

# U.S.I. JOURNAL

INDIA'S OLDEST JOURNAL ON DEFENCE AFFAIRS



(Estd. 1870)

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## USI LATEST PUBLICATION DURING 2023-2022

Pub Code	Title of Book & Name of Author	Price(Rs)	Year
Adm-SYB/23**	"STRATEGIC YEAR BOOK 2023" Editor-in-Chief Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd), Editors Lt Gen GS Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), Gp Capt Sharad Tewari, VM (Retd) & Dr Jyoti Yadav	2250	2023
M-1/2023**	"India Tibet Relations (1947-1962)" By Mr Claude Arpi	395	2023
R-115/2023**	"Grey Zone Warfare : Way Ahead for India" By Lt Gen Dushyant Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd)	1450	2023
OP-1/2023**	"The Ukrainian Conflict : Heavy Metal still Rocks the Charts" By Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd) & Maj Gen VK Singh, VSM (Retd)	250	2023
OP-2/2023**	"The Great Helmsman and the Generalissimo : A Personal Feud That Endures" by Col Sanjay Kannoth, VSM	250	2023
OP-3/2023**	"Changing Operational Scenario and Evolving Rules of Engagement" by Wg Cdr UC Jha (Retd) and Gp Capt Kishore Kumar Khera (Retd)	250	2023
OP-4/2023**	"Empowering Commanders for Tomorrow" By Brig Pawan Bhardwaj	250	2023
OP-5/2023**	"A Joint Concept of Operations" By Air Marshal (Dr) Diptendu Choudhury, PVSM AVSM, VM, VSM (Retd)	250	2023
Adm-UNPO/2022	"Keeping the Peace –UN Peace Operations and their Effectiveness : An Assessment" by Maj Gen (Dr) AK Bardalai (Retd) M/s Pentagon Press	995	2022
Adm-UNPK/2022	"INDIA AND UN PEACEKEEPING : THROUGH THE PRISM OF TIME" Edited by Maj Gen PK Goswami, VSM (Retd) M/s KW Publishers Pvt Ltd	1880	2022
CS3 R-114**	"Geo-Politics of Water in South Asia : Implications For India" By Col Anurag Jyoti	1250	2022
CMHCS-6*	"GALLIPOLI REVISITED" Edited by Sqn Ldr RTS Chhina, MBE, (Retd) and Amb Asoke Mukerji, IFS (Retd)	800	2022
OP-4/22**	"Theaterisation : A Way Ahead" By Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd) and Maj Gen RS Yadav, VSM (Retd)	250	2022
Adm-SYB/22**	"Strategic Year Book 2022" Edited by Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd), Lt Gen GS Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) and Gp Capt Sharad Tewari, VM (Retd)	2250	2022
Adm-6 (UNPO)/2022)**	"UN Peace Operations Part - VI : Challenges of Mission Leadership in UN Peace Operations in delivering the mandate" Edited by Maj Gen AK Bardalai and Maj Gen PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)	350	2022
OP-2/2022**	"India and Blue Economy : Challenges and Way Forward" by Dr Roshan Khanijo & Ms Samridhi Roy	325	2022
OP-3/2022**	"Military Manual on Laws of War" by Wg Cdr Umesh Chandra Jha (Retd)	250	2022
M-1/2022**	"Eastern Military Thought" by Colonel Harjeet Singh (Retd)	325	2022
Adm-5 (UNPO)/2022**	"UN Peace Operations Part - V : Women, Peace & Security" Edited by Maj Gen AK Bardalai and Maj Gen PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)	350	2022
CMHCS-5	"History of Indian Air Defence Artillery 1940-1945" By Col Mandeep Singh (Retd) M/s Manohar Publishers & Distributors	1495	2022
OP-1/2022**	"Military Legal System in China" By Wg Cdr Umesh Chandra Jha (Retd)	250	2022
CMHCS-4**	"BATTLE TALES" – Soldiers' Recollections of the 1971 War" Edited by Sqn Ldr RTS Chhina, MBE (Retd)	1350	2022

\*Available at USI of India

\*\* Available at M/s Vij Books of India Pvt Ltd

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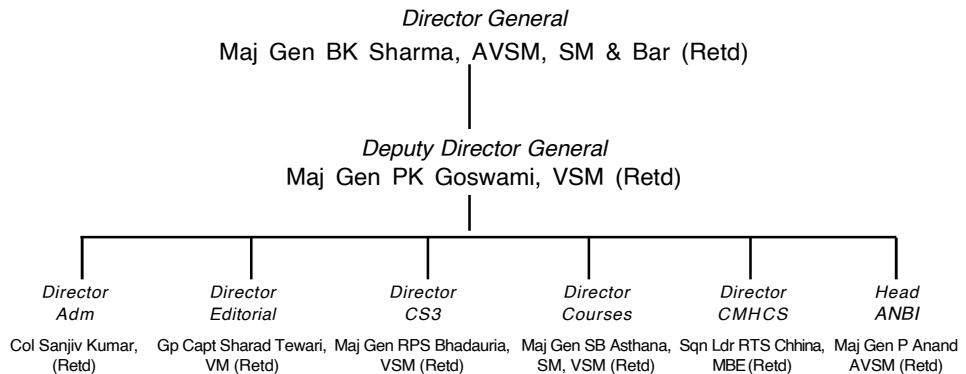
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**Editor**

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- 2. It is mandatory that the author furnishes complete details of the book/journal referred to in the article as end notes. A guide to writing endnotes is given on the next page. Besides endnotes, if the author so desires, a bibliography may also be included, though it is not mandatory.
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- 5. The author will receive a copy of the issue of the Journal in which his/her article appears along with three offprints. A suitable honorarium will also be paid after the article is published.

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Some examples are given below:-

- ¹ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy : A Prime in the Social History of Pictorial Style*, (Oxford University Press, London, 1988), p. 45.
- ² Lina Bolzoni and Pietri Coral, *The Culture Memory*, (Bologna : Societa editrice Il Mulino, 1992), p. 45.
2. Use of Ibid., op. cit., and loc. cit.  
Ibid. refers to the immediate preceding reference; op. cit. refers to the prior reference by the same author and loc. cit. is used instead of op. cit. when reference is made to a work previously cited and to the same page in that work. For example :-  
⁴ R Polrer, *Learning Physics*, (Academic, New York, 1993), p.4.  
⁵ Ibid, p. 9.  
⁶ T Eliot, *Astrophysics*, (Springer, Berlin, 1989), p.141.  
⁷ R Millan, *Art of Latin Grammar*, (Academic, New York, 1997), p.23.  
⁸ Ellot, op cit., p148.  
⁹ Ellot, loc. cit.
3. Where websites have been used to access information, the complete web address of the website should be cited, followed by the date the website was accessed by the author.  
e.g. Accessed Jun 24, 2020 from <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1947degana.html>.

## **Additions to the USI Library for the Quarter Ending September 2023**

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During the period Jul–Sep 2023, 22 registered as New Life Members; No Ordinary Members renewed membership and 149 registered as new Ordinary Members.

### **Course Members**

During Jul-Sep 2023, 63 Officers registered for Course Membership.

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## **Editorial**

Dear Readers,

It gives us great pleasure to present to you yet another invigorating and stimulating issue of the USI Journal, for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter of 2023. For over 15 decades, the USI Journal has compiled military and strategic affairs and has provided a platform to the military officers as well as other scholars to inculcate the love for writing and reading and share their knowledge with our members and readers. This issue contains 12 well researched articles, two review articles, and two short reviews of recent books.

The lead article is on ‘Recalibrating Defence Indigenisation’ by Lieutenant General NB Singh, PVSM, AVSM,VSM (Retd). The author argues that achieving technological parity with China by 2045, or earlier, should be underpinning the strategy to accelerate self-reliance. The article gives out a road map to accelerate self-reliance, making the ‘Make in India’, a truly global brand in the stride. This is followed by an article by Dr Soumya Awasthi, titled ‘Strategic and Geopolitical Shifts: Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan’s surging Resilience and India’s Security Calculus’. The article highlights that since 2021, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan has transformed into a formidable force and for India’s regional stability, vigilance, strategic acumen, and prudent military measures are crucial in navigating the complex dynamics between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the evolving terror landscape.

The third article titled ‘Iran-Saudi Arabia Relations:Cooperation and Convergence Replacing Hostility and Divergence’ is by Major General Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd) who writes about the recently concluded Iran-Saudi Arabia Agreement in the context of the evolving global and regional geopolitical scenario, and dwells on the intricacies of the Agreement as well as the pivotal role played by China, and its implication for neighbours and India. The next article is by Dr SD Pradhan, former Dy NSA, on ‘Growing Indian Defence Production Capabilities: From the biggest Importer of Defence Equipment to an Exporter’. He brings out that India’s progress in increasing its indigenous defence production capabilities, in recent years, is indeed remarkable. However, two

significant challenges remain, availability of sufficient investments and the induction of advanced technology, on a continuing basis, for maintaining a competitive edge in the global defence market.

Colonel Mandeep Singh (Retd) in the article 'Of Military History and War Dairies' writes that the military histories are used to examine the past and make decisions about the future and, therefore, it is essential that these are written honestly. Further, timely and honest generation and maintenance of war diaries is essential so that not only the military histories are written correctly but the right lessons are learnt from them. One of the challenges of the current United Nations Peace Operations is the 'mis and dis information' campaign by the armed rebel groups as well as the not-so-friendly host states to malign the peace operations. This has been looked into in the next article titled 'Misinformation and Disinformation in UN Peace Operations' by Major General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd). The author brings out the steps to be taken in a multi-faceted approach to tackle mis and dis information menace through 'Training and Strategic Communication', both, at operational and tactical level.

The seventh article is the concluding part of 'Fifty Years after India's First Airborne Operation at Poongli Bridge, Tangail:What we know of its Planning? (Part 2)', written by Lieutenant Colonel RS Bangari (Retd) and provides an insight into the planning process of the airborne operation at Poongli Bridge, along with its execution, to achieve the desired objectives. This lays the foundation for a more informed debate on certain highlights and issues that this article brings up. Part 1 of the article was published in the previous (April - June 2023) issue of the USI Journal. Dr Irfan Ul Haq, in his article titled 'South China Sea: Dracophobia and the Lilliputian Dilemma in a Gulliverian (China) Neighbourhood' highlights that the South China Sea holds massive historical significance as the epicentre of the Indo-Pacific Region and is evolving into the most vibrant and contentious geopolitical hotspot. It is in this context that the article analyses the dilemma among the smaller regional neighbours of China.

The next article is the edited version of the paper which won the first prize for the COAS Gold Medal Essay Competition for the year 2021-22 in Group II category, titled ‘Fortifying Indian Army’s response at Tactical Level against People’s Liberation Army’, by Major Ankita Mishra. This article sheds light on the challenges faced by the Indian Army in relation to the PLA and the measures to mitigate the shortcomings and fortifying response against the PLA. Russia and India have enjoyed a particularly close strategic relationship over the last half century oftme. The two countries continue to have common interests as they look for a multipolar world. The article by Major General (Dr) Pawan Anand, AVSM (Retd) on ‘Russia and India: Navigating Uncertain Times’ highlights that there is much to learn from recent geopolitical experiences of either country, even as they steer their individual course through an uncertain world situation.

The penultimate article is titled ‘The New Cold War’ authored jointly by Dr Martand Jha and Ms Anuttama Banerji. It analyses the New Cold War that is building up between the United States and China and brings out that India’s has to ensure that this doesn’t impacted negatively on her strategic, economic, and overall national interests. The last article of this issue is by Mr Manav Saini, titled ‘Colombo Security Conclave: Need for Transition towards Sustainable Energy Security’. The article discusses the development of CSC, its limitations, and explores the importance of including relevant offshore renewable energy for CSC and the way forward to make the mini-lateral a more robust organisation.

This is followed with Review Article 1 where, Major General Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd) writes about the book ‘War Despatch 1971’ edited by Brigadier BS Mehta. The reviewer writes that the book is unique in many ways. It’s a lucid recount of the triumphs and challenges by a group of officers, from the 28 NDA Course, who fought the 1971 War with grit and courage in the face of adversity. Review Article 2 is about the book ‘ARMOUR ‘71’ authored by Cavalry Officers Association. Here the reviewer, Major General VK Singh (Retd) writes that beginning with the politico-diplomatic perspective of the war, the build up to the war, armour operations in each theatre, followed by naval and air operations, the canvas of Armour 71 is undoubtedly wide. The book covers

interesting viewpoints and the role of armour in offensive and defensive operations.

This issue also carries short reviews of the following books:

- Chinese Military Legal System: An Analysis  
By UC Jha and Kishore Kumar Khera  
Reviewed by Gp Capt Sharad Tewari, VM (Retd)
- The Eastern Gate: War and Peace in Nagaland, Manipur and India's Far East  
By Sudeep Chakravarti  
Reviewed by Dr Jyoti Yadav

As always, we look forward to your feedback and suggestions.  
The USI acknowledges the financial assistance received from the ICSSR for publication of this Journal.

Happy Reading!

Gp Capt Sharad Tewari, VM (Retd)  
Director Editorial

# Recalibrating Defence Indigenisation

Lieutenant General NB Singh (Retd)<sup>@</sup>

## Abstract

*The ‘Make in India’ initiative was launched by the Indian government to make India self-reliant in major weapon platforms. A number of enabling provisions were rolled out to provide the desired traction to Atma Nirbhar Bharat. An analysis of the ground covered indicates that systems reaching a stage of maturity are primarily those on which Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has put in sustained effort over a period. Platforms that are at various stages of induction are those having substantial, at times more than 50 per cent import content. This is bound to create critical vulnerabilities in any prolonged conflict. In pursuit of new acquisitions, the Do Nothing Syndrome for legacy systems aggravates conventional readiness, ushers hollowness, and puts the defence budget into a tailspin. The army ends up possessing thousands of platforms but only a fraction is truly fully mission capable.*

*The grave consequences of employing such legacy platforms in the war in Ukraine are there to see and have thrown up important lessons. In 1973, during the Yom Kippur war too, initial setbacks suffered were a big learning experience for Israel which set out to achieve self-reliance. Half a century later, it figures amongst the top 10 exporters of arms in the world. India too needs to evolve a strategy to accelerate self-reliance. Achieving technological parity with China by 2045, or earlier, should be the under pinning philosophy of this strategy. Such a goal can provide technology security to India besides enhancing strategic assurance and influence amongst friendly foreign nations. The article gives out a road map to accelerate self-reliance, making the ‘Make in India’, a truly global brand in the stride.*

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## Background

It has been a while since the Make in India policy was launched by the govt to make India self-reliant in major weapon systems. A number of initiatives were rolled out to provide the desired traction to Atma Nirbhar Bharat; the promulgation of the Indigenisation Lists, Innovation for Defence Excellence (IDEX), supporting pole-vaulting in Research & Development (R&D) through Innovations for Defence Excellence for Developing Niche Technologies. There is also the provision of Technology Development Fund (TDF) under DRDO for upgrades, incubating game changing technologies and providing a firm base for self-reliance in weapon platforms. However, an analysis of the ground covered indicates that systems reaching a stage of maturity are primarily those on which DRDO has put in sustained efforts over a period ; like missiles, helicopters, marine vessels, fighter aircraft, combat bridges, towed gun system, etc. Nothing concrete seems to have emerged from the industry, either in niche or foundational technologies or conventional hardware. Whatever platforms are at various stages of induction, incorporate substantial, at times more than 50 per cent import content at hardware and software level. This is bound to create critical vulnerabilities in any prolonged conflict.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has ranked India as the largest importer in the world for the period 2018-2022, accounting for 11 per cent of the imports, followed by Saudi Arabia at 9.6 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Russia, France, and the US are the largest suppliers to India, accounting for 85 per cent of the imports. The implication of this large import dependence on structural readiness and military effectiveness is not difficult to visualise; a huge outflow of capital for life cycle sustainment, the absence of which will push the military towards hollowness i.e., tanks, guns, missiles, radars, and soldier systems without skilled personnel and spare parts to keep them running, giving appearance of readiness when in fact the capability is really not there. Add to this, the large scale battlefield attrition seen in the war in east Europe and one can visualise the rapid degradation of combat power with each passing day of wars in the future. Responsive industrial and maintenance surge will be essential for operational effectiveness. Traditionally, sustainment readiness issues find few takers in the army where

the thrust is more on acquisition of new gadgets. Engineering support remains firmly positioned on the back burners, a third class activity behind logistics (rations, general stores, ammunition). Lately, emergency procurement has kicked in, adding to complexity and diversity of equipment. Its impact on operational effectiveness remains a moot question.

Speaking at the India Today Conclave, the Chief of Army Staff (COAS), when asked about the major lessons that have emerged from the ongoing conflict in east Europe, stated that the significance of hard power has been reinforced and land warfare remains the decisive domain in our context. The duration of wars will no longer be short and swift as war could be prolonged by the adversary, spanning multiple domains. Hence the importance of self-reliance to support the war effort. These observations from the COAS should initiate a rejig in the manner the army handles its acquisition to turbocharge army's capability development initiatives and consolidate strategic readiness. Traditionally, acquisitions have been based on first-past-the-post principle. Given the complex acquisition procedure and stringent QRs, new acquisitions often get delayed, inservice platforms await reset and backlogs spiral.

### **The Capability Problem**

In the never ending race for new acquisitions, budgetary support for Maintenance, Repair and Organisation infrastructure and resources has become scarce, so much that serious equipment capability gaps surface due to technological obsolescence. Operationally, these gaps need to be plugged immediately through technology insertion. Absence of indigenous innovation, and dependence on foreign supply chains for upgrades and spare parts leads to cost and time overruns. Such defence thinking results in a 'Do Nothing Syndrome', which aggravates conventional readiness, ushers hollowness, and puts defence budget into a tailspin. The army ends up possessing a fleet of thousands of platforms but only a fraction are mission capable. Figure 1 illustrates the expanding capability gap with time.

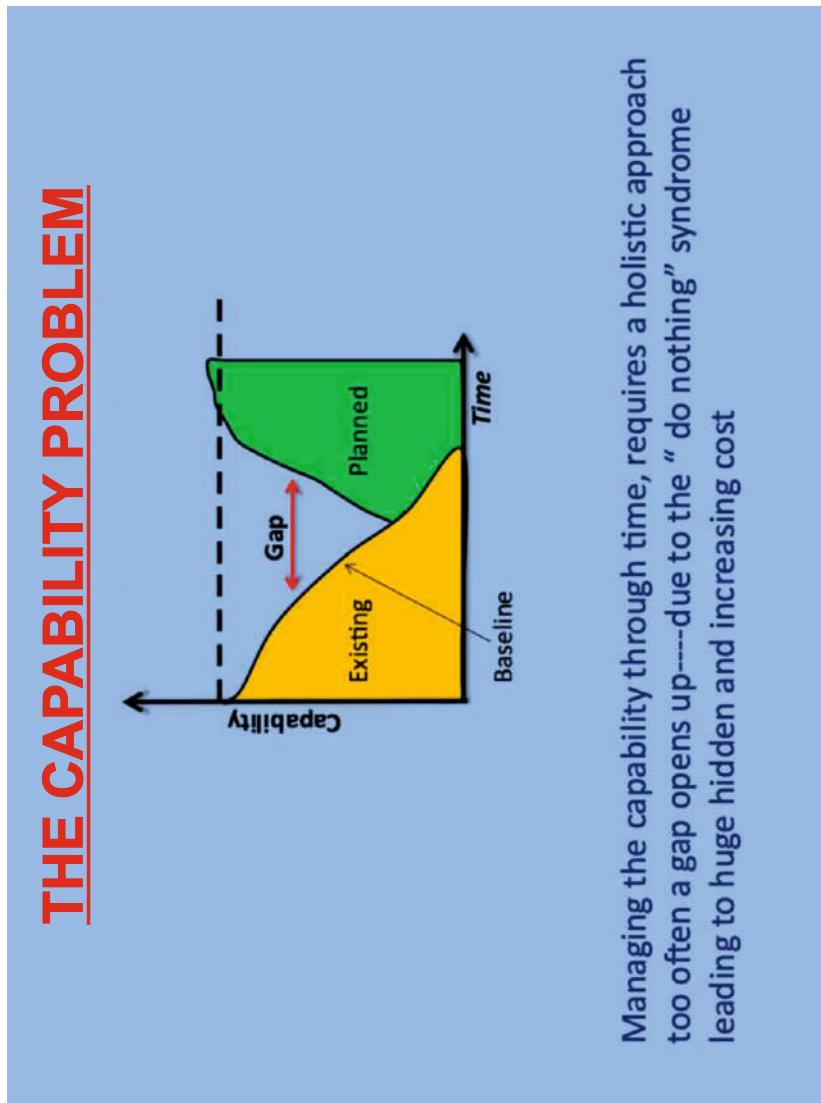


Figure 1

The grave consequence of such hollowness is visible in the war in Ukraine which has thrown up important lessons. The most significant lesson is that readiness is a complex attribute that dissipates with time. It cannot be taken as a constant factor. Skills and competencies are lost due to move of personnel and early retirement while platforms become unreliable with age and usage. Even if platforms are taken out from deep freeze (preservation and mothballing), their performance cannot be assured, without painstaking engineering support before and during combat. Mechanical failures and heavy attrition grounded the Russian advance to Kiev. The Russian military lost its reputation as an invincible fighting machine, despite large no of platforms and huge stockpiles of ammunition. Malfunctioning platforms and attrition caused by drones, precision fires, and Special Forces denuded its combatpower. Ukraine has suffered heavily in terms of military hardware, destruction of powerand communication infrastructure, industrial base, roads, and human lives. This has seriously impacted its operational readiness for the long haul. Being short on industrial and maintenance surge, it has barely sustained a readiness rate of 50 per cent.

Since a large portion of the army's inventory specially the big four or five platforms is of Russian origin, it is important to review the performance of these weapons and identify critical vulnerabilities. This will enable a holistic assessment of equipment capability gaps and resilience of formations for long drawn operations. In this war in East Europe, demand for ammunition, complex platforms and spare parts has far outstripped the industrial capacity of both the warring sides, and their allies.

### **Equipment Performance and Force Regeneration**

One factor that stands out clearly is that weapons designed to meet the doctrinal needs of any nation cannot be employed as such in any other operational environment. Knowledge of platform vulnerabilities by the adversary could enable exploitation of such gaps by launching a surprise, as was achieved by Ukraine in the destruction of Russian warship Moskva and large no of tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, Infantry Carrier Vehicles (ICVs), guns, and combat vehicles. This is the foremost reason for India to put defence self-reliance in the overdrive, since PLA has deep insights into the technologies behind Russian systems and has established

a versatile Defence Industrial Base (DIB) that has rolled out state of the art bespoke platforms using a mix of Russian and western technologies. It has emerged as the fourth largest arms exporter cornering 5.2 per cent of the global arms trade. It, thus, possesses the industrial capability to rapidly transform into a war economy to support long duration conflicts.

According to Oryx, a Dutch Open-Source Intelligence defence analysis website, and media reports, Russian forces have suffered very heavy attrition. Around 1500 tanks were destroyed and 440 captured of which approximately 160 tanks were damaged or abandoned which could have been recycled with forward repairs. Around 60 per cent of artillery guns were damaged. Total losses of other combat vehicles were close to 4000. It is estimated that 50 per cent platforms could have been regenerated with close engineering support, as drone attacks, missiles and other shoulder fired weapons normally immobilise platforms. Despite these losses, Russia's investment in Strategic Readiness (SR) and industrial resilience has placed it in a relatively stronger position to thwart the Ukrainian counter offensive.<sup>1</sup> SR in military terms is the ability to architect, manufacture, maintain, and balance combat capabilities to provide an operational overreach to the military across multiple domains. It flows out of Comprehensive National Power (CNP) which is a composite measure of economic, demographic, military, diplomatic, industrial and technological capabilities.

An important finding is that performance benchmarks of equipment achieved during combat operations were sub par, leading to frequent malfunctions and low usage rates. This issue assumes critical importance in our context where platforms are being deployed in much harsher terrain and weather conditions that adversely impact residual useful life and performance. Hence the need to not only preserve equipment capability but also to evolve quantifiable metrics of performance for regular measurement of operational readiness rates. This will enable the army to be forearmed for intensive, long drawn combat operations. Akin to the feat accomplished by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) during Yom Kippur War, force regeneration at the Line of Actual Control could emerge as a significant combat enabler, hence, the need for self-reliance and industrial resilience.

### **Israel's Shift to Self-Reliance**

In 1973, IDF were struck by a massive strategic surprise which sent them scrambling to hold back the Arab military, both in Sinai and Golan Heights. Israeli armour, that moved out to launch counter attacks, was met with swarms of infantry operated anti-tank guided missiles. Israeli losses were so staggering and it shook its military to the core. In first three day of the war IDF had lost 400 tanks and 44 aircraft that rose to 109 by the end of the war. All in all, IDF had 840 damaged tanks. Half of these were fixed and returned back into action. Of the 236 aircraft that were damaged, 215 were repaired and returned in a week. Such rapid was the dissipation of combat power that Israel had to turn to the US for supply of fighters, tanks, armoured personnel carrier and artillery pieces.<sup>2</sup>

This setback was a big learning experience for Israel, which set out to achieve self-reliance from the very next year. Half a century later, it has not only secured itself with an Iron Dome but also figures amongst the top 10 exporters of arms in the world. A remarkable achievement! This impressive journey has been made possible due to consistent support of government and effective technical leadership of the IDF. Growth of defence industry was achieved by a blend of imported technology and Israeli innovation courtesy domestic and foreign firms. A well planned and efficient government intervention facilitated establishment of a versatile DIB and emergence of government-owned conglomerates like Israel Military Industries, Israeli Aerospace Industries, Rafael Advanced Defence Systems, along with a host of private companies. A focussed R&D funding programme providing up to 66 per cent match by government for innovative projects, with no repayment requirements, accelerating the process. Former IDF members provided knowledge leadership in pushing innovations into the development pipeline. Israel's trailblazing of this difficult course has created the Tel Aviv Haifa Information And Communication Technology (ICT) Corridor (Figure 2); an outstanding example of how government support, hand holding by the military, and a collaborative culture can make the dream of self-reliance a reality.<sup>3</sup>

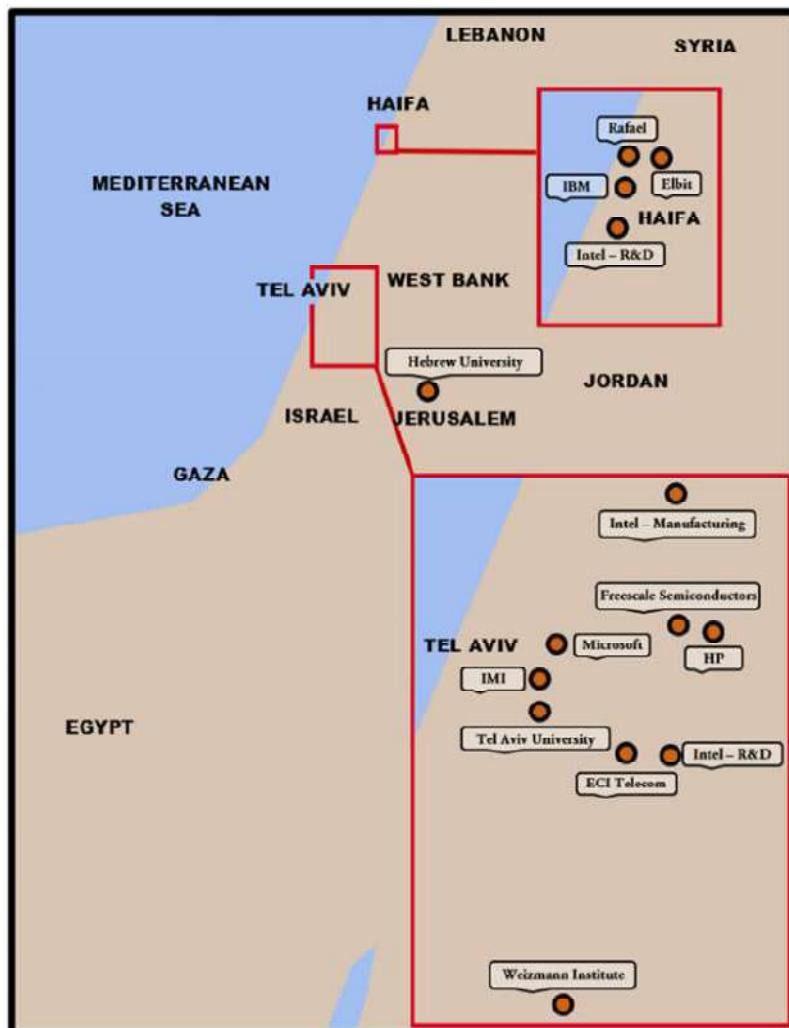


Figure 2 : Tel Aviv Haifa ICT Corridor

### Indian Defence Industrial Base

A unique advantage of the Indian industry is that it is modern, matching global standards of manufacturing with adequate availability of local talent. However, indigenous innovation and creativity leaves much to be desired. Supply chains too are dependent on foreign sources for materials and lack capability and capacity. A host of in service platforms, rolled out under Transfer of Technology (TOT) from the government owned DIB

are still dependant on foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers for critical spare parts. This can put the military on backfoot in case of hostilities. The country has capabilities to design and manufacture complex platforms like fighters, helicopters, howitzers, and aircraft carriers. Some very niche industrial capabilities have been created in private sector like low earth orbit satellites, unmanned systems, payloads and munitions. However, the performance has been achieved mostly using foreign foundational systems like propulsion, navigation, sensors, aviation suite, weapons, etc. This is a vital industrial capability gap. Localisation of 4000 odd components has reduced imports from 46 per cent to 36 per cent, but serious efforts have to be made beyond these lists towards generic, foundational and game changing technologies. It can be done by providing conditions that enable our youth to innovate ahead of the world.

To achieve this, private enterprises need to join not as competitors but as partners. If more than 50 per cent of the sub systems for Tejas or Arjun or Vikrant are ex-import, it is important to shift focus to indigenisation of sub systems alongside components, using the enormous intellectual firepower of our youth and Non-Resident Indians. TDF/IDEX initiative should provide mission oriented funding for projects that seek to address technological capability gaps. Government backed venture funds and recruitment of overseas talent could be considered. The aim should be to manufacture next generation platforms with locally developed foundational systems and generic technologies. A strong DIB can help achieve this. The US military has always been supported by very high levels of technology that has increased its mobilisation readiness and resilience. This has been possible because of its versatile Military Industrial Complex.

### **Eco System of DIB**

A calibrated development of DIB is essential to achieve self-reliance. It cannot be left to evolve on market forces else the end result may be half baked as has happened with a number of free trades zones and high tech parks. It needs to be scripted according to a plan with pre-defined milestones. The DIB comprises:

- **Prime Contractor or Systems Integrator.** An entity with industrial capability to deliver a complex system or product like an armoured fighting vehicle, ship, or aircraft. It requires

high grade systems engineering skills, processes and tools to integrate a complex system and testing facilities to test and prove system functionalities.

- **Partial System Manufacturer.** These manufacture independent systems which can work in a standalone mode or become relevant when integrated to a platform e.g., air defence missile, radar.
- **Sub-System Manufacturer.** These are specialist's outfits that manufacture systems and foundational modules like mobility, fire power, survivability; which give a capability only when integrated with the platform e.g., a power pack, or aero engine.
- **Component and Aggregate Manufacturers.** These entities, generally Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), provide finished assemblies/aggregates/Line Replaceable Units which form part of a sub-system/system e.g. engine parts, printed circuit board, power supplies, harnesses, etc.
- **Design Houses.** These are knowledge based organisations (Design Authority) with unique systems engineering skills, a suite of modern modelling & simulation processes and tools and facilities to test & prove at system/ sub-system level. They pick up sub-contracts from prime SIs for designing/testing of system and have specialists who have deep insights into all levels of engineering of the system as a whole.
- **Anchor Institutions.** These provide finance from research grants to promote technological innovation and collaboration. They provide consulting, mentoring, lab testing, and TOT to move an innovation into the manufacturing pipeline. Anchor institutions like Category A establishments of the military, IITs, NITs have to encourage a culture of collaboration between the military, industry, and research institutes to enable creation of technology incubators and accelerators.<sup>4</sup>

### **Underpinning Philosophy**

In order to achieve self-reliance in defence – a massive but achievable objective, it is important to lay down a guiding philosophy. The fundamental approach has to be spelt out alongside the end state to be achieved and resources to be made available. China was in near similar condition as India during the 70s, dependant on vintage platforms being manufactured under technology transfer from the then Soviet Union. The Chinese adopted the strategy of Introduce, Digest, Absorb and Re-innovate (IDAR) by on-boarding current technologies into legacy systems and developing weapons de-novo. Technology gaps were filled through import and joint ventures. This enabled them to transform their military and become a leading exporter of arms. Besides an enduring military capability, a vibrant DIB offers a number of advantages like strategic assurance, and influence, and civilian spin offs of technology. In the light of the above, how does India embark on its journey of self-reliance? Achieving technological parity with China could be the kernel of this philosophy. It is time to recalibrate the entire approach to self-reliance focussing on this end state.

### **Indian Development Strategy**

I propose a development strategy centred on system effectiveness i.e., capability of platforms to accomplish stipulated missions in our operational environment. Development of new platforms may take several years. Hence, to retain military effectiveness; on-boarding of new technologies in legacy platforms to make this future ready and cover interim risks, is indispensable. Such Capability Enhancement Programmes also fuel innovation and invigorate MSMEs. The corner stone of this strategy has to be a commitment by all stakeholders to the self-reliance call by the Prime Minister, hand holding of the industry, giving access to current technologies and platforms, experimentation, testing, course correction and retesting. A large portion of Israel's ICT achievements have been attributed to its hi-tech Unit 8200 that played a key role in providing advanced training and high quality technical support. DRDO and technical establishments of the military could provide the much needed facilitation to the industry to build up foundational know how to innovate and rebuild. This is the crux of what ails the indigenous innovation system –

knowledge sharing; a reluctance of government entities to share tacit and pragmatic knowledge and assist industry in experimentation and trials. It is only through a collaborative stance that local platforms will achieve system maturity to enable the military to out manoeuvre the adversary.

### **Strategic Plan for Self-Reliance**

In order to achieve self-reliance and technological parity with the adversary, a long term view encompassing two to three decades becomes necessary. We should aim to achieve comprehensive technology security in the region by 2045. All activities have to take place under an overarching national strategy to optimise resources. The tremendous potential of game-changing technologies requires long term investment and consistent support by the government with a robust collaboration between the military and leading edge innovators. The following action plan could help channelize the nation's strengths towards this goal.

**Short Term (2023- 2035).** This could be a decade of knowledge consolidation, creativity, and collaboration to achieve self-sufficiency in foundational systems, generic technologies, and energetics that are essential to build platforms and munitions ground up. It could be through indigenous innovation and foreign collaboration using the technology insertion route. The US-India initiative on critical and emerging technologies can assist in the development of generic and radical technologies. Concomitantly, we need to establish world class system architecting, system engineering and life cycle system management skills and competencies. This will facilitate design and development of bespoke weapon platforms optimised for our operational requirements. Like the Production Linked Incentive scheme in manufacturing, the government could consider technology linked incentives for companies coming forward to develop foundational and game changing technologies.

**Long Term (upto 2045).** Aim at building ground up next generation combat systems for the military and export market, powered by indigenous innovation and foundational systems. Our weapon platforms should be able to out perform foreign designs and be affordable. A sustainable military capability resting on technological parity and technological dominance in some domains like cyber, electronic warfare, space, directed energy, energetics and munitions, advanced materials, etc. is sine qua non for India to be truly secure from external threats. End state 2045 should aim at

providing all-encompassing technology security to Mother India and a distinctive rise in our CNP. This would ramp up strategic readiness in all domains.

### **Conclusion**

To become truly self-reliant in defence manufacturing, it is essential to recalibrate our gunsights, aim long term and stage forward in a calibrated, surefooted manner. The war in Ukraine has placed mass and technology on equal footing. The emerging threats in the sub-continent where war could open up on multiple fronts and domains, military effectiveness requires the military to be ready for operations over long durations. This will be feasible only if major platforms are designed and manufactured within the country, alongside a localised supply chain that canguarantee the depth to absorb losses and continue combat operations. Industrial and maintenance surge will provide the staying power and resilience and inhibit fighting forces from degenerating and fighting employing technological capital of World War II. We have to look at a fine the balance between combat usefulness, cost, and complexity of technologies. As we approach 100 years of Independence, it would be a befitting tribute to our freedom fighters if the goal of self-reliance is not only achieved but recognized worldwide by making the proud 'Make in India' brand, a truly globalbrand.

### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> India world's top arms importer in 2018-2022: SIPRI,<https://imrmedia.in/india-worlds-top-arms-importer-in-2018-2022-sipri/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-equipment.html>

<sup>3</sup> "Taking a Look under the Hood... The October War and What Maintenance Approaches Reveal about Military Operations", Colonel James S. Powell, U.S. Army LAND WARFARE PAPER 128 / August 2019

<sup>4</sup> "Creating an Innovation System for Knowledge City", Shanthi Nataraj, Howard J. Shatz, Keith Crane, Steven W. Popper, Xiao Wang, Chaoling Feng, RAND technical report series 2012

<sup>5</sup> "Engineering an Innovation System for Defence Industrial Corridors", Lt Gen N B Singh, South Asia Defence Strategic Review, Sep- Oct 2021

# **Strategic and Geopolitical Shifts: Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan's surging Resilience and India's Security Calculus**

**Dr Soumya Awasthi<sup>®</sup>**

## **Abstract**

*Since 2021, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has transformed into a formidable force despite continuous pressure from the Pakistan Government. With strategic mergers, expanded support, and novel tactics, the TTP intensified attacks on Pakistan's security forces and Chinese projects in Pakistan. The Afghan Taliban's rise further strengthened the TTP, providing sanctuary and support, leading to an influx of fighters and suicide bombers. India faces regional destabilisation risks, necessitating recalibrated military strategies to protect her national interests. Balancing safeguarding interests and avoiding instability demands a sophisticated geopolitical response. For India's regional stability, vigilance, strategic acumen, and prudent military measures are crucial in navigating the complex dynamics between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the evolving terror landscape.*

## **Introduction**

**A**midst the geopolitical landscape of Afghanistan and Pakistan, a remarkable transformation has unfolded since 2021, witnessing Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) emerge as a formidable force, resiliently countering transnational terror groups and evading the Government of Pakistan's relentless raids. The TTP has significantly enhanced its operational prowess by employing strategic mergers, bolstering its support base, and adopting novel

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tactics. Firmly entrenched within Afghanistan, and now extending its influence into Pakistan, the TTP has amplified its assault on Pakistani security forces and critical Chinese infrastructure projects in Pakistan.

In July 2023, the 32nd report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team released a report to the UN Security Council (UNSC) that focused on 'ISIL (Da'esh), Al-Qaeda, and associated individuals and entities'. The report highlights Afghanistan's ongoing significance as a global terrorism hotspot, hosting around 20 terrorist groups. Notably, the Afghan Taliban's rise to power has empowered the TTP, allowing them to exploit their presence in Afghanistan to conduct operations within Pakistan. The TTP's objectives include regaining control of Pakistani territory, focusing on high-value targets near the border and soft targets in urban areas.<sup>1</sup>

An intriguing development lies in the visible patronage and alliance extended to the TTP by the Afghan Taliban.<sup>2</sup> Initially, Pakistani authorities anticipated that the US withdrawal from Afghanistan would constrain the TTP's threat, assuming that the Taliban would rein in their influence. Contrarily, the TTP appears emboldened by the Taliban's ascension to power, burgeoning in strength. The Taliban leadership granted political asylum and unhindered mobility within Afghanistan to senior TTP figures and fighters, previously incarcerated by the Afghan Government, providing them a sanctuary to orchestrate their violent campaign within Pakistan.<sup>3</sup>

The resurgence of the Afghan Taliban regime attracted a significant influx of Pakistani militants, manifesting an unwavering resolve to overthrow the Pakistani state. Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud, the Emir of TTP, lauded the Taliban's triumph and pledged allegiance to Emir Haibatullah Akhundzada and unconditional support to the Afghan Taliban's cause. In tandem, the TTP asserted its demand for a semi-autonomous status for the tribal belt, striving to implement Sharia law as its guiding principle.<sup>4</sup> Compounding the situation is the deep-seated commitment of several Afghan Taliban members to support the TTP's jihad against Pakistan, fuelled by tribal, ethnic, ideological, and personal affiliations that took root during the decades of insurgency in Afghanistan. Scores of Afghan Taliban fighters have volunteered to augment the TTP's

ranks, offering themselves as suicide bombers and foot soldiers in their crusade against Pakistan.

In this rapidly evolving strategic landscape, India finds itself at a critical juncture, compelled to recalibrate its military calculations to safeguard its national interests. As the TTP's influence expands, so does the potential for destabilising the region. India's military must meticulously assess this evolving scenario, anticipating the ramifications of a strengthened TTP and its affiliations with the Afghan Taliban. The implications are manifold and demand a comprehensive strategic response. India must proactively engage in sophisticated geopolitical manoeuvres to mitigate risks while capitalising on opportunities that arise amidst the TTP's rise. The delicate balancing act requires astute military decision-making, deftly treading the fine line between safeguarding Indian interests and avoiding further regional destabilisation.

As the situation evolves, India must monitor the fluid dynamics closely, ready to adapt its strategies to a rapidly changing landscape. The resurgence of the TTP and its nexus with the Afghan Taliban warrant India's vigilance as it seeks to preserve stability and secure its geopolitical standing in the region. Prudent military measures and strategic acumen will play a pivotal role in defining India's position amidst the interlocking dynamics of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the ever-shifting terror landscape.

### **Growth of TTP**

The growth of TTP can be explained under five sub-categories, as follows:

- **Merger and Expansion.** Till July 2023, there were a total of 36 terror groups which had earlier split from core TTP but have rejoined the group back. The TTP has strategically merged with various militant groups, strengthening its ranks and operational capabilities. The return of the Afghan Taliban in 2021, and their opposition to foreign militants on Afghan soil, led to TTP volunteers returning to Pakistan, boosting the group's influence. The merger provided the TTP with battle-hardened militants and expanded its geographical presence, particularly in southern Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. Additionally, regaining control of north Waziristan further solidified the TTP's position and support base.<sup>5</sup>

- **Centralisation and Command Structure.** To address fragmentation issues, the TTP adopted a centralised command structure. The central leadership retains control over appointments and established shadow province leaders accountable to the main cabinet. This hierarchical system allows for better coordination and operational effectiveness, streamlining the TTP's activities.
- **Revisiting Objectives.** The TTP shifted its focus from regional and global ambitions to a local agenda, exploiting grievances within Pakistan to legitimise its jihad. The TTP aimed to gain sustained support for its war against the Pakistan Government by localising its operations and limiting attacks on civilians. This shift was influenced by the success of the Afghan Taliban, showing that limiting their agenda could enhance their operations and chances of success.<sup>6</sup>
- **Rise in Operational Activities.** The TTP's reformation led to increased operational attacks, focusing on targeting Pakistan's security forces. The group acquired sophisticated weaponry after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, further bolstering its capabilities. Adopting a centralised suicide bombing brigade allowed the TTP to expand its reach beyond tribal areas, infiltrating major urban centres in Pakistan.
- **Reformed Role of Media.** The TTP's media channel, Umar Media, has become more prolific, with improved production quality. Utilising a multilingual approach, the TTP's propaganda targets various communities, linking their anti-state war narrative with highlighting socio-political grievances. By appealing to diverse audiences through regional languages, Umar Media strengthens the TTP's influence and garners support for its cause.<sup>7</sup>

### **Implications**

The TTP's comprehensive reformation has made it a more formidable threat to Pakistan's security and stability. The group's increased operational activities, with focus on urban areas, indicate its ability to strike at the heart of the country. Moreover, the TTP's nexus with other terrorist organisations, like Al Qaeda, and its alliances with various militant groups pose risks to regional security. The TTP's alignment with the Afghan Taliban, and the

latter's takeover of Afghanistan, has provided the former with sanctuary and freedom of movement, enabling it to intensify attacks within Pakistan's. This development raises concerns about Pakistan and Afghanistan's security challenges from transnational terrorist groups operating in the region.

Addressing the TTP threat requires a multifaceted approach, including counter-terrorism efforts, intelligence sharing, border security, and handling grievances within marginalised communities. Cooperation between Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other regional stakeholders is crucial to effectively combatting the TTP and its affiliated groups.

Thus, the TTP's comprehensive reformation and growth since 2021 have made it a significant security threat in the region. Its strategic mergers, centralisation, revisited objectives, increased operational activities, and sophisticated media propaganda contribute to its resilience and expansion. Combating the TTP's menace requires a coordinated and comprehensive approach to ensure stability and security in the wider region.

### **Consequences of TTP's Merger and Expansions**

The TTP's restructuring and expansion significantly affects the regional stability and future developments. On 30 Jan 2023, a devastating suicide attack at the Peshawar police headquarters, claiming over 100 lives, marked the deadliest act of terrorism in Pakistan since the 2014 Army Public School attack. While the TTP tried to distance itself from the attack, doubts persist about the sincerity of its new policies and internal support for them. Nevertheless, despite such attacks, the TTP's leadership remains committed to its reform initiatives. This attack also underscores the role of the Afghan Taliban in the conflict between the TTP and the Pakistani state. The Taliban's interim foreign minister denies the existence of terrorist sanctuaries in Afghanistan, but tensions persist, with Pakistan accusing the TTP of planning attacks from Afghan soil. The TTP's current trajectory indicates a strategic shift under its leader, Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud, focusing on gaining territorial control over the tribal belt adjacent to Afghanistan rather than seeking an Afghan Taliban-style victory in Pakistan.

As the TTP continues to escalate violence, particularly in urban areas, Pakistan's military and intelligence leadership may

face domestic political pressure to reassess their approach. Cross-border military action, including covert assassination attempts and drone strikes, may be employed to exert pressure on the TTP. Pakistan could also attempt to divide the TTP by offering incentives and targeting critical nodes within the group to encourage moderates to distance themselves from hardline leaders.

### **Afghan Taliban's Role and Decisions**

The role of the Afghan Taliban in mediating between Pakistan and the TTP is crucial as the stalemate persists. The Taliban faces a delicate balancing act as they seek international acceptance for their governance while upholding their alliance with the TTP. Internal politics within the Taliban, including support for the TTP from certain factions, influences the group's approach to deal with the TTP. The Taliban's stand on the TTP's demands will play a significant role in mediation. While they generally support the TTP's aspiration for a Shariah-based order in Pakistan, specific negotiating points need clarification. Some elements within the Taliban may have reservations about accommodating the TTP's demands due to concerns about potential risks and challenges from anti-Taliban factions like ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K).

The Taliban's decisions as a mediator will have implications for regional stability and security. Their outreach to India reflects efforts to diversify international partnerships, potentially reducing their reliance on Pakistan. The growing aspiration of having closer ties with India could be a driver for how the Taliban approaches managing relations with the TTP.

### **Pakistan's Political Landscape and Leadership**

The upcoming general elections in Pakistan will influence the future role of the Taliban as a mediator. The military's negotiations with the TTP and potential constitutional changes to facilitate a settlement may raise questions within Pakistan's political landscape. While political elites generally align with the military's priorities, some parties, like the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), may have reservations about a settlement with the TTP due to historical grievances. Regarding Imran Khan, his stance on not resorting to military action against the TTP or seeking assistance from the US may be an attempt to appease both, the TTP and the Afghan Taliban. His criticism of the national security policy aligns with the TTP's view on Washington's security cooperation with Islamabad.

However, such stances may also impact the government's efforts to develop a consensus on dealing with the TTP.

Thus, the TTP's merger and expansion have far-reaching consequences for regional stability. The role of the Afghan Taliban as a mediator and Pakistan's political landscape, and leadership decisions, will shape the regional politics, stability, and security dynamics.

### **Policy Options for India: A Fresh Approach**

Before formulating any strategy, India must carefully assess whether affecting itself with the TTP, primarily Pakistan's domestic problem, aligns with its interests. India must clearly define its aims and objectives if it decides to engage. Considering the complexities of the situation and the key players involved, India has several policy options to consider as elucidated below:

#### **Positive Aspects**

- **Utilising Turbulence in Pakistan.** The prevailing turmoil in Pakistan could work in India's favour as it allows the country to focus on targeting the Pakistani establishment and its armed forces, which are critical concerns for India.
- **Weakening Pakistan's Control.** The rise of the TTP weakens Pakistan Government's control in areas where the group holds sway, thus reducing the presence of Pakistan's military.
- **Slowing Development in Pakistan.** Continued instability may hinder Pakistan's development projects, leading to frustration and grievances among its citizens.
- **Highlighting the Consequences of Terrorism.** India can leverage the TTP situation to emphasise the self-destructive nature of breeding terrorism, especially in Pakistan.

#### **Challenges**

- **Terrorism Spillover.** A rise in terrorist activities in Pakistan could spill over across Indian borders, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, posing security threats.
- **Enhanced Pakistan-China Collaboration.** Instability in Pakistan might lead to her increased dependency on China, potentially enhancing collusive threat to India's northern border.

- **Impact on Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Measures.**

Pakistan might exploit the TTP challenge to plead for leniency from the FATF, affecting efforts to maintain pressure on the country.

- **Blaming India.** Pakistan may continue to blame India for the TTP issue, complicating diplomatic efforts.

### **India's Strategic Trajectory**

To safeguard its interests and address the challenges, India should adopt a multifaceted approach, such as:

- **Strengthen Border Security.** India must closely monitor the borders in Jammu and Kashmir and respond firmly to any aggression from Pakistan.

- **Diplomatic Engagement.** Establish communication with the Afghan Taliban to influence the TTP to avoid targeting India and its bordering states with Pakistan.

- **Engaging with Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) and Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA).** Initiate communication channels with PTM and BLA members to maintain influence and control within the TTP.

- **Cordial Relations with Afghan Taliban.** Foster positive relations with the Afghan Taliban and urge them to deny their territory as a launchpad for Pakistani terror groups targeting India.

- **Information Warfare.** Amplify tensions between the Afghan Taliban and Pakistan over issues like the Durand Line to divert Pakistan's focus inward.

- **Leveraging International Forums.** Continuously raise Pakistan's association with terrorism in international forums, including the UN, SAARC, ASEAN, BIMSTEC, BRICS, G20, and G7.

- **Collaboration on Financial Flows.** Work with FATF and G20 to trace cross-border financial flows involving Pakistan.

- **Sanctions and Asset Freeze.** Impose sanctions on Pakistan, close airspace for their trade, and through back-channel diplomacy, try freezing assets abroad of Pakistani officials and politicians.

- **Diplomatic Pressure.** Urge friendly countries and allies to boycott Made-in-Pakistan products and reduce dependence on Pakistani labour.

- **Diplomatic Bargaining.** Use diplomatic channels to pressure countries like Algeria, Mauritania, and Libya to cut defence and civil deals with Pakistan.

### **Conclusion**

While the precarious situation in Pakistan with the rising TTP poses significant challenges, it also presents opportunities for India if it adopts a realist approach. A realistic assessment of the evolving geopolitical landscape can enable India to craft a nuanced strategy that safeguards its national interests and enhances its regional standing.

By closely monitoring the developments in Afghanistan and Pakistan, India can identify potential areas of cooperation and engagement with various stakeholders, including the Afghan Taliban, to influence the TTP's activities and deter any direct threats to Indian security. Open communication and diplomatic channels can be utilised to convey India's concerns and interests while urging restraint and cooperation from the regional players.

While navigating the complexities of the Afghanistan-Pakistan region demands prudence and foresight, India's realist approach can transform the precarious situation into an opportunity. By calibrating its military, strategic, and geopolitical responses effectively, India can safeguard its interests, promote regional stability, and strengthen its position as a responsible and influential actor in the South Asian context. Therefore, India's approach should be calculated, measured, and adapted to changing circumstances to protect its interests effectively.

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# **Iran - Saudi Arabia Relations: Cooperation and Convergence Replacing Hostility and Divergence**

**Major General Jagatbir Singh (Retd)®**

## **Abstract**

*The recent global developments including the war in Ukraine, US withdrawal from Afghanistan, and China's aggressive foreign policy approach have threatened the volatile existing global order and is pointing towards an unstable global situation, a dangerous decade and a historic hinge. As the new world order is emerging, the Middle East is witnessing diplomatic initiatives that are reshaping regional alignments and defining global power equations. The diminishing United States (US) credibility is pushing the regional power to safeguard their own interests. The increasing international polarisation is likely to increase instability in the region. West Asian countries need to build stability with their neighbours and not be entangled in a state which is reminiscent of the cold war era. They are now pursuing 'strategic autonomy'; taking decisions on their own based on their self-interests. Perceived disengagement by the main security guarantor, the US from the region has forced both Iran and Saudi Arabia to re-look at the spectrum of inter-state relations and diversify partners with an eye on their economic and security interests. The article looks into the recently concluded Iran-Saudi Arabia Agreement in the context of the evolving global and regional geopolitical scenario, and dwells on the intricacies of the Agreement as well as the pivotal role played by China, and its implication for neighbours and India.*

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## Introduction

A major rapprochement between two estranged powers, Iran and Saudi Arabia, traditional rivals and amongst the biggest oil producers who have been on the opposite sides on a host of issues, took place on 10 Mar 2023. It was an unexpected development in a fraught relationship with ideological, spiritual, and sectarian differences, and bringing together a fractured Islamic world where many different divisions existed. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia perceived the other to be keen on dominating the region. We now see a convergence of interests.

Talks first began in Apr 2020 initially in Iraq and Oman. Five rounds were facilitated by the then Iraqi Prime Minister Kadhimi, but then, however, Iraqi politics intruded. Kadhimi was gone in Oct 2022 and his successor Prime Minister Sudani showed little interest in continuing Iraq's role as a mediator; he also did not enjoy the same level of Saudi trust as his predecessor.

Apparently frustrated by the pause, Saudi Arabia asked China to assume a mediator's role when President Xi Jinping visited Riyadh in Dec 2022. In Feb 2023, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi visited China, and met President Xi, and the proposal for a resumption of ties was discussed. The talks were then elevated from regional level, with China as the host. As a result, the path breaking deal was signed in Beijing on 10 March 2023. China played a major role and Wang Yi, the Director of the Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee called it a 'Victory for Dialogue, Victory for Peace'.<sup>1</sup>

Iran and Saudi Arabia have been trying to mend a break in relations that occurred in 2016, after Iranian protestors seized Saudi diplomatic missions in Tehran and Mashhad in retaliation for the execution of prominent Saudi Shiite opposition cleric Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr. Iran then cancelled the Haj Pilgrimage as the troubled relationship reached a new low.<sup>2</sup>

Level of tensions between two countries who have been at loggerheads since the Iranian Revolution in 1979, is high. As Talmiz Ahmed wrote in his book 'West Asia At War'; this posed a particularly dangerous threat for Saudi Arabia – a threat that was at once doctrinal, political and strategic. The Islamic Revolution

challenged Saudi Arabia's leadership of the Muslim world, which was based on the fact that its geographical space encompassed the source of the faith and its ruler's guardianship of Islam's holiest sites.

As a result, Saudi Arabia supported Iraq in the War of Revolution. Lately, the Iranians also felt that the US withdrawal from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018 was due to Israeli and Saudi Arabian pressure. Saudi Arabia accused Iran of 'taking advantage of the revenue generated by the lifting of the sanctions to destabilise the region'. In Yemen, Iran supported Houthi rebels, though there is an uneasy truce presently, Iran was attributed to providing weapons that have been fired on Saudi's Aramco refineries. During the Arab Spring, they were also suspected of inciting protests in Bahrain.

In return for Iranian re-implementation of prior assurances of non-interference in Saudi internal affairs, Iran demanded that Saudi Arabia should stop funding Iran International, a Persian-language news channel that gives a platform to opponents of the Islamic Republic and, their coverage of the protests. Iran believes it is responsible for fomenting unrest across the country for the past five months.

They want the Saudis to withdraw completely from Yemen and recognise the Ansarallah (Houthi) movement as a legitimate authority in the war-torn country. They also asked Riyadh to stop supporting Iranian opposition groups including the Mujahedin-e Khalq, the ethnic Arab group Al-Ahvaziya, and the Baloch militant group Jaish al-Adl. Iran considers these three as a terrorist organisations. In addition, Iran asked Saudi Arabia to ease the pressure on its Shiite minority and allow members to visit the Iranian Shiite holy city of Mashhad.<sup>3</sup>

The competing regional agendas of Riyadh and Tehran have compounded devastating wars in Yemen and Syria, and continue to fuel instability in Lebanon and Iraq.

### **Reasons for Rapprochement**

The initial push for a reconciliation can be traced to a joint article 'We Can Escape a Zero-Sum Struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia – If we Act Now' published in 'The Guardian' in Jan 2021 by two distinguished scholars; Dr Abdulaziz Sager of Saudi Arabia

and Hossein Mousavian of Iran calling for a dialogue between the leaders of their two countries, a follow up to an earlier article with a similar theme written two years earlier.<sup>4</sup>

Iran was approaching a high level of enrichment and, with the JCPOA talks going nowhere, it feared a US – Israeli strike on its facilities. The deal will now diminish the threat of military action against it. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia's agreement with Iran appears to be an attempt to stay out of the fray in case of a conflict.

Further, Iran was facing an increasing regional and global isolation due to the sanctions imposed on it. It aims to thwart growing Western pressure by diversifying its options, it's with this in mind that it normalised relations with United Arab Emirates recently. Iran has now pushed back on its regional isolation without changes in its policies.

According to the newspaper Kayhan, a mouthpiece for Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Tehran's ability to neutralise enemy's hybrid warfare aimed at bringing about regime change during the protests, and its refusal to give in to foreign pressure to abandon its nuclear program were instrumental in paving the way for a final agreement with Saudi Arabia, once the protests subsided in Dec.<sup>5</sup>

Saudi Arabia showed signs of being frustrated with the US, particularly the Democrats, after the JCPOA was signed in 2015 and now due to President Biden's perceived attitude to region. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud felt that he has been targeted over the murder of Jamal Khashoggi in Oct 2018. In 2021, the US also disclosed a report on 9/11 that potentially implicated Saudi Arabia.

In 2019, following an Iranian attack on Saudi Arabia's Abqaiq oil facilities, many Saudis felt that the US government did not retaliate on their behalf. The realisation dawned that Saudi Arabia was on its own and would never enjoy Israel-like security guarantees by Washington. They felt the need to diversify their security partners. The signs were visible, the US had accused Saudi Arabia of siding with Russia when Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC+) decided to cut oil production over Washington's objection. The US-Saudi relationship notably soured.<sup>6</sup>

President Biden's visit to Saudi Arabia, in Jul 2022, failed to get them to increase oil production with a view to squeeze Russian oil revenues. While they have largely supported UN General Assembly resolutions, they have not joined in implementing sanctions against Moscow or other policies aimed at squeezing Russia. As per Gerald Feierstein, a former US Ambassador to Yemen; "The Saudis have emphasised in recent years that they seek to avoid entanglement in what is referred to in the US as 'great power competition'.

China is viewed as a neutral party. Amongst China's largest oil supplier in the region is Iran, which in turn relies on China for 30 per cent of its foreign trade and where China has pledged to invest \$ 400 bn over 25 years. Iran, which has few export markets owing to crippling sanctions over its nuclear program and facing high inflation sells oil to China at a steep discount. It has trade in the region of over \$ 100 bn.<sup>7</sup>

China needs to balance its key energy suppliers and maintain its friendship with both Iran and Saudi Arabia. China has major investments in Iran, with whom it has a 25-year strategic partnership with investments of \$ 400 bn and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) runs through region.

Has China moved outside its traditional role and is now at the centre of global politics? Is it now a geostrategic force to be reckoned with? Chinese focus is on a strategic partnership with Iran and economic relationship with Saudi Arabia. No doubt, the trilateral engagement is seen as a triumph for China.

The US was not part of the negotiations. US–Saudi ties ever since the 1945 meeting between President Franklin Roosevelt and King Abdul Aziz ibn Saud, have hinged on energy for the US, and provision of security to Saudi Arabia. However, both countries agreed to disagree on Palestine. The US sees itself as the dominant super power in the region. It has dominated the diplomatic space globally. Now things are looking different, it was indispensable in the region but could not have brokered this deal in view of its friendship with Israel and animosity with Iran with whom it has no diplomatic ties since 1979.

President Obama's 'pivot to Asia' focussed on rise of China and its expansionism in Indo-Pacific and now with the Ukrainian

conflict the US is back to being Eurocentric. The deal is thus seen as a setback for the US in the region. But does this deal fly in the face of the order they have been trying to create? To quote Antony Blinken, the US Secretary of State during a visit to Ethiopia, “From our perspective, anything that can help reduce tensions, avoid conflict, and curb in any way dangerous or destabilising actions by Iran is a good thing”.<sup>8</sup>

Both Saudi Arabia and Iran were waiting for some positive developments from the US; the Iranians were looking at the ongoing talks regarding JCPOA 2.0 and subsequent easing of sanctions while the Saudi's were trying to fathom President Biden's attitude towards them. Faced with disappointment, due to the retreating and reducing US involvement, they had few options other than turning towards China to address the issues between them. The reconciliation can, therefore, be viewed as a necessary and inevitable step.

### **Israel's Concerns**

While the deal was welcomed across the Middle East, for Israel, the Saudi Arabia-Iran rapprochement comes at a strategic price, with regional and international dimensions. It will be a setback for Abrahams Accord. Prime Minister Netanyahu has been tough on Iran and has repeatedly stated that their nuclear programme threatens regional stability. He was heavily invested in improving ties with Saudi Arabia while sustaining offensives against Iran. One of Netanyahu's greatest foreign policy triumphs remains Israel's normalisation deals in 2020 with four Arab states, including Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. They were part of a wider push to isolate and oppose Iran in the region.<sup>9</sup> A normalisation deal with Saudi Arabia, the most powerful and wealthy Arab state, would have fulfilled Netanyahu's prized goal, re-shaping the region and boosting Israel's standing in historic ways.<sup>10</sup> Since returning to office, Netanyahu has hinted that a deal with the kingdom could be approaching.<sup>11</sup>

Israel was building an Arab Alliance against Iran but with both UAE and Saudi Arabia now developing relations with Iran, this seems to be in jeopardy. At the same time, Israel fears that the Agreement could pave the way for a resolution to the war in Yemen which presented an opportunity for Israel to increase its

influence in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea. Another concern for Israel is a potential new Taif Agreement in Lebanon, whose parties could be Saudi Arabia and Iran, guaranteeing the stability of the Lebanese regime and economy. Yair Lapid, the former Prime Minister and head of Israel's opposition, denounced the agreement between Riyadh and Tehran as 'a full and dangerous failure of the Israeli government's foreign policy'.<sup>12</sup>

### **The Global Outlook**

The recent strategic shocks that include the Ukrainian conflict, pull out of US from Afghanistan and China's aggression, all point to an unstable global situation, a dangerous decade and historic hinge. The region is at the heart of global energy trade, and centre of logistical connectivity. It is also the destination for millions of religious pilgrims. As the new world order is emerging, the region is witnessing diplomatic initiatives that are reshaping regional alignments and defining global power equations.

The Russia-Ukraine war has spurred the countries in the region to discuss a regional security framework that will distance them from tensions in the emerging global axes. In contrast to the Cold War, the Arab Gulf states enjoy good relations with Russia and the US, but the increasing international polarisation is likely to increase instability in the region. They need to build stability with their neighbours and not be entangled in a state of cold war.

China has no doubt promoted dialogue amongst its principal partners, who were estranged from each other, in order to promote harmony. It signifies President Xi's willingness to leverage his economic clout in third-party negotiations.

### **Implications for India**

The West Asian Region forms an important part of India's extended neighbourhood, and is vital to India's strategic outlook. India has vital stakes in the stability, security, and economic well-being of the region. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Arindam Bagchi while commenting on the development said "India has good relations with various countries in West Asia and that India has always advocated dialogue and diplomacy as a way to resolve differences".

India needs to maintain a balancing act in a region where it has deep abiding interests and good relations with the countries, its core interests range from religious ties, energy, trade, investments, and a large diaspora. The region supplies about 50 per cent of India's crude oil requirements, over 70 per cent of natural gas requirements, hosts about 9 million Indians and accounts for 60 per cent of remittances received in India annually. Security challenges in the region lead to instability, which has a direct bearing on the safety and security of millions of Indians working there.

India has close civilisational ties with Iran but Iran moved closer to China since India voted against it in International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in 2009, though it did abstain from the vote in IAEA in 2022, and then discontinued oil purchases on pressure from the then US President Trump in 2019. Iran feels that, India has consistently subordinated its ties with Iran over other considerations, the latest being the controversy over the Raisina Dialogues. We need to now enhance our engagement with Iran, which must, amongst others focus on both the Chabahar Port and International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

De-escalation of tensions in this crucial area will naturally be a positive outcome for security in the region which has a direct bearing on India. Further, reduction of tensions in the region could lead to a more stable oil market which will be good for India's energy security. We also need to encash on the positive contribution and goodwill of our diaspora in the region. For India it is imperative to monitor the evolving dynamics and assess how it can leverage its own relations with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other regional players to secure its strategic interest. The Iranian Ambassador to India, Iraj Elahi, summed it up by stating that "this step could benefit India since it helps intensify stability and peace in the Persian Gulf Region".<sup>13</sup>

### **Problems in Implementation**

While both nations seemed predestined for immutable rivalry because of the ancient Persian-Arab divide and the Sunni-Shia divide, the Saudi Arabia-Iran deal suggests that the two sides have made some progress in addressing critical areas of their disputes. However, the feud between Iran and Saudi Arabia is rooted in doctrine, enmeshed in history, and both nations have

waged wars via proxies across the Middle East. They need to overcome sharp differences and wide chasm of this deep fundamental rift between Shias and Sunnis where a historical fault line exists.

Iran can neither afford to dismantle their armed militias nor reduce the power of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), which is viewed as a terrorist organisation by US, necessary to protect its ideological character and take on the US and Israel. Both countries are fighting long running, multiple, and ruinous 'Proxy Wars', supporting militant groups against each other in Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Libya. In Syria, the Saudi's supported the ISIS while Iran supports President Assad along with Russia, whereas in Yemen, the Saudi's supported the ruling regime of President Hadi and Iran supports the Houthi rebels, in Lebanon, Iran supports the Hezbollah, and in Palestine, both Iran and Saudi Arabia support the Hamas. Conversely, can actions by these non-state actors torpedo the Agreement?

Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium is now reportedly at 60 per cent enrichment. Diplomatic relations are unlikely to eliminate Saudi Arabia's concerns about Iranian nuclear weapons programme. Conversely, will Iran now find the roads to bypass the sanctions and render them ineffective?

UAE shares a maritime border with Iran where there is a dispute over three islands. With India, Israel, UAE and United States (I2U2) group, it was firmly aligned towards the US. It had also intervened in Yemen, but returned its Ambassador to Iran last August after 2016. But suspicions still run deep. Last year, a drone strike launched by the Iran-backed Houthis hit Abu Dhabi, hurting the UAE's reputation as a safe harbour in the volatile Middle East.

### **The Way Ahead**

There are whispers of Iran looking at reviving the 2001 Security Pact, which Saudi press at the time described as 'the end of a long and unproductive period of disagreement's and also the broader 1998 Cooperation Agreement between the two countries.<sup>14</sup> The Apr 2001 Security Agreement included commitments to fight drug trafficking, crime, terrorism, and money laundering. But there are conflicting interests and compromises that need to be

discussed. The deal emphasises non-interference in each other's internal affairs and has the potential to help de-escalate regional conflicts.

There is a need for reduction of problems and conflicts in Yemen where there is an uneasy UN negotiated truce since Apr 2022, Lebanon which has had no President since Michel Auon vacated office in Oct 2022 and is witnessing a deepening political divide and a worsening economic crisis, Iraq and Syria where it has the potential to hasten the acceptance of Syria into the Arab fold. But can these problems just disappear and does this also underscore China's desire to play a more active role as an international mediator?

The next issue as far as Iran is concerned is the number of pilgrims permitted for Haj, which as of date is 87,550 but Iran has a registered waiting list of over eleven lakhs. An increase in the quota for Iran will also be a pointer as to the velocity and direction of the deal.

### **The Positives**

This Agreement will, no doubt, pave the way for more dialogue and cooperation between the two countries and, ultimately, lead to lasting peace and prosperity for the region. The reconciliation is a major development in international relations and a positive development in the regional security scenario. No matter how complex the challenges or complicated the situation, mutual respect and equal dialogue finds a mutually acceptable solution by working through contradictions. The Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, said on Twitter after the announcement, 'the countries of the region share one fate.'

One of the major fallouts of the deal is the INSTC. The progress on INSTC could lead to security, stability, development, and economic growth of the region, and this will be integrated with the BRI.

### **Conclusion**

The Ukrainian conflict has altered the power balance on the world stage. There is now a fundamental shift in the way China is acting, in countries where it had invested heavily, to show that it matters.

A new realignment is taking place in the Gulf Region while a strategic reconvergence is being witnessed between Russia, China, and Iran, and now Saudi Arabia which is seeking a leading role for itself at both the regional and international levels. It is converging closer towards them, driven by its economic power and influence, demonstrating that it is capable of negotiating the delicate balance of a world shifting from unipolarity to multipolarity. China, the biggest trading partner in this region, has stepped into the power vacuum by leveraging its ties and is positioning itself to become a significant player in West Asia where it has major geo-economic interests. China is presenting itself as a force for peace in the world, a role that used to be played by the US. It is, however, the desire for a stable security architecture that is getting the two major protagonists closer together.

The deals taking place are unarguably significant and promising, but how these countries follow up on them, and fulfil their commitments, will determine their success or failure.

### **Endnotes**

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# **Growing Indian Defence Production Capabilities: From the biggest Importer of Defence Equipment to an Exporter**

**Dr SD Pradhan<sup>®</sup>**

## **Abstract**

*India's progress in increasing its indigenous defence production capabilities, (in recent years), is indeed remarkable. The country has achieved significant milestones by manufacturing key defence items such as nuclear-powered submarines, an aircraft carrier, cruise missiles, fast speed patrol boats, and light combat helicopters. This shift has transformed India from being the largest defence importer to a more self-reliant nation, capable of exporting defence equipment to a growing number of countries. The transformation in India's defence sector is reflected in the significant growth of its indigenous defence equipment and weapons exports. Over the past eight years, India's exports in this sector have grown tenfold, with more than 85 countries now importing Indian defence products. This growth demonstrates the increasing recognition and acceptance of India's capabilities in the global defence market. However, there are several key challenges that India needs to address for further advancing its indigenous defence production capabilities. Two significant challenges are, ensuring availability of sufficient investments and the induction of advanced technology, on a continuing basis (in the defence manufacturing sector) for maintaining a competitive edge in the global defence market.*

## **The Golden Era of the Indian Defence Sector**

**T**he growth of India's indigenous defence production capabilities has been exceptional in the last few years. India organised the Def Expo (18-22 October 2022) in Gandhinagar, displaying

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defence weapons and systems produced in India. More than 1300 exhibitors, including India's defence industry, joint ventures associated with Indian defence industry, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), about 100 start-ups, and many foreign representatives, including 53 from African countries, attended the exhibition. India's Defence Minister Shri Rajnath Singh, on this occasion, stated that this is a 'golden era' of the Indian Defence Sector.<sup>1</sup>

India's transition from being the largest defence importer to a modest exporter is a significant shift. The fact that India now exports defence equipment and weapons to more than 85 countries, highlights the growing acceptance and demand for Indian defence products worldwide.<sup>2</sup> India has a list of 7031 defence items that have been indigenised. In 2020-2021, 74 per cent of contracts awarded by the Indian Army went to the Indian vendors. While defence imports have been reduced between 2018-19 and 2021-22 from 46 per cent to 36.7 per cent, defence exports touched Rs 16,000 crore in FY 2022-2023.<sup>3</sup> India plans to achieve a turnover of USD 25 billion, including export of USD 5 billion in Aerospace and Defence goods and services, by 2025.<sup>4</sup>

India is producing certain items in collaboration with foreign entities under the Transfer of Technology (ToT) scheme and steadily moving to totally indigenise strategic items. While earlier three Positive Indigenisation Lists (PILs) covered 3060 items for which there was an embargo on the import beyond the timelines, in May 2023, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) approved the 4<sup>th</sup> PIL of 928 strategically-important Line Replacement Units/Sub-systems/ Spares and Components. Under *Atmanirbharata* in defence, 164 PIL items, with an import substitution value of Rs 814 crore, that were to be indigenised by December 2022, have met the target within the timelines.<sup>5</sup>

Gradually, India is trying to reduce its dependence for spare parts on foreign countries. India's defence production infrastructure is supported by the requisite research and development ecosystem and a reasonable budget. Notwithstanding that modernisation of the Indian Armed Forces demands further increase in defence budget, currently it accounts for 2.15 per cent of the country's total GDP.<sup>6</sup> The objective is not only to indigenise defence production but also to modernise the Indian Armed Forces, to

raise their efficiency in the current scenario by equipping them with modern weapons and weapon systems, supported by advanced technology, to meet the upcoming challenges.

India has established two Defence Industrial Corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to boost defence production capabilities. The purpose is to facilitate defence production by having special zones with a faster decision-making system and tax benefits. 'The nodal agency for the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (UPDIC) has signed 69 MoUs with the industry, with potential investment of Rs 10,545 crore. An Investment of Rs 1,767 crore has been made by the industries in UPDIC. It has six nodes – Aligarh, Agra, Kanpur, Chitrakoot, Jhansi, and Lucknow. The nodal agency for the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor (TNDIC) has arranged investment worth Rs 11,359 crore through MoUs etc. with 42 industries. An investment worth Rs 3,176 crore has been made by the industries in the TNDIC, which comprises Chennai, Tiruchirappalli, Coimbatore, Salem, and Hosur. These corridors are expected to create new defence production facilities and promote clusters with necessary testing and certification facilities, export facilitation centres, technology transfer facilitation, etc.'<sup>7</sup>

### **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the Defence Sector**

Alongside, India has also liberalised FDI in the defence sector. It now allows FDI under the automatic route up to 74 per cent (up from 49 per cent) and up to 100 per cent through the government route, wherever it is likely to result in access to modern technology. The total FDI inflow in the defence sector between April 2000 and December 2022 was USD 15.78 million. The Department of Defence Production (DDP) has brought in the following policy reforms for attracting foreign investment<sup>8</sup>:

- Higher multipliers are assigned in the Offset Policy to attract investment and ToT for defence manufacturing.
- Specific consultations are done regularly with Foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers.
- Under the Aerospace and Defence Policy notified by the two state governments- UP and Tamil Nadu, customised incentive packages are provided to investors based on investment, employment, and project location, which may include GST based

refunds on sales, stamp duty concessions on land allotment, electricity tax exemption, and capital and training subsidies for training workers.

- The Defence Investor Cell has been created to provide all necessary information including addressing queries related to investment opportunities, procedures, and regulatory requirements for investment in the sector.

### **Emphasis on Critical Military Technologies**

The MoD, under the 'Make in India' and *Atmnirbharata* initiatives, has identified three critical technologies including a production line for semiconductors, aero-engines and important advanced materials used in military technology. These technologies are important for the different platforms and weapons used by the Indian Armed Forces. The aim is to cut down dependency on imports in these niche areas and achieve self-dependence. The MoD and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology are working together to manufacture 'chips'. Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) identified nine thrust areas for focused research, namely, platforms, weapon system, strategic systems, sensors and communication systems, space, cyber security, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotics, material and devices and soldier support. To enable the adoption of AI in defence, the Defence Artificial Intelligence Council (DAIC) and the Defence Artificial Intelligence Project Agency (DAIPA) have been created. The Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) designed and developed by DRDO, has been successfully tested in fully autonomous mode.<sup>9</sup> The DRDO has indigenously developed an engine with 180 HP capacity for the UAV Tapas, which can go up to 17000 ft altitude.<sup>10</sup> It marks a significant development towards self-reliance in manufacturing UAVs, which are going to play a vital role in future wars.

According to DRDO Chairman, Dr Samir Kamat, his organisation is now focussing on cutting edge technology to face the challenges in future wars. Three aspects are especially given importance: space situational awareness, underwater domain awareness, and defensive system to protect military and strategic assets from hypersonic weapons. Alongside, research in Direct Energy Weapons like laser and high-power microwaves, and cyber-related weaponry continue to receive due attention.<sup>11</sup>

India is also collaborating with foreign countries for research and development in critical and advanced technology. The India-US initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology was launched to elevate and expand Strategic Technology Partnership and Defence Industrial Cooperation between the two countries. India and US launched a new bilateral 'Defence Industrial Cooperation Roadmap' to accelerate technological cooperation in critical technologies like AI, Quantum Mechanism, and Advanced Wireless. In addition, both countries are jointly enhancing research focus on identifying challenging dimensions of maritime security and Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance operations.<sup>12</sup> India and France are also collaborating in the production of six Scorpene submarines through the ToT. The first Scorpene submarine, INS Kalvari, was commissioned in 2017.<sup>13</sup>

### **Important Defence Items Manufactured in India**

In recent years, India has pushed the policy of 'Make in India' in the defence sector, which is implemented through various policy initiatives that promotes indigenous design, development, and manufacture of defence items. The initiatives for encouraging indigenous production of defence items, inter-alia, include priority for procurement of capital items from domestic sources under the Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020, simplification of the industrial licencing process with longer validity, liberalisation of FDI, and sourcing of items from the Positive lists. Many significant projects, including the 155 mm Artillery Gun system 'Dhanush', Bridge Laying Tank, Thermal Imaging Sight Mark-II for T-72 Tank, Light Combat Aircraft 'Tejas', 'Akash' Surface to Air Missile System, Submarine 'INS Kalvari', 'INS Chennai', Anti-Submarine Warfare Corvette, Arjun Armoured Repair and Recovery Vehicle, Landing Craft Utility, etc., have been produced in the country under 'Make in India' initiative of the government in the last few years.<sup>14</sup>

Some of the major items exported in the past few years, are, Fast Speed Patrol Boats, Coastal Surveillance System, Light Weight Torpedoes, Light Weight Torpedo Launcher and parts, Dornier-228 Aircraft, Wheeled Infantry Carrier, Light Specialist Vehicle, Mine Protected Vehicle, Passive Night Sights, Battle Field Surveillance Radar Extended Range, Integrated Anti-Submarine Warfare, Advanced Weapons Simulator, Personal Protective Items, 155 mm Artillery Gun Ammunition, Small Arms and Ammunitions,

Weapon locating Radars, Identification of Friend or Foe - Interrogator, etc.<sup>15</sup> India is also exporting BrahMos missiles that are manufactured in India in collaboration with Russia.<sup>16</sup>

### **Big-ticket Items**

Among the big-ticket items produced in India are the nuclear-powered submarine INS Arihant, BrahMos Cruise Missile, the INS Vikrant aircraft carrier and Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Prachand.

#### **INS Arihant**

Launched in 2009 and commissioned in 2016, INS Arihant is India's first indigenous nuclear powered ballistic missile capable submarine, built under the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project. INS Arihant and its class of submarines are classified as nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN). They can remain under water for longer durations and do not create noise like diesel submarines. The commissioning of the Arihant submarine was important for the nuclear triad. Prime Minister Modi remarked that the commissioning of INS Arihant completes India's nuclear triad, though India remains committed to 'No First Use' of nuclear weapons.<sup>17</sup>

Crucially, the Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) for these submarines are also being indigenously developed by DRDO. These are lighter, more compact, and stealthier than their land-based counterparts, the Agni series of missiles which are medium and intercontinental range nuclear capable ballistic assets. INS Arihant carried out a successful launch of a SLBM on 14 October 2022. The successful user training launch of the SLBM by INS Arihant is significant to prove crew competency and validate the SSBN programme, a key element of India's nuclear deterrence capability.<sup>18</sup>

INS Arihant is a 6,000-tonne nuclear propelled submarine with a length of 104 metres and a beam of 15 metres. It has a range of over 700 km. Its surface speed is between 12 and 15 knots and submerged speed is between 30 and 34 knots. It can carry 12x K-15 ballistic missiles and 6x 533 tube torpedoes.<sup>19</sup> It can stay deep inside the ocean making it virtually undetectable for months. There are plans to build more nuclear-powered submarines. Another nuclear-powered submarine the INS Arighat

is slated to be commissioned soon. Two more SSBNs are under construction.

### **BrahMos Missile**

The BrahMos missile of the Indian Armed Forces is a supersonic cruise missile developed by the DRDO and Russia's Mashinostroyeniya. It is named after two major rivers in India and Russia: the Brahmaputra and the Moskva. The missile is capable of being launched from land, sea, sub-sea, and air against surface and sea-based targets and has been long inducted by the Indian Armed Forces.

In the joint venture, the Indian side holds a share of 50.5 per cent and the Russian side holds 49.5 per cent. The technology used in this joint venture is based on the Russian P-800 Oniks cruise missile and similar sea-skimming cruise missiles from Russia.

The BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was first tested on 12 Jun 2001. Since then, it has been upgraded many times across various platforms, that is, the sea, land, and air. When compared to subsonic cruise missiles, BrahMos has three times the speed, and 2.5 times the flight range. BrahMos is supersonic cruise missile that can attain a speed of up to Mach 3, with a maximum flight range of 290 km. It is a two-stage missile with a solid propellant booster as its first stage, which brings it to supersonic speed and then separates. The second stage then takes the missile closer to Mach 3 speed. Stealth technology and guidance system with advanced embedded software provide the missile with exceptional capabilities.<sup>20</sup> Its special features include<sup>21</sup>:

- Operations on the principle of 'fire and forget', adopting varieties of flight on its way to the target.
- Enhanced destructive power due to the large kinetic energy on impact.
- High supersonic speed all through the flight.
- Long flight range with a variety of flight trajectories.
- Low radar signature.

- Shorter flight times leading to lower target dispersion and quicker engagement.
- Pin-point accuracy with high lethal power.

It can carry a conventional warhead weighing 200 to 300 kg. The missile has identical configurations for land, sea, and sub-sea platforms and uses a Transport Launch Canister (TLC) for transportation, storage, and launch.<sup>22</sup>

India is exporting BrahMos missiles to the Philippines. In January 2022, the Philippines signed a \$374.96-million deal with BrahMos Aerospace Private Ltd. for the supply of a shore-based, anti-ship variant of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. The contract includes delivery of three missile batteries, training for operators and maintainers, as well as the necessary Integrated Logistics Support (ILS) package. The coastal defence regiment of the Philippine Marines will be the primary employer of the missile systems. The Indian Navy trained 21 Filipino marines on the operating and maintenance procedures of BrahMos missiles.<sup>23</sup> Other countries, like Indonesia and Vietnam, are also showing interest in this missile.

### **INS Vikrant**

The commissioning of the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, with its new abilities and the fact that it was not only designed and built indigenously but also used 76 per cent Indian material, was an important landmark in the growth of indigenous aircraft carrier production capabilities. It was built in India at a cost of about Rs 20,000 crore. With INS Vikrant, India joined the list of countries which manufacture huge aircraft carriers with indigenous technology. It is an important reflection of India becoming self-reliant in this crucial field. An aircraft carrier is considered the most valuable sea-based asset that allows to dominate the maritime domain. It can be quickly deployed in different areas and, thus, helps the navy establish command and control at decisive points.

“The 262-metre-long INS Vikrant aircraft carrier has a full displacement of close to 45,000 tonnes, which is much larger and more advanced than its predecessor. The ship is powered by four gas turbines totalling 88 MW and has a maximum speed of 28 knots. It has been built with a high degree of automation for machinery operation, ship navigation and survivability, and designed

to accommodate an assortment of fixed and rotating aircraft. The ship would be capable of operating an air wing consisting of 30 aircraft comprising MiG-29K fighter jets and Kamov-31 multi-role helicopters, in addition to indigenously manufactured Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) and Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) (Navy). Using a novel aircraft-operation mode known as Short Take-Off but Arrested Landing (STOBAR), the IAC is equipped with a ski-jump for launching aircraft, and a set of arrester wires for their recovery onboard".<sup>24</sup> INS Vikrant used indigenous equipment and machinery supplied by India's major industrial houses as well as over 100 MSMEs. It is the largest ship ever built-in maritime history of India and houses state of the art automation features.

The commissioning of INS Vikrant makes India's maritime domain more secure. Given our dependence on the blue economy and having three sides to the sea, maritime security for India is of paramount importance, particularly in the present context when China is increasing its footprint in the Indian Ocean. Control over the seas and safeguarding the sea lanes of trade and communications are essential. With its escort ships and fighter jets, it is a Carrier Battle Group, which means it can bring to bear that kind of force which is mobile, potent, and self-sustaining.

### **LCH Prachand**

The induction of the indigenously built LCH named Prachand into the Indian Air Force at Jodhpur on 3 October 2022, by Shri Rajnath Singh, India's Defence Minister, was another landmark in the development of India's defence production capabilities. This helicopter fills an important need for the protection of our assets and territory at high altitudes, like in Siachen, Daulat Beg Oldie etc.

The special characteristics of this air vehicle make it different from other helicopters. Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari, Chief of the Indian Air Force, stated that this LCH is either at par with or better than similar attack helicopters available globally.<sup>25</sup> The LCH is designed and developed indigenously by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). It is primarily designed for operations at high-altitude in all-weather combat conditions. It is a multirole combat helicopter, designed to perform various attack profiles.

'It can fly at an altitude of 5000 metres. Its empty weight is 2250 kg and maximum take-off weight is 5800 kg. It can carry a weapon payload of up to 1750 kg. It can take off at high altitude with all its payloads. Its length is 15.8 m, wingspan is 4.60 m, and height is 4.70 m. It can carry two pilots. It has a top speed of 268 kmph and a maximum range of 550 km. It is powered by two Shakti engines. Its endurance is 3 hours and 10 minutes. Its weapons capabilities are significant. It carries 1 x 20 mm M621 cannon on Nexter THL-20 turret, 4 x 12 FZ275 LG Rockets, 4 x 2 Mistral air to air missiles, 4x4 'Dhruvastra' anti-tank guided missiles, cluster bombs, and grenade launchers. It can evade detection by enemy radar and dodge incoming missiles. It is armed with a missile approach warning system, a Saab radar laser warning system, and chaff and flare dispensers.<sup>26</sup>

In Indian context, given the distinct advantages of greater fire power, excellent manoeuvrability, and a higher range of operations than other helicopters, along with stealth features, the role of this helicopter would be critical at higher altitudes. It upgrades India's capability to check air and land intrusions by our enemies. While it can be effectively deployed to deny the use of our airspace by hostile air or land forces, it is also capable of conducting lightning air strikes to complement the army's offensive and defensive operations. Besides, it can also be deployed to destroy the terrorist infrastructure behind enemy-lines. In any conflict, the role of this helicopter will prove invaluable.

### **Conclusion**

The Indian defence manufacturing industry is vital not only for security of India but also for its economy. The demand for better equipment, based on advanced technology, is increasing as India moves towards modernising its forces. Such demands are also increasing in other countries, which are facing threats from bullying countries that still believe in achieving their objectives using force. India's threat perception of a two-front-war has risen many times in recent years. The security of the land border and the Indian Ocean demands more submarines, aircraft carriers, fifth-generation fighter aircraft, combat helicopters, and super-sonic missiles.

The fundamental shifts in strategic equations globally demand a robust defence capability to maintain India's strategic autonomy. The risks involved in importing defence equipment are well known.

Usually, the best technology-based weapon systems are not transferred and if they are, the importing country remains dependent for maintenance on the country manufacturing the system. Defence equipment imported from abroad is susceptible to espionage and sensitive information can be leaked/stolen through such imported systems. Domestically manufactured equipment reduces this vulnerability. In addition, the purchase from foreign countries usually takes a lot of time, and by the time the equipment comes, it has outdated technology.

India has done well recently to push its defence manufacturing capabilities. The creation of two defence corridors will evolve as hubs for the defence manufacturing industry along with private industries linked to the defence industries, skilled manpower, start-ups, and R&D institutions providing useful assistance. Defence indigenisation has been extended to areas such as Innovations for Defence Excellence, which seeks to generate innovation in aerospace and defence. Significantly, necessary provisions to boost indigenous defence industry (68 per cent) have been made and a Special Purpose Vehicle has been arranged in the budget. Indian Defence Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh, has recently stated that it will establish the role of the private industry as a partner beyond just a vendor or supplier. The positive list is yet another excellent decision that will go a long way towards ensuring a market for the indigenous defence industry. The fifth-generation fighter plane is likely to be manufactured in about three-and-a-half years while transport aircraft would start production by 2026. The exports have substantially increased, indicating bright prospects for the Indian defence industry. To attract investments, incentives are being given.

However, there would be key challenges to achieving the goals. First, investors' interests will have to be protected to ensure their continued support to the defence industry. The long-term challenge for India is to ensure deep and sustained investments in defence R&D. Increase in exports of indigenous weapons constitute an essential aspect for attracting investments. The government's decision to deploy defence attachés in the target countries is an excellent proposal, but they will require the whole of government support, including diplomatic missions and intelligence agencies to achieve the objective. Second, the start-ups and private players will need to be given sufficient assistance and assurance.

Third, it is important to ensure the quality of the products and induction of the latest technology to produce world-class equipment. The lessons from the Ukraine-Russia conflict need to be internalised. The drones are playing an important role, hence, greater emphasis is needed on this dimension. While research in AI is in focus, it must be pursued with greater vigour. India has an agreement with the US on critical and emerging technologies. It is essential to ensure that India gets the advanced technology it needs. The India-US Defence Policy Group keeps meeting and efforts are being made to enhance defence industrial cooperation and operationalise the India-US Major Defence Partnership. These must be actualised soon to achieve the desired results.

Fourth, the production will have to be accelerated to ensure timely delivery. Fifth, at present, some parts are imported for our products. India needs to have a defence industrial ecosystem that can meet the requirements of the Indian Armed Forces. These demand a greater push in the direction of *Atmanirbharta*, particularly when the security environment is deteriorating, causing not only security challenges but also economic problems.

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# Of Military History and War Diaries

Colonel Mandeep Singh (Retd)®

## Abstract

*The study of military history is as old as the history of mankind itself. Earlier the accounts of battles and wars were recorded in the form of epics and ballads. The forms of recording military accounts and events evolved with time, with war diaries being used as the primary source for writing of military history since the turn of the twentieth century. As the military histories are used to examine the past and make decisions about the future, it is essential that these are written honestly. Timely and honest generation and maintenance of war diaries is essential so that not only the military histories are written correctly but the right lessons are learnt from them.*

## Introduction

War is a serious business. It may be the last, and at times the only, resort to resolve disputes but it represents the failure of civility, of reason, of humane means of resolving conflicts and disputes. It is against the civilisational norms as it allows for the concentration of power in a select few and infringes on human rights.

The conduct of war is a complicated and difficult affair. It is also the most chaotic and stressful activity in which humans engage. It needs total attention of the military professional as not only the adversary but the very nature of warfare has to be fought and overcome to achieve the desired end-state. But as Sir BH Liddell Hart stated, the “direct experience is inherently too limited (for most military professionals) to form an adequate foundation either for theory or application.”<sup>1</sup> The armed forces

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need to study the past in the hope of finding tools for understanding war and preparing commanders and units for it.

It is also important to bear in mind that while war may be fought by states through their armed forces, it is ultimately fought by individuals who are scarred by their experience, both physically and mentally. It is, thus, not only the nations and societies that are affected by conflicts but these impact human psychology and psyche as well. This makes the study of war important to understand its impact and avoid past mistakes.

As history is filled with stories of war and conflicts, the field of historiography—the writing of history—is often rooted in recording military accounts and events. The early records were based on oral accounts of the conflicts but as wars evolved, the methods of recording history also evolved with the written records providing most of the information. Over time, the war diaries and historical reports generated by units and formations became the basic tools and foundations of official histories and are the essential primary source for such historiography.

### **Use of War Diaries and Historical Reports**

The war diaries have been kept and maintained for centuries but its format, as is known today, was standardised during the South African War 1899-1902, though it was during World War I that daily record-keeping was initiated when the British Expeditionary Forces implemented the same.<sup>2</sup> Generally written by the regimental adjutant or nominated junior officer, the purpose of these reports, known as war diaries, was to provide a record of operations for the official history of conflict and to provide information to allow the army to wage war more effectively. The war diaries were kept by all units and formations including every branch of staff of general headquarters. The Indian Army adopted the same practice and there is a rich collection of the war diaries that offers invaluable insight into the conduct of military operations by the Indian Army. In later years, the practice of generating annual historical reports was adopted to cover the period when the units and formations were not involved in active operations. They are today the primary source of history writing in the army.

At the functional level, Army Orders 7 of 1983 (AO 7/83) and 8 of 1983 (AO 8/83) lay down the detailed mechanism for initiating

and writing of war diaries and historical reports. AO 7/83 pertains to the generation of historical reports, the purpose of which is to "provide a record of motivities of formations and units".<sup>3</sup> It is required to be submitted by all formations/units when not committed on actual operations or internal security duties and should include the following:

- Location of the unit.
- Change in organisation.
- Postings and transfers of officers.
- Exercises carried out.
- Nature of training carried out and lessons learnt.
- Administrative problems and how these were solved.
- Morale of personnel and matters affecting it.
- Weapons and equipment, with some details of their performance in the case of new items.

The guidelines for generating war diaries are laid down in AO 8/83. These are required to be compiled half yearly, prepared in triplicate, when the unit or formation is employed on actual operations and on internal security, including counter-insurgency operations. When the unit or formation is employed on 'actual operations and during mobilisation', two copies of the war diary are to be sent to the Military Operations Directorate (MO-6) under the Army Headquarters, General Staff Branch but when deployed on internal security, including counter-insurgency operations, a copy each is to be sent to the Historical Division of Ministry of Defence and Records Offices by the units, whereas formations are required to send them to the Historical Division only.

War diaries are generally written and maintained by the regimental adjutant or nominated junior officer and though they may not be of great literary merit, they can provide a unique insight into a unit's and individuals' experience of an operation or the war. They are of importance as these are the basic records to provide a detailed and accurate account of the operations that can be used to prepare the history of the operation (or war).

### **Observations**

With such import, the moot question is - are the war diaries maintained in a manner that they meet the required standards? As the war diaries are to be maintained during operations on a daily basis, it is generally not a popular task, or something sought after, within a large number of units as it is regarded to be something that interferes with more important tasks. However, in spite of a large number of war diaries kept in a tardy manner, there are some very well-kept war diaries with a detailed account of the operations. In this regard, it is interesting to note that it is generally a unit in the thick of action, involved in heavy and bitter fighting, that kept the war diaries in a detailed and meticulous manner and the units under the least pressure had poorly maintained war diaries. One reason for poorly maintained war diaries is that these are not written on a daily basis, as the events unfolded. If the war diary is written after a lapse of several days or even weeks, factual errors are likely to creep in and the account may not be of any value thereafter. A large number of war diaries unfortunately fall under such a category.

Even with historical reports, the lessons learnt, problems and shortcomings, matters affecting morale, lapses, and details of performance of weapons and equipment are generally not included, and the emphasis is on visits and perceived achievements, which are not of much historical relevance. This disturbing trend can be observed in recent war diaries also. Both, historical reports and war diaries are increasingly being used for publicity (for want of better word) with emphasis on including large number of photographs to showcase activities of little, if any, historical import while tiding over the failures and shortcomings which invariably will still be existing.

### **Shortcomings Noted**

A major shortcoming of war dairies and historical reports is that most of them are less explicit than what they should be. They provide insufficient details and information included is not adequately definite. Yet, there are enough war diaries of yester years that provide detailed information that is usable for any historical study. War diary of an artillery regiment noted in 1945 that "Reaction of almost all Indian officers to new pay code is very unfavourable as they feel that the new pay code is not good enough to attract any capable man into the Army"<sup>4</sup> while another

noted that "The morale of the men is good although many wonder just what are they doing sitting on the gun site when there appears to be no apparent likelihood of hostilities. To these men, war seems to be dragging on and with no prospect of an early finish".<sup>5</sup>

The war dairies of yore also contain details of trials and new equipment. War diary of HQ (RA), 33 Indian Corps records that 8 Medium Regiment, RA carried out trials to "decide the relative effectiveness with different permissible fuses now that 117 and 118 fuses are not allowed to be used".<sup>6</sup> The war diary goes on to record the details of the results and recommendations made by the regiment. Similarly, the war diary of Camp Commandant, Headquarters 15 Indian Corps noted on 27 Jul 1944 that "Orders received for reorganisation of infantry battalions of 25 and 26 Indian Division on standard infantry Division will be carried out as soon as possible".<sup>7</sup>

As can be seen from aforementioned examples, war diaries and historical reports, if properly maintained and recorded, can be a rich source of information that can be used to write the military history and also draw relevant lessons for future. It is not that only the war diaries of pre-independence era included details of operations. War diaries of recent times, including of units committed in counter insurgency operations, are also an invaluable source of record of operation and lend to a serious study of conduct of military operations.

### **Recommendations**

The AOs mentioned above lay down the guidelines on writing and maintenance of war diaries and historical reports and they need to be followed while recording the daily events but it is important to remember that the main purpose of these two records is ultimately to write the military history and draw lessons for future. This is the most important aspect that needs to be kept central to the task of maintaining these documents. To this end, the details being recorded should be factually correct, honest, and avoid any hyperbole. It is worth noting that war diaries are not hagiography. They are simple, honest records of daily occurrences. The following may be of use:

- Operations and activities should be recorded in as great a detail as possible.
- The war diary should be maintained on a daily basis, with the activities being recorded on the same day on which they take place.

- Comments on experience gained, or any lessons learnt, should be included. This can be done personally by the commanding officer in case of a unit or by a senior staff officer in case of a formation headquarters.

Regarding historical reports, it will be wise to ask the following while writing the same:

- Are the details mentioned (or being recorded) of any relevance or use?
- Have the shortcomings noticed, or lapses been included?
- Can the details included in the report be used to draw any lessons?

A major lacunae in generation of historical reports is that the AO 7/83 states that, if required, appropriate security classification may be given but generally secret/top secret material should be avoided. As the unit/formation may err in appropriately classifying information, it results in a large amount of information being left out from these reports which rightfully should have been included.

### **Conclusion**

India unfortunately does not have a culture of serious study and writing of military history. Most of the war accounts are personal narratives or hagiographic accounts written mostly by retired army officers. There are hardly any objective analyses by trained historians on the *les affaires militaires*. Even the recent trend of writing operational accounts and narratives is too jingoistic to be of any real learning value to any military commander. A major reason is that the primary sources themselves, that is the war diaries and historical reports, are either poorly written and/or are not accessible for study. While the issue of developing this culture needs to be addressed at multiple levels, one thing that can be addressed and implemented without much ado is that the units and formations maintain the war diaries and historical reports in a truthful and honest manner so that they can be used to learn the right lessons. These lessons are essential for military leaders to develop critical thinking and decision making skills while facing ever increasingly complex challenges, as it is only by drawing from a wealth of lessons learned in past conflicts that a commander can prepare himself (or herself) for the next battle. The present generation of commanders owe this to the future generations.

### Endnotes

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<sup>3</sup> Army Order 7 of 1983

<sup>4</sup> War Diary 28<sup>th</sup> (Punjab) Para Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, September 1947

<sup>5</sup> File No 601/2439/WD, War Diary of 4th Indian LAA Regiment ( Now 29 LAA Regiment)

<sup>6</sup> War Diary of HQ Royal Artillery, 33 Indian Corps (File No MISC/566/H, Identifier: PR\_000004032985), National Archives of India, New Delhi

<sup>7</sup> War Diary of HQ Royal Artillery, 33 Indian Corps (File No MISC/566/H, Identifier: PR\_000004032985), National Archives of India, New Delhi

# Misinformation and Disinformation in UN Peace Operations

Major General PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)®

## Abstract

*One of the challenges of the current United Nations (UN) peace operations is the ‘mis and dis information’ campaign by the armed rebel groups as well as the not-so-friendly host states to malign the peace operations. Mis and disinformation undermine the trust of local communities, complicate negotiations, and even fuel conflict. This, in turn, besides placing the peacekeepers lives at risk, tends to alienate the local population. This article discusses how unchecked mis and disinformation campaign can adversely impact the performance of UN peace operations and transforms Blue Flag from a symbol of security into a target for attack.*

## Introduction

Peacekeeping is one of the most effective tools available to the United Nations (UN) in promotion and maintenance of international peace and security. Unfortunately, in many endless internal conflicts, political solutions are either absent or not acceptable to the warring factions, thus, ceding space to the internal or external spoilers. These kinds of conflicts are prevalent, pervasive, durable, and insoluble, since the issues of the dispute are emotionally charged. They give people their sense of belonging through their bond with her or his community and defining the source of satisfaction for her or his need for identity.<sup>1</sup> Even when an UN peace operation is launched, sometimes mission’s mandate lacks focus and clear priorities; thus, present-day peace operations face several intractable challenges. Multifaceted threats, in the prevailing operational environments, are on the rise, triggering

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avoidable injuries and fatalities to the peacekeepers. Another challenge is delivering on protection mandates and contributing to long-term, sustainable peace and development. More so, in today's social media driven environment, missions face lack of situational awareness, inadequate resources (personnel and equipment), and sometime UN force's reluctance to take risks to tackle these threats. This volatile situation gets further accentuated by Mis and dis information, which creates an extremely unfavourable environment for UN peace operations.

In today's digitally connected world, significance of information and communication needs no explanation. Information has real-life consequences as it can prove to be a life-saver – when it's authentic and true but, unfortunately, the opposite also happens. Today's global youth are digital native and more likely to be connected online than the rest of the population, making them the most digitally connected generation in history. In conflict-affected areas, people have little access to fair and impartial news media. Lack of information in the face of endless violence and ever evolving uncertainty adds to the frustration and anger on the perceived failure of UN or other foreign intervention. This ecosystem is a fertile ground for twisting the facts, planting stories against the peacekeepers, and creating well-crafted disinformation. At the same time, easy spread of information by social media and messaging applications further aggravates the issue. This has cumulatively resulted in the rapid spread of wrong information: misinformation and disinformation. These two words, misinformation and disinformation, so often used interchangeably, are merely one letter apart. But behind that one letter is the hidden 'critical distinction' between these confusable words i.e., intent. Unfortunately, it is the peacekeepers who are experiencing its ill-effects on ground.

Misinformation is 'false or inaccurate information'. Examples include rumours, insults, and pranks. On the other hand, disinformation is deliberate and includes malicious content such as hoaxes, spear phishing, and propaganda. It spreads fear and suspicion amongst the population.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, disinformation is misinformation that is intentionally spread, with intent to deceive and mislead; and this makes disinformation more powerful, potentially destructive and disruptive, especially in times of crisis, emergency, or conflict. False information about UN peacekeepers

is also nothing new; what is new is the scale at which false information is being mass-produced and the speed at which it spreads today. A growing barrage of motivated disinformation has targeted UN peace operations, particularly the missions in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mali (MINUSMA), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), and South Sudan (UNMISS). Disinformation, like peacekeepers are exploiting natural resources, colluding with armed groups or jihadists, sexual exploitation, and even supporting foreign troops is part of local campaign. It ultimately transforms 'Blue Flag' from a symbol of security into a target for attack and fuels open violence against UN personnel and partners.

Some unfortunate and reprehensible instances of grave misconduct by UN peacekeepers, like sexual exploitation and abuse of vulnerable population, provide ready credibility to the local campaign and make even the false allegations against peacekeepers more reliable. Advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has further strengthened disinformation by creating synthetic media, fake photographs, and cloning of voices of known personalities, called deep-fakes. AI can amplify bias, reinforce discrimination, and enable new levels of authoritarian surveillance.<sup>3</sup> Thus, disinformation makes it more difficult for peace operations to implement their mandates and endangers the safety of peacekeepers. In the overall analysis, disinformation is an integral part of broader challenges that are confronted by the UN peace operations. These may also include international and regional geopolitics and, most often, prevailing tense relationships with the host-state governments and populations.<sup>4</sup>

### **Case Studies**

Disinformation and misinformation campaigns have repeatedly targeted the UN peacekeepers in Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, South Sudan, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). These campaigns run from inside as well as outside the countries, increased in frequency and scope since 2022, endangering contingents, and jeopardising the missions' ability to implement their mandates.<sup>5</sup> To illustrate the impact of misinformation and disinformation, some cases from the ongoing UN peace operations are as under:

- In the DRC, the spread of rumours and false information about the Ebola virus contributed to mistrust and violence

against healthcare workers in 2019. “Fake news and misinformation about Ebola, Covid-19, and the vaccines that can curb these deadly diseases were rife and there was a lot of mistrust within communities” Yakubu Mohammed Saani, Country Director of Action Aid DRC explained.<sup>6</sup> Few rumours were like- “White people came with Ebola”, though they were around before Ebola. “You white people come for your own interest, to make money off Ebola”.<sup>7</sup> “People who died from Ebola are deliberately being killed in treatment centres”. This type of misinformation contributed to more than 130 attacks on healthcare facilities, during which dozens of people were killed. This made it difficult for UN peacekeepers and other organisations to work with the local communities to prevent the spread of the disease.

In 2022, consequences of misinformation and disinformation campaign by locals led to events of 25-26 July 2022, as narrated by Bintou Keita, Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), DRC during a seminar at the USI in October 2022. Angst against the peacekeepers was created through a sustained disinformation about the UN role. The local attack on the UN facility resulted in the death of at least 15 people in a violent demonstration in the North Kivu, DRC. Those killed included two Indian police officers and a Moroccan ‘blue helmet’. MONUSCO came under local criticism for its perceived inability to stop fighting in the conflict-torn East DRC, whereas peacekeepers are in the region to protect civilians. The SRSG added, “Fear, anxiety, and trauma are all having an impact on how we carry out our mandates”.<sup>8</sup>

- In Mali, a fake letter alleging that peacekeepers were collaborating with armed groups was posted on Facebook and it went viral on WhatsApp.<sup>9</sup> Rumours and conspiracy theories about the UN peacekeeping mission contributed to anti-UN sentiments and attacks against peacekeepers. Thus, it has become more challenging for the UN mission to gain trust and cooperation of local population as well as making their vital task of protecting civilians that much difficult. Now Malian Government has asked UN to withdrawn Peacekeeping Mission on the pretext that mission has failed to achieve its mandate. What happens to the civilians in Mali after the mission pulls out at the end of 2023? There are proponents of hiring Private Military Contractors (PMC) to protect civilians.

- In the CAR too, rumours and false information about the intentions of peacekeepers contributed to anti-UN sentiments and attacks against peacekeepers. This made it more challenging for the UN mission to build relationship with the local community and effectively carry out their mandate. In 2021, France suspended financial support and military cooperation with the CAR, accusing it of being complicit in a Russian-backed disinformation campaign targeting France's presence in Africa.<sup>10</sup>
- In South Sudan, social media platforms have been used to spread false information and hate speech, contributing to the escalation of violence and displacement of civilians. The spread of false information has also undermined the credibility of the peace process and made it more challenging for the UN mission to mediate between the warring parties. The Government of South Sudan is also to blame for the same. A free and vibrant media is one of the best ways to combat fake news and hate speech but the South Sudanese Government had created a near blackout of independent journalism in the country. Unfriendly news outlets were closed, journalists arrested and intimidated.<sup>11</sup> This allowed outside influence through Facebook posts.

### **Managing Information Landscape**

Disinformation is a significant challenge to UN peacekeeping missions as it undermines the trust of local communities, complicate negotiations, and even fuel conflict. New technologies have totally revolutionised the information landscape and today, these channels of communication and influence constitute both, critical assets and significant challenges for missions. Thus, information management has to be an integral part of all mission planning, execution, and evaluation. It remains a challenge for mission leadership, to proactively mitigate and contain mis- and disinformation risks. To succeed, UN peace operations need to be equipped with the necessary strategies, competencies, and resources. In the multi-faceted approach to tackle mis- and disinformation, 'Training and Strategic Communication', both, at operational and tactical level, are considered most important. In this regard, following steps are being taken:

- **Training.** Peacekeepers are being trained to identify and counter disinformation. For this they must be aware of:
  - Host nation's media landscape, its politicisation, polarisation and propaganda machinery.
  - Providing training to journalists and civil society organisations on how to recognise and report disinformation.
  - Use of technology assists peacekeepers, but it has its own limitations – no tool available to analyse Arabic, due to variety of dialects.<sup>12</sup>
  - Perception management plays a major role to counter disinformation. In 2006, after war, Security Council enhanced United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon's (UNIFIL) mandate and increased the number of peacekeepers to a maximum of 15,000<sup>13</sup>; in actual from 2000 to 13000. This enhancement was perceived as interference of the west in Arab Countries, which was not acceptable. Thus, mission leadership, at all levels, must clear perception of local population about responsibilities/tasks of mission by highlighting mandate.
  - Though it's a very important issue, missions have limited resources and capabilities to counter.
  - UN to provide guidance on training, including collecting and sharing best practices with troop contributing countries.
- **Strategic Communication.** Disinformation is not merely a technical or tactical issue but more of a political and strategic issue that requires the proactive attention of mission leaders. It requires a mission-wide coordinated approach and could be mitigated by building missions' strategic communications capacity. Communications, which are credible, accurate, and human-centred, is one of the best and most cost-effective instruments to counter disinformation. While we live in an increasingly digital world, direct person to person communication often remains the most powerful way to build trust and counter false narratives. Missions must conduct town-hall style gatherings in local communities with village elders, young people, women groups, and others to learn, and to listen to provide them with accurate information, to dispel rumours, and build trust. It strengthens the understanding amongst the local

population of our missions and mandates and, in turn, strengthens peacekeepers' understanding of the local population's concerns, grievances, expectations and hopes. But, to be effective, it must be grounded in evidence, based on verified data, open to dialogue, rooted in storytelling, and delivered by credible messengers. UN missions must also publicise its success stories at local, regional and national level. The missions should also work with local media and civil society organisations to promote accurate reporting and educate the public about the mission's objectives and activities. In short, it must be integrated into planning cycles and risk management efforts to promote successes, manage expectations, and help address misinformation, disinformation and hate speech.<sup>14</sup>

- **Fact Checking.** Accurate and timely information is essential for decision making and successful achievement of the mission's objectives. Missions to establish fact-checking mechanisms to verify information before disseminating it, to ensure that the information shared is accurate and reliable.<sup>15</sup> Missions must maintain transparent communications with the public to help build trust and dispel false rumours and misconceptions.
- **Partnership.** The missions should partner with host government, civil society organisations, local media, and other stakeholders to promote accurate information and counter disinformation.
- **Monitoring and Reporting.** The missions should monitor and report on disinformation and misinformation campaigns, which helps to raise awareness and builds resilience against such tactics. To ensure effectiveness, we must adjust as necessary and adapting our strategy to the tactical necessities of the specific contexts we operate in.
- **Accountability.** The missions to enforce measures to hold those who spread disinformation accountable, including through investigations and legal action.

### **Conclusion**

Both at headquarters and on the ground, UN personnel are attempting to address disinformation against the UN. Nonetheless, the scale at which this challenge has grown far exceeds the UN

ability to respond. They need greater capacity and coordination to monitor and analyse disinformation, both online and offline. They need more streamlined approval processes so that they respond to disinformation more quickly. In the longer term, they need to shift toward preventive approaches, including proactively reshaping narratives about the UN and contributing to a healthier information environment through support to local journalists. At the mission level, adopting a whole-of-mission approach across uniformed and civilian components to foster a networked communication in the field will be beneficial. For this, military, police and civilian officers skilled in strategic communications be considered or trained for.

Thus, addressing disinformation is not solely a task for missions' leadership but effectively tackling disinformation requires putting it in the broader political context and understanding its drivers - a task that falls on a broad array of actors within and outside of the UN, both at UN HQ and mission leadership and host govt.

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# **Fifty Years after India's First Airborne Operation at Poongli Bridge, Tangail: What we know of its Planning?**

## **(Part 2)**

**Lieutenant Colonel RS Bangari®**

### **Abstract**

*The objective of this article is to try and uncover what we know about the planning process of the airborne operation at Poongli Bridge, along with its execution, to achieve the desired objectives. This was the first classic parachute operation mounted by the Indian Army since independence and in its success we need to know what went into its making: with the starting step being the planning stage. This article first looks at the different accounts of the 1971 War by various authors, specifically relating to the chosen area of interest, including as many as possible key participants and other critical observers and researchers. Based on these, one could apply logical analysis and counterfactual arguments to identify the most likely scenario(s) to arrive at what may have been the case. Once we have some idea of the key planning factors and evolution sequence, we could also briefly correlate our understanding with the initial execution of the plans as they were put into motion. This preliminary study will, hopefully, lay the foundation for a more informed debate on certain highlights and issues that this article will bring up. This is the concluding part of the article wherein, Part 1 was published in the previous (April - June 2023) issue of the USI Journal.*

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**Major General HS Kler, the then Brigade Commander 95 Mountain Brigade**

Major General Hardev S Kler writes that while making his plans to achieve the tasks set for him by the General Officer Commanding 101 Communication Zone Area (GO 101 CZA), he eventually conceived a plan that furthered the overall objectives, which included the plan to drop the airborne Battalion (Bn) Group at Tangail.<sup>1</sup> Kler, then a Brigadier commanding 95 Mountain Brigade (Mtn Bde), placed under 101 CZA, says that he first brought up his ideas broadly encompassing the plan on 04 Nov, when the Army Commander, Lieutenant General JS Aurora, visited his brigade (p 66). He writes his initial realisation of this idea after his brigade was tasked with the capture of Mymensingh and they had moved to Tura by the end of Oct and begun the planning process in his own words, "A scrutiny of the lay of the land struck me that our planners had completely missed out the tactical and strategic role of the land approach to Dacca. Another plan, which initially seemed far-fetched, then started taking shape in my mind. In broad terms, this involved an advance from Kamalpur to Bakshiganj, crossing the River Brahmaputra west of Jamalpur, establishing a roadblock on the road Jamalpur-Tangail, ask for a parachute drop at Tangail to cut off the withdrawal of enemy troops and then dash for Dacca". (P. 65-66) (See Figure 3 for operations of 101 CZA).

This plan, he writes, found approval of the two Generals in the audience (the Army Commander and the GO 101 CZA) who were "Suitably impressed and agreed with me".<sup>2</sup> This was followed up with a sand model on 12 Nov, where it was seemingly validated for execution, as per Kler (p. 21).<sup>3</sup> In fact, Kler's 95 Mtn Bde executed its operations more or less in line with the broad outline he lists out as discussed at this sand model discussion (p. 21).

**Brigadier (then Captain) PK Ghosh, Officer sent for Advance Intelligence Collection into Bangladesh**

Captain PK Ghosh was despatched on a behind-the-enemy-lines mission to secure information that would help finalise the selection of the Drop Zone (DZ) and aid in the execution of the paradrop operation with the help of local Mukti Bahini cadres under Tiger Siddiqui, a Mukti Bahini commander operating in the general area identified.

The final DZ selection may have been based on the inputs sent back by Captain PK Ghosh, who had infiltrated into Bangladesh on the nights of 01/02 Dec to secure actionable intelligence besides other supporting tasks with the help of Tiger Siddiqui who was operating in the area. This is mentioned in accounts by Ghosh and Nuran Nabi, a member of Tangail Mukti Bahini.<sup>4</sup> This seemingly was the only such mission mounted, which is also mentioned by Lieutenant General Thomas in his account, who writes about telling Captain Ghosh not to inform anyone, even his own family, about the mission he was being sent on. Captain Ghosh, however, was not told the date and location of the drop for security reasons.<sup>5</sup>

### **Additional Observer Accounts**

As regards the role of GOC 101 CZA, Major General GS Gill, we did not come across any account by General Gill himself, but there is a mention about his involvement in employment of the airborne operation in the account by Major General Lachhman Singh, who has authored 'Victory in Bangladesh'.<sup>6</sup> He writes that, "At Gill's insistence, his task was enlarged to include the capture of Tangail" and "[A] paratroop was also planned to secure the bridge on the Lohaganj river north of Tangail and cut the retreat of the withdrawing Pakistanis" (p. 150). Lachhman Singh adds that in view of Major General GS Gill's plans "To press on to Tangail to get behind the enemy forces at Mymensingh and destroy them piecemeal. [Lieutenant General] Aurora agreed to strengthen Gill and improve his chances of destroying the enemy at Tangail by interposing a parachute drop of a battalion in support of Gill's operations" (p.151). Lachhman Singh, however, does not state specifically 'when and where' this meeting or exchange took place, but clearly it seems to be during the planning process when Gill is arguing for expansion of the initial tasks allocated to him, i.e., from "To reach the river and capture Jamalpur and Mymensingh" to include "The capture of Tangail" and, finally, to also include "Contact Dacca by D plus 12/13" (p. 150). It is to be noted that a similar request is claimed to have been made by Brigadier Kler while making his case with the Army Commander, in presence of the GOC 101 CZA, at the sand model referred to above. So, it is possible that this may be a reference to those revised plans.

Commanding Officer (CO), 2 Para, Lieutenant Colonel (later Major General) KS Pannu, writing about 2 Para's operation at

Tangail in 'The Story of the Indian Airborne Troops'<sup>7</sup>, does not mention anything about the operational planning process and how the plan itself emerged. His account focuses more on the on-ground execution of the task by 2 Para Bn Group and its subsequent triumphant entry into Dacca.

While going over some of the accounts covering Air Force participation in the Eastern Command sector, one finds that most do not go into the planning towards selection of the para drop zone, as is to be expected<sup>8</sup>, though, there is a mention of the various alternatives considered in the record of air operations in the east by Jagan Mohan and Chopra.<sup>9</sup> They write that "Director of Military Operations (DMO) identified likely operations: Capturing Kurmitola airfield; Subsequent strengthening of force to capture Dacca; Capturing Hardinge bridge; D-day (commencement of hostilities) + 5: paratroop at Tangail to block retreating forces [...]; Capture bridge near Jhenida-Magura road to assist 4 Mountain Division (the Division's rapid pace of progress made this mission unnecessary); Para battalion drop to capture Kamarkali ferry on Madhumati River; D+10: Para company drop to capture targets of opportunity in II Corps area; Only after D+15: Para Bn to capture Kurmitola; to be reinforced by the brigade drop to assist the fall of Dacca". (pp. 291-292). From what we know already, it is quite likely that these may have been the tentative tasks identified early on, in the initial planning stage because the authors go on to add that, "These tasks were confirmed by Advance Headquarter (AHQ), Eastern Air Command with directives issued for planning drop zones, mounting airfields and aircraft allocation" (p. 292).

#### **What we know about the planned second 'Battalion less Two Company Group' Airborne Drop (later called-off)**

We do not hear much about this second smaller airborne operation that was being planned alongside the 2 Para Bn Group drop as it was eventually not executed. Major General Afsir Karim, then CO of 8 Para, that was earmarked for this task, writes in 'The Story of the Indian Airborne Troops'<sup>10</sup> that it was decided to "Drop 2 Para Group at Tangail to interdict enemy forces withdrawing to Dacca from the north and to drop a two company group task force of 8 Para at Jhenida to cut off enemy's withdrawal towards the Madhumati River" (p. 186). However, "Jhenida drop ... was cancelled at the last moment as the enemy abandoned this sector

prematurely in order to get across the Madhumati River. 4 Infantry Division, therefore, had little problem in capturing Jhenida 48 hours ahead of the timetable" (p. 187). The two company group task force of 8 Para then rejoined the Para Brigade, less 2 Para Bn Group that was operating in a ground role in the same sector. Not much is known about existence of any alternative plans for this force and reasons why one of those was not followed up at this stage are not known. On the early morning of 08 Dec, 8 Para two company group task force had been released and was in the process of joining the brigade.<sup>11</sup> Operations in all four sectors of Eastern Command to achieve their objectives in East Pakistan were still underway and these troops possibly could have been effectively employed somewhere to expedite the ongoing operations, but there seems to be no planning for such a contingency.

### **Likely Planning Scenario(s) and Emergence of the Airborne Operation**

The above accounts give us an idea of how the planning of the airborne operation proceeded though individual accounts are sometimes at variance with one another. There are some overlaps, and even inconsistencies, that can be spotted across some of these accounts, which is possible in a complex scenario as this, especially when ideas are being floated and discussed at multiple levels and the paper trail is not strong. It is not within the scope of this article to comment on the veracity of all these above accounts emanate from their individual perspectives that see only a partial picture, putting themselves at the centre of things, so to say. Also, it is naturally to be expected, in the post-hoc context, that the author or ownership for the airborne operation's plans would have many claimants, bringing to mind the adage; 'Victory has many fathers and defeat is an orphan'. It is, though, likely that various formation commanders would have bid for the Para Bn (or Bn less) Group airborne operation to support their respective formation's operations, since they knew of its availability and the area of Tangail and near-abouts seemed a feasible, no-risk kind of a scenario. Let's review some of the other likely inferences from the above review.

**Planning Timeline and Process.** What emerges from the above accounts is that as HQ Eastern Command's plans began to take some shape, it was engaged with the airborne element that was

made available to it and various options were considered at different levels in a consultative manner. While detailed appreciation for specific operational employment most likely took place at the command level, Major General IS Gill was on hand to give his advice on the options being considered, as well as active encouragement for the feasible options. It is not clear from a review of materials discussed above, if bids for available airborne resources were called for from the formations engaged in this theatre. Evidently, this may have been constrained by the time of issue of the Operational Instructions from the Army HQ and then by the Eastern Command<sup>12</sup>, though broad planning and scenario war-gaming would certainly have been going on simultaneously. It is not very clear why 4 Corps, which was to operate in an area very densely intersected by riverine terrain, did not visualise any opportunity for airborne forces' employment to further their operations, with Lieutenant General Sagat Singh, the Corps Commander, having commanded the 50 (I) Para Brigade earlier. Though, he was in the process of securing 110 Helicopter Unit's Mi-4s for his Corps, he was initially asked to plan for at most a company heli-borne effort.<sup>13</sup> One wonders if it was the operating limitations put on these airborne forces' employment (some of these brought up earlier) that limited flexibility with a commander which was a detriment to strong bids by Sagat Singh. This was coupled with the fact that till late in Nov, and even thereafter, there was lack of clarity on whether his Corps' objective visualised crossing of the Meghna and a move towards Dacca to begin with. If so, this calls for a need for review of future planning processes so that commanders in field are not stymied by these limitations and lack of flexibility noted above. Perhaps, some of the structural reasons for those have been overcome already, or may be not.

It appears that as the operational plans were being finalised, most likely, by mid-Oct or early Nov, a broad consensus on the employment of the Para Bn Group would likely have emerged and resources approved and committed. At this stage, Tangail, not Kurmitola, was narrowed down to as an objective. The specific drop-zone from amongst a few available choices around this objective would have been chosen further closer to the date, based on air-photos and aided by reconnaissance reports sent back by Captain Ghosh, as mentioned above.

**Key Constraints Limiting the Scope.** We see that an effort was made to broaden the scope of the employment of the airborne element to maximise their utility; however, a governing limitation was that of the air resources the air force could provide for support to the army in this context. The resource availability against expected time horizon is given in Lieutenant General Thomas's account, as seen above. This seems to have restricted the scope of employment of the airborne force in support of the ground operations in the Eastern Command area of operations. A point to note is that despite this being an ideal operational scenario, where the Air Force had gained complete air-superiority over the battleground in the Eastern Sector by D plus 3<sup>14</sup>, it was still limited by overall resource constraints to make available sufficient resources to enhance the operational employment of the airborne force against other competing demands. This factor alone may be more critical in any future conflict and innovative work-arounds will need to be considered and developed.

**Planning Process. Top-down or Bottom-up.** Army HQs instructions to the Eastern Command, in mid-August, were followed up by Eastern Command's instructions to the three Corps and 101 CZA soon after. In the intervening period since the early warning sometime in April, broad planning had begun over maps and sand-models. As the plans would have crystallised over these brainstorming sessions, formation commanders would likely have bid for additional resources to achieve their objectives more efficiently and in a timely manner. Records of such bids, if made, for any vertical-lift force employment, e.g., airborne or heliborne, are conspicuous by their absence, in general, in most battle accounts, starting with the official history and Lieutenant General Jacob's account of the Eastern Command's planning. One finds such references only in the accounts of or about commanders from 101 CZA, that have been recounted above. These commanders were, however, already very much in the airborne operation planning loop, as it were. Hence, this could be a result of what could be termed here as 'critical occurrence bias': which can be explained as the tendency in people to bring up or recall facts and events (or even conjure these up) associating themselves closely with critical incidents in the post-hoc scenario, rather than bring up or refer to missing data or events.<sup>15</sup>

Curiously, Lieutenant General Sagat Singh, the erstwhile 50 (I) Para Bde Commander, who led it in the 1961 liberation of Goa, comes across as somewhat reticent in the manner of bold bids for these resources. Is this possibly due to the restrictions placed by the Eastern Command on the 4 Corps' objectives initially, aggravated by the uncertainty of flexibility in availability of these resources on call as per the evolving operational situation when battle would be joined?<sup>16</sup> If so, then this limit and restriction upon assured availability of critical operational air resources to further ground operations is a serious issue, especially when considered here against the air force's plans and its confidence about ensuring complete air superiority within the initial days of the war once it broke out.

**Objectives Considered: Strategic or Tactical.** The focus of the airborne forces' employment appears to be oriented to the operations of 4 Corps and 101 CZA, in view of the expectation of these thrusts as being most likely to get to Dacca quickest. However, there does not appear to be any serious bid for these forces from 4 Corps and by design or default, the area considered for the Bn Group airborne operation remained in the Tangail-Kurmitola airfield region. With Kurmitola being ruled out during Eastern Command's planning, Tangail, and the area around, seems to have been the sole contender for this operation. Looked at objectively, while capture of Kurmitola provided the possibility of unhinging the defence of Dacca and bringing the war in the east to an expeditious end, there was an element of risk involved as noted above. In contrast, the drop at Tangail, at least as initially planned<sup>17</sup>, was more of a tactical enhancement of the thrust by 101 CZA, in view of its planned operational timeline (see below), which cut down relatively on the element of boldness and surprise. The level and manner of employment of such critical resources need deliberate thought to maximise their effect.

**Integration of the Airborne Operation with 101 CZA's Plans.** Thomas brings out that the earliest this Airborne Bn Group could be launched was on D plus 7 and that seems to have been treated as a hard constraint.<sup>18</sup> To what extent it was concurrently dove-tailed with 101 CZA's operations is difficult to state. Though 95 Mtn Bde's Kler writes<sup>19</sup> that on 08 Dec, as his brigade was surrounding the 31 Baluch Regiment entrenched strongly at Jamalpur, he assured the Eastern Army Commander, Lieutenant

General Aurora, that he would stick to the operation's D-day schedule and requested him to "Allow the para drop to proceed as planned on 11 Dec" (p. 90). Kler eventually was planning the attack on Jamalpur on night 10/11, however, luckily that action was not needed as 31 Baluch attempted to break out of Jamalpur the same night — a move that was 'sensed' by Kler (as he writes) in time and the brigade's attack plans changed to ambush 31 Baluch on the road south to Tangail (p. 91-93). It looks like that there was an element of luck, chance or boldness, whatever you call it, as plans for the link-up would likely have been affected if 31 Baluch had continued to resist at Jamalpur, which they seemingly were capable of.<sup>20</sup>

However, this does raise a couple of pertinent questions. If 95 Mtn Bde's operations had proceeded smoothly as per their initial plans (which would have been their normal expectation in view of the lead preparatory time), would the airborne drop have been too late to be of any substantive practical use? Eventually, in the scenario that finally evolved as described here, was there any flexibility to advance the airborne drop so as to more effectively interfere with the enemy withdrawing towards Tangail and on to Dacca or to put pressure on the entrenched enemy forces from the rear or even, more boldly, unhinge their positions in a classic coup-de-main coordinated move?

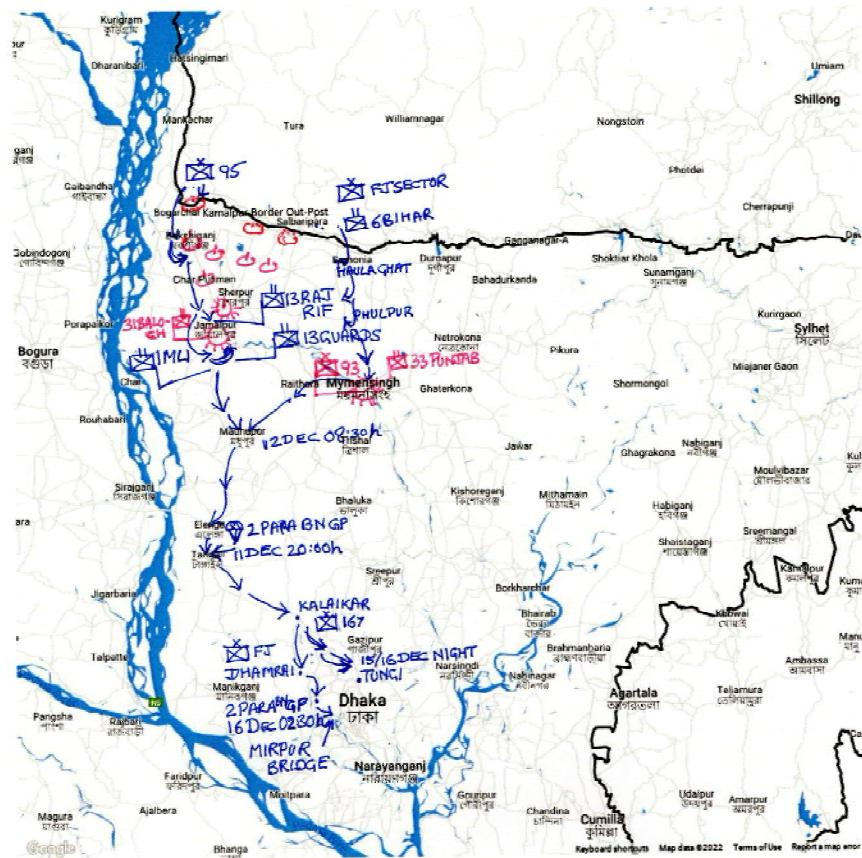
**Responses during Dynamically-paced Operations limited to Pre-planned Contingencies.** One aspect of the planning and execution that stands out starkly is that when the operational dynamics took over, further deliberations of operational plans and employment of resources were seen to be very much limited by the contingencies earlier discussed, and planned for, in the preparatory period. Especially, as we see in context of airborne operation planning during this war, due to various constraints and limited flexibility, commanders were not able to fine-tune force employment more effectively as the war progressed, e.g., the bn less two company group airborne element, was not employed and the bn group airborne drop employed just as initially planned. In fact, 'behavioural decision theory', a field that has developed over the last 60-70 years, tells us that our brain system can only take a limited amount of uncertainty during stress and that it falls to previously learned responses during such crises.<sup>21</sup> The clear learning for tomorrow's leaders from this is that if they do go

beyond the envelope of conventional thinking during peace time training, they will never be able to come up with creative, timely responses to crises situations that often demand newer, as against standard but expected, responses<sup>22</sup>; they will, instead, fall back to their learned, albeit, tried and tested routines that may not be adequate under the emerging circumstances.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In conclusion, while this article may be beset by limitations in terms of availability of truthful, factual and more number of in-depth accounts of this operation's planning process that could throw better light on the issues it delves into, existing information and accounts throw up interesting points to ponder. The article uses these as points of departure to make some tentative arguments based on what we know and it seeks to initiate a debate into this critical aspect of planning and employment of potentially unhinging forces in the current and emerging battlefield environments. In a future scenario, these resources needn't be restricted to airborne forces alone and, in fact, could be in conjunction with other specialised and field forces working jointly to introduce newer dimensions of combat potential. The planning and execution of these operations, however, as seen here, would be limited by human minds that may need to open up to their limitations and work to extend those. The review also shows us how the reluctance of operational commanders, and other participants, to record their experiences and the thinking process in a more forthright and truthful manner can lead to deficiencies and gaps in the analysis of various operational actions in the future, thus, limiting the learning potential for the future generations.

By analysing this operation as a case to trigger further debate on some relevant issues, we look forward to contrary and contrasting viewpoints and analyses which would help throw further light on some of these critical aspects we have raised above, that we all need to debate and learn from. Any such analysis or viewpoint should be truthful and based on the prevailing situation and information available then; not on post-hoc outcomes and information that we know now.



**Figure 3 : Operations of 101 Communication Zone Area**  
 (Sketch overlaid on contemporary Google map of the general area)

#### Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Maj. Gen. Hardev S Kler, Making of a plan: The capture of Dhaka, in Maj. Gen. DC Katoch and Lt. Col. Q S A Zahir's (Eds.), Liberation: Bangladesh—1971, Bloomsbury, New Delhi, pp. 65-67.

<sup>2</sup> Major General HS Kler, 12 Days to Dacca, Quest Publishers, 2015/2017, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> This claim does run contrary to Jacob's accounts and this aspect has been brought up by Kler (*ibid.*), who substantiates his side with specific names and details of the audience present at the sand model.

<sup>4</sup> Brig. P K Ghosh, Behind Enemy Lines, Section 3(4), pp. 161-170 and Nuran Nabi, The Tangail Landings, Section 3(3), pp.150-160 in Maj. Gen. D C Katoch and Lt. Col. Q S A Zahir's (Eds.) Liberation: Bangladesh—1971, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup> Ghosh, pp. 167-168 and Thomas, p. 21.

<sup>6</sup> Maj. Gen. Lachhman Singh, Victory in Bangladesh, Natraj Publishers, Dehradun, Reprinted 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Maj. Gen. K S Pannu, Operation Cactus Lily: 1971, pp. 193-201, in Maj. Gen. Afsir Karim's (Editor) The Story of the Indian Airborne Troops, Lancer Publishers, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Air Vice Marshal A K Tiwary in 1971 Air War: Battle for Air Supremacy, Book Excerpt "Indian Air Force in Wars, Lancer Publishers, 2013", in Indian Defence Review, 15 November 2017, accessed on 1 May 2022 at <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/1971-air-war-battle-for-air-supremacy/0/>, wherein he writes, "Well before the war began, contingency planning for a battalion paratroop at four places had already been effected — Tangail being the 'priority one' drop."

<sup>9</sup> P V S Jagan Mohan and Samir Chopra, Eagles over Bangladesh: The India Air Force in the 1971 Liberation War, HarperCollins Publishers India, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Maj. Gen. Afsir Karim, Chapter 6: Operations in East Pakistan (Bangladesh): 1971, pp. 184-192, in Maj. Gen. Afsir Karim (Editor), The Story of the Indian Airborne Troops, Lancer Publishers, 1993.

<sup>11</sup> Karim, p. 189.

<sup>12</sup> Operation Instructions by the Army HQ were issued on 16 August (Jacob, 1997/2018, p. 74) and soon thereafter issued by the Eastern Command too. Randhir Singh gives more details of the planning process, the to and fro and all that, right from end May, by when Jacob "had already prepared an outline framework", in, Maj. Gen. Randhir Singh, A Talent for War: The Military Biography of Lt Gen Sagat Singh, Vij Books, 2013/2015 reprint (p. 116; pp. 115-120).

<sup>13</sup> Randhir Singh mentions that Sagat was "mandated to utilise only one company for heliborne operations ... required to make detailed plans and submit them well in advance ... (but he) gave a non committal reply and submitted no plans" (Sinh, ibid, p. 131). There is some ambiguity about when helicopter resources were made available to 4 Corps, since Randhir Singh mentions that these came under their command only on 6/7 December (p. 193-194), but Jacob (1997/2018) mentions that for 4 Corps to also pose a threat to Dacca, "they were allotted the complete Mi4 helicopter resources, i.e., fourteen helicopters. These were sent to them

prior to operations for training." (p. 74) This, however, is also not supported by Sqn Ldr Pushp Vaid in his account, Special Heliborne Operations(SHBOs) by Mi-4s in the 1971 Liberation War, in Sqn Ldr RTS Chhina (Ed.), Battle Tales: Soldiers' Recollections of the 1971 War, 2022, pp. 87-116. Vaid was the Flight Commander of 110 HU and actively involved in planning and conduct of these heliborne operations from 7 December onwards.

<sup>14</sup> Prasad et al., op. cit., p. 598-599, 615-616.

<sup>15</sup> This is a slight off-take on the work of Kahneman and Tversky and other psychologists on heuristics and biases, namely, the more well-known "hindsight" and "self-serving" biases. From the examples discussed above, these commanders at least appear to give themselves sole or more credit for the planning and execution of this airborne operation, especially as it turned out to be successful, critical and (possibly) easy to execute.

<sup>16</sup> This is mentioned in various accounts, including, Sukhwant Singh, Lachhman Singh and Randhir Singh, ibid.

<sup>17</sup> This is an important point to consider and must not be mixed up with the turn of events subsequently on ground after 14 December, when 2 Para Bn Group happened to be in the right place at the right time and provided the GOC 101 CZA with enhanced capability by resuming advance on a newly discovered axis that struck straight at the heart of Dacca at the Mirpur bridge. This is well covered in any of the accounts earlier above, e.g., Prasad, Praval, etc.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas, 2022, op. cit.

<sup>19</sup> Maj. Gen. Hardev S Kler, The Battle of Jamalpur, in Maj. Gen. DC Katoch and Lt. Col. Q S A Zahir's (Eds.), Liberation: Bangladesh—1971, Bloomsbury, New Delhi, pp. 88-94.

<sup>20</sup> Salik, op cit, p. 187-189.

<sup>21</sup> There is a long history of behavioural decision research that brings out the limits of the functioning of human minds in general and especially during stressful conditions. This encompasses the work of researchers such as Simon, Kahneman, Tversky, Bazerman and Thaler amongst others. Of these, Simon, Kahneman and Thaler have been awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences for their contributions to the emergence of this field.

<sup>22</sup> There is a bit of a play of words here, in that, crises situations are exactly so because they have not been thought of yet and hence require creative and situationally-appropriate responses by leaders.

# **South China Sea: Dracophobia and the Lilliputian Dilemma in a Gulliverian (China) Neighbourhood**

**Dr Irfan Ul Haq®**

## **Abstract**

*The South China Sea (SCS) holds massive historical significance as the epicentre of the Indo-Pacific Region. The SCS holds immense economic and strategic importance, with its sea lanes facilitating over 80 per cent of international trade, making it vital for countries' commercial and security interests. The rise of China and the consequent geopolitical response from the United States (US) makes the region strategically alluring for both the ruling as well as the rising power. Furthermore, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD), involving India, Japan, Australia, and the US, has the potential to counter China's expansionist ambitions and uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific. This US-China dynamic elevates the stakes for the smaller states within the region. China, recognising the strategic significance of the SCS for its national interests, has publicly designated the region as a matter of fundamental importance. Consequently, neighbouring countries have become increasingly concerned about Beijing's alleged ambitions of transforming the area into a Chinese-dominated sphere as Beijing wants to be Godzilla of Asia. This prevailing dracophobia in the region has led to a series of miscalculations and sporadic disputes. Consequently, the SCS is evolving into the most vibrant and contentious geopolitical hotspot. It is in this context that this article analyses the Lilliputian dilemma among the smaller regional neighbours of Gulliverian world.*

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## Introduction

The countries of Southeast Asia hold a strong emphasis on sovereignty, making the principle of non-intervention a cornerstone of their foreign and interregional relations. In addition to being a vital hub for trade and transportation, Southeast Asia encompasses crucial sea lanes of communication, accounting for 32 per cent of global oil net trade and 27 per cent of global gas net trade.<sup>1</sup> It is no surprise, therefore, that the regional countries are highly protective of their maritime rights. Unfortunately, as Mark Valencia astutely observes that “when Asian nations think of the maritime domain, their focus tends to gravitate towards boundary conflicts rather than the preservation of the declining marine environment or the management of dwindling fisheries”.<sup>2</sup> The South China Sea (SCS) disputes and border conflicts among the regional states have elevated the region to be a primary concern for China. Moreover, due to Southeast Asia’s geopolitically pivotal location as a bridge connecting two oceans and two continents—Oceania and Asia—it becomes an alluring region for an emerging global power like China. Consequently, the region has experienced significant political shifts and the emergence of new security risks.<sup>3</sup> Despite the historical grievances and longstanding territorial disputes, the ongoing maritime claims are now placing strain on the previously successful regional security structure.<sup>4</sup> Chinese assertiveness in the SCS not only presents significant geopolitical challenges for regional and extra-regional powers, like the US, but also elicits a range of counter-responses. The region finds itself at a critical juncture where the actions and intentions of China have far-reaching implications for the stability and security of Southeast Asia and beyond.

### **China’s Growing Geopolitical Assertiveness in SCS: Unpacking the Implications**

The SCS holds immense historical significance as the epicentre of the Indo-Pacific Region. With the rise of diplomacy and a rapidly expanding global economy, the strategic allure of this region is expected to increase. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), over 80 per cent of all international trade in 2021 was conducted through waterways, with Asia accounting for 54 per cent of global maritime trade.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, the SCS is evolving into the most vibrant and contentious geopolitical hotspot. Territorial and sovereignty disputes plague the region, with conflicting claims over islands, rocks, reefs,

territorial waters, exclusive economic zones, and the seabed. Additionally, military and maritime activities in the region as well as concerns about environmental degradation further contribute to the volatile nature of the area. China, recognising the strategic significance of the SCS for its national interests, has publicly designated the region as a matter of fundamental importance.<sup>6</sup> It is important to note that Beijing is unwavering when it comes to its core interests, as evident in its assertive maritime manoeuvres. The Chinese claims over the SCS have created a complex web of intractable challenges, stretching from the Cold War era to present-day assertions. Historical incidents, such as the attacks on Vietnam over the Paracel Islands in 1974 and the Fiery Cross Reef in 1988, as well as conflicts with the Philippines over the Mischief Reef in 1995, demonstrate the long-standing tensions. More recent events, including armed skirmishes in the Scarborough Shoal in 2015 and encounters involving vessels like the *Impeccable* and the *USNS Bowditch*, further underscore the unstable and intricate nature of the region.<sup>7</sup> China's unwavering stance on its indisputable sovereignty based on historic rights, along with its nine/eleven dotted line claims, contributes to the complexities and challenges surrounding the SCS. Through this line, China claims 90 per cent of the territory of the SCS and if acknowledged by others, its neighbouring countries had observed that this would create, to use Graham Allison's words, a 'South China Lake'.<sup>8</sup> The region remains a simmering tinderbox, with the potential for significant geopolitical consequences.

China's military innovations, long-term investments in coast guard capabilities, and expansive commercial maritime assets have significantly enhanced its ability to exert influence in the SCS region. Consequently, neighbouring countries have become increasingly concerned about Beijing's alleged ambitions of transforming the area into a Chinese-dominated sphere. This prevailing 'dracophobia' in the region has led to a series of miscalculations and sporadic disputes.<sup>9</sup> Recognising the geopolitical significance of the SCS, China has been steadily increasing its naval presence, viewing the sea as a second Persian Gulf.<sup>10</sup> The potential oil resources near the Spratly Islands alone are estimated to range from 105 billion to 213 billion barrels, with gas reserves varying from 266 trillion to over 2,000 trillion cubic feet.<sup>11</sup> Regarding the Spratly Islands issue, Beijing maintains a stance of subscribing to no multilateral consultations, no internationalisation of the

dispute, and no specification of claims. Recent developments further exemplify China's efforts to solidify its presence in the region. For instance, China has deployed an early warning radar system at Fiery Cross Reef in the Spratly archipelago, bolstering its installations there. In addition, off the West coast of the Philippines, China maintains a naval presence at Mischief Reef.<sup>12</sup> These strategic moves by China have raised concerns among neighbouring countries, intensifying tensions and exacerbating the already complex dynamics in the SCS. It is these countries who face challenges like 'Lilliputians' when dealing with a much larger and more powerful neighbour China, who on the other hand is like 'Gulliver' in the land of Lilliput, like a dominant and influential force in the neighbourhood.

The US's interests in the SCS are increasingly at risk. Washington has a profound and enduring interest in ensuring that sea lines of communication remain open to all states for both, commercial and peaceful military activities. The control exerted by China over the near-seas region could have significant implications for the security framework of the Indo-Pacific Region. It particularly raises concerns about the US's ability to fulfil its obligations to Taiwan as outlined in the Taiwan Relations Act.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, it could create challenges in meeting its commitments under regional security and defence treaties, especially with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. Furthermore, Chinese control over the SCS could impede the US's capacity to manoeuvre its forces in the Western Pacific for various reasons. This includes maintaining regional stability, fulfilling engagement and partnership-building responsibilities, managing crises, and executing war plans. Washington's primary interest lies in safeguarding the rights to navigate, overfly, and conduct military exercises within waters that Beijing claims as its own. The increasing risks to the US interests in the SCS have far-reaching implications for regional security and stability. It underscores the complex dynamics and potential challenges that arise from China's assertive actions in the region, prompting Washington to closely monitor and respond to developments to protect its strategic and security concerns.

India, as another significant regional power, is increasingly concerned about China's growing military assertiveness in the SCS and its implications for international marine resources. Although India does not have a direct territorial claim in the SCS, sea lanes have become crucial for its expanding commercial links

with Southeast Asian countries. During the 15th East Asia Summit in Nov 2020, India's External Affairs Minister, S Jaishankar, expressed New Delhi's apprehensions regarding China's claims in the region. He highlighted that Chinese actions in the SCS have undermined trust in ongoing negotiations for a proposed code of conduct in the region.<sup>14</sup> This reflects India's deep-seated concerns about the evolving security dynamics in the SCS. Given that approximately 55 percent of India's trade with the Indo-Pacific Region transits through the SCS, New Delhi perceives itself as a key player in the region's security dynamics.<sup>15</sup> Any volatility, or instability, in the SCS poses a direct risk to India's trade and economic activities, further emphasising its stake in the region's evolving security landscape. India's concerns align with its broader strategic interests in maintaining stability, safeguarding maritime trade routes, and ensuring a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific Region. As a result, India too closely monitors developments in the SCS and seeks to actively engage in regional discussions to protect its economic and security interests.

### **Regional and International Response to Chinese Assertiveness**

China's increasing assertiveness in the SCS has caused alarm not only within the region but also among the global community. The US has been vocal in opposing Beijing's actions in the region and has demonstrated its opposition through freedom of navigation operations.<sup>16</sup> In 2020, the US conducted 10 of these operations, compared to eight in 2019 and six in 2018. Australia and Japan have also joined in expressing their concerns and have taken similar action. Japan, to enhance the maritime security of the Philippines and Vietnam, has provided them with military weapons and ships.<sup>17</sup> Most regional countries have expressed their apprehensions regarding China's actions in the SCS. President Joe Biden and his administration have largely supported the policies of the previous Trump administration by emphasising that any Chinese maritime claims conflicting with the 2016 arbitration tribunal decision are unlawful.<sup>18</sup> In addition to increasing naval operations, Biden has reaffirmed the US's treaty obligations that require Washington to act in the event of an attack on Philippines' forces in the SCS. The recent visit of the US Secretary of Defence, L Austin, to Manila further demonstrates the Biden administration's commitment to these objectives. It is worth noting that the Philippines, despite being one of the most assertive claimants in Southeast Asia, under President Rodrigo Duterte had previously

pursued closer ties with Beijing and distanced itself from the US. However, during Secretary Austin's visit, Duterte reversed his decision to abrogate the Visiting Forces Agreement which allows easier entry of US military forces into the Philippines.<sup>19</sup> This shift has revitalised the US-Philippine alliance and pushed Washington into a stronger position to counter China's aggressive actions in the region.

The Biden administration should seize the opportunity to lay the foundation for a global alliance that upholds a maritime order based on norms. This can be achieved through various means. Firstly, the administration can enhance short-term deterrence by supporting the Philippines in upgrading its military capabilities, and considering the rotational deployment of American military resources, particularly missile platforms, in the region. By doing so, it can demonstrate a commitment to the security of its allies and partners in the SCS. In addition to strengthening short-term deterrence, the Biden administration should also focus on long-term strategies. This involves exerting economic and diplomatic pressure on Beijing to encourage a peaceful and suitable resolution of maritime conflicts. By utilising economic leverage and diplomatic channels, the administration can emphasise the importance of adherence to international law and norms in the SCS. This approach aims to create an environment conducive to constructive dialogue and negotiation, reducing the risk of further escalation. Furthermore, the US can work towards promoting multilateral cooperation and engagement in the region. It should actively engage with like-minded countries and stakeholders to form a united front in support of a rules-based maritime order. By building alliances and partnerships, the Biden administration can increase its influence and collective leverage to address the challenges posed by China's assertiveness. Overall, the Biden administration has an opportunity to establish a comprehensive approach that combines short-term deterrence with long-term economic and diplomatic pressures.<sup>20</sup> This approach, combined with fostering global alliances and promoting multilateral cooperation, can contribute to the maintenance of stability and the pursuit of a peaceful resolution to maritime conflicts in the SCS.

Vietnam has maintained a consistent and firm stance on the SCS dispute in recent years. It has consistently rejected new Chinese claims to sovereignty through diplomatic means and improved its defences in the Spratly Islands covertly.<sup>21</sup> Despite

Chinese efforts to obstruct offshore oil and gas exploration, Vietnam has persisted in retaining its rights to such resources. However, Vietnam has been hesitant to mobilise global support for the Southeast Asian cause in the SCS dispute, preferring to let other countries, particularly the Philippines, bear the costs of openly criticising Beijing.<sup>22</sup> This is where the role of the US becomes crucial. If Washington displays a willingness to act and builds on the momentum created by the recent visit of the US Defence Secretary to the Philippines, it can help overcome the hesitance of countries like Vietnam. In addition to encouraging regional claimants, the US can utilise the QUAD to counter China's expansionist maritime ambitions in the SCS. The QUAD has initiated the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness to monitor and address illicit activities in the Indo-Pacific, such as dark shipping and illicit fishing.<sup>23</sup> This effort has the potential to significantly enhance the partners' capacity to comprehensively monitor the waters and uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific. However, more action is needed, and the onus lies on the QUAD to prevent China's SCS ambitions from turning the region into a Chinese-dominated entity. This is crucial for the QUAD to maintain its credibility as a force for promoting and upholding the rule-based order.

The SCS has become a geopolitical tinderbox within the Indo-Pacific security architecture. China's assertive maritime manoeuvres, claiming nearly the entire region, have put the SCS under pressure, affecting smaller regional powers as well as extra-regional powers like the US and India. Smaller countries are compelled to challenge Chinese claims, and the US has been reaffirming its commitments to promoting and upholding a rule-based order. The US, along with its strategic partners in the QUAD, needs to take the lead in pushing back against Chinese assertiveness. While there are collective efforts underway to counter Beijing's unilateral moves, more must be done to prevent the SCS from becoming a virtual Chinese lake.<sup>24</sup> If the US and its partners fail to act, the principles of a free and open Indo-Pacific and the rule-based order will face serious challenges. It is imperative to take action to avoid dire consequences not only for the smaller regional countries but also for the US and India, which have significant geopolitical stakes in the SCS.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the SCS remains a highly contested and complex region with significant geopolitical implications. China's growing

assertiveness in asserting its claims and expanding its maritime influence has raised concerns among regional countries, as well as the global community, including India. The US, along with its strategic partners like India, Japan, and Australia, has been vocal in opposing Beijing's actions and upholding a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific. The dynamics in the SCS have led to various responses, including freedom of navigation operations, military support to regional claimants, and efforts to build alliances and multilateral cooperation. However, more needs to be done to address the challenges posed by China's assertiveness and prevent the region from becoming a Chinese-dominated entity. The involvement of smaller regional claimants, such as Vietnam, and their collaboration with larger powers like the US play a crucial role in shaping the future of the SCS. The QUAD has an opportunity to enhance maritime security and uphold a free and open Indo-Pacific. However, collective efforts should continue to strengthen, ensuring that the principles of a rule-based order are maintained, and China's unilateral moves are effectively challenged. It is essential for the international community to recognise the significance of the SCS and actively engage in finding peaceful and diplomatic resolutions to the disputes. By promoting dialogue, adherence to international law, and fostering cooperation, a stable and secure SCS can be achieved, benefiting not only the regional countries but also the global order.

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# **Fortifying Indian Army's response at Tactical Level against People's Liberation Army**

**Major Ankita Mishra®**

**"The challenge for India with China is not to compete for trade and economic growth, but to compete for strategic space".<sup>1</sup>**

## **Abstract**

*The People's Liberation Army's (PLA) adventurism in Ladakh has been a blessing in disguise in expediting India's war-preparedness and shifting the focus towards sharpening our own forces, and their response against China from strategic to tactical levels. Though Indian Army (IA) is a seasoned soldiers' army, it yet needs to match steps with modern technology while also focusing on the upgradation of its strategies, policies, and tactics. The need of the hour is thus, to focus on enhancing situational awareness, improving operational strategies, tactics and grouping capabilities, exploiting the field of human resource through effective training of troops, and, most importantly, focusing holistically on strengthening the administrative and logistic set-up to sustain in rough, rugged terrains, have effective border-area infrastructures, state of the art medical facilities for troops well within their reach as China specialises in the game of attrition. India is committed to a strategy of deterrence against China and to achieve*

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*this deterrence IA needs to identify the challenges at various levels vis-à-vis the PLA and, thus, formalise a response system to fortify IA's position against PLA. This article sheds light on the challenges faced by the IA in relation to the PLA and the measures to mitigate the shortcomings and fortifying IA's response against the PLA, limited to tactical level only.*

### Introduction

From '**Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai**' to '**Hindi-Chini Bye-Bye**', India-China relations have been marked with ambiguity. Amidst series of intermittent scuffles owing to China's 'salami slicing'<sup>2</sup> tactics in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and Union Territory of Ladakh to full-fledged action in Galwan since May 2020, China today stands as India's primary adversary.

While rumours are rife that Chinese aggressive activities in Ladakh are a ruse to divert India's attention from Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to its Northern borders, the ongoing dispute definitely highlights several inadequacies. The expeditious deployment of troops in the hot bed, necessity-based emergency equipment procurement, and sudden move of several formations to LAC, can all be summed up in one phrase- 'knee-jerk reaction'. The present stand-off is, thus, an eye-opener for all stakeholders to cover lost ground and fortify India's defence forces in a holistic manner through effective policy creation and implementation. Apropos, Indian Army (IA) needs to modernise itself by not just inducting state-of-the-art weapons but also by reorganising its existing tactical formations and fighting units, modernising its administrative and logistic set-up and training methods.

### PLA Revolution over the past Decades

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) has consistently transformed from a manpower-intensive army to a force-multiplier entity today. The Chinese have long erased the trauma faced at the hands of Vietnam in 1979, and today stand tall as a world-class military. The ruthless implementation of merit-based policies, large-scale Research and Development (R&D) programmes, and indigenous defence industrial base have invigorated and modernised the PLA

through 'mechanisation' and 'informationisation'.<sup>3</sup> Post the latest reforms in 2020, PLA now comprises of the following arms:

- PLA Army.
- PLA Navy.
- PLA Air Force.
- PLA Rocket Force.
- PLA Strategic Support Force.
- PLA Joint Logistic Support Force.

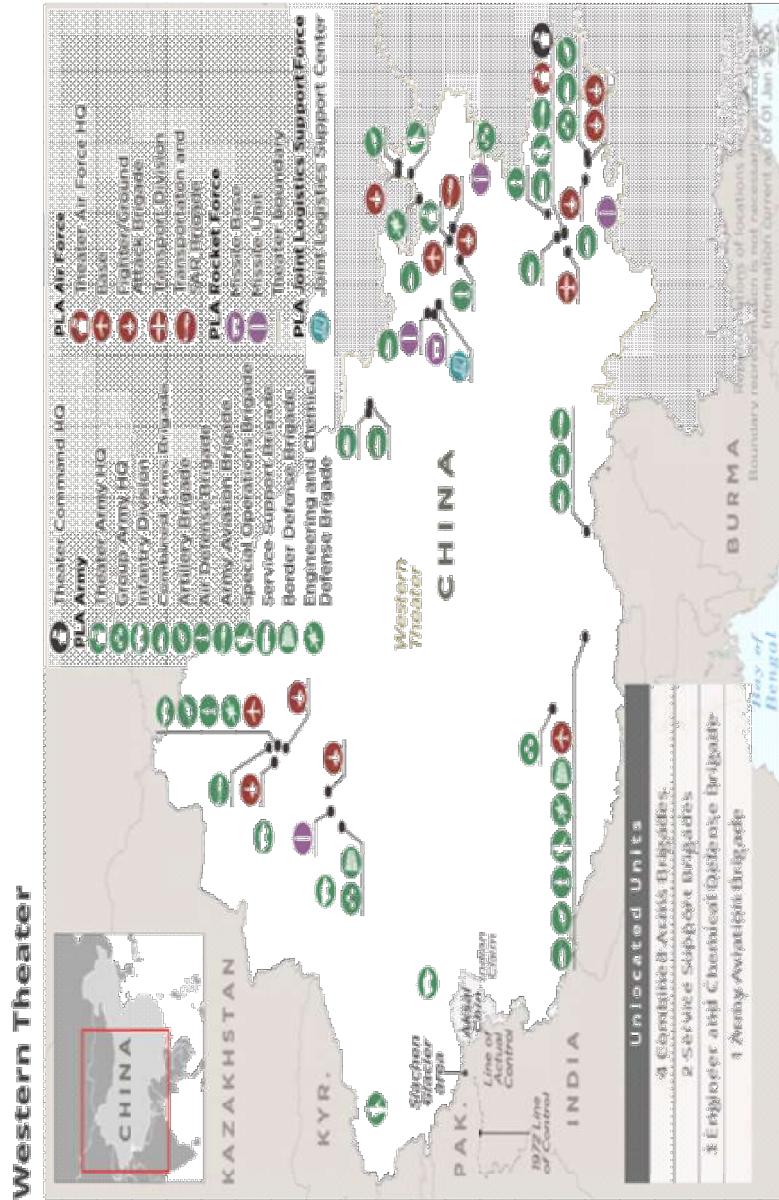
With its strategic policy of 'Active Defence', PLA has now been organised into five Theatre Commands, to focus on operations with integrated jointness, as under:

- **Eastern Theatre.** Responsible towards Taiwan and the East China Sea.
- **Southern Theatre.** Responsible towards South China Sea, South East Asian border security and territorial and maritime disputes.
- **Western Theatre.** Responsible for conflict-resolution, with primary focus on India. It includes the military districts of Xinjiang and Tibet and focuses on 'Counter-Terrorism' operations along China's Western borders.
- **Northern Theatre.** Responsible towards Korean Peninsula and Russian borders.
- **Central Theatre.** Primarily responsible for the defence of Beijing as also to provide support to the other four theatres.



Figure 1 : China's Theatre Commands

**Source:** Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2020, Annual Report to Congress, Office of the Secretary of Defence, 2020.<sup>4</sup>



**Figure 2 : Force Structurewithin China's Western Theatre**

**Source:** Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China, 2020, Annual Report to Congress, Office of the Secretary of Defence, 2020.<sup>5</sup>

### **Challenges ahead of IA**

IA is a professional army, with battle-hardened soldiers. However, amidst the race for modernisation, induction of ultra-sophisticated equipment worldwide, and changing character of warfare, numerous challenges are staring in the face of IA today, highlighted in the Land Warfare Doctrine 2018 of the IA, and are enumerated as under:

- ‘Two and a half front’<sup>6</sup> war in wake of collusive threat from China and Pakistan, in addition to non-conventional counter-insurgency warfare in Kashmir.
- Ambiguity of operations with nations neither at peace nor at war, or in ‘Grey Zones’, with expansion of domains of warfare from conventional to cyber/space/non-contact warfare.
- Limited defence budget allotment vis-à-vis ambitious modernisation plan.
- Exploring combined options of diplomatic, political, military and economic responses to avoid future confrontation.

It is, thus, imperative for the IA to re-align its policies and strategies from strategic to tactical levels, to strengthen itself against the PLA, by inducting modern weaponry, enhancing advanced professional training of personnel, tailor-made administrative and logistic support, improving connectivity channels, expeditious technical upgradation, self-sustenance and refining existing tactical procedures to adopt fresh tactics, tailor-made for tackling the PLA.

Moreover, two colluding belligerents require focused and speedy formulation of response mechanisms, with perspective plans, increased budgetary support, and induction of modern weaponry. IA should understand that PLA respects strength and to this end, its own response systems need to evoke adequate caution in the minds of local PLA commanders, lest they plan any adventurism. Simultaneously, the organisational structure and equipment prowess must aid in fortifying the theatre of response, to ensure inter-theatre operability.

### **Recommended Measures to mitigate the Shortcomings and Fortify IA's response against PLA at Tactical Level**

In order to develop a cutting-edge response against China, few suggestions for IA are enumerate, for due implementation at battalion, brigade, and division levels, and for honing the IA in countering PLA:

- **Improving Situational Awareness** Learning from Kargil, the field of intelligence gathering needs to be effectively exploited with the use of men and equipment, combined with modern day technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI). Hence, to holistically improve situational awareness capabilities of IA, the following steps, at each tactical level, are recommended:

- **Battalion Level**

- Human Intelligence (HUMINT) will always remain quintessential despite any leap in technology yet, it may be suitably backed-up with modern technologies, like Raytheon's FoXTEN<sup>7</sup> (an open intelligence platform being used by US Army).
- The surveillance devices presently available with a Battalion Commander offer very limited verticals for intelligence gathering. Thus, procuring additional surveillance devices like passive Battle Field Surveillance Radars, short-range surveillance drones, increasing the number of Quadcopters, increasing the scaling of surveillance equipment like Night-Vision Devices, Passive Night Vision Goggles and devices, Hand Held Thermal Imagers, provision of Pan-Tilt-Zoom cameras etc., will greatly accentuate intelligence-collection capabilities at battalion level.
- Focus on unmanned/remote-intelligence collection methods and devices like Drones, Micro-UAVs, Long-Range Reconnaissance and Observation System (LORROS), high-tech sensors, etc.

- **Brigade Level**

- Inducting components of Electronic Warfare (EW) and Information Warfare (IW) in brigades.
  - Making Brigade Headquarter the first stage agency for effective intelligence analysis and collation, by sieving out non-essential information, and passing the rest to next higher level.
  - Shortening the gap between requisitioning of satellite imagery and its receipt to 24 hrs or less in both peace and hostilities, for better reaction time.

- **Division Level**

- Achieving synergy between other intelligence agencies at the division level, like Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), local police and various agencies of the Ministry of Home Affairs for holistic information collection and collation.
  - Creation of a separate branch on the lines of Joint Operations Centre (JOC) at division level for intelligence collection, collation, analysis, segregation, dissemination and action.
  - Procurement of 'Big Data Analysis' software like Memex<sup>8</sup>, RapidMiner, coupled with Artificial Intelligence (AI) for enhanced surveillance and effective processing of gathered intelligence for gaining upper-hand in Non-Contact Warfare.

- **Improving Operational Strategies, Tactics and Grouping Capabilities**

- **Operational Strategies and Tactics.** IA soldiers stand at an advantage against PLA in terms of superior training and regular combat exposure. Also, in view of present confrontation, IA is already altering its strategy by vigorously changing its Order of Battle (ORBAT) along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. In addition, IA needs to exercise 'end to end credible deterrence' against PLA through:
  - Disproportionate and visible troop build-up along LAC in Ladakh.

- Combination of selectively-overt deployment of Special Forces/Scouts.
- Visible conduct of military exercises to boast own capabilities.
- Conceptualising proactive 'Simulation Wargame Plan', with terms of reference to trickle down from strategic to tactical level, with effective timelines, based on seasonality of events and other eventualities.
- 'Fighting China, the Chinese way', through:
  - Training of own troops in PLA tactics of surprise, bluff, deception, and hand-to-hand combat.
  - Excessive display and deployment of force in the hot-bed and appropriate propaganda through media-management.
  - Overcoming PLA strategy of outflanking the enemy by engaging PLA on multiple frontages.
  - The 3488 kms long LAC comprises of mainly three types of terrains - High Altitude Area (HAA), mountainous terrain, and jungles. Apropos, basing IA's operational strategy against PLA on a single or a combination of following strategies:
    - ✓ **Terrain-Specific Strategy.** For operations in HAA, jungle and mountainous terrains.
    - ✓ **Arm-Specific Strategy.** To include Infantry, Artillery, Special Forces, Special Frontier Forces (SFF), Mechanised Forces and Air Defence elements.
    - ✓ **Synergised Strategy.** A combination of both the above strategies.

- Maintaining a proactive posture, rather than being predictably reactive. The success of this change in strategy was witnessed during the Ladakh standoff in Aug 2020.
  - PLA has been consistently undergoing heavy mechanisation. While PLA has deployed its 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Type-99 Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) and light-weight Type-15 tanks in Ladakh, IA too needs to build and induct mountain-friendly, light-weight tanks for gaining superiority.
  - Employment of tanks would further imply support from tactical drones for dead-ground visibility as well as carrying out EW, closely supported with attack helicopters.
  - Chinese trend of intrusion suggests that their confrontations are not short and swift, but those of long duration. Apropos, IA will have to be geared for prolonged deployment in a state of high alert and master the game of attrition against the PLA.
  - Inclusion of Light Combat Helicopters custom-made for HAA.
- **Grouping.** A compact, well-balanced, and self-contained force is the key to fighting quick and decisive battles. Hence, there is a need to revamping own fighting units as under:
  - **Creation of Special China Cell (SCC).** Creating a special cell with quintessential elements of intelligence, IW, interpreters, personnel with military employment experience in China, and a team of Nuclear- Biological-Chemical (NBC) qualified troops. This specialised cell may be made a permanent entity of infantry battalions facing China.
  - **One Border, One Force.** During peace time, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) forces are deployed as first line of defence on LAC and come under direct command of IA only during hostilities. It is recommended to place ITBP permanently under the command of IA formations, to avoid

duplicity of forces at LAC and for better coordination and cohesion between dissimilar services.

- **Implementation of Integrated Battle Groups (IBG-isation).** IBG-isation is the need of the hour to achieve optimum utilisation of resources, increase mobility, reduce reaction time in deployment of units and formations to achieve maximum advantage in future operations.

- **Integral Aviation Elements.** IA aviation units have three roles-recce and surveillance, casualty evacuation, and weapon system integration in the form of attack helicopters. However, there are no dedicated aviation units under command, even at Corps level. But, given their wide utility, aviation units can be made integral to each division facing China, with dedicated efforts available for each brigade, for accentuating own strength against the enemy.

- **Improving Human Resource Capabilities.** Human capital and its rational management through effective and relevant training has always yielded transformative results for any force. Hence, to achieve optimum capabilities of personnel, following is recommended:

- **Thoughtful Selection of Personnel**

- Schematic planning and advertisement for attracting talent from civil institutes of excellence.
- Motivating Tibetan youth towards SFF recruitment which has died down in recent decades. Contrarily, PLA was recently in news for motivating Tibetans for joining their Army.
- Composition of China-specific formations to be from Ladakh/North-East/ Mountain-heavy population, for better acclimatisation and training of troops.

- **Focused Training**

- Imparting detailed teaching for all ranks on China, on the lines of 'Know Your Enemy', be it through Junior Leadership Course or Young Officers' Course or even Higher Command Course.

- Chinese language be made compulsory in basic training of all ranks and identifying, and training, such personnel who show aptitude towards the language in initial training.
- Technology is the order of the day. Hence, keeping present soldiers abreast with technology, and recruiting tech-savvy manpower for force modernisation.
- Mandatory cyber education for all ranks, rather than barring its use, as China specialises in cyber warfare.
- Regular exercises and wargaming with maximum participation from junior leadership and young officers, being key elements on ground.

- **Specialisation**

- Building pool of ‘Domain Specialised’ China-experts and provide them repeated exposure of postings and assignments at Chinese fronts.
- On the lines of Pre-Induction Training Schools for troops in Jammu and Kashmir, training schools and long courses/cadres to be facilitated for troops due for deployment on the China fronts.

- **Motivation**

- Sending Chinese-specialist troops to United Nations missions to understand PLA soldiers, their cultures and functioning, thus serving dual-purpose of rewarding own troops and gaining first-hand information about the adversary.
- Coveted postings to Chinese embassies or knowledge-hubs like Institute of Chinese Studies (New Delhi) to enhance motivation levels of troops for out-of-domain experiences.

- **Improving Administrative and Logistic Capabilities.**  
Future wars will be short and intense and will demand prompt logistic support. Hence, one needs to keep evolving logistics

support concept, while matching steps with latest technological advances, through the following:

■ **Administration and Logistics**

- Administration and logistic chains to be custom-made for specific area and terrain, on the lines of assault echelons ahead in the area.
- Provision of palatable functional foods (Mushroom-based foods developed by DRDO), clean water facilities (DRDO's water-deferrisation units), fiber reinforced plastic-based insulated accommodations, bio-toilets, comfortable extreme climate clothing, etc., for good health and high morale of troops in difficult terrain against China.
- Establishment of mobile towers in forward areas for better coordination and connectivity, more so as a morale booster.
- Establishment of underground storage facilities, on the lines of PLA's Underground Facilities (UGF) to conceal military targets from adversaries, especially in vast open areas of Ladakh. Also, duplicity of stocking at such locations for continued sustenance in contingencies.
- Resource mapping by static elements of the formation for contingencies.
- Construction of adequate numbers of NBC shelters.

■ **Medical**

- Establishment of a 'state-of-the-art' hospital facility in Leh due to quantum of forces present, as nearest advanced evacuation facilities are located in Delhi and Chandigarh.
- Integration of medical services with existing civil hospitals in proximity.
- Exploring feasibility of use of drones for forward delivery of critical medicines, blood etc.

- **Enhancing Infrastructure and Connectivity.**

Connectivity and infrastructure development will play game-changer against PLA deployments in the inhospitable terrains of HAA. Further improvements may be carried out as under:

- In view of poor road connectivity on own side during winters, more airstrips be added for consistent air maintenance. Also, railway line construction in Sichuan, Chengdu, Qinghai, etc., in Tibet suggests that such construction activities despite inclement terrain are feasible and be emulated by IA to improve its lines of communication.
- China's super-connectivity by road to its forward-most posts on LAC presents a sharp contrast to maintenance of Indian posts with inadequate connectivity of roads, tracks and rails. Thus, to increase axes of maintenance for year-round sustenance.
- Creating vertical and horizontal connectivity between forward sectors and sub-sectors for better coordination and utilisation of available resources and for economy of logistic efforts.

### **Way Ahead**

The PLA adventurism in Ladakh has been a blessing in disguise in expediting India's war-preparedness and shifting the focus towards sharpening own forces and their response against China from strategic to tactical levels. Some additional recommendations are entailed below:

- **Disproportionate Response When Provoked.** IA needs

to develop unpredictable and graduated response against China. One example may be to choke China in the Malacca any time it creates turbulence in Ladakh or any other land border.

- **Rapidly Enhancing Technical Warfare Capabilities.**

IA needs to further develop its technical domain through initial import of modern weaponry, coupled with indigenous production in future.

- **'Sons of the Soil' Battalions.** The operational-readiness state of Scout battalions seen against the PLA in the bizarre weather of Ladakh implies raising more such specialised battalions on China front.
- **Trial-Based Employment of SFF with IA.** Acknowledging the crucial role of VIKAS battalions, by grouping their company each with battalions deployed on China front, on a trial basis, may yield excellent results.
- **Theatre Specific Employment.** The forces against their respective adversaries can be custom-designed and equipped to increase awareness about the enemy, and his modus operandi, to boost confidence and morale of own forces.
- **Identifying Potential Commanders in Chain.** Identifying and gainfully employing officers qualified in three-dimensional knowledge about PLA its methodology, Chinese language, and capable of formulating plans of action against them.

## Conclusion

While the de-escalation between IA and PLA has long started, India's efforts of force build-up and permanent infrastructure development in Ladakh should not lose steam, because while modern-day dimensions of war are evolving and expanding to cyber and space domains, the importance of a tactical level battle will always remain critical; for as long as a nation is fighting to safeguard even an inch of its sovereign soil, its soldiers will have to give up their gaming consoles and fight in a real battlefield that no amount of technology can ever prepare them for. As eventually, it is the grit of real soldiers and not expensive weapons that wins war. In the words of a soldier- "I am the weapon, everything else is just accessory".

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# Russia and India: Navigating Uncertain Times

Major General (Dr) Pawan Anand (Retd)<sup>@</sup>

## Abstract

*Russia and India have enjoyed a particularly close strategic relationship over the last half century of time, which has withstood geopolitical pressures of the Ukraine operations. The two countries continue to have common interests as they look for a multipolar world, and support each other closely in various multilateral fora such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) etc. While trade and technology cooperation did take a hit with post-sanctions Russia, other opportunities presented themselves to the benefit of both. There is much to learn from recent geopolitical experiences of either country, even as they steer their individual course through an uncertain world situation.*

## Introduction

Number ‘Six’ is a unique number in relations between India and Russia! Six times India abstained on UN resolutions against Russia over the last one year or more, despite pressure from the West.<sup>1</sup> Six times the USSR used its veto to rescue India at the UN, between 1957 and 1971. When times get difficult and uncertain, the two nations have resolutely stood by each other against attempted isolation at this multilateral forum.

The pandemic in 2020, military operations in Ukraine, and heightened tensions in the Indo-Pacific Region have made the last three years tumultuous. Vaccine ‘apartheid’ during the Covid

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pandemic shook the faith of the Global South in its hopes to receive any support by developed nations of the Global North. Indeed, the chimera of global equality and equitable growth opportunities has faded. Human rights as a diplomatic pressure tool, to be used selectively, is now recognised as a skewed approach to international relations even as the debate on alternate forms of governance deepens. Weaponisation of economies has permanently altered the, so-called, inevitable path to an inter-dependent globalised trade system. Bretton Woods institutions are seemingly powerless, weakly manoeuvring their way through great power contestation in obvious attempts to survive or remain relevant. Seemingly robust global supply chains have been suddenly disrupted, with nations scrambling to 'de-risk' and improve resilience in trade strategies. The current global order is in the throes of a long-drawn process of re-ordering, as all nations, big or small, re-evaluate their positions in realigned groups. Yet, uncertain times throw up big opportunities; and strong relationships get an opportunity to grow. Will Russian and Indian relations enter a phase of re-evaluation towards growth, or fall into ferment? Time alone will tell.

President Putin visited India in Oct 2000, when India and Russia signed the declaration of 'Strategic Partnership', enhancing levels of cooperation in 'almost all areas of the bilateral relationship' viz., political, security, defence, trade and economy, science and technology, and culture.<sup>2</sup> In 2010, it was elevated to 'Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership'. Ukraine has put this relationship to test, and India has proved to be a staunch support to Russia, even as it believes that boundaries between nations need to be respected and issues resolved by other means. Prime Minister Modi's statement that "today is not the era of war" needs to be seen in this context.

### **Multipolar World Order**

There is a notable convergence on the pressing need to usher in a multi-polar world order which allows a say to other major global powers, and emerging players despite being part of the Global South. The containment strategy of proxy players in Ukraine against Russia, has, in the short term, succeeded in unifying Europe, increasing its expenditure on developing defence capabilities with greater contribution to the NATO coffers. This may not last over the long term, as many of them could return to depend on Russian resources and energy supplies, even if indirectly. However, the

crisis and broad swathe of sanctions by the West, and its allies, are bound to take its toll on the Russian economy and military. As Russia turns its focus to Eurasia, the ‘heartland’ and its Asian partners offer opportunity.<sup>3</sup>

The US and its western allies view India as a balancer in the Indo-Pacific, creating an alternate power centre to China in a regional context, and wish to see its involvement in a possible military confrontation. While India is in the process of resolving its border issues with China, it perceives its national interest to keep away from any direct military confrontations over Taiwan or the South China Sea (SCS). Border issues with China are being dealt under bilateral arrangements.

### **Multi-lateral Fora**

Apart from the strongly institutionalised interaction between them, Russia and India also participate in a number of larger groupings; most intimately at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) and the Russia-India-China (RIC). A number of points of convergence emerge between the two nations as elaborated below:

- **SCO.** This has huge implications on trade possibilities in Eurasia. Under its aegis, the North South Corridor from Moscow to Mumbai, International North–South Transport Corridor and Vladivostok-Chennai Sea Link, if operationalised, present possibilities as emerging ‘corridors of prosperity’. The SCO also enables India to raise anti-terrorism issues, which sooner than later affect all participants. Days ago, in May 2023, at the Foreign Minister’s meet in Goa, Mr Jaishankar, India’s Foreign Minister, reminded the members that terror was one of the original mandates of the SCO and that ‘state actors cannot be allowed to hide behind non-state actors’—directly alluding to Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> A collective approach would be beneficial to all members, rather than opportunistic leveraging of this double-edged sword by countries, like China, who turn a blind eye to epicentres of terror in Asia. A common anti-terror agenda is inevitable if these groupings are to engage in meaningful interaction.
- **BRICS.** This is a vibrant grouping in which all five states are also members of the G20 grouping. Representing 41.5 per cent of the global population, and 32.5 per cent of global GDP (PPP), it is the closest rival to the G7, now seeking to

represent the voice of developing nations. After the first formal summit held in Yekaterinburg in 2009, the idea of a new global reserve currency was mooted, resulting in a fall in the value of the dollar. The current refrain of ‘de-dollarisation’ is bound to have a similar impact, although contemplating a de-coupling from the dollar in the mid-term is not practical. However, unprecedented sanctions against Russia and weaponisation of the dollar has exacerbated the need to reduce dependency on a single reserve currency. BRICS nations did focus on the issue during the summit in South Africa in Aug 2023. 19 countries had expressed their desire to join the BRICS, out of which six were inducted during the Aug summit. Clear guidelines were to be followed to ensure coherence in the group.<sup>5</sup>

● **RIC.** While SCO and BRICS have gained traction, RIC has languished, mainly due to divergences between India and China on their border issues. The recent SCO meet was also an opportunity for the foreign and defence ministers of India and China to meet on the sidelines. The Chinese side sought to project the border situation as ‘generally stable’, and that everything else could continue between the two countries. India, however, categorically stated that the border situation was ‘abnormal’ and countered that until the disengagement process is carried forward, and peace and tranquillity remain disturbed, other activities cannot be considered under the pretence of normalcy. China’s possible strategy to bleed the economy of India and tire out its army by enforced deployments along its 3,500 km long Line of Actual Control (border) over prolonged periods (akin to the breakup of the USSR) is not only misplaced but also counterproductive. In its current predicament caused by the Ukraine crisis and broad swathe of sanctions by the West, Moscow is already being shown as ‘Beijing’s junior partner’ seeking economic and, possibly, military assistance. Russia, as the third player in this trilateral, has a weighty role to play in pressing upon the two sides to resolve issues bilaterally, in the larger interest of RIC becoming a Eurasian multi-pole. This is predicated to the understanding that ‘all three players in this trilateral enjoy equal status’. China needs to understand that any perceived tilt of India towards the US, by joining the QUAD, does not guarantee India’s military participation in

the SCS. India is acutely cognisant, as are South Korea and Japan, that they do not wish to be the next Ukraine-like proxy of any power struggle over Taiwan in the Indo-Pacific.

### **Trade and Technology**

Currently the fifth largest globally, the Indian economy, with a projected annual growth rate of about 6 per cent, is likely to be the third largest by 2030 as per an Ernst & Young Report of January 2023; even as fears of recession loom over other major economies. India is not only digitally enabled across its 1.4 bn population, it is now poised to be a manufacturing powerhouse in the next few years, as the 'Make in India' policy is enforced. Its internal demand is enough to drive growth and sustain the economy. Two thirds of India's energy consumption will come from renewable sources by 2030. Massive investment opportunities await those who do business with India.

Western businesses have aggressively begun to look for joint ventures and co-production arrangements. Russia has traditionally been India's biggest defence equipment supplier. Earlier pegged at 68 per cent, it is now down to around 59 per cent and likely to go lower unless delayed deliveries are expedited despite the Ukraine crisis. In keeping with government policy, Indian defence industry is looking for self-reliance, banking on technology transfers, collaborative R&D (such as the Brahmos missile), and co-development and co-production in state of art technologies. Dependence on any one country is not an option. Economic interests coupled with geostrategic convergences will define its path. France and the US are possible technology and manufacturing partners, provided their overtures to India are sincere. Yet, Russia must note that India is a proven reliable long-term partner in maintaining Intellectual Property (IP) and technology transfer arrangements, and must be trusted. Cooperation in licensed production and co-development has been fruitful.<sup>6</sup> Brahmos missiles, nuclear power generation, T series tanks, frigates and corvettes, fighter aircraft etc., are good examples but these now need to be taken to the next level of collaborative R&D in state of art technologies such as the fifth-generation stealth aircraft and frigates, metallurgy, high performance engines, air independent propulsion technologies for naval vessels and the like.

Russian and Indian business have reached out to each other, but working arrangements and some changes in law need to be streamlined before trade gets a substantial boost. There is a need

to find a faster mechanism to synergise Russian and Indian requirements. The old slow processes enshrined in the India Russia Inter governmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific & Cultural Cooperation and Military Technical Cooperation need to be revised and made more business friendly and agile. Should there be any delays in these processes, the close defence dependence relationship will drift apart as India will be forced to maintain its operational readiness by falling back on alternative sources available with the West.

### **Currency**

Issues like the Rupee-Rouble trade arrangement need to be addressed. While India benefits from the low cost of oil from Russia, the latter benefits by earning revenue despite the sanctions regime. Even as the balance of trade is tilted towards Russia, it needs to consider investing the same Rupee back into Indian companies to establish a win-win paradigm. Mr Lavrov, Russia's Foreign Minister, is on record in the Indian press, during the SCO meet in Goa, that Russia has little use for the Rupees accumulated due to the sale of oil to India over the last year. Solutions to this lie in encouraging Russian business investments in India, and benefitting from their export to Russia to offset the trade imbalance, or exporting to third countries and sharing profits in those alternate currencies. Indian business could be encouraged and incentivised to cater to Russia's specific import requirements, to reduce the trade imbalance, putting the Rupee surplus with Russia to good use.<sup>7</sup> This could also be done by re-balancing trade or goods imported from other countries currently. Trust and goodwill are great instruments to maintain the value of relationships and mutual interests between friendly nations, through innovative solutions.

It may be quite some time before a common BRICS currency is floated, duly counter-weighted against their five-member country currencies. The proposal to trade in each other's currencies at the earliest may be feasible and holds merit. It is to be understood that the dollar is not going away as a reserve currency for a while, but creating a blockchain based common currency may be feasible in the medium-term.

### **Reviewed Nuclear Deterrence**

The Ukraine crisis has changed the existing nuclear deterrence paradigm. Forward deployments of weaponised vectors on the western borders of Russia have drastically reduced reaction times

and raised the chances of a nuclear conflagration, re-starting the nuclear arms race, and raising the spectre of use of tactical nukes and dirty bombs.<sup>8</sup> Its implications have been felt not only in Europe but also in the Indo-Pacific, as Western allies review the efficacy of the US umbrella, and their stakes in a possible armed conflict over Taiwan. A survey in South Korea, almost a referendum, reflects the mood of the people-almost 70 per cent of the youth feel the need to develop an indigenous nuclear deterrence program. India faces two nuclear armed neighbours as well and has much to learn from the experiences of its partners. Intelligence sharing over safety of nuclear assets in other countries would create greater levels of confidence and build deterrence capabilities.

### **Conclusion**

Russia and India share a strategic relationship built on trust over a period of time. The current uncertain times call for strong efforts to retain this trust and build pathways to take forward the mutually beneficial relationship to a new level.

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# The New Cold War

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## Abstract

*The article is regarding the New Cold War that is building up between the United States (US) and China. An old era is passing, even if the contours of what is yet to come have not truly announced themselves. We cannot fully imagine them in part because of the sticky weight of the present. But even if the quotidian blinds us, an age of substantially redistributed global power is fast approaching. This quote by Howard W. French is apt for the new Cold War or the Cold War 2.0 i.e., is slowly but gradually emerging between the US and China. “The Sino-US relations are getting bitter and complex with each passing year and it seems that this situation is going to stay for a long period of time”. India’s has to ensure that in her strategic interests, economic interests, and overall national interests this new Cold War doesn’t impact her negatively.*

## Introduction

The global balance of power is shifting and the relationship between the US and Peoples Republic of China (PRC) is undergoing a tectonic shift, and the world is now preparing itself for a real change. Wang Yi, the Chinese Foreign Minister in his annual interaction with the media had noted that it has come to his attention that the US and China were on the brink of a ‘new Cold War’.<sup>1</sup> Cui Tiankai, the Chinese Ambassador to the US has upped the ante by making it clear that the US had to make itself aware

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of the existing realities that governed our understanding of modern-day international politics where China and the US were now standing shoulder to shoulder in the realm of international politics.<sup>2</sup> The diplomatic relations between the US and China have thus turned somewhat sour in recent months and years.

### The New Cold War

The new Cold War is now a reality. The question that, however, remains to be answered relates to its onset. The erstwhile Cold War saw the US competing with the Soviet Union for 45 years. It was a battle of wit and ideology and a way of life. The new Cold War is ‘new’ in every sense of the word and unlike popular perception this Cold War between the US and China did not begin with the Trump Presidency but it can be dated to the early 2010s when the US-China relationship started showing signs of disarray. Nicholas J. Spyker states that large states become great powers and remain strong under centralised rule, and it is the location of these states that influence their foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> Since, China and the US are undergoing a centralised period of governance where the states are being led by strong personalities; it is possible that the new Cold War becomes an ongoing phenomenon.

Moreover, the rise of Xi Jinping’s China Dream Project and his clarion call for ‘the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ came at a time when US had begun its symptomatic decline. Interestingly, US is trying to be ‘great again’ while China excels in its attempts to ‘greatly rejuvenate itself again’.<sup>4</sup> The ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) started by President Xi Jinping is a case in point. Through this project, he ‘aims for open co-operation and mutual development’ and has decided to connect all the nations along the ancient maritime and terrestrial silk route. China has its ‘own strategic considerations’ in proposing the initiative and it is well known that ‘China wants to explore a new development space for its own economic transformation’ especially across the Eastern Arm of China which has remained considerably poor as compared to her Western Arm. Moreover, for China, ‘the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ which is a key goal of this initiative involves restoring its place in the international order as visualised by them. These ideas backed by the notions of Tian Xia and Pax Sinica have now created a molotov cocktail. China is going back to its roots to secure its future through the initiation of the ‘BRI and wishes to gain control of the littorals of Southeast Asia which had

traditionally served as ‘transmission belts of Chinese culture and prestige from the time of the Tang Dynasty (618-907) till at least 1912. China wants the world to recognise that it is hardly a pawn but a strategic actor in international relations who executes its own interests and political will.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, China can be deemed to be a revisionist power in this era while the US is in favour of maintaining the status quo. China, with its two-pronged attack on the US, therefore, is keen to alter the existing status quo.

### **Sino-US Great Power Rivalry**

The US and China want to view themselves as ‘great’ and these two powers draw significantly on the notion of ‘symbolic power’. Since this notion grows on the notion of ‘cultural capital’ that refers to non-financial social assets, both are seeking a revival in their status through ways and means that are independent of their economic status. This desire for notional power has also led to the acceleration in the Cold War in recent years as both countries have realised their ‘rejuvenation with a difference’ within their own cultural contexts. In other words, since the notion of symbolic power is essential to both the Chinese and Americans as China is on the rise and America seems to be on the decline as the US faces its own set of challenges and both aspire to spread their cultural footprint far and wide. Cultural power remains a significant attribute of overall power. On the contrary, US foreign policy has historically harped on the notion of the age-old notion of ‘Manifest Destiny’ and ‘Monroe Doctrine’.<sup>6</sup> China is today where the US was 200 odd years ago. However, today the renewed clash of civilisations between the West and Sinic world is due to the ‘ensuing strategic competition’ that has engulfed them.

### **Theatres of the New Cold War**

Like any war in the past, the new Cold War is being fought on many frontiers though the two major frontiers of this Cold War include East Asia and North America. The new theatres of this Cold War exist both in the tangible as well as the virtual realm i.e., traditional (SCS, intelligence, hegemonic ambitions, and alliance building) and non-traditional security areas (technology, Artificial Intelligence) while China has chosen to attack through more traditional or tangible means in East Asia, her attacks in North America are more in the non-traditional realm.

China wants to become a great power and it understands that its great power aspirations can be fulfilled only through control of the seas. Since control of the sea is a prerequisite for achieving great power status in the international order and sea power has primacy over land in both war and peace time. China feels the need to exert its influence over the SCS.<sup>7</sup>

### The SCS

The control of the SCS has become a major bone of contention between China and the US. Since it is a repository of seabed oil and gas and controls large volumes of international trade, it has become a theatre of the new Cold War. It is non-traditionally a virtual area of the Cold War between China and the US for both nations have used the SCS for power projection in East Asia.<sup>8</sup> The possibility of a full-scale conflict over the SCS is a distant possibility considering the US has now become rather inward in its approach and especially after the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, she wishes to steer clear of long and arduous conflicts that have dotted her recent history. The US wants to secure its own backyard now and is less inclined to enter full blown conflicts in other parts of the world.

### Technology and Cold War 2.0

The technological realm has emerged as the most important area of conflict in this *nouveau* or new Cold War and is the oldest area of contestation as well. The battle of the technological realm is multi-fold in nature with control of the Internet and the realm of information security forming the chief pivot of this model. The advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) forms the second pivot of contestation while 5G is the latest technological innovation to join the bandwagon forming the periphery.<sup>9</sup>

The US had traditionally held an upper hand in this domain with US based companies like Microsoft, Google and Apple controlling the realm of Cyberspace. China joined the internet in 1994 and started building the 'great firewall' to regulate the flow of ideas and information from abroad. Since 2000s, it has moved from censoring ideas to regulating public opinions on the net. From the 2010s, she has chosen to reward and punish her people based on their social credit score in what has been called digital

totalitarianism. The Chinese state has unleashed a practice whereby the state assesses the digital activities of its citizens. Under Xi Jinping, it has taken a step further and tried to evolve into a ‘norm maker’ from being a ‘norm taker’ especially in the realm of Cyberspace. China has promoted ‘Internet Sovereignty’ to reshape the discourse and practices of global cyber governance. Thus, China has used technology to not just control its own citizens but also of the world. Interestingly, countries like Iran and Russia have supported China’s strict national sovereignty model in this regard. China fears that the US has attempted to ‘nationalise the realm of information security’ and it has reiterated its stance to have access to a ‘free and fair internet’ in this regard.

### **The Advent of AI**

AI has changed the scenario with China seeing exponential growth in this field due to the rise of a burgeoning AI infrastructure, abundant data and a highly skilled workforce led by ‘tenacious entrepreneurs’. China has, therefore, emerged as the leader in technology be it in the domain of AI, cloud computing, IoT or 5G. While the technological sphere was dominated by the US for much of mankind’s history, the shift towards China is now more palpable than ever. China boasts of incomparable advantages in the domain of 5G. While 5G construction in the US and Europe have been managed purely by telecom enterprises, 5G deployment in China is a ‘national strategy guided by the government’. Since regime security continues to be the core concern of the Chinese state, it controls the hearts and minds of its people by controlling the digital resources. This calibrated control is facilitated by the media which acts as a bridge between the Chinese Communist Party and the people.

### **Cold War 2.0 and India**

Cold War 2.0 is an emerging and ongoing phenomenon and India is treading a cautious path while dealing with both China and the US. It is in India’s strategic interests, economic interests, and overall national interests that this new Cold War doesn’t impact her negatively. The US sees India as a potential balancer to China’s ambitions of power maximisation in the Asia-Pacific. India itself is indulged in the long-time boundary dispute with China’s territorial claims in Aksai Chin and India’s North-Eastern borders. Keeping this in mind, India is choosing to be non-aligned, which is still a

backbone of India's foreign policy. India's strategic community has started using terms like 'Strategic Autonomy' to convey the same message, albeit with a different terminology. New Delhi's interests lie in hoping and aiming that the international system remains in a mode of status quo. What this means simply is that New Delhi wouldn't want Beijing's power to increase as an outcome of the Cold War 2.0.

The reason being, that China's rising power could potentially prove to be much more detrimental to India's own interests than the hegemonic interests of the US. Atleast, in the short term, it is India who would be wary of China's growth. This analysis could be challenged by those scholars who are proponents of liberalisation and globalisation, and they might project a critique that this new Cold War 2.0 and its analysis is based on the assumptions of structural realist thinking. The liberals argue that the forces of globalisation almost force nation-states to pacify their militaristic expansionist over zeal in favour of financial progress for large-scale business interests. These two analyses are ideologically opposed to each other and therefore provide a different explanation to the same phenomenon i.e., Cold War 2.0. The new Cold War or the Cold War 2.0 is increasingly getting acceptance as the pressing reality of our times according to most of the scholars and international relations observers.

For instance, in his book, 'Cold War 2.0: Illusion versus Reality', author Madhav Das Nalapat, has summed up the new Cold War. He opines, "Cold War 1.0 was fought principally between the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Soon after the collapse of the latter, Cold War 2.0 began. Just as with the earlier Cold War, this is also a battle of systems on an existential trajectory. This time around, the principal protagonists are the US and the PRC. Those who deny the reality of the new Cold War believe that Cold War 1.0 has reappeared, this time with the Russian Federation replacing the Soviet Union as the opponent. Such a view ignores the changes to the global order caused by the increasingly visible efforts of the PRC to replace the US as the prime mover influencing the trajectory of the twenty-first century".

### **Conclusion**

This new Cold War could well be unlike the Cold War of twentieth century. Of course, some parallels always exist because of the great power rivalry, power maximisation, hegemonic ambitions of

great powers etc but the nature and character of the new Cold War has changed tremendously. In the Cold War both the US and the Soviet Union were already established superpowers in the international system who were tussling with each other to become a global hegemon. Here, in the new Cold War, the US is already a hegemonic power while China is yet to be accepted as a superpower in the international community, despite its military and economic power. China has still not filled the vacuum which was left in the international system because of the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union.

However, with the growing bitterness in the Sino-US relations, it would be interesting to see whether countries like India still play a balancing act in this Cold War or China's bullish intentions would propel India to take sides with Washington to serve its own interests. Unlike the 20th century, today non-military arenas are increasingly getting more securitized than even before. Areas like Environment, Health, Cyber-Space, Water and even Outer Space are getting securitised. These non-military areas could potentially be the ones where the new Cold War would be fought. India needs to increase its power in all these non-militaristic areas as well to defend itself with ease.

To conclude, the Sino-US rivalry could well be a defining factor of international relations in the twenty first century. With increasing natural calamities, disasters, and pandemics on their way, if humanity as a race couldn't cooperate to avert these challenges, it would be disastrous for the world. In pursuing their hegemonic ambitions, both China and the US should not take steps that could prove disastrous for global security.

### **Endnotes**

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# **Colombo Security Conclave:Need for Transition towards Sustainable Energy Security**

**Mr Manav Saini®**

## **Abstract**

*In the 21st century, with increasing global interconnectedness and globalisation, security threats are no longer confined to specific states. A prime example of this is the global impact of Covid-19, which transcended national boundaries. Consequently, non-traditional security challenges have become significant in this era, going beyond traditional military threats. These challenges encompass a wide range of issues that require international cooperation and attention to find effective solutions. Therefore, the significance of multilateral organisations for states' cooperation has increased to tackle non-traditional and human security challenges. Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) is one such mini-lateral organisation. It is a regional security framework initiated in 2011 by India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka. After a brief suspension, it was rebranded in 2020 and expanded to include Mauritius as a member and Bangladesh and Seychelles as observers. CSC primarily focuses on addressing non-traditional maritime security challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to enhance stability through cooperation. This article will discuss the development of CSC, its limitations, and potential solutions. It will then explore the importance of including relevant offshore renewable energy for CSC and finally the way forward to make the mini-lateral, a more robust organisation for ensuring human security through the maritime domain.*

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## Introduction

Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) is a regional security cooperation framework that originated from meetings between the National Security Advisors (NSAs) and Deputy NSAs of India, Maldives, and Sri Lanka in 2011. However, due to tensions between India and Maldives, the meetings were suspended for a short time after the third NSA-level CSC meeting from 2014 to 2020. In 2020, it was revived, rebranded and renamed as ‘Colombo Security Conclave’ from its previous name ‘NSA-level Trilateral Meeting’. A secretariat based in Colombo for the group was established in Colombo in 2021.<sup>1</sup> During the fifth NSA-level meeting in 2022, CSC incorporated Mauritius as a fourth member and invited Bangladesh and Seychelles to join CSC as observer states.<sup>2</sup> The CSC aims to address security concerns in the IOR, focusing on Maritime Security, Marine Pollution Response and Search and Rescue (SAR).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, with a focus on addressing collective maritime security challenges, CSC aims to enhance stability through collaboration in the IOR.

According to Indian Fusion Centre, some of the non-traditional security challenges in IOR are Piracy and Armed Robbery, Contraband Smuggling (mainly drugs, wildlife resources and arms smuggling), Illegal Unregulated and Unreported fishing (IUU fishing), Irregular Human Migration (IHM), maritime incidents, marine pollution, cyber security, climate change and security. In 2022, South Asia accounted for 21 per cent of the world’s IUU fishing with a reported total of 125 incidents.<sup>4</sup> Regarding incidents involving IHM, South Asia recorded 69 incidents in 2022. In contrast, the Mediterranean Region reported 1401 incidents, while Southeast Asia reported 119 incidents.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, 13 piracy and armed robbery incidents were reported in South Asia in 2022, compared to 86 cases in Southeast Asia and 34 cases in the Gulf of Guinea.<sup>6</sup> Due to differences in strategic ambitions and priorities, all 36 countries of the IOR may not be facing common maritime security challenges. Even when security threats are common, priorities in addressing threats are different. Therefore, CSC becomes relevant as it is a small grouping, enabling India to address its security concerns in South Asia while also providing an opportunity for the island and littoral nations to tackle their maritime challenges. Likewise, reaching agreements becomes easier in a mini-lateral organisation.

### **Key Areas of Cooperation**

Over the years, the level of cooperation in CSC has grown significantly, strengthening its ability to address maritime security challenges in the region. In the second meeting held in 2013, the members collectively developed and agreed upon a roadmap outlining the key focus areas. Sri Lanka and Maldives were granted access to the Indian Long-Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) Data Centre for monitoring and tracking their flagged merchant vessels. The Merchant Ship Information System (MSIS) was employed for exchanging unclassified information on white shipping. Automatic Identification System (AIS) data was shared in a trilateral format over the MSIS platform. Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) training was conducted in India to enhance participants' understanding and capabilities. Cooperation in SAR was strengthened through such operations, assistance in setting up Maritime Rescue Coordination Centres (MRCCs), and coordination of distress alerts and safety messages. Mechanisms for Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) surveillance were strengthened. In addition, communication channels were established to address illegal maritime activities. The trilateral exercise 'DOSTI' was strengthened with tabletop exercises and seminars on maritime issues held every alternate year. Simultaneous tsunami warnings were passed to agreed Points of Contact in addition to the designated National Tsunami Warning Centres. A trilateral sub-group focusing on legal and policy issues related to piracy was established.<sup>7</sup>

In the third meeting in 2014, newer areas of cooperation were added to this trilateral group, such as joint hydrography, training on board-sail training ships, exchanges between think tanks and joint participation in adventure activities.<sup>8</sup> In 2020, during the fourth CSC meeting, the area of cooperation further expanded, introducing intelligence sharing against terrorism and radicalisation, extremism, illegal drugs, weapons, and human trafficking. Additionally, collaboration to confront non-traditional security challenges, such as the effects of climate change on the maritime environment and oil spills, was added. Efforts were made to explore underwater heritage and safeguard the Indian Ocean's maritime ecosystem.<sup>9</sup> In the 5<sup>th</sup> NSA level CSC meeting, member states identified and further developed key areas of cooperation to enhance and strengthen regional security in the following five pillars:

- Maritime safety and security.
- Countering terrorism and radicalisation.

- Combating trafficking and transnational organised crime.
- Cyber security, protection of critical infrastructure and technology.
- Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.<sup>10</sup>

Apart from expanding areas of cooperation at the policy-making level in recent summits, CSC has also expanded its cooperation at the operational level. It conducted various tabletop exercises, virtual workshops, seminars/conferences, and training programs. In Jan 2022, CSC started the first virtual workshop on developing regional cyber security capabilities on defensive operations, deep/dark web handling, and digital forensics to address key areas of the deep web and dark net investigation and challenges, digital forensics, cyber threat intelligence and defensive operations in the cyber domain. The discussions focused on technological advancements, research challenges and approaches in these areas. Participants also shared their experiences and solutions in dealing with cyber security threats.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, in 2022, CSC started with virtual conferences and a training programme on investigating terrorism-related cases.<sup>12</sup> The participants discussed the difficulties of investigating terrorism cases and they shared their experiences and effective ways to handle prosecution of terrorism cases. Member states also discussed laws dealing with terror financing in their countries, like fake money, online radicalisation, and social media.

Additionally, they discussed organised crime, economic intelligence, cyber and mobile forensics, and the role of INTERPOL.<sup>13</sup> Apart from that, tabletop exercises are also organised regularly under CSC to work together on maritime challenges in IOR. The latest tabletop exercise was the 4<sup>th</sup> such exercise organised by the Indian Coast Guard in Kolkata from 14 to 16 Mar 2023.<sup>14</sup> These exercises are vital in keeping the IOR safe and secure for commercial shipping, international trade, and legitimate maritime activities.<sup>15</sup> It also keeps synergy and coordination between the militaries of member states during joint operations. It can be said that CSC delivers cooperation both at the operational and policy-making levels as it involves various government agencies that help enhance maritime security in the region. For example, Rashtriya Raksha University, Gujarat, organised two maritime law workshops under the CSC till 2023. Its objective aimed at capacity building in the domain of maritime law and

governance through teaching, research, training and extension programmes and activities.<sup>16</sup>

### **Relevant Offshore-Renewable Energyin CSC**

Offshore energy refers to generating renewable energy from natural resources found in offshore environments. It comprises:

- Offshore wind energy.
- Offshore wave energy.
- Tidal energy.

In comparison, marine energy is a wider term that covers all types of renewable energy derived from the ocean, seas, and other water bodies, such as Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC), Salinity Gradient Power Energy, as well as Offshore Wave and Tidal energy. It excludes offshore wind energy. Marine energy is a more inclusive category that covers various methods of harnessing energy from the marine environment.

While CSC started focusing on the effects of climate change on the maritime environment in 2020, as mentioned above, it can also work together to find ways in which maritime domain can help minimise the impact of climate change. By this, CSC can tackle non-traditional security issues by utilising the maritime space as climate change directly impacts the population of a region. One of the best ways in which the maritime domain can help minimise the impact of climate change is when CSC member states collaborate in producing green/renewable energy from marine environments, such as offshore renewable andmarine energy. It would help reduce the dependency on fossil fuels, which are one of the main causes of climate change. There are various types of offshore renewable energy that have great potential to replace fossil fuel-based energy as they are in abundance in the South Asian Region. These are as follows:

- **Offshore Wind Energy.** Offshore wind energy is the generation of electricity by wind farms in bodies of water, most commonly at sea. According to the *International Energy Agency* (IEA), wind speeds are higher offshore than on land, therefore, offshore farms generate more electricity per capacity installed.<sup>17</sup> The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) writes that offshore windmills are beneficial as land accusation is not a concern in setting up windmills, and land

resources remain protected.<sup>18</sup> According to *International Trade Administration*, India has the potential to generate 140 gigawatts (GW) of electricity from offshore winds due to its long coastline, especially in the regions near the Southern coasts and off the Western coast of India.<sup>19</sup> Whereas, according to *World Forum Offshore Wind*, global offshore wind energy production in 2022 was 57.6 GW of electricity.<sup>20</sup> CSC member states are also located close to the Southern coast of India, which means they share a geographical proximity to these areas abundant in wind energy potential. India has a roadmap and set the target to achieve 30 GW of electricity from offshore winds by 2030.<sup>21</sup> While MNRE is working on installing offshore windmills in India and came up with the National Offshore Wind Energy Policy in 2015.<sup>22</sup> MNRE can also work under the CSC framework and support members in establishing and reaching their renewable energy goals. For example, collaboration under the CSC can help Sri Lanka achieve its target of generating 70 per cent of energy requirements from renewable sources by 2030.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Sri Lanka is still finalising its offshore wind energy roadmap.<sup>24</sup> They can achieve this through joint research and operations with renewable energy agencies of member states under the CSC framework.

- **Wave and Tidal energy.**

- Wave and tidal energy are two forms of ocean renewable energy that use waves to generate electricity. However, their energy capture techniques differ. Tidal energy is generated by the moon and the sun's gravitational pulls, which cause tides to rise and fall. Tidal energy devices capture the energy of water movement during tidal cycles. Whereas in offshore wave energy, the kinetic energy of ocean waves is used to generate electricity. It involves catching the energy from the motion of waves as they move across the ocean's surface.

- A joint study conducted by the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Madras, in collaboration with Credit Rating Information Services of India Limited Risk and Infrastructure Solutions Limited in December 2014, revealed that the tidal power potential in India is approximately 12.455 GW. The study identified areas with low to medium tidal wave strength where this potential could be harnessed. These areas include

the Gulf of Khambat, the Gulf of Kutch in Gujarat, and the Southern regions of Gujarat. The Palk Bay-Mannar Channel in Tamil Nadu and the Hooghly River, South Haldia, and Sunderbans in West Bengal were also identified as promising locations for tidal power generation.<sup>25</sup> The study found that India has a significant capacity to produce clean electricity from tidal energy. Tides are predictable and flow in a regular and consistent pattern, unlike wind, making them a constant source of energy. As water is denser than air, tidal currents are denser than wind currents, which means tidal energy systems can generate more power compared to wind turbines of similar capacity.<sup>26</sup>

■ Indian Parliament in 2021 asked MNRE to set up a tidal power project as there is no such project in India currently.<sup>27</sup> The problem lies in the high cost of production that led to the cancellation of earlier projects. However, efforts were made that have decreased the cost; but it needs to be further decreased through Research and Development (R&D).<sup>28</sup> CSC members can collaborate in R&D to further reduce the cost of tidal energy production. Government organisations on renewable energy of CSC member countries like Bangladesh Solar and Renewable Energy Association, MNRE India, Sri Lanka Sustainable Energy Authority, Renewable Energy Maldives, Mauritius Renewable Energy Agency, Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment of Seychelles can collaborate under CSC for R&D and in finding tidal energy potential in all member countries as also to set up tidal power projects. Similarly, wave energy has the potential of 40GW in India, especially along the Western coast of India, as ocean water flow is stable. However, India has failed to tap wave energy due to high costs and insufficient technology.<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, researchers from the IIT Madras, have built and conducted successful trials of six wave devices offshore Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, in 2022.<sup>30</sup> Joint collaboration in training programs can be set up that can include IIT Madras and various research institutions from CSC member countries in joint R&D. Additionally, financial incentives can be provided in promoting research on wave energy to decrease the cost of energy production.

- **Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC)Energy.**

■ It is another renewable marine energy produced by utilising the temperature difference between warm surface water and deep ocean cold water. Both warm and cold water have their different uses. Warm surface water is used to vaporise any working fluid that has a low boiling point, such as ammonia. Whereas cold deep ocean water is used to condense the vapour back into a liquid state, releasing heat in the process. The temperature difference causes the working fluid to expand and contract, driving a turbine that generates electricity. The National Institute of Ocean Technology, an institute under the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), established an OTEC plant with a capacity of 65 kilowatts (kW) in Kavaratti, India, to power the desalination plant.<sup>31</sup> Dan Grech, the Founder and Managing Director of Global OTEC Resources, stated that the Indian Ocean has enormous potential for OTEC plants to supply continuous power in the coming years as the temperature difference on average is 20 degree Celsius.<sup>32</sup>

■ The research paper titled ‘Assessment of Extreme and Met Ocean Conditions in the Maldives for OTEC applications’ in the International Journal of Energy Research shows that OTEC could work well in the Maldives. Considering the current power generation methods here, it would also be economically beneficial as well.<sup>33</sup> MoES can cooperate with CSC members to construct OTEC energy projects in member countries. India can start by building small-scale OTEC plants in island member nations, and electricity can be utilised for desalination. It would ensure a constant supply of energy to desalination plants. India is the only CSC member nation that has successfully installed an OTEC energy plant. Other CSC member nations are negotiating with European countries for installation of such plants. India’s proactive steps can aid CSC members in installing OTEC power plants, reducing their energy insecurity and making the CSC multilateral framework robust.

### **Conclusion**

CSC has become a crucial platform for addressing non-traditional security challenges in the IOR. CSC has strengthened regional stability by focusing on maritime security and cooperation among

member states. To tackle the pressing issues of climate change and promote human security, CSC should incorporate offshore renewable energy and marine energy because CSC focuses on the maritime domain and; therefore, harnessing benefits from the maritime domain to tackle climate change should be its priority. Collaborative efforts in research, training, and project implementation can harness the region's vast renewable energy potential, reducing dependence on fossil fuels and mitigating climate change impacts. By embracing offshore renewable and marine energy, CSC can address security challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century and ensure a sustainable and secure future for the IOR.

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## **Review Articles & Book Reviews**



## **Review Article 1**

# **War Despatches 1971\***

**Brigadier BS Mehta**

### **Introduction**

Literature on war can be written from many perspectives, it can be from the top looking on how the events unfolded or it can be across the unfolding events and also from the ground upwards on how those who were part of the events received their orders, carried out the tasks assigned, and their visualisation of being part of an action. Further, it can be written in the form of individual accounts by senior officers or by strategic analysts, historians, and journalists. Finally, it can be written by either of the parties involved or by external independent observers. Each account in its own way adds to the literature of the conflict and contributes in understanding of the events and drawing suitable lessons.

Most books on war are individual accounts of soldiers or their units, describing sacrifice and glory. This book is the first collective war experience of young officers of not only the combat arms leading men in battle but also the support and logistic services like the Engineers, Signals, Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME), Ordnance and Supply, whose roles are equally important.

### **The Authors**

'War Despatches' edited by Brigadier BS Mehta (Retd) is unique in many ways. It's written by a group of officers from the 28 NDA Course. They belonged to various arms and services with the respective Services. At the time of the war, they were all young officers serving in battalions at the cutting edge of combat or in formation headquarters which were deeply involved in the conflict. Hence, the experiences they have written about are at the 'tactical level' and mostly at company and battalion level but their experiences have been recounted with the wisdom of hindsight and the maturity of their experiences 50 years after the event.

The 28th NDA batch commissioned on 15 June 1966 set a new trend for all other NDA batches by publishing 'War Despatches

\***War Despatch 1971.** Edited by Brigadier BS Mehta; (Noida: Occam (An imprint of BluOne Ink) October 2022); Pages: 368; Price: 899; ISBN-13: 978-9392209123

1971' while the country celebrated the Golden Jubilee of Victory in 1971 war with Pakistan. The book contains the first-hand battle experiences of batchmates from different branches of the three Services coming together on a common veteran's platform after six decades of joint training at NDA.

Having passed out of the Indian Military Academy (and other academies) in June 1966, they joined their units soon after the 1965 war with Pakistan and later in their Services would have been Battalion Commanders (and equivalent) during Operation Pawan and Operation Chequerboard and would have been in various appointments including Brigade Commanders while combating insurgency in both J&K and the NE and as Divisional Commanders during Operation Vijay. In fact, both Major General VS Budhwar, who was commanding 3 Infantry Division, and Major General (later Lieutenant General) Mohinder Puri, who commanded 8 Mountain Division, were part of this course. Subsequently, many from this course went on to become Lieutenant Generals, including Lieutenant General Arvind Sharma who retired as an Army Commander. Hence, their accounts are enhanced by their experience in Service.

### **About The Book**

In 'Burinda Bash'; Brigadier Mehta writes how after the destruction of Pakistan's 3 (Independent) Armoured Squadron at Garibpur on 21 November 1971, the 'window of opportunity' for capture of Dacca was opened but was 'not exploited'. This is the epic battle in which a Squadron of 45 Cavalry destroyed fifteen Pakistani Chafee tanks with their PT-76. The Battle of Burinda took place a few days later and has been described in great detail. 'It was a symbol of Pakistan's gumption to fight against heavy odds, not witnessed elsewhere in East Pakistan'. Balram Mehta was a tank troop leader supporting 4 SIKH who suffered 62 casualties including fourteen killed. He quotes General Jacob an unimpeachable source in his "indictment of the quality of higher-level planning, execution and leadership".

Lieutenant General RSK Kapur writes about the personality of Lieutenant General Sagat Singh who as General Officer Commanding (GOC) 17 Mountain Division 'had taught the Chinese a lesson of their lives'. After carrying out a task for which he had 'worked tirelessly' he recalls General Sagat asking his surprised

Military Attaché to call his ‘son’ and then giving him a tight hug and saying ‘Well done, son’. He calls him ‘the greatest General he ever served with’ and this association ‘taught him some essential character qualities.’

Major General Vinod Budhwar talks about his accompanying a Mukti Bhaini patrol to destroy a bridge in East Pakistan and the difficulties encountered and the manner in which they carried out improvisations to execute the mission. Brigadier Sukhdev Singh writes about the fog of war where a bridge at Jaintiapur had been captured by the Mukti Bhaini but they failed to hold on to it as they got carried away in their celebrations and began ‘looting the bazaar’ and the officer tasked for the demolition went missing for two days before he finally returned. He also writes about the ‘Khustia Episode’, “the attack was a failure. The entire 4 Mountain Division then concentrated on one axis”.

Brigadier Shimi Kanbargimath gives an insight into the human aspects through selected excerpts of letters to his wife. He had been moved to East Pakistan from the Commando Wing in Belgaum where he was an instructor. He recalls taking a Sikh officer to a hospital in Dhaka after the surrender and how a Pakistani nurse asked if it was safe for her to attend to the Sikh officer, who had a dental issue. She was nervous because, “They had been told in schools and at home to stay away from Sikh men”. It reveals the psyche created amongst the people.

Air Commodore Arun Karandikar writes about Kilo Squadron a ‘clandestine unit’ formed with a few Pakistani Air Force pilots who escaped from East Pakistan with the refugees. He also recalls Group Captain (later Air Vice Marshal) Chandan Singh a ‘dynamic go-getter’ and how he made him “undertake an urgent flight in a Dakota alone. He ended up flying 49 sorties including five single sorties in fourteen days”.

In ‘The Battlefield Blues’, Brigadier Mehta covers the battle of Garibpur including the bravery of Major ‘Chiefy’ Narag, the Squadron Commander of 45 Cavalry who was destined ‘to play his role’, and made the supreme sacrifice and was later awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC). On completion of his orders when he asked his Troop Leaders if they had any questions, a newly promoted JCO asked, “Who will give the orders to open fire”.

Used to formation level exercises reality had now hit, the war had started. It turned out to be an exceptional and rare tank battle. The early victory served as a trumpet call.

Major Pradeep Sharma recalls being the solitary Sapper having been heli dropped to the location of the advancing Independent Squadron of 7 Light Cavalry to render engineer support. He single handedly prodded the area in front for mines throwing out all the rules for such procedures, thereafter, deciding that prodding was too tedious he moved on the leading tank observing the area for tell-tale signs of mines and he even removed explosives with his hands from a bridge that had been prepared for demolition by the enemy, "just doing what you are trained for and able to do".

Lieutenant General Arvind Sharma was a Captain in a brigade headquarter which had moved from Nagaland. He gives an insight into the personality of his Commander, Brigadier RCV Apte, the GOC Major General (later General) KV Krishna Rao and Major (later General) Zia ur Rehman of 8 East Bengal Regiment which was placed under the command of the Brigade. He also talks of the manner in which he directed an air strike at Maulvi Bazar on 08 December.

Brigadier Trigunesh Mukerjee was also a Staff Officer as a Captain in a leading brigade and recalls dealing with questions from the local Bengali population regarding their missing kin who had been picked up by the Pakistani soldiers and were untraceable. He also talks of the war correspondents and remembers the words of Melville DeMello, "if you don't love the army, you can never be a war correspondent".

Part 2 of the book covers the Western Front. Colonel Tarlochan Singh Kalra writes about the capture of a Post after the cease fire by 2 SIKH in the Amritsar Sector and the praise given by the Pakistani CO a few days later, "your men fought heroically in battle and were definitely superior". Lieutenant General PPS Bhandari writes about his experience as Adjutant of 72 Armoured Regiment a new raising being bloodied in battle and been awarded the 'Battle Honour Chhamb'. This was also the battle in which Deccan Horse lost Captain Daljinder Singh who 'lived life king sized', Brigadier Gautam Tandon has captured his personality perfectly in a moving tribute.

Captain SS Sethi covers the naval operations in great detail. Being the navigating officer of a frontline ship, he was hardly able to sleep during the twelve days. Wing Commander S Balasubramanium describes an operational mission and states how the "attack was the ultimate test for a fighter pilot".

Lieutenant Colonel RC Chetri and Major General Subash Bindra write about inventory management and ammunition supply in war. While Major General CP Tewari recalls how "they issued supplies without any indents" and Major (later Lieutenant General) Krishen Bhatia signing the receipt on the back of a cigarette packet. Brigadier ML Jaisinghani writes about the famous battle of Shakargarh where his artillery guns were supporting 3 SIKH LI and 'brought down accurate fire to silence the enemy'.

Air Commodore Kurivilla gives out his experience as a Prisoner of War including how Bhutto visited their camp in November 1972 and said, "I want you to go home... and please return our prisoners of war". Lieutenant General Mohinder Puri was posted in 25 Infantry Division as a Captain and describes the build up to the war as also the attack on Poonch which the GOC Major General (later Lieutenant General) Kundan Singh had anticipated and asked for additional troops. He sums up his account by saying, "intelligence continues to remain a weak spot, though our acquisition capabilities have vastly increased".

Colonel KK Nanda was part of his battalion 13 PUNJAB deployed in Ferozepur and describes leading a Patrol deep into Pakistan and the capture of Southern portion of the Mamdot Bulge in great detail. He says, "his achievement in the war has been the high point of his life". Brigadier Vijay Rai who was with 15 DOGRA gives out the role of his battalion in capturing the Northern portion of the Bulge. While listing out various ambiguities and shortcomings he concludes by saying, "all our shortcomings got drowned in the celebrations".

Colonel Mahendra Singh Joon was part of 3 GRENAIDIERS in the historic battle of Jarpal. This is where Major (later Brigadier) Hoshiar Singh and Second Lieutenant Arun Kheterpal were awarded the Param Vir Chakra (PVC) and his Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel (later Lieutenant General) VP Airy was awarded the MVC for their gallant actions. He recalls the seven enemy counter attacks and the handing over of the body of Lieutenant

Colonel Akram Raja with a citation ‘based on which he was awarded Pakistan’s second highest gallantry award’. Major General PJS Sandhu was also in this sector as a Staff Captain with 16 (Independent) Armoured Brigade and recalls how Brigadier (later General) Vaidya “operated from his track group throughout the war with just his haversack and never came back to his Headquarters, that was the major reason for success of the operations by the Brigade. He was always present at the point of decision”.

### **Conclusion**

The 1971 war was a glorious victory in which all cogs of the wheel performed admirably. It was no doubt a whole nation approach. While there is a lot of literature covering various facets of the conflict, this remains a rare book as while it is a narrative from the perspective of young officers it is a reflection of their wisdom and experience after many years in Service shedding light on the significant aspects important to win a war. Their points of view were those of young officers taking orders and passing on orders while being in the thick of action themselves.

Authored by those who fought the war with grit and courage in the face of adversity, this is a lucid recount of their triumphs and challenges. The book will serve as an inspiration for the next generations of warriors due to the unique insight it has given into a very important chapter of India’s military history. There is no doubt that we as a nation need to salute all those who contributed to the victory and particularly those who made the supreme sacrifice.

Finally, the book serves as an important reminder of the contribution made by the defence forces in nation building. The book records how as young Troop Leaders, Pilots, Sailors contributed to achieve victory to finally shed the ‘historical baggage of a military defeat’ and emerge as a regional power.

*Major General Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd)*

## Review Article 2

# ARMOUR '71\*

Cavalry Officers Association

### Introduction

The Indian Armoured Corps has fought and ensured victory in all major conflicts in post-Independence. It has operated effectively in diverse terrain and climatic conditions ranging from the high mountains in Zojila (1948) and Chushul (1962), in developed terrain including Patton Nagar at Khemkaran (1965), Akhnoor and Shakargarh (1971), in the deserts to include Laungewala (1971), riverine terrain of Bangladesh (1971), in the jungles and built-up areas in Sri Lanka during the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) Operations (1987) and recently at the high altitude in Eastern Ladakh (2021). Armour assures both deterrence and destruction.

It is thus apt to document the various battles - both for their remarkable operational execution as well as lessons for current military professionals, which are relevant even today. It is with this in mind that the Cavalry Officers Association launched an outstanding initiative under Lieutenant General Amit Sharma (Retd) and a team of three highly committed authors who have meticulously researched and recorded the history of armour operations in 1971 with a great deal of granularity.

### The Authors

The book has been co-authored by four authors headed by Lieutenant General Amit Sharma who was then the President of the Cavalry Officers Association. Commissioned into 45 Cavalry, he retired as the Commander in Chief of the Strategic Forces Command and has commanded an Armoured Brigade, an Infantry Division, and the Strike Corps, all in the Desert Sector.

Lieutenant General Rakesh Chadha, was commissioned into and Commanded 66 Armoured Regiment. He commanded an Armoured Brigade as part of an Armoured Division and retired as the Director General Operational Logistics.

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\*Armour 71. By Cavalry Officers Association (Publisher-DEFSTRAT Books, December 2022); Pages: 280; Price-1200; ISBN: N/A

Journal of the United Service Institution of India, Vol. CLIII, No. 633, July-September 2023.

Major General Jagatbir Singh belongs to 18 Cavalry and has Commanded an Armoured Brigade in the Desert Sector and the strategic Black Elephant Armoured Division. Post retirement he is a Distinguished Fellow with USI.

Sagat Shaunik, comes from a family with a rich military heritage, his father and grandfather were both in the Army and he is the grandnephew of Major Somnath Sharma who was awarded the first Param Vir Chakra (PVC) and General VN Sharma who was the Army Chief. His area of interest is India's military history.

### **The Book**

Beginning with the politico-diplomatic perspective of the war, the build up to the war, armour operations in each theatre, followed by naval and air operations, the canvas of Armour 71 is undoubtedly wide. The book covers interesting viewpoints and the role of armour in offensive and defensive operations. It also includes the employment of tanks in East Pakistan which posed many problems due to the riverine terrain with the large numbers of rivers and streams that were required to be crossed.

1971 is widely remembered as a liberation war, a war that led to the creation of a new nation. Of all four wars with Pakistan, the 1971 war is remembered as the decisive one. All wars and battles lead to outcomes, invariably interpreted as victory or defeat by the protagonists and the India-Pakistan wars are no different, but the 1971 war is still accepted as a decisive victory for India, for it achieved an outcome that changed the regional and world map forever.

The objectives of the military campaign were clear. In the East, it had to be the decisive defeat of Pakistan; in the West, it was to ensure that Pakistan was unable to make any gains in Jammu and Kashmir while exploring possibilities of capturing territory in Rajasthan and Sindh that could be politically useful at the negotiating table. The force levels were deployed accordingly. General Candeth, in his book on the 1971 War, stated- "The Chief of Army Staff informed us, his Army Commanders that the aim of the government was to create conditions by helping the Mukti Bahini drive out the Pakistanis and install a popular government in Dacca so that the ten million or so refugees could go back home and live peacefully. He told us that it was not part of India's

policy to humiliate Pakistan. India sought to achieve a quick victory in the East and carry out only holding operations in the West".

While the Indian Army had undergone major modernisation and expansion post the 1962 conflict, the focus was on the Northern Borders and lesser emphasis was laid on armour. In fact, in 1965, Pakistan had more Armoured Regiments than India. But after 1965, the focus fell on Armoured Corps and ten additional Regiments were raised and our holdings were modernised with the induction of T-54, T-55 and PT-76 tanks from USSR and our own Vijayantas. The older equipment continued too, including the mighty Centurions, the Light AMX-13 and some Shermans.

In the East, there were three Armoured Regiments, 45 Cavalry and 69 Armoured Regiment equipped with PT-76 tanks and 63 Cavalry with recently inducted T-55 tanks. In addition, there were two independent Armoured Squadrons equipped with the PT-76's discarded by 63 Cavalry.

45 Cavalry was the first Regiment to be blooded in battle in this war on 21 November 1971. Over the next twenty-six days, the Regiment fought twenty-nine actions with seventeen battalions of 4 Mountain Division and 9 Infantry Division, the last two being on 16 December, the day of the surrender. The actions by Major DS Narag at Garibpur, where they destroyed five Pakistani Chafee tanks and Second Lieutenant Sam Chandavarkar have been beautifully illustrated. Major Narag who was killed in battle was awarded the Maha Vir Chakra (MVC).

5 (Independent) Armoured Squadron of 63 Cavalry commanded by Major SS Mehta was involved in three major operations which were Akhaura, Ashuganj and the crossing of the mighty River Meghna in the most innovative manner. This Squadron was the only Armour element to be present in Dacca for the 'Surrender Ceremony'.

On 17 December 1971, Lieutenant Colonel Pawittar Singh Takhar, Commandant of 69 Armoured Regiment, had the unique opportunity to accept the surrender of Lieutenant Colonel Bukhari, Commanding Officer Pakistan 29 Cavalry.

It was decided to use a mix of T-55 and PT-76 tanks in each Regiment evolving the concept of light armour supported by medium armour. T-55 Squadrons were employed along the axis

which had firm terrain and PT-76 tanks were employed to carry out an outflanking manoeuvre across wet paddy fields. Armour operations in East Pakistan were successful due to correct employment and aggressive action with high initiative at the sub-unit level. Nevertheless, it must be remembered that tank actions can only succeed if they have dedicated infantry, artillery, and air support, with very carefully executed logistics support.

### **Scenes from East Pakistan**

India's strategy in the West was more aimed at preventing loss of territory. Several small offensives were planned to capture vulnerable salients across the Cease Fire Line as also across the International Border. The original plan was to launch offensives in Chhamb and in the Shakargarh Bulge. A major advance was to take place in the desert towards Naya Chor. A smaller push in the direction of Rahimyar Khan was also considered. A contingency plan to employ the Armoured Division across the border was also made in the event of Pakistan committing its reserves in the Shakargarh area. Neither this nor the plan for the offensive in Chhamb were executed. In fact, the Armoured Division remained on 'a tight leash' throughout.

The battle of Chhamb where two Armoured Regiments, The Deccan Horse and 72 Armoured Regiment fought an integrated battle as part of 10 Infantry Division displayed gallantry, resolute grit and determination which led to destruction of enemy armour and stymied their offensive on the West bank of the Munawar Tawi has been covered in a great deal of detail. Yet it is quite inexplicable that The Deccan Horse which blunted the Pakistan armour in the initial stages was denied the Battle Honour of Chhamb.

In the Western Sector, Second Lieutenant Arun Kheterpal of Poona Horse was awarded the PVC whereas Brig Arun Vaidhya, Cdr 16 (Independent) Armoured Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel RM Vohra, commanding The Hodsons Horse, Lieutenant Colonel Sukhjit Singh, commanding The Scinde Horse, and Lieutenant Colonel Hanut Singh, commanding The Poona Horse, were all awarded MVCs. The battles of these and many other illustrious Regiments which fought in the Western Sector have been covered in greatest of detail bringing out issues that have not yet lost their relevance.

### Conclusion

Though 1971 reflected a combination of strategic decisiveness among the political leadership, unity across the party lines, setting out of clear political objectives, and a relationship of trust in the advice rendered by the military leadership. It was no doubt a whole nation approach working on a common script, that enabled India to claim that it was on the right side of history.

However, as General VN Sharma wrote, "Despite India's great victory, in the Shimla Agreement, it is not clear why PM Indira Gandhi let Pakistan 'off the hook' on the question of the conflict in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and the need for settlement of the border and termination of terrorist activity by Pakistan".

An extremely detailed book backed by painstaking and meticulous research, it will undoubtedly assist future military leaders in training for the next conflict in varied and difficult terrain, and understanding the express need for effective cooperation between all military arms and services and departments of government, for success in battle. The book will also be of interest to fellow Indians and students who will feel proud of the great achievements of the Indian Defence Forces. The book also needs to find a place of pride in libraries of training academies and armour training schools across the world.

*Major General VK Singh (Retd)*

**Chinese Military Legal System: An Analysis.** By UC Jha and Kishore Kumar Khera; (New Delhi: Vij Books India Pvt Ltd, June 2022); Pages: 308; Price: Rs 1750/-; ISBN-13: 978-9393499608.

The Chinese military legal system is headed by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Military Court, which is under the Political Department of the Central Military Commission and the Supreme People's Court. Below the PLA Military Court, there are courts in the military regions as well as 'in' the military services—Navy, Air Force, Armed Police, and below those courts, are basic level courts within each of these regions, military services, and other units. The PLA consisting of nearly two million active-duty officers and civil cadres, Non Commissioned Officers and conscripts are governed by numerous laws, rules and regulations. The book goes on to suggest the inherent lack of transparency and openness not only in the Chinese military court system but also in the personnel system. Under the current government, the PLA, which is also a subset of Chinese society, is undergoing a major reform in terms of structure and values and, hence, the governing laws and codes of conduct play a major role. This book looks at various facets of Chinese military laws, their implementation process, their inherent strengths and inadequacies, and their future impact on its military.

The book is laid out into nine chapters and seven appendices which analyse the military legal system of the PLA, including matters related to administration, administrative and disciplinary measures, and trial by military courts in a simple and lucid manner. The first chapter gives a clear overview about the Peoples' Liberation Army, the Central Military Commission (CMC), the composition and reorganisation with changing ethos. The second chapter elucidates the administrative aspects contained in the Interior Service Regulations of the PLA which are the military administrative law and regulations defining the basic system of military activities, including induction, oath, system of rank, internal relations, and personnel policies. It also discusses issues related to appointment and removal, administrative violations, disposal of complaints and grievances of the service members.

Chapter 3 covers the historical evaluation and progression of the Chinese military legal system from the times of earliest ruling dynasties till the present time. The chapter also gives an account

of the military law codified and evolved over the millenniums and how the codes transitioned and progressed after the establishment of Republic of China in 1912. It discusses the constitutional provisions and the relevant laws affecting military service and analyses the development of military laws and regulations.

Chapter 4 reveals the substantive provisions in Criminal Law of PRC which exclusively deal with 'Crimes of Servicemen's Transgression of Duties', contained in Articles 420 to 451. The natures of crimes range from wartime crimes, crimes in violation of military discipline, crimes endangering military secrets and fighting capacity to crimes infringing the interests of the soldiers and civilians. The PLA personnel are liable to be prosecuted in a military court for these offences. The criminal procedure law followed in a trial by a military court has also been briefly covered in this chapter. Military courts are standing courts organised under the Organic Law of the People's Court. They hold jurisdiction over both criminal and civil cases. Chapter 5 discusses the hierarchical structure and functioning of the three levels of the military court system under the PLA. The chapter also discusses the extent of jurisdiction of the military courts in criminal and certain civil cases.

The next chapter describes the rules of discipline of the PLA and discusses discipline-related offences, punishments that can be awarded to soldiers, officers and members of the civilian cadre of military, and their implementation in accordance with articles 132-145 of the regulations on the discipline of PLA. The chapter 7 of the book relates to the wave of judicial reforms related to the rights to a fair trial, designed to protect individuals from the unlawful and arbitrary deprivation of their basic rights and freedoms. It is contained in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which has been signed by the PRC. The chapter also covers the right to fair trial under international law, and critically analyses whether trials in the military courts of China are just and fair. This chapter, as also the Chapter 8 highlight the large number issues related to instilling discipline amongst its cadre. The foremost issue remaining that of corruption among senior officers and the enforcement measures in place to check the systemic corruption in higher ranks. Chapter 8 stretches to examine the root of the issues related to corruption and the effectiveness of the recent attempts by Xi Jinping to root out corruption from the military. The military law reforms are an important part of President Xi Jinping's

comprehensive reforms of the political system and the military modernisation programme. The last chapter of the book under the title 'Gestalt' broadly draws the verdict on various aspects of the military legal system of the PLA and evaluates the efficacy of the military legal reforms especially those in last two decades.

The book provides a wholesome reading experience to military lawyers and scholars alike since it not only covers the administrative and criminal aspects of the military legal setup in the PLA, but also the unique role and position occupied by the government functionaries in the administration of military justice in PLA. The book would immensely add to readers' knowledge and help in drawing comparative analysis between the legal system of major armies of the world and suggest way forward for learning lessons, adopting best practices, and new approach to study military law.

*Group Captain Sharad Tewari, VM (Retd)*

**The Eastern Gate: War and Peace in Nagaland, Manipur and India's Far East.** By Sudeep Chakravarti; (*Simon and Schuster, New Delhi, India, January 2022*); Pages: 477; Price: Rs. 899/-; ISBN13: 978-9392099212

The Eastern Gate is Chakravarti's second book on the northeast, an area that he calls far-eastern India, after *Highway 39*, which was released in 2012. It was Chakravarti's previous attempt at unravelling the brutal history of Nagaland and Manipur, and their violent and restive present. The book touches upon issues of other states in the northeast but is essentially focused on Nagaland and Manipur. There are 42 chapters divided into three sections titled 'Smoke, Mirrors, and Smoke and Mirrors'.

Northeast India accounts for nearly a seventh of the country's landmass and is home to nearly 50 million people. It is a gateway to immense possibilities, from hydrocarbons to regional trade, and a bulwark of the country's security in the shadow of China. The region is also home to immense ethnic and communal tension, and an ongoing Naga conflict that is shrouded in a cloud of uncertainty. No wonder the author writes, "India's eastern elixir is a seductive, stunningly complex cocktail". The agenda is open ended and issues are picked up along the way and analysed through interviews with interested parties or by re-reading news reports concerning them.

In the book, the author discusses in detail the “issues that snarl community relationships in Manipur, and the massive umbilical of the Naga question that is irrevocably tied to this state and irrevocably affects the region”. The author also dwells on the Kuki community and its history and aspirations in the book. According to the Nagas, all the land in the hills actually belongs to them and the Kukis were ‘vagabonds’ who came and settled there. The Meiteis feel the entire state belongs to them — it was a part of their old kingdom. So, unless this major issue of land or territory gets resolved, we are not going to head anywhere, an Intelligence Bureau official puts in the book. The book attempts at peace-making at the community level between the Kukis and Nagas in Manipur. The bloodshed during the 1990s has remained a bitter memory and a sticking point between the two communities. The author records the peace overtures made by the Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM) to their Naga counterpart, United Naga Council (UNC).

The Eastern Gate seeks to background the ambit of that ambition in this geo-strategic, geo-economic sweet spot with a combination of research and reportage in a narrative that draws in policymakers from politicians and bureaucrats to academicians and analysts, players of every hue from rebels to intelligence operatives, and people in whose name policies and plays are made. The book also highlights the mechanics, the pressures, and the counter-pressure of peace-making that has the potential to transform and elevate this region; the Naga peace process that saw an uptick in mid-2015 and; the crucial, and often misunderstood, ethno-political umbilical that ties it firmly to Manipur and, to a lesser extent, to Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

A close watcher of the complex geo-ethno-political developments in the north-eastern states, Chakravarti, in this book, offers crucial historical perspectives into the beginning of the Naga problem, elaborating how the British started showing Naga homelands as part of their territory on papers even as they enjoyed little or no authority over the land and its people, and how the government of India, thereafter, continued with the British policy. The book, however, uses history mostly to elaborate the context of the present and the recent past, especially 2014 onwards, but the focus has been on discussing and weighing possible ways to bring peace to ‘the interlocked histories and territories of Manipur and Nagaland’.

Employing a 'dispatches' style of storytelling, and interviews with rebel leaders, politicians, bureaucrats, policy makers, security specialists and operatives, gunrunners, narcos, peace negotiators and community leaders, Chakravarti's narrative provides a definitive guide to the transition from war to peace, even as he keeps a firm gaze on the future.

*Dr Jyoti Yadav*

## USI LATEST PUBLICATION DURING 2021-2020

Pub Code	Title of Book & Name of Author	Price(Rs)	Year
R-111**	"STRATEGIC YEAR BOOK 2021" Concept and Structure by Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd), Edited by Lt Gen GS Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd), Gp Capt Sharad Tewari, VM (Retd) and Dr Roshan Khanijo	1850	2021
R-112	"Maritime Corridors in the Indo-Pacific : Geopolitical Implications for India" By Cdr Subhasish Sarangi M/s Pentagon Press	1295	2021
NSP-38**	"Role of Niche and Disruptive Technologies in India's Deterrence and War Fighting Capabilities" By Lt Gen PJS Pannu, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)	295	2021
NSS-66**	"TRANSNATIONAL TERRORISM – Evolving Threats and Responses" Edited by Maj Gen RPS Bhadauria, VSM (Retd) and Dr Roshan Khanijo	850	2021
M-1/21**	"The Determinants of India's National Military Strategy" By Lt Gen (Dr) Rakesh Sharma, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)	295	2021
OP-1/21**	"Russia-China Relations and Future Dynamics" By Brig LS Lidder, SM, VSM (Retd)	250	2021
OP-2 /21**	"India's Space Programme - Capabilities, Organisations and Warfighting Potential" By Lt Gen RS Panwar, AVSM, SM, VSM (Retd)	195	2021
OP-3 /21**	"The China-Pakistan Collusive Threat" By Maj Gen VK Singh, VSM (Retd) and Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd)	195	2021
OP-4 /21**	"The Coup in Myanmar : Strategic Implications and Breaking the Impasse" By Lt Gen Shakti Gurung, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)	195	2021
CS3 /R-113**	"Cyber Security & Cyberspace in International Relations - A Roadmap for India's Cyber Security Policy" By Professor Gautam Sen	895	2021
Adm-1 (UNPO)/ 2021**	"India and UN Peace Operations Part - I : Principles of UN Peacekeeping and Mandate" Edited by Maj Gen AK Bardalai and Maj Gen PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)	295	2021
Adm-2 (UNPO)/2021**	"UN Peace Operations Part - II: Hostage Taking of Peacekeepers" Edited by Maj Gen AK Bardalai and Maj Gen PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)	295	2021
Adm-3 (UNPO)/ 2021**	"UN Peace Operations Part - III : Effectiveness of UN Peace Operations : Dynamics of Composition of Troops and Diversity on UN Peace Operations" Edited by Maj Gen AK Bardalai and Maj Gen PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)	295	2021
Adm-4(UNPO)/ 2021**	"UN Peace Operations Part - IV : Protection of Civilians" Edited by Maj Gen AK Bardalai and Maj Gen PK Goswami, VSM (Retd)	295	2021
CMHCS-3	"WITH HONOR AND GLORY - Five Great Artillery Battles" By Maj Gen AJS Sandhu, VSM (Retd) Published by USI (CMHCS)	–	2020
R-105**	"Tao of Soldiering the Chinese Paradigm – The Shift in Human Resources Development in PLA and Lessons for India" By Col Nihar Kuatri	1995	2020
OP-1/2020**	"The Dynamics of the India – Nepal Relationship" By Lt Gen Shokin Chauhan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM & VSM (Retd)	295	2020
OP-2/2020**	"Chinese Intransigence in Ladakh : An Overview" By Maj Gen PK Mallick, VSM (Retd)	295	2020
OP-2/2019**	"Unpacking SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)" By Cdr Subhasish Sarangi	150	2020
CMHCS-1	"Traditions and Customs of the Indian Armed Forces" By Brig SP Sinha, VSM (Retd) M/s Manohar Publication, New Delhi	4500	2020
CMHCS-2**	"Laddie Goes to War – Indian Pilots in WWI" By Mr Somnath Sapru	1250	2020
R-106**	"India and China Building Strategic Trust" By Maj Gen Rajiv Narayanan, AVSM, VSM (Retd) & Professor Qiu Yonghui	1950	2020
R-107**	"Strategic Year Book 2020" Edited by Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd) Lt Gen GS Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) and Dr Roshan Khanijo	1850	2020
R-108**	"The End of an Era India Exits Tibet - India Tibet Relations 1947-1962, Part-4" By Claude Arpi	1950	2020

\* Available at USI of India    \*\* Available at M/s Vij Books of India Pvt Ltd

# USI

(Estd. 1870)

## OUR ACTIVITIES

### **Library and Reading Room**

The library holds over 68,000 books, and journals, including some books of 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, on an astonishing variety of subjects. While the principal emphasis is on strategy and defence, there are a large number of works on different vistas of Indian life. There are memoirs, biographies, recollections, diaries, journals, manuscripts for scholars and researchers. The reading room is air-conditioned, spacious and well stocked in terms of current reading material. The library was automated in 2002.

### **Correspondence Courses**

The Institution runs regular correspondence courses for officers of the Armed Forces to assist them in preparing for promotion examinations, and for the entrance examinations to the Defence Services Staff College and Technical Staff College. Over the years, this has been a significant and well-received activity.

### **USI Journal**

The *USI Journal* is the oldest surviving defence journal in the country and in Asia, having first appeared in 1871. In an era when there is a feeling that free expression of views by Defence personnel is not looked upon kindly by the establishment, the Journal in fact provides just such a forum, without regard to seniority and length of service in the Armed Forces, subject of course, to propriety and quality of the written work.

### **Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation**

The Erstwhile Centre for Research and its resources have been merged into the new Centre named as USI Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation (USI-CS3) w.e.f.01 January 2005. The Centre aims at conducting detailed and comprehensive enquiry, research and analyses of national and international security related issues, and gaming and simulation of strategic scenarios, to evolve options for wider discussion and consideration.

### **USI Centre for UN Peacekeeping (CUNPK)**

The Centre was established in 2000 and functioned with USI till Aug 2014, when it moved out of USI premises and was delinked from USI. Its aims were organising workshops, seminars and training capsules for peacekeepers, observers and staff officers – both

Indian and foreign. It also oversaw the practical training of Indian contingents. It functioned under a Board of Management headed by the Vice Chief of the Army Staff and worked in close coordination with the Service Headquarters and the Ministries of External Affairs and Defence. In August 2014, CUNPK moved out to the accommodation allotted by the Army HQ.

### **Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies (CMHCS)**

The USI-Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies (USI-CMHCS) was established in December 2000 at the behest of the three Service Headquarters for encouraging an objective study of all facets of Indian military history with a special emphasis on the history of the Indian Armed Forces. It focuses on diverse aspects of the history of Indian military evolution, policies and practices-strategic, tactical, logistical, organisational, socio-economic, as well as the field of contemporary conflict studies in the broader sense.

### **Gold Medal Essay Competition**

Every year the Institution organises a gold medal essay competition open to all officers. These essays, the first one of which was introduced in 1871, constitute a barometer of opinion on matters that affect national security in general and the defence forces in particular.

### **USI-War Wounded Foundation Joint Essay Competition**

This essay competition was instituted in 2021 after signing of the MoU between USI and the War Wounded Foundation. The competition is open to all across the globe and must be on the subject of issues relating to the experiences and/or rehabilitation of war disabled personnel of the Armed Forces of India.

### **Lt Gen SL Menezes Memorial Essay Competition**

This has been instituted from 2015 on a subject related to Armed Forces Historical Research. The Essay Competition is open to all across the globe.

### **Lectures, Discussions and Seminars**

A series of lectures, discussions and seminars on service matters, international affairs, and topics of general interest to the Services, are organised for the benefit of local members in Delhi.

### **MacGregor Medal**

This medal is awarded to Armed Forces personnel for valuable reconnaissance and adventure activity they may have undertaken.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

The following are eligible to become members of the Institution :

- Officers of the Armed Forces
- Class I Gazetted Officers of Group 'A' Central Services.
- Any category mentioned above will be eligible even though retired or released from the Service.
- Cadets from the NDA and Cadets from the Service Academies and Midshipmen.

For further particulars, please write to Director General, USI of India, Rao Tula Ram Marg, (Opposite Signals Enclave) Post Bag No. 8, Vasant Vihar PO, New Delhi – 110 057