan's fighting capability. This as we all know by now came a cropper during Op Parakram, when we took 28 days to mobilize and build up our forces at the border (by then the surprise factor was lost).

A direct fallout of the lessons learnt after Op Parakram was the Cold Start doctrine (2004-2014). This doctrine did not require long period for mobilization and comprised of eight Integrated Battle Groups (IBG) moving directly from designated cantonment areas close to the border to cross the border for "shallow gains" (as opposed to Sundarji's deep strike) so as to have an upper hand at the negotiating table later after the battle is over. Pakistan's threat of use of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW) to blunt this offensive has been discussed widely.

Since PM Modi took over office on 26 May 2014, there is some talk of the 'Modi-Doval Doctrine (2014-2016)' which has some fantasy components, more in the realm of imagination than anything in concrete terms for military planning or national security. Quantum Randomization National Doctrine is a holistic doctrine of politico-military statecraft. The essential components are:

- *Economic Measures* – Removal of MFN status, curtailing trade, disallowing movement of farm produce from Kashmir to POK, economic sanctions whichever can be enforced.
- *Diplomatic Pressure* – Isolating Pakistan at every world forum, UN resolutions, sanctions, own permanent seat in UNSC etc.
- *Geographical Manipulation* – Controlling/damming the flow of rivers from upper riparian states. Flooding Pakistan when required. Causing smog like conditions along the borders by artificial means (to be used in conjunction with military operations).

- *Leadership Disenchantment* – Tailing the top 100, military and political leaders of Pakistan, their bank accounts, assets, properties, children's education, overseas accounts and planting leaks in the press and media with proofs/evidence to create disenchantment in the masses with their leadership of the day. Creating a divide between the Haves and Have Nots, as there are glaring differences in incomes.

- *Electoral Interference* – Interfering with the electoral process in Pakistan by funding through state sponsored hawala route. Promote India sympathetic candidates and their elections to local and national assemblies.

- *Cultural Invasion* – Briefing top 20 directors (Films/TV) on need for nationalistic fervor and allowing them artistic freedom to produce movies that project our nation as the promised land of "milk and honey" with great opportunities for leading a good quality of life. Beaming quality serials/programs across the border and getting the population of Pakistan hooked to watching Indian content.

- *Satellite Surveillance* – Launching more high-resolution satellites to watch over activities in sensitive spots over Pakistan.

- *Cultivating Allies* – Afghanistan, Iran, USA, UK, Germany, France and Japan are natural allies. Russia needs to be cultivated as a bulwark against China. Out of 56 Islamic countries, we need to use internal animosities against each other as our base for nurturing allies.

- *Paid News* – The world over, it is a known fact that there exists a scope for planting media stories for a monetary consideration. A few upcoming new channels or established reputed old ones are vulnerable to poaching of anchors/news readers for a pay packet. Media planted stories can be used to spread canards to destroy reputations carry out vilification campaigns against established leadership of Pakistan.

- *Cyber Attacks* – This is the field where we as a nation can excel. From hacking into the Twitter accounts of Pakistan's chatterati to military software to bank accounts everything is in the realm of the possible. A strong cyber cell working under MoD with the best Indian brains, dedicated to excel in their task can achieve out of proportion dividends.

- *International Waters* – Our navy and Coast Guard should so to say always be testing the waters to breach Pakistan's national waters and constantly pick up fishermen/small boat owners etc. to needle Pakistan.

- *Unstable Borders* – LoC in J&K, IB in Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat and AGPL in Siachen region,

should be constantly subject to uncertainty and instability of our choosing by stimulated border skirmishes, air violations by own air force, drone movements, artillery fire assaults, arming Baloch rebels (those who have a Maratha lineage), nudging Afghanistan to create unstable conditions along its borders with Pakistan and feeding Iran in real time about atrocities against Shias in Pakistan. The more the borders remain unstable, more the Pakistani top military leadership will remain engaged in “dousing bushfires.”

- *Joint Exercises* – Conducting joint military exercises with Israel, USA, Russia and Japan close to the Pakistan border as military training is a method to send shivers down the spine of the most battle hardened General. One can never guess when such an exercise can turn into a limited operation to take out terror leaders/lay a siege to nuclear assets etc.

- *Military Option* – The repercussion of provoking the Indian military to strike should be out of proportion to the damage caused. All holding Corps commanders must have the freedom to plan and execute limited operations in their area of influence so as to maintain the high morale and fighting spirit of troops in that sector.

A centrally planned riposte (AHQ level) should follow at place of own choosing, small teams should be equipped with Night Vision Devices and encouraged to cross the borders at will, alignment of LoC should be constantly challenged by our young company commanders and supported by HQs. A small provocation across the border should incite a sledge

hammer response from our side. Who asks us to be rational, measured and calibrated in our response? Punishment for each act of aggression/provocation should be asymmetrical since we are five times the land mass and seven times the GDP of Pakistan we have the right to retaliate with at least five times the force or more.

Our military strategy should be built around unpredictable, decentralized nature of our response, including pre-emptive strikes to take on suspected terror threats that can cause damage to our nation.

Do you know how dinosaurs went extinct? There is an unsubstantiated theory which goes like this, “Smaller animals started eating them at the feet while they were still alive. A dinosaur was so large that the nervous system sent the pain signal from foot to its brain in two days. By that time the smaller animal would have eaten its fill and escaped.” Though this theory may be wrong but the underlying message is clear: We as a nation need to have our response to every challenge/attack, clear and timely to avoid the ignominy of eventually being perceived as soft and becoming extinct.

In the form of hybrid warfare imposed on us by Pakistan, this is the way forward to answer for Pakistan's version of “Death by Thousand Cuts” (Op Topac). India as a sovereign nation reserves the right to utilize one or more, all or some parts of the Quantum Randomization doctrine. Our aim should be to constantly keep their leadership unhinged and guessing on land, sea, air and in space about our next attack, whether in the political or military realm.



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Why is the 'WELFARE' Department Using Disabled Soldiers for Target Practice?



The ruthless penny pinchers even made the govt change rules governing death and disability benefits of soldiers. Today, the widow of a soldier who dies of a heart attack in Srinagar may not be granted a higher family pension, but a CRPF trooper's widow remains entitled to the same even in peacetime locations.

by Major DP Singh, Veteran



After being left for dead with multiple embedded shrapnel during Operation Vijay and then miraculously revived, I was lucky to get some visibility for my achievements as an amputee marathon runner though what the world saw was my missing leg, not the invisible psychological wounds. But many others who suffer unseen physical and mental conditions due to the stress and strain of military service are not as fortunate. I fought a legal battle for seven years and finally got my dues, but they are being dragged to the Supreme Court for their disability pensions.

There is no doubt that when the present govt came to office, it took path-breaking measures to reduce litigation and unburden the dockets of courts. However, one department that has always struck a discordant note is the ironically titled department of ex-servicemen welfare (DESW) of the ministry of defence.

Despite categoric interventions from the political executive, high-level expert committees from the defence and law ministries and strictures by courts — one for frivolous appeals from the SC as recently as Jan—this department continues to wage a litigious war on disabled military veterans, widows and old pensioners by challenging almost all verdicts passed by the Armed Forces Tribunal (AFT), including issues

already settled by SC.

Army soldier maintains vigil a top of a vehicle near the site of gunfight on the outskirts of Srinagar, on Sunday 10 November 2024. Three encounters have taken place in Jammu and Kashmir in last 24 hours in which one militant has been killed and two security personnel injured.

The extremely perturbing nature of such litigation first came to fore in December 2014 when the SC dismissed a group of thousand appeals filed by DESW with strong observations. This made Prime Minister Narendra Modi and then defence minister Parrikar take note.

This was followed by robust directions from the defence secretary, communications by the then attorney general and observations by an expert committee under the defence ministry, of which this author too was a member, to end such litigation. The attitude still did not change, leading to the SC calling this a 'misadventure' and an 'extremely unfortunate situation of unnecessary and avoidable burdening of the court through frivolous litigation' in Pirthvi Singh's case (2018).

This was followed by another committee of the law ministry directing withdrawal of all pending appeals on settled matters, which mostly pertained to disabled

soldiers. The appeals were finally withdrawn in 2019 but the vicious battle wasn't over.

Fast forward to 2023. On non-implementation of five-year-old pension verdicts passed by the AFT, strict action was initiated by the tribunal against certain officers who had initiated multiple audit objections. This led to MoD's finance wing, in conjunction with DESW, initiating challenges to thousands of cases granting disability and other pensionary benefits in high courts all over India.

What was surprising was that no note was taken of the recent executive directions to withdraw from the same litigation. Bruised egos got the better of the system in waging a war against soldiers!

Regrettably, a disinformation campaign was also unleashed on disabled soldiers by certain elements. References were made to the increasing number of disabled soldiers in the military and veterans/widows claiming benefits, even though military service is known to aggravate medical conditions and affect longevity of soldiers compared to civilian employees.

The incidence of circulatory system diseases and mental health issues is on the rise amongst soldiers, and even otherwise fit young men and women in uniform are falling prey to such disabilities. A person working in a 9-to-5 job in a city cannot fathom the effect of spending more than half of service life away

from family in a remote, inhospitable, high-altitude, insurgency-infested area or even a high-pressure peacetime area.

I remember a soldier standing guard in minus 15 degrees C with excruciating toothache since the nearest dentist was ten hours away. The soldier later developed a life-threatening infection.

The ruthless penny pinchers even made the govt change rules governing death and disability benefits of soldiers. Today, the widow of a soldier who dies of a heart attack in Srinagar may not be granted a higher family pension, but a CRPF trooper's widow remains entitled to the same even in peacetime locations.

The intent here is not to compare but to highlight facts. Under these bizarre new rules, while the disability of a member of a police force or even a regular citizen on the street would be assessed at 40% or more for a prolapsed intervertebral disc or heart disease with a replaced valve, the military may now just grant 5-10% to a soldier with the same ailments, as if some alien medical science applies to soldiers.

Why, one may ask? Because accountants want to keep the disability below 20% — the minimum requirement for grant of disability benefits!

It is a sad thing to see how this one govt department, with 'welfare' in its name, is indulging in target practice on the old, disabled and the infirm.



Major DP Singh is a Kargil War Veteran. A war disabled officer and a national awardee, he is India's first blade runner. He passionately deals with issues related to military veterans, disabled soldiers and military widows. He was also a Member of the Committee of Experts constituted by the Government for reducing litigation initiated by the Ministry of Defence against its employees and retirees. This article first published at TOI, reproduced here with permission of author. He can be reached at Email: majordpsingh@gmail.com

India Sends with Love to Pakistan, Badges of Honour



Pension is Right Not Bounty



by Capt RK Bhardwaj, Veteran - Gen Secretary, (AIRDOWA)



Despondency/ hurting inflicted to Short Service Officers (SSCOs); presidential commission officers' eligibility of qualifying service for pension after 12 years (5 years as SSCO + 7 years as PBOR); Presidential commission officers (Short Service) released after 14 years don't qualify for pension; Regular officers, JCOs and PBORs are granted pro-rata pension after 10 years of service on their permanent absorption in the PSUs.

The uneven and illogical approach of the Government exasperates the aspirations of the released officers at young age.

The connotation of the above-mentioned variant versions infuriates the larger interest of the released presidential Commissioned Officers to the extent that an Officer who earned his service with physical attendance of 14 years holding a rank of Lt Col but without the benefit of pension.

On the other hand, an officer with 12 years who has physical attendance of only 5 years as a Commissioned Officer enjoys LIFE LONG BENEFIT OF PENSION.

Eligibility of pro-rata Pension to Regular Officers including JCOs and PBORs is another step but no such facility envisaged to the Released Officers.

GOVERNMENTS' VIEW

It is irony to note that Government attracted the goodwill of lakhs of military pensioners by sanctioning the hefty budget of OROP.

To compensate the exuberant pensionary budget, the intake of Short Service is being increased and induction of officers in NDA and IMA streams are being brought to minimum as per the new policy.

This seems replica on the lines of recruitment of AGNIVEERS retaining 25% and rest 70% to be retrenched thereby reduction in overall budget of OROP.

Such lackadaisical policies are detriment to the interest of the youths who unceremoniously and abruptly were being released with NO SOCIAL SECURITY like Pensionary benefits/ OROP. Medical facilities and resettlement plans.

Of late, One-Time compensation package on their short-term retirement cannot cater the lifelong NEEDS OF LIFE.

On legal ground, this diabolical policy framed by the Policy Makers does not hold good. Ignoring the grant of pensionary benefits to 14 years and bestowing it to 12 years of service is against the principal of Natural Justice.

Such disparities are no less than mockery of the system which are required to recondition to go along with VIKSIT BHARAT.

VIOLATION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Army Instructions 11/s/64 under which the Short Service Commission introduced, is totally baseless as it does not conform to the Constitutional Backing in terms of the Army Act 1950.

Instead, it would have been appropriated if amendment to the Army Act 1951 should have been ratified in the Parliament. As such there was no EMERGENCY call of the Nation in year 1966 when Short Service began its journey but it eventually experienced havoc with the youths released at the age of 35 and throwing them virtually on the roads with

....SHORT SERVICE OFFICERS

meagre amount of 5000 as gratuity amount as lifelong treasure.

This inimical policy is termed as USE AND THROW.

The Policy Makers must introspect, if this phenomenon of throwing abruptly replicate in their life span, would they be in a position to accept such ORDEAL.

REPERCUSSIONS

Government belied the TRUST and CONFIDENCE of youth intentionally keeping the youths in DARK right from the year 1966 till we managed to obtain the copy of the Army Instructions 11/s/ 64 under the RTI Act 2005 in the year 2018. We compromised with our deflated fete from 1966 to 2018.

It was astonished moment as well as intolerable to understand on receipt of the said Army Instruction, para 17 of the above said Army Instructions which states under Pensionary terms - "Pension under consideration and Orders will be issued separately".

As such this Army Instruction 11/s/64 which was

kept hidden for 52 years is a matter of INVESTIGATION which were congenial to the AUTHORITIES but repugnant to the wishes of gullible released officers destroying their ultimate career without any pensionary benefits as well as any described REHABILITATION POLICY to fall back upon.

It amounts to CRIMINALITY and playing bluntly with the career of youths and no less than a FRAUD COMMITTED by the Government.

Nevertheless, Government has lost the essence of empathy.

These affected officers are not crying over the split milk but crying genuinely over deprivation of their pride and dignity.

The pensionary benefits should be extended as per the tables of OROP to all the released Presidential Commissioned Officers keeping in mind the Regulation 30 of the Pension Regulation 1961 as may have been pronounced in the year 1961 itself without castigation of any amendments at a later stage.

Capt RK Bhardwaj is General Secretary of All India Released Defence Officers Welfare Association (AIRDOWA). He can be reached at Email: rkb1944@rediffmail.com

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The Boot that Revealed the Truth



How a routine patrol led to the discovery of a fallen soldier and cleared his name after months of mystery

by Lt Col Thomas Varghese (Retd)



A sudden event, often with a positive outcome, prompts us to spontaneously exclaim, “Oh! My God.” Such is the case with providential interventions in our lives. At some point, God uses each of us as an effective tool to fulfill the very purpose of our existence.

In May 1970, I was posted to a Punjab Regiment unit (17 Punjab), which was deployed at one of the most vulnerable locations in Sikkim, the “Nathula Pass.” This high-altitude area, standing over 14,000 feet on the Indo-China border, has historically served as a trade route between India and China. I was the Adjutant (staff officer to the Commanding Officer) of the unit at the time. Our headquarter was located at “Sherathang”, a local town nestled at the foothills of Nathula. It is worth mentioning that we had the honor of being visited by the then Chief of Army Staff, General SFHJ Maneckshaw (later Field Marshal), at Nathula. I still possess a few photographs I took during his visit, which were sent to Army Headquarters because the PRO’s photos did not turn out well.

In 1971, after completing its two-year high-altitude tenure, our unit was scheduled to move down to Gangtok. As part of the withdrawal process, we were temporarily deployed at the 19 Mile area (19 miles from Gangtok) to guard the Division’s vital ground on the northeastern heights astride the “Lun Se Chu” river, which flows down from Tibet. The distance between Gangtok and Nathula is about 25 miles, but the

journey takes four to five hours through winding roads. While we were preparing to move to a peace station in Punjab, the move was delayed due to the war-like situation in East Pakistan. Eventually, we received orders to move on November 26 to a transit area near Five Miles, but our further relocation was postponed until 1972 due to the Indo-Pak war of 1971.

On November 25, our Brigade Commander, Brigadier RF Khambatta (later Major General), who was officiating as the General Officer Commanding of the 17 Mountain Division, visited our unit, perhaps to bid us farewell. As usual, our Commanding Officer conducted a tactical briefing from a vantage point. After the briefing, the Officiating GOC asked a pertinent question: “Has anyone reconnoitered the approach along the Lun Se Chu?” Although taken aback, our CO admitted that the unit had not done so.

The Officiating GOC instructed the CO to send a patrol the next day on behalf of the Division and submit a report. I was present during this exchange, and even after fifty years, I still wonder why this task was assigned, especially when our unit was scheduled to move the following morning. This task could have been delegated to the incoming unit.

An advance party led by me was scheduled to move by vehicle early the next day, while the remaining unit was to march down at the same time. To my surprise, I received a midnight call from my CO informing me that the officer assigned to lead the patrol had

expressed his inability due to illness, and the CO wanted me to take up the task. Knowing the officer personally, I was aware that he was physically unfit for such an arduous task. Understanding the precarious situation, I assured the CO that I would lead the patrol.

The patrol group was a composite team, consisting of personnel from various divisional units along with a few selected men from my unit, including my Intelligence Section Naik and Radio Operator. The Divisional Headquarters had set up a high-powered radio set on the high range from where I was to begin. However, the odds were heavily stacked against us. The group comprised twenty men from different units, most of whom were unfamiliar with the mission ahead.

Due to the lack of time, there was no proper briefing, no essential equipment like manila ropes for rock-face rappelling, and no adequate rations for the day. It felt like a wild goose chase, but our solace came from the courage and strength bestowed upon us to navigate the dense jungles leading to the Lun Se Chu.

After a prayer, we set off, only to find the terrain exceedingly challenging. The canopy of towering trees and dense undergrowth created near-total darkness, while the uneven, rocky surface was teeming with pests and insects. By around 2:30 in the afternoon, we neared the river, but proceeding further was impossible due to steep rock faces, compounded by the exhaustion of the men. At that point, we were ordered to return.

However, retracing our path was almost unfeasible because of the vertical rock faces we had descended. We decided to take a circuitous route on the eastern side, hoping to intersect a descending path somewhere. Climbing up proved far tougher than going down; there were moments we were literally on our knees. Darkness enveloped the landscape, visibility was poor, and the men were utterly fatigued. It was a daunting experience, but one that tested our resilience and faith.

At one point during our mission, we were negotiating an extremely cold crevice, where water would have flowed during the monsoon. While climbing on our knees, I happened to notice something strange—a protruding toe of a boot, partially visible above the ground. This indicated the possibility of a body buried underneath.

However, we had no time to investigate further as I was focused on ensuring the safety of the tired men with me, who were at risk of becoming casualties. Still in unfamiliar terrain, I instructed my intelligence assistant to mark the spot on the map. Meanwhile, a

search party with torches was trying to flash lights to guide us, but we could see nothing except darkness.

Ultimately, a sense of direction combined with God's guidance led us to a point where we could identify the path we had initially taken to descend. We assured the search party that we would return by midnight. My greatest relief and joy was being able to bring my team back safely.

Upon our return, I reported the strange discovery of the boot and the likely presence of a dead body beneath it to the CO. My assessment was that the body might have been washed down during the September rains, or it could have been deliberately buried, with the topsoil eroded over time. The CO instructed me to remain back to brief the Officiating GOC the following morning, who then directed me to meet Colonel GS at the Divisional HQ.

When I narrated the events to Colonel GS, he questioned me harshly: "Why didn't you bring it?" as though I could have carried the body in my pocket. I replied bluntly that my priority had been the welfare of my men, not the boot. He then ordered me to retrieve the body. I told him that the task would require the support of a company-strength force (125 infantry soldiers) and requested Gorkha troops from the relieving unit, as they were best suited for jungle operations. While he grudgingly agreed, he didn't appreciate my audacity.

The next morning, a company-strength contingent from the 9 Gorkha Regiment (possibly 5/9), under the command of a Major, prepared for the mission. Interestingly, the unit's CO, a decorated soldier, came to meet me and motivate his men. As we were about to set off, he insisted on accompanying me, which greatly boosted my confidence. This act of dedication highlighted the contrast between the perspectives of an infantry officer and an artillery officer.

I instructed the troops to cut a path through the dense jungle using their kukris to facilitate our return along the same route. We carried essential supplies, including manila ropes, stretchers, and blankets. Around 11:30 a.m., we reached a particular ridge where I abruptly stopped, momentarily confused. I began to doubt if I was on the right path, relying only on my intuition and vague recollections from the previous day in poor light. Leaning on a Y-shaped tree, I took a moment to pray silently for clearer vision, confident that the location was to the right.

We set two small parties, one to the right and the other to the left with instructions to report back within 15 minutes. Ten minutes later, I received a call from my JCO: "Sab, Idhar Hai" (Sir, it is here). Upon careful digging, we discovered the intact body of a Sikh soldier

in uniform. His identity card identified him as ORA Kehar Singh, a radio operator from the 58 Light Regiment, an artillery mule unit under the 17 Mountain Artillery Brigade.

The body was secured onto a stretcher with manila ropes and carried upwards using a relay method. The terrain was so treacherous that one of the stretchers broke en route. We finally reached the hilltop after midnight, and the body was preserved in a barrack near the main road. A month earlier, the 58 Light Regiment moved to Siliguri. A party from their unit at Siliguri, led by an officer, took custody of Kehar Singh's remains.

Subsequent inquiries revealed that Kehar Singh had been dispatched with a radio set on September 26 to the "Billi-Hiran" exercise location. He was reported missing thereafter and had been declared a "deserter" by his unit. Coincidentally, he was also the primary witness in an ongoing murder case within the unit.

The then, 33 Corps Commander, Lt Gen ML

Thapan, initiated a serious inquiry, but no conclusive evidence emerged regarding Kehar Singh's death. The unit was disbanded a few months later. This entire episode underscores the providential intervention that led Brigadier Khambatta to order the patrol and placed me in charge by default.

The most significant outcome was that the boot unearthed a hidden truth, exonerating Kehar Singh of desertion. It proved he had died while performing his duty in a high-altitude operational area. This revelation likely vindicated his family in Punjab, alleviating their guilt and stigma. They may also have received some financial compensation.

My greatest reward was knowing that God had used me as an instrument to reveal a truth that would have otherwise remained a mystery. As the Chinese philosopher Confucius wisely said, "Three things cannot be long hidden: the Sun, the Moon, and the Truth."

Lt Col Thomas Varghese is a retired Army officer who served the country for about 30 years from 1964 to 1995. Trained at Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, before being commissioned as an officer of Infantry in Punjab Regiment. Settled in Bangalore, he spends his time writing for journals, magazines and newspapers, focusing on life experiences. He can be reached at Email: tomnewhope@yahoo.co.in

REMEMBRANCE

Tribute to a Victory India Icon: Gen VK Madhok, AVSM, VSM

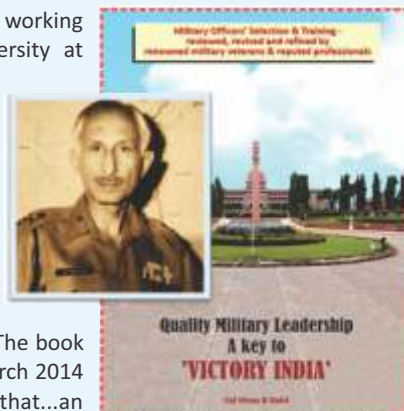
by Maj Gen Raj Mehta (Retd)

I first met Col Vinay Dalvi in 2010. I was working in the then upcoming Flame University at Pashan, Pune as CAO cum faculty and Vinay was driven by a dream called 'Victory India' for which his mentor was a GR officer Maj Gen VK Madhok. Though he had come to request me to write for Victory India, I remember we discussed VK sir for hours instead...over snacks, tea and finally a Guju lunch.

The book Victory India, Vol 2, was released in March 2014 at AIPT, Pune. The book Victory India, Vol 2, was released in March 2014 at AIPT, Pune. The Gen was like that...an addiction. He was erudite. He was focused.

He had guts...grit and he had credibility. When he spoke for change at NDA for it to remain among the world's uber tri-service training academies the military fraternity listened. This is because his career comprised of a series of firsts starting with his being from NDA's iconic first course.

He was thus a pathfinder in most of his professional activities as well as in his free-lancing standards of ace readability...diversity in interests and uncompromising truth on what he chose to write about. He thus set standards



in constructive criticism of the NDA done with the sole aim of retaining it in its uber slot of being the world's finest tri-service academy.

Victory India thus were led by Services icons in its pursuit of excellence and key among them was the first 'Scholar- Soldier' NDA has produced and that indisputably was VK sir.

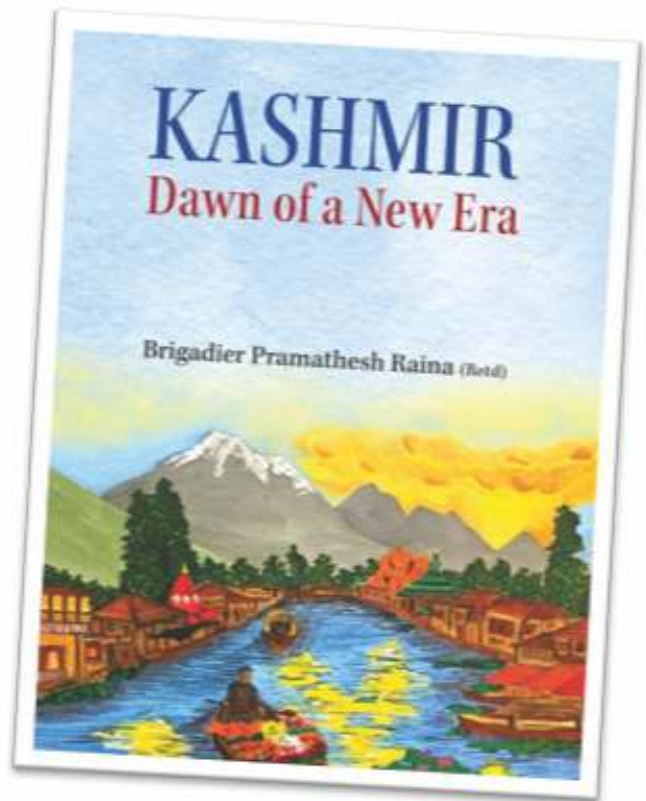
I have never met him or heard him speak. I have just heard what other NDA icons have said about him and they respect his persona...treat him with reverence. I have read a few of his

3000 published articles and wish I had had the fortune of knowing him better.

Vinay Dalvi is a Puneri as he was and was in intimate touch with the Gen for 15 years. The six Victory India volumes offer proof of their association for NDA and India good.

The Gen will be missed highly. An icon is no more. Long live the spirit of the great General and may it continue to guide Col Vinay Dalvi in his noble Mission of Victory India.

'KASHMIR' Dawn of a New Era & Pahalgam Terror Attack



"What sets this work apart is not just the authenticity of the author's account, having witnessed the events unfold firsthand, but the grace and restraint with which he has narrated it. Despite the deep personal loss and trauma - his own family being among those who were forced to leave the Valley - there is no trace of bitterness or hatred in his writing. Instead, he presents a clear, unflinching view of how neighbour turned on neighbour, how the bonds of trust and communal harmony were broken, and how panic and insecurity gripped an entire population. The honesty with which these tragic events have been described speaks volumes about the author's integrity and commitment to truth." – Anupam Kher (Foreword)

by Team MVI



On the evening of April 21st when the book release function of Brig Pramathesh Raina's book, titled 'Kashmir- The Dawn Of A New Era' was taking place at Pune little did the invited luminaries and spectators present for this memorable function imagine that the very next day, on 22nd April, the deadly Pahalgam terror attack was going to take place. Suddenly, a lot of what was said in this function especially by Lt Gen VG Patankar and Maj Gen GD Bakshi has become most relevant for dealing with the challenges confronting our security forces and the nation.

Brig Raina's book has much to offer towards a deeper insight of Kashmir and take one on the road to the 'new era'. The Pahalgam terror attack highlights the obstacles and roadblocks on this treacherous path.

However, if the nation genuinely integrates and decides collectively to resolve this Kashmir problem with a united approach the author's dream of this 'New Era' for Kashmir will surely be achieved! Editor, MVI

The book Kashmir: Dawn of a New Era authored by Brigadier Pramathesh Raina was released on 21 April 2025 at a function in the auditorium of the IIEBM Campus, Indus Business School, Wakad, Pune. The Chief Guest for the event was Lt Gen VG Patankar, PVSM, UYSM, VSM. The guests of honour were Maj Gen (Dr) GD Bakshi SM, VSM and Arun Wakhlu, Founding Director of Pragati Leadership Institute and Chairman of Pragati Foundation. Approximately 250 people attended the function which included retired service personnel, interested citizens, members of the

Kashmiri Pandit community of Pune and members of the faculty, staff and students of the Institute.

About the Book

Kashmir: Dawn of a New Era is a powerful narrative that delves into the heart of Kashmir's history, challenges, and hopes for the future. Divided into three distinct sections, the book offers a panoramic view of the region's tumultuous journey through the lens of personal experience, societal change and cultural revival.

The first part ('My' Kashmir Files) is an account of the period between May 1989 and August 1990, an epochal period in Kashmir's history to which the author had a ringside seat. It recounts his vivid and heart-wrenching experiences during the tragic exodus of Kashmiri Hindus in 1989-90. It paints a poignant picture of a community forced to abandon its homeland amidst the rise of militancy, reflecting the profound loss and resilience of those who endured this dark chapter.

The second part (Kashmir: Towards Demilitarisation-2) discusses the changed conditions and the fresh set of challenges that have emerged post 2019. It chronicles the sweeping changes in Kashmir's political, social and law-and-order landscape from the release of the author's earlier book to the present day. It provides a thoughtful analysis of the region's shifting dynamics, offering readers a comprehensive understanding of its ongoing transformation and the challenges that lie ahead.

The final section, (W(h)ither Kashmiriyat?) is a commentary on the prevalent social scene and some crystal ball gazing into the possibility of the re-evolution of Kashmiri society into the syncretic one that it once was. It explores the enduring spirit of Kashmiriyat—the essence of Kashmir's pluralistic heritage. It presents a hopeful vision for restoring harmony, fostering unity, and reclaiming the Valley's identity as a symbol of coexistence and mutual respect.

Deeply moving and insightful, Kashmir: Dawn of a New Era is both a chronicle of struggle and a beacon of hope, inviting readers to reflect on the possibilities of healing and renewal in this storied land.

About the Author

Brigadier Pramathesh Raina hails from a Kashmiri Pandit family from Srinagar and thus has an intimate knowledge of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. He was commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery of the Indian Army in June 1971 and took part in the Indo-

Pak war of the same year.

He retired from the Indian Army in 2007. After retirement he served as Chair Professor, Chhatrapati Shivaji Chair of Excellence at the Savitribai Phule University, Pune. He is the author of the authoritative book, Kashmir: Towards Demilitarisation. He is settled in Pune.

The Book Launch Function

While introducing the book, the Author mentioned that it is different from other books on Kashmir because it is actually a collection of three books and therefore cannot be typecast into any particular genre. Book 1 deals with contemporary history. Book 2 is a commentary on the present-day conditions and the fresh set of challenges that have emerged post 2019. Book 3 is a commentary on the prevalent social scene and exploring the possibility of the re-evolution of Kashmiri society into the syncretic one that it once was.

The Author mentioned that the book was initially meant to be a follow up of his earlier book published in 2016, Kashmir: Towards Demilitarization. The thrust of that work was to identify ways and means by which we could reduce the quantum of uniformed personnel in the state of Jammu and Kashmir without compromising on national security.

The controversy surrounding the movie 'The Kashmir Files' prompted him to put on record his recollections of 1989-90, as he happened to be posted in Srinagar during that tumultuous period and witnessed the flight of his entire community from the Kashmir Valley. He titled this chapter, "My" Kashmir Files and that became Book 1. As he said, "Writing this chapter was a catharsis of sorts as it helped unburden and unshackle memories and wounds burnt deep in my heart".

The Author ended on a note of caution laced with optimism. He said that it is time for the Kashmiri Pandit community to reclaim their heritage. At the same time, he advised caution, "While we should be optimistic about the future, we should not assume that all is well, and the violent times are behind us. It could well be the calm before the storm. There is a veneer of outward peace and stability ... But it all could go South ... Our enemies both within and beyond our borders are defeated but not eradicated. They are biding their time, lying in wait for an opportunity. Once a chink in our armour is exposed, they will again emerge to challenge the established order".

Maj Gen GD Bakshi, as expected held the audience spell bound by narrating compelling real-life



Brig Pramathesh Raina, Lt Gen VG Patankar, Maj Gen (Dr) GD Bakshi, Arun Wakhlu releasing the book on 21 April 2025 at the auditorium of the IIEBM Campus, Indus Business School, Wakad, Pune

incidents from his tenure drawn from his vast experience in counter-insurgency operations. His narratives carried the weight of lived conflict. He was of the opinion that there should be no reduction in troop levels and that boots on the ground were the only effective deterrent against terrorism.

Arun Wakhlu reminded the audience of Kashmir's historical and spiritual essence, lovingly referring to it as the "Nani of India." His powerful words, "If it is to be – it is up to me," resonated deeply, calling upon all to transcend differences in religion, race, and to preserve Kashmiriyat — the soul of unity.

Lt Gen Patankar speaking in a calm and measured tone invoked the spirit of Tehzeeb, emphasizing that true normalcy will return not merely through strength (Taqaat), but through grace and culture. He reminded us that a terrorist can be eradicated but terrorism is a mindset — one that must be overcome from within. It is the people who can defeat terrorism.

Epilogue

It is a coincidence that the very day after Kashmir was discussed in great detail, the terrorist attack on Pahalgam happened killing 27 tourists at last count. When asked to comment on the incident, Brig Raina responded, "You can expect such shock and awe incidents at sporadic intervals especially when foreign dignitaries are in India, for instance this attack has been timed to coincide with the visit of US Vice President, JD Vance and the PM's visit to Saudi Arabia.

We should not go overboard and take it out on the locals. Instead, we should use this excuse to do another Balakot on Pakistan. I expect an action bigger or at least more impactful than Balakot which was an action against a terrorist camp. This time we should hit where it hurts – directly at the Pakistani Army and then be prepared to climb up the escalation ladder."

Book - Kashmir: Dawn of a New Era, Author : Brig Pramathesh Raina (Retd); Foreword by Anupam Kher; Publisher : Pentagon Press, New Delhi. Contact email - col.vinay.dalvi@gmail.com



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If Suni Was an Officer of Indian Navy

by Brig AN Suryanarayanan (Retd)



Social media are buzzing with a number of jokes on the US astronauts Sunita and Willmore, the foremost among them being: 'Sunita will never ever dare ask her husband for Space again!' Suni, a former Capt of the US Navy and Will thought they were going to space for eight days, but ended up being stuck for 286 days: 'literally stranded in space'. Well, it was not much unlike the handsome King Trishanku who had to stay upside down in Vishwamitra's world! The astronauts had no control over their situation, there being no booking feasible for a return flight! They had to adapt, stay calm through the process for 286 days of uncertainty. Here on our Mother Earth, we lose patience over a 10-minute traffic jam (OK make it 90 minutes in Bellandur or 45 in Silk Board Junction in Bangalore!) and Govt Projects and business deals getting delayed routinely by many months.

Imagine if Suni was in the Indian Navy and had gone on this very experiment, how would the Controller of Accounts (Navy) have reacted once she submitted a claim for Travelling Allowance and Daily Allowance? First and foremost: she would have got an email from CDA(N) stating that her TD (Temporary Duty) claim cannot be processed due to lack of travel related documents, the first being approval by the appropriate authority in Govt of India! She would have had to reply that the nature of duty was classified! CDA(N) would then have asked about the boarding passes for the to and fro journeys which were not found enclosed, her return 'ticket' not being through authorized government spacecraft/ airlines.

She would have to explain the reasons for using a

private mode (SpaceX shuttle) for the return journey against an ISRO space Shuttle (which is not yet operational!). A third observation would be as to why Sunita did NOT bring back the Last Ration Certificate (LRC) from the Quarter Master at ISS (International Space Station). Fourth and the most important observation would be as to why the CFA (Competent Financial Authority) sanction for TD beyond 89 days both from the detaining authority as well as the sanctioning authority are not found attached. Temporary Duty exceeding 89 days, extending into 286 days will require Govt of India sanction through proper channel.

Two further observations would have been raised: one, a certificate from the Detaining Authority at ISS that continued detention was beyond human power and was in the interest of State; and two, how were her duties performed at the permanent unit and whether the Govt could do away with that appointment, as the unit could function for over 9 months.

With all this, one can hear her sotto voce murmur that she would rather forego her allowances than moving against the slow machinery of Govt sanction. And, do you know for all her troubles for those nine months and the serious health issues that may affect her (with vision, body swelling, fluid redistribution and severely weakened immune system), she gets only 4\$ per diem, incidental expenses! India's CGDA too would have allowed only that much but after application through staff channel and medical board proceedings!



Brig Suryanarayanan during his 34 years in the Army since Jun 1962, he has participated in 1965 and 1971 Wars; held coveted staff appts; been Instr at School of Arty and DS at DSSC. Humorous articles from him appear regularly in Deccan Herald, The Tribune and Silver Talkies since many years and armed forces related articles in Asian Age, Deccan Herald and Fauji Magazine. Two books have been published by me "Straight Trees Are Cut First: Army's Process vs Practice" and "Many Laughs and a Few Tears". You can visit his blog is at <https://surya-musings.blogspot.com.html>. He can be reached at Email: survini@gmail.com

My Father and his Presence: Gen Sundarji

by Vikram Sundarji



Mathura cantonment is the place where my first memories of Life, Presence and My Father coincide: A wide angled view from a 3-year-old height of a tall, slim, smiling man with a distinct presence wearing starched olive greens and a beret on his head stepping out of a military jeep.

I would run as fast as my little legs would carry me towards him yelling “caddy me up... caddy me up...” and he would hoist me high into the air and throw me up a several times before setting me down. I still distinctly remember seeing the brass lions on his shoulder blur and a little black elephant on a badge rub my nose as he picked me up.

He had a distinct spoor which spelt father and I would sniff his shirts when I missed him when he left for the war in the Congo soon after with the 'Lorried Brigade' as the outfit symbolised by the black elephant was known.

The next time I would see him incidentally after the Mathura posting was two years later for a few days when he flew back with the ashes of his colleagues killed in action with the UN peacekeeping force. Such can be the normal life of an army family and it undoubtedly comes at an emotional and psychological cost which people outside the community will always have to make an effort to understand.

Another of my still vivid early memories from those early Mathura days is of him relaxing on the lawn in civvies on holidays and opening a pack of cigarettes (Panama) with a steam ship on it by pulling on a red band which sliced the cellophane packing in half. I always got the red band when this happened as a reward.

Today what strikes me most was how different was his body language in civvies and uniform. A sort of Clark Kent and Superman difference. Though he was only of medium height, slightly under 5ft 10 inches, he always walked much taller in uniform.

He genuinely derived great pleasure and comfort in pulling on his OGs every morning. After this he would whisk down his breakfast and step out to work with a spring in his step whistling with tuneless joy and enthusiasm for the challenges which lay ahead. His work in the army meant everything to him.

I honestly do not recall a single day when I saw him depressed or pensive and dragging his feet to work. And this covers almost half a century of life all the way to the time when he retired (prematurely for a man of his energy and enthusiasm for military work). Even when he returned dog tired at night after a hard day's work he maintained the spring in his step as long as he had his Superman OGson.

In the evening as he stepped into his civilian

evening clothes and got ready for an evening of whisky sodas in good company, the joyful tuneless whistling would start up again. He was a man who lived in the moment and for the moment. The work hard play hard ethic and lifestyle of the Army was his only religion.

I sometimes reflect on just how far he had come from his Tamilian Brahmin origins by the time I gathered my first memories of him. Though he didn't come from a traditional mantra chanting family — his father was an English-speaking engineer and his mother also spoke fluent English — the anglicised ways of the army were probably not what he had grown up with at home.

He joined the army as an emergency commissioned officer at the impressionable age of 17 against the backdrop of the second world war and very quickly adopted it as his main family from there on. Many of his superiors I assume had fought in the second war as part of the British Indian army. By the time my first memories of him were formed, he was already very anglicized like all the officers in the Indian army at that time.

I grew up with wild geese hanging in the pantry and spitting lead pellets from partridge roasts and the raucous happy laughter of my father and his partying fellow officers, not the mantra chanting of my fastidious vegetarian brahmin ancestors.

The book shelves at home were lined with hard cover books by PG Wodehouse which he had bought as a junior bachelor officer and read several times. He loved to sit down in his dressing gown with crossword puzzles from The Statesman on holidays and even tried to get us kids involved in solving them, anagrams and all, so it could become a family game!

He met and married my mother Padma, when he was ADC to a senior general who was visiting the Nilgiris and her Oxford educated brahmin father was the forest conservator there. My mother's siblings especially her younger brother approved of him as a suitor, because he played games with them and even clambered up to the roof of their house by the drain pipes to recover a cricket ball. And so my grandmother, who did not quite approve of him and his cavalier ways, was outvoted.

My maternal grandfather was a brahmin man like him. The product of an age when educated brahmins morphed into neo colonials and shot tigers and played tennis and golf. I remember they got along well.

We saw very little of his own family while growing up unfortunately. He was one of nine children if I remember correctly. I remember meeting his father once and his mother twice.

He must have been close to his sister Hema, a vivacious little woman with twinkling eyes, because we saw her relatively often over the years and even got to know her children a little.

My cousin Amit introduced me to Bob Dylan and his sister Aruna went on to become a national icon in her own right and the winner of the Magsaysay award. I also met one of his brothers Admiral Sridharan much later in life. He was a charming soft spoken man who had taken to writing books on naval matters after retirement.

The only material trace of his Brahmin origins showed up in the elaborate vegetarian South Indian Brahmin food he like to have for lunch as often as he could. He hated standard army mess food especially dal. Probably the only thing army he did not like. He said he had overdosed on dal as a young officer.

And so dinner might be colonial roasts and souffles or North Indian mutton curries and pulaos and biryanis etc. but his preferred lunch would, if feasible, be traditional South Indian Brahmin fare: rasam, sambhar, vegetables and keerays (greens) sauteed in coconut, kootus, chutneys, lemon rice, tamarind rice, curd rice, moroo colombe, south Indian rice papadams, lemon pickle, avakai pickle, vadu manga pickle etc. etc.

He liked to eat this with his hands out of a thali smacking his lips and proclaiming that one dish or the other was outstanding on that particular day. We often travelled around the country by train on posting with a civilian South Indian cook in tow along with the dogs and batmen.

I once remember President Venkatraman, also a South Indian Brahmin, coming home for lunch and slurping up his curd and rice with his fingers and commenting, with a mischievous twinkle in his eye, that Pandit Nehru used to maintain "that eating Indian food with a knife and fork was like making love through an interpreter".

Despite being a holy brahmin by birth he was not a religious man. Temples and their rituals bored him and he would always sit outside in the car reading a book or working his way through a crossword puzzle while my mother went in for her pujas.

As a young child I once took him on for atheist ways. I had heard from the family grapevine that he did not believe in God. "If you don't believe in God" - I asked, confronting him with an earnest stare, "then who created the trees and sky and animals and stars?"

I remember he chewed on that for a second before deciding not to forward his reasons for being an atheist to his 3-year-old son. He was in fact sporting



A young Sundarji at his marriage

enough to act as if he had lost the debate and assured me that he would believe in God from thereon after my persuasive reasoning.

The only religion he had was the army and there was no communal feeling in the army. Superior officers came from all religions and they were the only gods he needed to take cognisance of.

It is only recently that I realised that though rituals bored the life out of him, he was actually a spiritual man who spent as much time in the moment as he could, just as all our enlightened gurus tell us to do. What he did not do was overthink or over anticipate situations.

Much of his free time was spent on his knees in the garden with a stilled mind and heightened awareness digging up the soil and weeding and planting. His mind was generally subservient to the purpose at hand and was no more than a tool to be used when required. He did not identify excessively with his thoughts and was generally anxiety free.

Gardening was his main obsession (apart from military strategy of course). Perhaps he first acquired his taste for gardening from my mother Padma. While

she was the supreme commander of all things domestic including packing up and moving home every other year, they spent many hours together pottering around cantonment gardens across the country planning herbaceous borders and cauliflower patches and suchlike.

Given that we changed houses frequently and that the next incumbent might not share his passion for gardening made absolutely no difference to him. It was the process that he loved.

I remember when he was an instructor at the military staff college in Wellington, he even completely relaid a lawn and conscripted my sister and I as his labour. We found it terribly boring. But even then he managed to motivate us to some extent by setting up a competition for pulling out the longest weeds!

Later in life he developed a serious interest in roses and even in his last days after he was diagnosed with motor neuron disorder and was partially paralysed he would wheel himself around his garden in the Delhi Cantt with his pruning tools attending to the roses. It was a zen activity for him.

He was also a naturally kind hearted man, a fact which might be surprising to some given the overarching media image created by some journalists of an ego driven war mongering hawk. One day he took me by surprise while I was in the process of delivering the last rites to a little bird I had shot with my catapult. I can still remember him appearing on the path where the terrified injured little wag tail awaited execution. He bent down in full military regalia, scooped it up in his palms and began stroking it to calm it down.

"Why are you killing it?" he had asked me gently before adding, "It's really scared, feel how hard its heart is beating". He then just handed the bird over to me and continued walking on his way to work.

I remember feeling the terrified little bird's heart beating against my clammy palms. It then turned its neck around and looked at me straight in the eye, a look I have never forgotten, chirped loudly in protest and mercifully flew away recovered.

Hunting living creatures who are abstractions at a distance is quite different from dealing with a

frightened heart beating in your palms. I grew up to be a long-haired make love not war kind of teenager and often got into moral discussions with him on the validity of his job which in principle could legitimately involve sacrificing humans in large numbers to push forward nationalist agendas.

His answers were always measured and even respectful. He never took the short cut and told me to shut up and get out of his hair as he could well have. But his position was always inflexible: Human beings were not capable of resolving their issues in a civilised manner and until this happened armies were necessary to do the needful and he had a valid job. At this point we would agree to disagree and change the subject.

A hobby we shared was fishing in wild natural places. On our very first trip out together in the Nilgiri wilderness I hooked a large trout which I yanked right out of the water in overexcitement and it came off the hook, sailed through the air and landed on the steep bank behind me. I pounced on it as it rolled and wriggled on its way back to the water, but it slipped through my fingers once twice three times and then plopped back in. I dived in after it in desperation, but it got away and I was left sobbing in frustration on all fours in icy cold water.

When I looked up I saw him sitting on the bank high above me holding his sides in laughter. I might have lost my first trout, but gave him a memory he recounted repeatedly with relish in later life.

My father loved to play family board and card games on holiday. He taught us everything from Snakes and Ladders and Ludo to Solitaire, Bluff, Monopoly and Scrabble. But war games were the ones he loved best. And he grew visibly excited, like a little boy in anticipation of a special event, whenever a military exercise loomed.

Sighting the nationalistic goal of a military operation and then working out the best means to achieve that objective were always more important to him, I think, than the pure thrill of war itself. So, he was not just Coppola's commander striding around in 'Apocalypse Now' proclaiming how he "loved the smell of napalm in the morning".

This was a point often missed by the media and bureaucrats who liked to paint him as a war monger. Admittedly he sometimes had to work out the end goal himself in an era where there was a very fuzzy idea of what the objectives could or should be in institutions outside of the armed services.

I'm not going to enter into a retrospective debate on his side here because, quite apart from geopolitical

goals being very far from my own personal areas of knowledge or interest, it is never possible to evaluate intended approaches objectively in the absence of the event. You can't really tell whether South Africa would have beaten the rest of the world at cricket during the apartheid years when it had a super strong team because those matches never happened.

Likewise discussing whether unfriendly neighbours could have been disciplined or even balkanised in the past and what impact it would have had on the overall geopolitical environment today, is an exercise for bored old men with little better to do. Nice perhaps after a few drinks at the bar, but not of any real value.

All I can say with all the global wars in progress even as I write this, is our species still has not come any closer to sorting out differences in a sensible way. He was more aware of the cynical way the rest of the world approaches their geo-political business than most Indians of his generation, largely because of an intense year he spent as a student at the United States Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. As a nationalist he did not want India to be bullshitted and powered out of its place in the emerging world order.

We all know General Sundarji the nationalistic hawk was capable of using a military sledgehammer when he felt it was the only option left and I will not delve into that can of worms here. There are geniuses enough who have painted their opinions on this subject with the full assurance that their retrospective theories can never be tested.

What is of greater interest when profiling him is to note that he was a fan of Sun Tzu the Chinese military strategist whose classic text on the art of war Chairman Mao is said to have partially attributed to his victory over Chiang Kai-shek. Sun Tzu is said to have maintained that an ideal general should be "an enlightened Taoist master".

Without claiming such enlightened status for him, I do think he was silently proud of his achievement in the 65 conflict as a battalion commander where he held a much larger force at bay with his battalion through deception. This was done by playing a high-risk game of bluff in real terms.

Another non-violent victory which I have seen him credited for by military strategists, is in a high-altitude stand-off in the Himalayas where he refused to be bullied by the Chinese and had modular artillery airlifted and reassembled at high altitudes to convince them that they would quite simply be blown up on the ground if they continued with their provocation.

From what I have read he was asked to back off by

our bureaucracy who feared another 62 style debacle, but refused to do so and offered his resignation instead.

Ultimately it appears both the Chinese army and the Indian bureaucracy backed down and it was sometime before the Chinese picked up their tails again. I suspected Sun Tzu's spirit might have been pleased.

There is no denying he had the ability to lead his teams through very difficult situations and stand up to intense pressure from above. I feel that this derived from his powerful presence more than any thought-out strategy. I don't think this attribute was something he was born with but, more a gift which derived from the training and experiences the army provided him with from a very early age in life.

The remarkable in the moment presence that the army gifts its soldiers from top to bottom is what differentiates the ordinary citizen from servicemen in India and can be observed almost everyday in emergencies across the nation. If you are travelling in a bus which goes off the road and into a river and there are two passengers who risk their lives to save the others without a moment's hesitation, it would be a good bet that they are either ex-servicemen or army men travelling back home on leave.

While this great quality is mostly taken for granted, by the rest of our country, I once attended a spiritual retreat at the ashram of one of our internationally celebrated 'enlightened' contemporary gurus and was pleasantly surprised to hear the 'Presence of the armed forces' being extolled as an example for spiritual seekers to understand the meaning and value of staying in the moment.

No lesser leader and strategist than Mahatma Gandhi moved mountains with Presence. Though I have never read a book by one of our celebrity Gandhian biographers on this, I have met more than one individual from Gandhi's inner circle who attributed their alertness and in the moment

awareness to Gandhi's 'training in staying present'. Still razor sharp in their 80's when I met them they said he gave them a few simple exercises to practice and that was enough for them to stay alert and follow him anywhere.

One smiling old man, in charge of the Sabarmati ashram when I met him, confided with a laugh: "Sometimes we did not even know why we got up and followed him in the early hours of the morning...It was just his presence...often we had no idea about what the whole exercise was about."

While the Army rather than Gandhi might have been responsible for his presence, Gandhiji seems to have been responsible for his un-South-Indian - Brahmin-like name: Sundarji. I have an unconfirmed family story that he changed his name from Krishnaswamy Sundar to Krishnaswamy Sundarji when still a young boy in school.

Apparently, he asked why Gandhi was called Gandhiji and the teacher answered: "...because he is a great leader". He is then said to have declared: "Then my name is going to be Sundarji".

I have a memory of him smiling in embarrassment when asked this question by someone. I don't remember hearing a direct denial or alternative explanation though!

Coincidentally, I have heard it was his platoon that was on duty at Gandhiji's funeral when he was a teenage second lieutenant. Their job was to keep a clear space in the inner core around the Mahatma's body on the pyre. But at some stage the crowd began to surge forward like a powerful tide and he had to lead his men into forming a hand holding cordon around the pyre. There was a point when the soldiers felt they might be burned alive but, if the story is true, it appears Sundarji and his men came through in the end.

I'm sure he enjoyed his whisky soda in the mess that night and hope Gandhiji's tee totaling spirit forgave young Sundarji.

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Duty, Dignity, and Disgrace

by PO Prakash Bishnoi (IN), Veteran



The Armed Forces of India represent far more than a military force - they are the embodiment of discipline, sacrifice, and national pride. For the soldiers, their service is a calling, not a pursuit of accolades. They serve without expectation of glory, driven by an unwavering commitment to protect the Republic. Yet, what happens when those entrusted with leadership positions forget this fundamental responsibility, using their power for self-interest rather than public service?

This is precisely the dilemma brought to the fore by **Dr Mayank Sharma**, IDAS, in his role as the Controller General of Defence Accounts (CGDA).

A Night of Excess: Misuse of Military Resources

On March 1, 2025, the IDAS Officers' Association hosted a private celebration to mark Dr Sharma's elevation to the post of CGDA. At first glance, this event appeared to be a mundane bureaucratic function, but the involvement of an Indian Army band to entertain Dr. Sharma, his spouse, and fellow officers turned it into a glaring misuse of military assets.

It's not just that military personnel were involved — it's the coercion behind their participation. Soldiers, trained for service and sacrifice, were reduced to performing at a private social gathering that celebrated a bureaucratic promotion. This is not a government event or a national occasion. It is a private affair, yet soldiers were paraded in front of civilians to provide entertainment for Dr. Sharma and his associates.

This act of turning the military into a tool for personal amusement strikes at the heart of civil-military propriety and raises a fundamental question: how far is too far when it comes to abusing authority?

A Disturbing Display of Entitlement

This spectacle is not an isolated incident but rather an example of a deeper culture of entitlement that has taken root under Dr Sharma's leadership. The actions of the IDAS Officers' Association, in which military resources were utilized for personal glorification, reflect a mindset where power is abused and public resources are misused to serve private interests. Dr. Sharma's conduct, far from being an isolated lapse in judgment, reveals a broader pattern of disregard for the principles of accountability, humility, and public service that should govern the defence accounts department. When leaders lose sight of these values, they place the integrity of the entire institution at risk.

Duty, Dignity, and Disgrace: A Stark Contrast

The role of CGDA is a position of immense responsibility. The person who holds this office is expected to uphold the integrity of the nation's defence finances with transparency, discipline, and accountability. Dr Sharma's actions, however, stand in stark contrast to these ideals. While soldiers risk their lives on the frontlines, Dr Sharma and his colleagues used the office of CGDA as a platform for arbitrary exercise of power, sacrificing the dignity of the military for personal gain. The military, a symbol of

national pride and honour, was reduced to mere entertainment for bureaucrats. This glaring contradiction should not only shock the public but also raise alarms within the corridors of power.

An Ideological Disconnect

Dr Sharma's tenure as CGDA is further tainted by his past actions. He has previously sanctioned public funds to celebrate the British colonial legacy — a period of subjugation and oppression. That such a leader is responsible for overseeing India's defence budget is deeply troubling. It begs the question: whose values does Dr. Sharma stand for, and what vision is he imparting to the next generation of leaders in the defence sector? These actions are not just about individual missteps — they reflect an underlying disregard for the dignity of the institution he is meant to serve. When senior officials use military resources for personal gain, it erodes public trust and undermines the very foundation of civil-military relations.

Restoring Integrity: What Needs to Be Done

This incident cannot be swept under the rug. To preserve the integrity of the CGDA office and the dignity of the Armed Forces, the following steps must be taken:

1. Immediately dismiss Dr Mayank Sharma from the post of CGDA, due to gross misconduct and violation of civil-military propriety.
2. Launch a Formal Inquiry into how military assets

were sanctioned for a private civilian event and the accountability of those who allowed this to happen.

3. Establish Clear Guidelines that prohibit the use of military personnel in non-official, private events — ensuring that such breaches of protocol do not happen again.

The Republic is watching, and it is incumbent upon the government and the Defence Ministry to take swift and decisive action. Allowing such abuses of power to go unchecked would not only embolden further misconduct but also diminish the public's faith in the institutions meant to serve them.

A Moment of Reckoning

This abuse of authority and misuse of military assets by the civilian officers mandated to ensure integrity of the public finance in defence budget is not just about one bureaucrat's misuse of power. It's about the integrity of the institutions that safeguard the nation's honour and security. The Armed Forces are the backbone of the Republic. To allow them to be reduced to ceremonial props for self-indulgent bureaucratic elite is a betrayal of the values they represent.

The Republic must make a choice — uphold the sanctity of its Armed Forces or allow their dignity to be trampled upon by those who hold power in their hands. This is a moment of reckoning for India. The choice is clear: the nation must choose duty, dignity, and accountability over disgrace.

The author is a retired Petty Officer from Indian Navy. He can be reached at beaworldleader@gmail.com

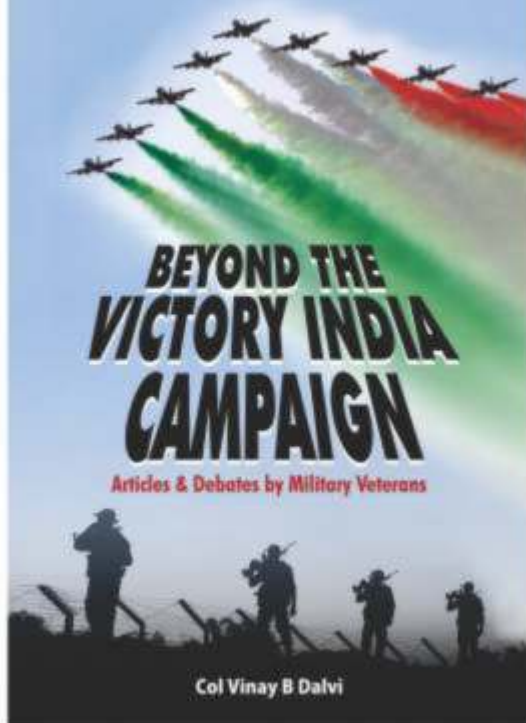
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Articles & Debates by Military Veterans

A Compendium of Vital Issues of Indian Military Officers



Book Review by Lt Col B S Barge (Retd)

'Beyond The Victory India Campaign'

Authored & edited by Col Vinay B Dalvi (Retd)

'Beyond The Victory India Campaign', a compendium of vital issues concerning Indian Military Leadership, authored and edited by Col Vinay B Dalvi is a meticulous and exceptional work encapsulating the collective efforts of numerous renowned veterans and academicians. This book displays fervour for excellence and sincerity in mission at hands. The production of this volume 4 (2018) of 'The Victory India Campaign' is an outcome of untiring efforts, relentless pursuit of several vital subjects with a vision of critical military challenges of the 21st century.

This 4th volume contains 34 articles and debates on multifarious military subjects; relating to officer selection and training, the inherent lacunae and shortcomings of our 70 years old selection system and training methodology. The articles and debates basically deal with technicalities of the issues and advocate the way forward for addressing them. The volume also covers many other critical issues, well beyond the earlier objective of the campaign, with write ups on several untouched subjects of sensitive and controversial nature that have caused agitation in the minds of higher military echelons over a prolonged period.

All concerned subjects have been analyzed in depth, debated seriously at appropriate forums to reach pragmatic solutions. The subjects covered are: Role and Preparedness of Armed Forces, Officers' Medical Boards, Viable & Meaningful Promotion Policy, Armed Forces Tribunal, Military Academies, National Defence University, Combat Military Leadership, Military Doctrine and Art of War.

In sum this precious book is a collection of noble work, ably contributed by experienced, knowledgeable military veterans and civil professionals of high repute. Their sincere, committed and dedicated work is of immense value worth considering and implementing.

Overall, the pragmatic solutions and worthwhile recommendations need immediate and urgent attention for implementation by military & civil apex authorities before it is too late and irreparable.

The book has contribution from 23 Authors and respondents of repute and comprises 34 chapters divided into 7 sections, namely:

Section 1: Nurturing, Selection & Training

Section 2: Contributions of Print Media

Section 3: Role & Preparedness of the Armed Forces

Section 4: Medical Boards, Promotion Policy & Armed Forces Tribunal

Section 5: Military Academies & National Defence University

Section 6: Combat Leadership, Military Doctrine & Art of War

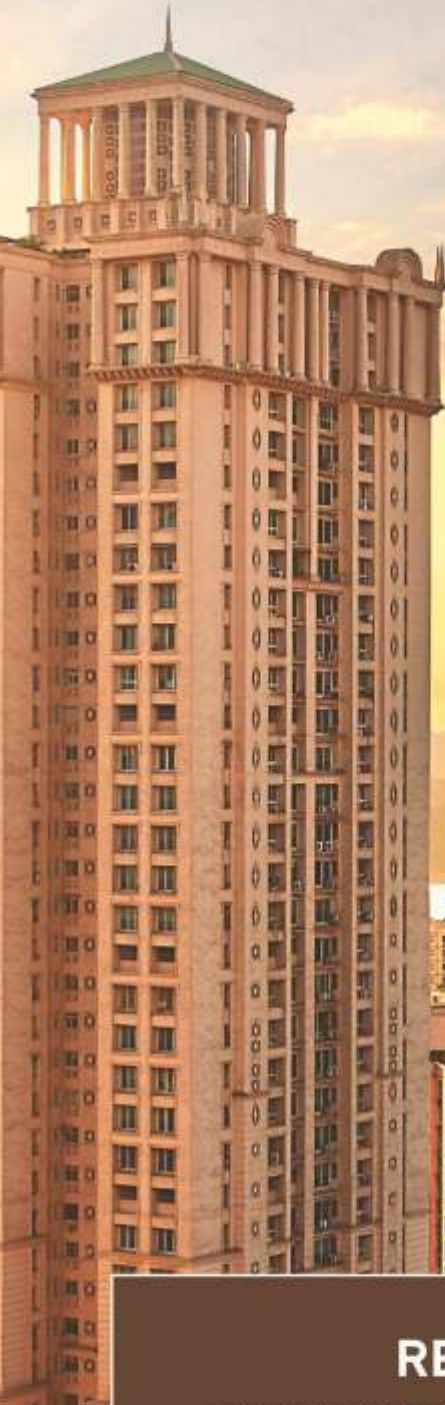
Section 7: Victory India Campaign: Validations, Way Forward (*appropriately and adequately validated by CNS, CAS, Comdt DSSC & Comdt IMA in letters*) and articles by Shashwat Gupta Ray & Maj Gen Raj Mehta.

The book should be perused and comprehended not only by military officers but also officers of Para Military Forces (PMF) and Police. The concerned officers of DIPR (DRDO), MOD and UPSC have much to gain from it. All dignified contributory authors have collectively projected their genuine and valid concerns through their selfless endeavors in the true spirit of nation building. The book is recommended for all those individuals and institutions who feel the dire and imperative need to strengthen the quality of our military leadership at all levels to face the multifarious and complex challenges of 21st century warfare confronting India and its forces! Jai Hind!


Book details : **'Beyond The Victory India Campaign'** - 225 pages Price Rs 795/-

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*The community is our
reason of existence
and its happiness is
our motivation.*



Actual image shot at Hiranandani Gardens, Powai.

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