

CIVIL – MILITARY RELATIONSHIP IN INDIA



Lt Gen K R Rao, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retired)



AUDIENCE

Interaction

Relatives

Appeared for Armed Forces



CONCEPT AND MEANING

Civil–military relations describe how political leaders, bureaucrats, and military institutions share responsibility for national defence while maintaining democratic accountability.

In India, the guiding principle is: “Civilian supremacy with professional military autonomy.”

- Political leadership decides policy and war objectives.
- Military leadership decides operational execution.

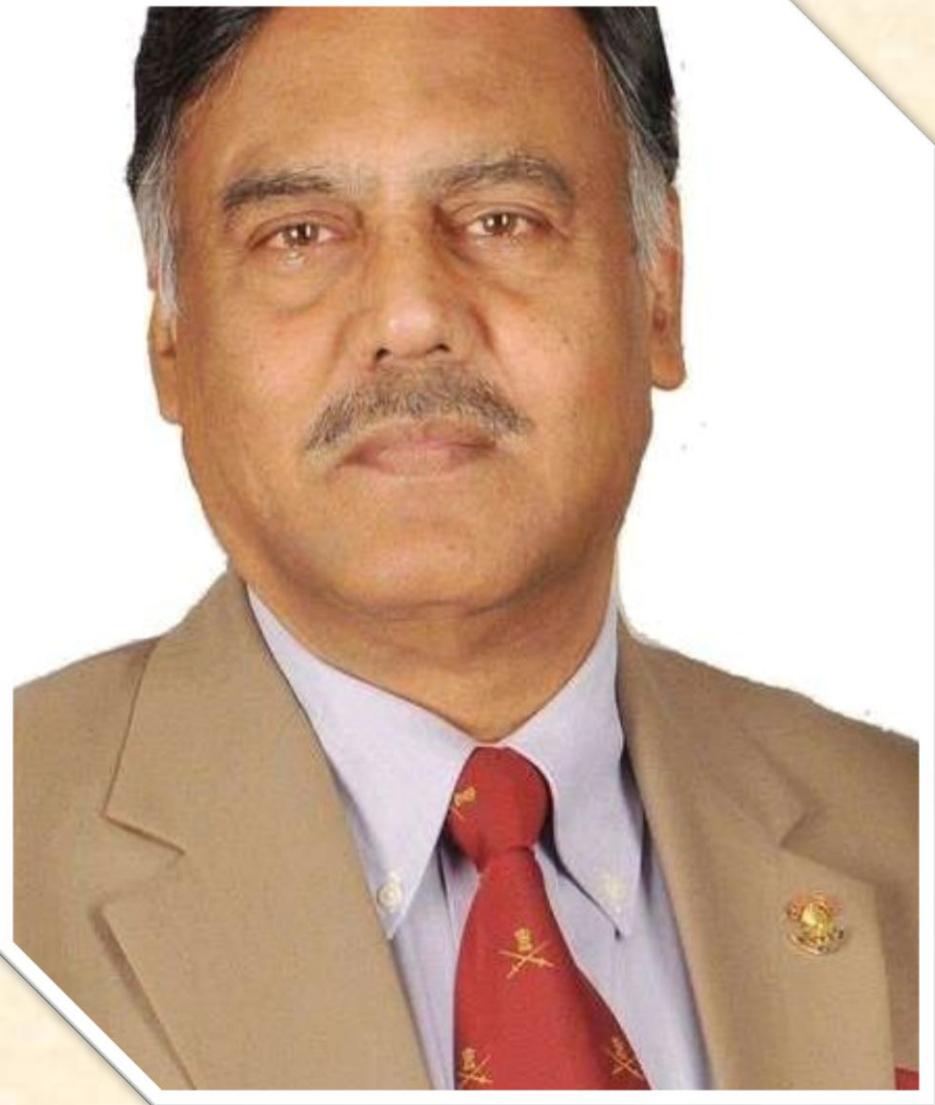
PART –I

GETTING TO KNOW

WHOM

YOU ARE DEALING WITH

SERVICE PROFILE



Retired 2010 as DG Artillery.

40 years in the Army.

- 10 years – 25% Delhi, 9 years - J&K, 5 years – Punjab, 5 years in Training, 3 years - Sikkim and NE, 2 years each in Rajasthan, Maharashtra, UP and Secunderabad incl 1/2 years – Sri Lanka.

Minus 49 To Plus 53.

Delhi Exposure each rank Lt Col, Brig, Maj Gen, Lt Gen, 6th CPC.

Sekhar Dutt, Vijay Singh, Alok Jain, Bimal Jhulka, Upadhyaya, Kumar, Sami Tandon.

INDIAN ARMED FORCES

Premier institution of the State.

Immense contribution to Nation Building.

Secular character of the Army, insurmountable passion for the Nation, well recognized.

Beacon of National Solidarity.

A Tribute



May you reach still
greater heights!

— R.K. Laxman

ROLE OF THE ARMED FORCES

Primary Role

- **To Defend the Territorial integrity of our Country from External Aggression.**

Secondary Role

- **To provide Aid to the Civil Authorities during Internal Disorders or Natural Calamities beyond the Capability of other Machinery.**



INDIAN ARMY

2nd Largest Standing Army in the World

Experienced in four Major Wars - 47-48, 62, 65 & 71.

Latest Major Involvement in Kargil War.

Heavily committed in Counter Insurgency ops in J&K and the North East. Most experienced Army in the World.

Mans The Boundaries With Five Different Nations - China, Pak, Bangladesh, Nepal & Bhutan.

All Encompassing Terrain & Climatic Conditions

- **Snow-covered Mountains In The North**
- **A Long Shore Line and Island Territories in the South**
- **Thick Rain fed Mountainous Jungles in the East**
- **Desert Terrain In The West**



HUMAN RESOURCE

PRIDE IN THE QUALITY OF HR.

ALWAYS MAN BEHIND THE MACHINE WON BATTLES.

THE INDIAN SOLDIER INTERNATIONAL FAVORITE

- TOLERANCE
- ADAPTABILITY
- RESOURCEFULNESS
- LOYALTY
- DISCIPLINE AND HUMAN SENSITIVITIES.



POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES – OFFICER CADRE

Discipline.

Integrity

Self-confidence

Determination

Courage

Sense of Responsibility

Speed of decision

Reasoning Ability

Good Communication

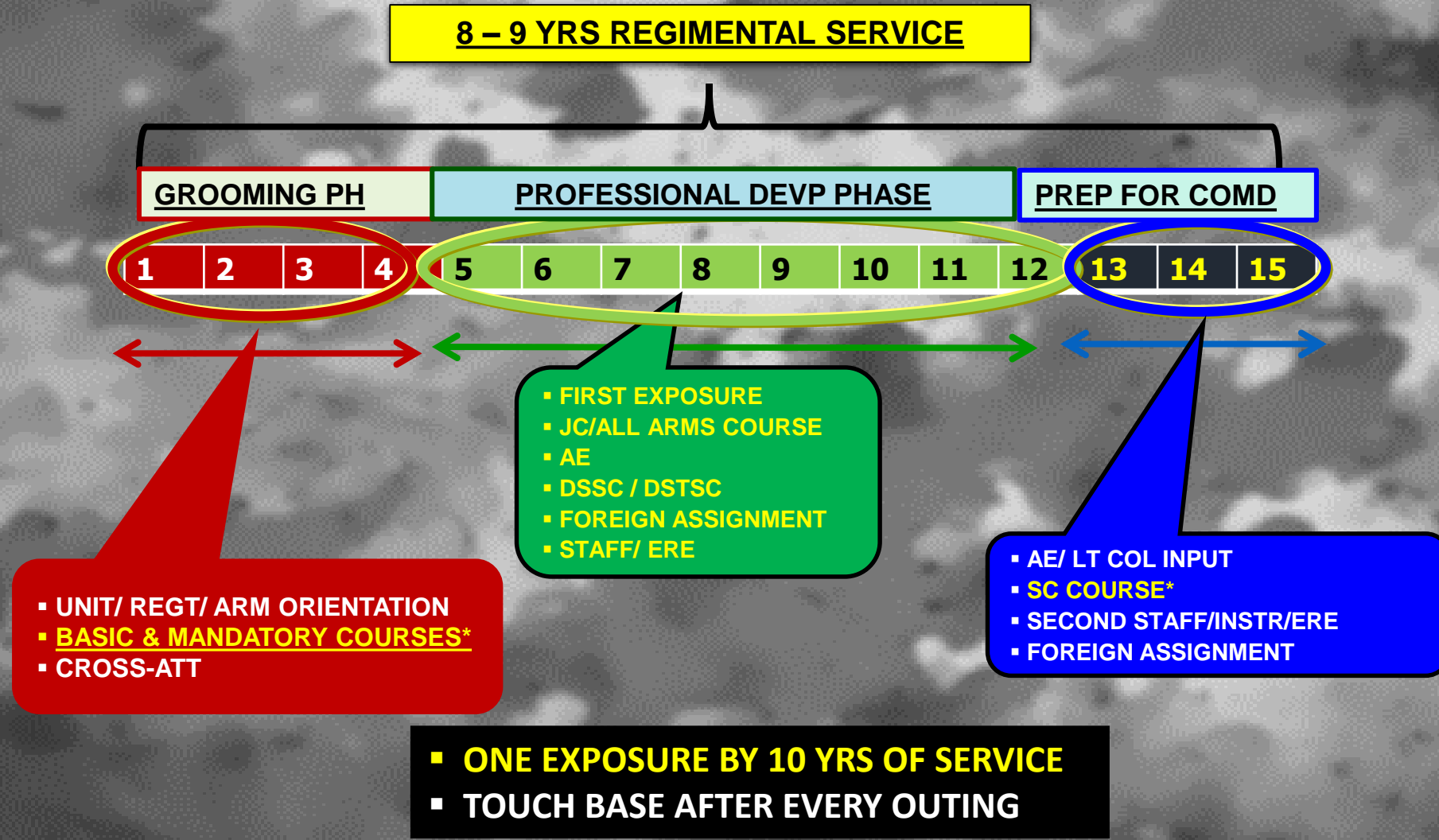
Problem Solving Skills

Team Work

Social Adaptability



CAREER PROGRESSION MODEL: COMB ARMS



PART –II

EVOLUTION OF CIVIL MIL RELATIONSHIP

COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

Commander-in-Chief of India occupied a dual position of being the equivalent of the Army Chief and the Minister of Defence.

Several reforms that did away with this colonial legacy and cast a new mould of civil-military relations.

During the first interim government in 1946, Nehru kept the Commander-in-Chief out of the Cabinet.

All communications came through the civilians in the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Creating Commander-in-Chief positions for the Air Force and Navy as well.

Commander-in-Chief of the Army “one of the three nominally equal chiefs”.

Eliminated a centre of power in the military, thereby, underwriting the civilian government’s dominance.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CMR IN INDEPENDENT INDIA

British rule of India armed forces supremacy was unchallenged.

History of Civil-Military Relations reveals two distinct issues

- **Conscious and deliberate decision to isolate the armed forces from political influence and interference.**
- **Systematic and gradual degradation of the status of the Indian Armed Forces vis-à-vis the bureaucracy.**

Former aspect viewed positively because armed forces apolitical.

Apprehension on the part of politicians about the military playing a larger role in policy making.

Marginalisation and Tight civilian control, emanates from political apathy.

The core of CMR debate in India.



CONSTITUTIONAL & INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

India's system is rooted in constitutional democracy.

Constitutional Basis

- President of India – Supreme Commander of Armed Forces (Ceremonial auth).
- Elected Government – Exercises real executive control.
- Parliament – Controls defence budget and oversight.

Key Institutions

- Ministry of Defence (MoD) – Civilian-led administration.
- Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) – Highest decision-making body on national security.
- Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) – Promotes jointness and integration.
- Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) – Supports tri-service coordination.

PART –III

1947-1962 DEVELOPMENTS

PERIOD UPTO 1999

Colonial Legacy (Pre-1947)

- British structured army under strict civilian (colonial) control.
- Separation from politics institutionalized.

Early Independence (1947–1962)

- Strong political leadership under Nehru.
- Limited military involvement in strategic planning.
- Lessons from 1962 Sino-Indian War exposed coordination gaps.

Reform & Professionalization (1962–1999)

- Expansion and modernization of forces.
- Creation of defence planning institutions.

PART –IV

POST KARGIL WAR DEVELOPMENTS

- ***“Politicians enjoy power without any responsibility , bureaucrats wield power without any accountability and the military assumes responsibility without any direction.”***



-K Subrahmanyam



WHY IMPROVE THE CMR

The Primary Aim Of Improving Civil-military Relations Is To Strengthen Military Effectiveness In An Increasingly Complex Political, Strategic, Technological, Economic And Geopolitical Environment. Without Mutual Understanding, The Political Leadership May Either Underutilise The Capabilities Of The Military Or Try To Get Them To Act Beyond Their Capacity.

POST KARGIL LIMITED WAR

Post Kargil, the government did implement some half-hearted measures towards reformation of higher defence management. However, most of these reforms were cosmetic in nature.

The slow pace of defence reforms is attributable to inter-Service turf rivalry.

Larger share of blame rests squarely with the politico-bureaucratic establishment.

Erosion of administrative effectiveness of the Service Chiefs due to their relationship with the Defence Secretary and other secretaries of the departments of the MoD



CREATION OF NSA

The defence reforms process did not move much further till May 1998.

When the successful underground nuclear tests at Pokhran catapulted India into the exclusive league of nuclear power states.

Needless to say, this sudden development cast very high responsibility on the Government of India, particularly on the Defence Ministry.

This led to the establishment of various arrangements and structures for handling strategic issues and decisions.

Thus, the National security Council was set up in November 1998 and a National Security Advisor (NSA) was appointed at about the same time.



NAMO DEVELOPMENTS

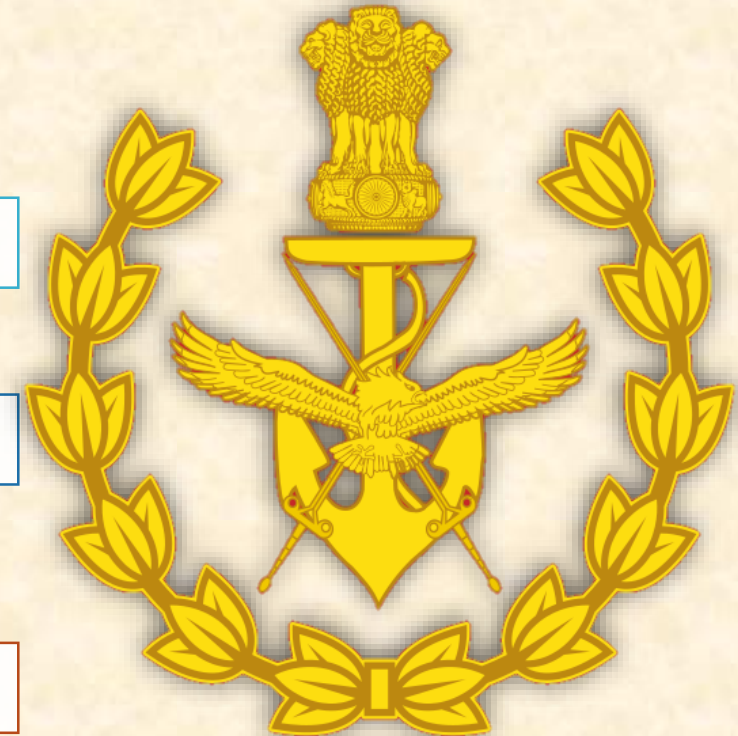
The Modi government has sought to deal with this issue through two separate sets of moves, both aimed at promoting civil-military ties but top-down.

One was the creation of the Defence Planning Committee (DPC), headed by the National Security Adviser (NSA), which included the three chiefs to “facilitate a comprehensive and integrated planning for defence matters.” The DPC analyses planning in issues like foreign policy imperatives, operational directives, strategic and security doctrines, and defence acquisition and infrastructure.

The Integrated Defence Staff was appointed as its secretariat, leaving people wondering whether the system had developed a hybrid CDS system.

But then came the second move, which was the appointment of General Bipin Rawat as the first CDS in 2019 and along with that, to cut the Gordian Knot of the AOBR and TOBR, he was appointed Secretary of a new Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in the MoD.

For the first time since 1952, the armed forces were brought into the apex government structure.



NAMO DEVELOPMENTS

Creating the post of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

The CDS is a key member of the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) and DPC, and acts as the Secretary of the Defence Management Agency (DMA). The CDS is responsible for handling most military matters, which can help address structural weaknesses in civil-military relations.

Creating the DMA

The DMA was created in December 2019 to promote jointness in training, staffing, and procurement. The DMA also helps restructure military commands to make better use of resources.

**DEFENCE ACQUISITION
COUNCIL (DAC)**



रक्षा मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
DEFENCE

सत्यमेव जयते

NAMO DEVELOPMENTS

Embracing new technologies

The government has encouraged the military to adopt new technologies like artificial intelligence, robotics, and autonomous systems. The government has also created independent tri-service agencies for space and cyber to coordinate operations in these areas.

Promoting jointness and integration

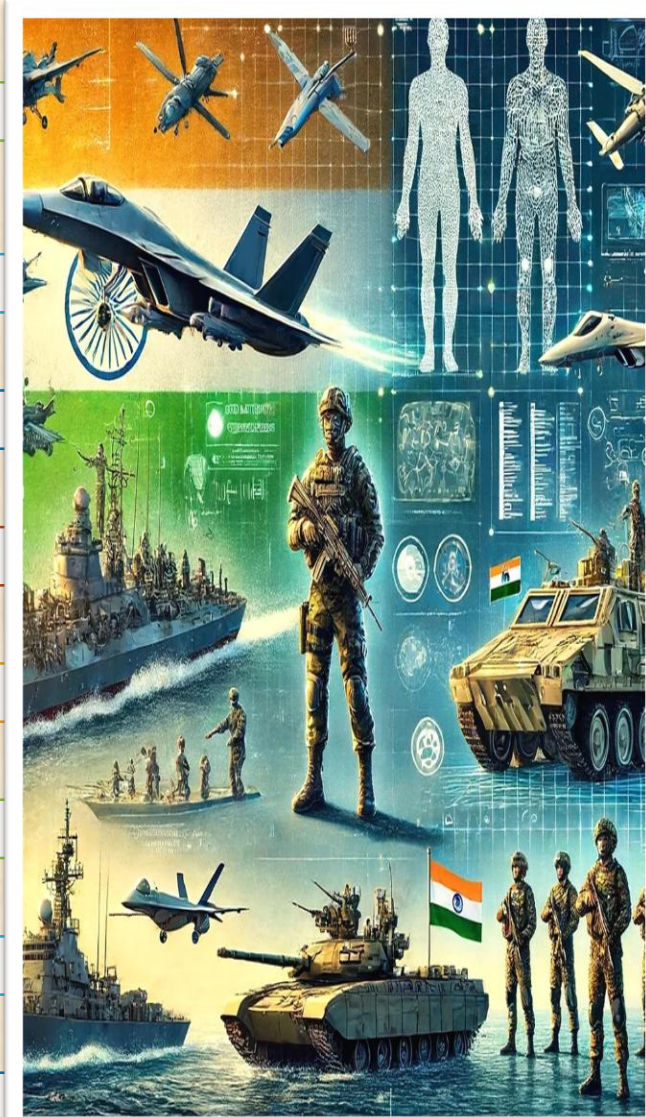
The government is working to promote jointness and integration between the three services. This includes streamlining decision-making and optimizing resource allocation.

Political endorsement of military strategy

The government has started to politically endorse military strategy in gray situations.

Joint military-diplomatic talks

The government has started to hold joint military-diplomatic talks.



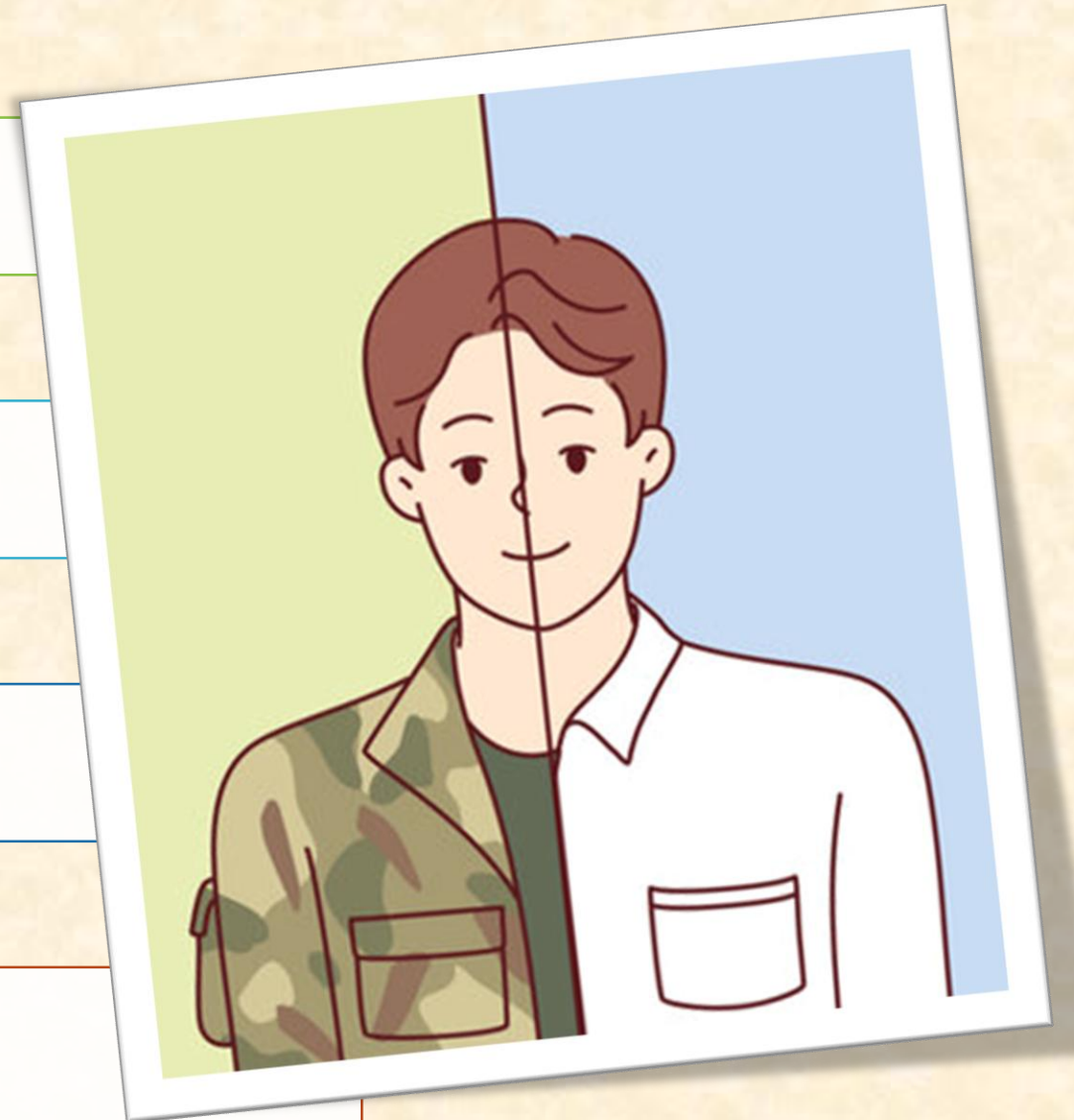
CONFLICT BETWEEN THE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY PERSPECTIVES

The civilian perspective is that the existing system has worked well in the past and, therefore, there is no need to alter the status quo.

The military, however, feels marginalised as far as the strategic decision making is concerned.

While the Political and Bureaucratic establishments see nothing amiss and have remained staunch upholders of the status quo.

The Military and the veterans see the with dissatisfaction at an increasingly asymmetric and deliberately contrived civil-military equation.



INTERESTING OBSERVATIONS

‘Huge Perceptual Gap’ as a key feature of the current CMR.

- **Admiral Arun Prakash**

While studying the militaries of India and Pakistan, have concluded that Indian politicians made no attempts to either politicise the Army or interfere in their professional work

- **My Observation TILL RECENTLY**



CLASSIC EXAMPLES

In 1965, the then Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri gave a free hand to the Service Chiefs in military operations.

Indira Gandhi's decision to postpone military operations by nine months in 1971.

More recent acceptance of the Army's position on Siachen by the Government also illustrate this assertion.

Exceptions

- In 1951 the COAS, General Cariappa, having delivered a lengthy warning to Nehru about Chinese military pretensions, was bluntly told that it was not his job "to tell the Prime Minister who is going to attack us where".
- Outbreak of the 1965 War, the then CNS, Admiral BS Soman met Prime Minister Shastri and protested against an MoD order forbidding the Navy to initiate any offensive action against Pakistan at sea and restraining the Navy's operations to south of Porbandar. Prime Minister refused to rescind the order and upon further urging by the CNS, he said "You have no choice".



POLITICAL OR BUREACRATIC CONTROL

Tracing the historical evolution of CMR in India from Lord Kitchener to Kargil Review, has identified the establishing of 'bureaucratic control' over the military as a root cause of present-day civil-military discord
Admiral Arun Prakash

CMR debate has largely been focused on the *inter-se* equation between the armed forces and the MoD. The underlying argument is that since the politician does not always involve himself in policymaking, 'civil authority' is represented by a duality or even trinity consisting of a combination of the politician, bureaucrat and scientist.

The present relationship between the civilian establishment and the military is characterised by the distortion of the concept of 'civilian supremacy' to 'bureaucratic control'



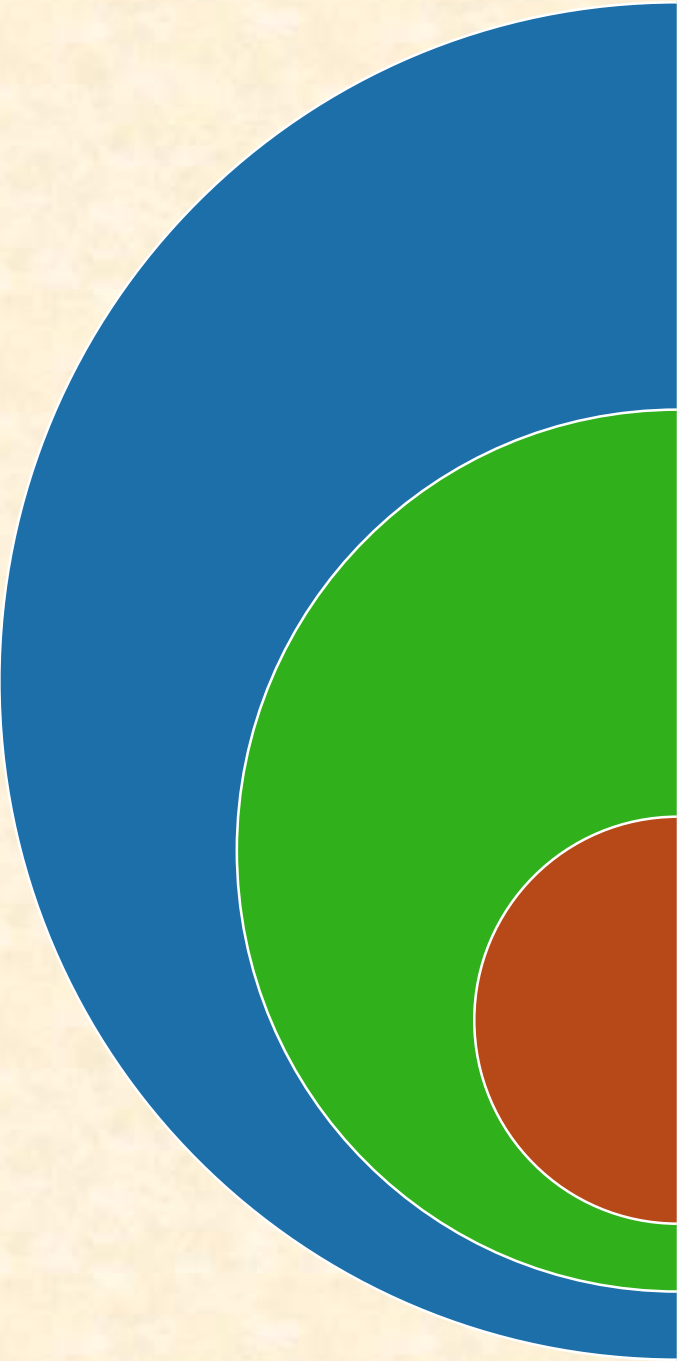
POLITICAL OR BUREACRATIC CONTROL

Many authors have also written about the mutual mistrust and suspicion between the military and the bureaucracy.

Examples

- **Events leading to the resignation by General KS Thimayya in Aug 1959 rescindment of the same by Pandit Nehru;**
- **Appointment of Lt Gen BM Kaul as the Corps Commander against the advice of General Thimayya**
- **Sacking of Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat in 1998**
- **Controversy about the Army Chief's date of birth in 2011**
- **The controversial report of troop movements in January 2012 "spooking Raisina Hill**

Demonstrate the widening chasm between the military and politico-bureaucratic establishment.



“Where there is authority, there is no accountability; and where there is responsibility, there is no authority”

- Admiral D K Joshi

“India has pursued this policy to a point where the military have almost no input in the formulation of higher defence policy and national strategy”

- Admiral Arun Prakash

A near total domination of the security processes and apex positions in the national security structures by the Indian Administrative Service and the Indian Foreign Service

- Gen Raj Shukla

THE CIVILIAN NARRATIVE

That *'assertion'*, which is an intrinsic military characteristic, is alien to the democratic construct and is thus the reason for dissatisfaction of the armed forces with the existing structures

• Sekhar Dutt

The knowledge of administrative processes and experience that matters.

Military cannot compensate for the value of civilian bureaucracy as an interface with the political leadership.

“the Hon’ble Defence Minister recently expressed the view that the country had lost respect for the armed forces, or the armed forces relevance had declined as there had not been any war since 1971” and that “a worthy politician had recently derided the death of a soldier by opining that *they are paid to die*”

• Lt Gen N S Brar



STRENGTHS OF INDIAN MODEL

✓ Stable democratic control

✓ Highly professional military

✓ No politicization of armed forces

✓ Public trust in military institutions

✓ Clear constitutional legitimacy

India is often cited as a model of democratic civil–military balance in the Global South.

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS

INDIA

• Civilian Control

- Military under firm civilian leadership.

• Democracy

- Strong democratic institutions.

• Role of Military

- Focus on national defense, no political role.



PAKISTAN



• Military Dominance

- Frequent **military coups**.

• Political Influence

- Army involved in **politics & governance**.

• Role of Military

- Powerful role in shaping state policy.



CHINA



• Party Control of Military

- PLA under CCP leadership.

• Authoritarian State

- One-party communist rule.

• Role of Military

- Guardians of the CCP, internal & external security.



MEDIA - ROLE

Media as Strategic Communication Tool

- Government messaging during crises
- Countering adversary narratives
- Psychological resilience

Negative Impact: Sensationalism

- TRP-driven reporting
- Hyper-nationalism
- Pressure for aggressive responses

Risk: Policy influenced by media emotions.

CRITICAL ISSUES TO CONSIDER

Operational Security Risks

- Live broadcasting dangers
- Exposure of tactical movements
- Intelligence compromise
- **Example:** 26/11 Mumbai attacks coverage issues.

Politicization of the Military

- Military actions framed politically
- Social media polarization
- Threat to institutional neutrality

Core Principle: Armed forces must remain apolitical.

Misinformation & Social Media

- Fake news
- Deepfakes
- Information warfare
- Psychological operations

ISSUES TO ADDRESS

Government & Military Media Management

- Defence PRO systems
- Official briefings
- Armed forces social media handles
- Controlled information release

Way Forward

- Media–military engagement programs
- Reporting guidelines during operations
- Defence journalism training
- Fact-checking mechanisms
- Strategic communication doctrine

EXAMPLES

Case Study: Kargil War (1999)

- First televised conflict in India
- Media boosted national morale
- Increased public understanding of war realities

Case Study: Balakot Air Strike (2019)

- Real-time narrative competition
- Media shaping domestic opinion
- Strategic communication importance

GAPS AND WAY FORWARD

Why Knowledge Gaps Exist

- Limited exposure to military operations
- Different institutional cultures
- Silo-based functioning
- Procedural vs operational mindset

Consequences of Limited Understanding

- Delays in decision-making
- Policy mismatches
- Coordination inefficiencies
- Mutual mistrust.

Way Forward

- Joint Training Programs - Joint modules for IAS/IPS & Armed Forces, National security curriculum, Crisis simulation exercises.
- Cross-Attachment Programs - Civil officers attached to military formations, Military officers deputed to ministries, Exposure at district & state levels

CIVIL–MILITARY RELATIONS IN MODERN WARFARE CONTEXT

In the era of Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) and hybrid warfare, relations are shifting toward:

- Whole-of-government approach
- Civil–military fusion
- Industry and technology integration
- Faster political–military decision cycles

KEY REFORMS LIKELY TO SHAPE FUTURE CIVIL–MILITARY RELATIONS

Theatre commands implementation

Integrated capability development

AI & cyber command structures

Defence industrial self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat)

Enhanced military role in strategic planning

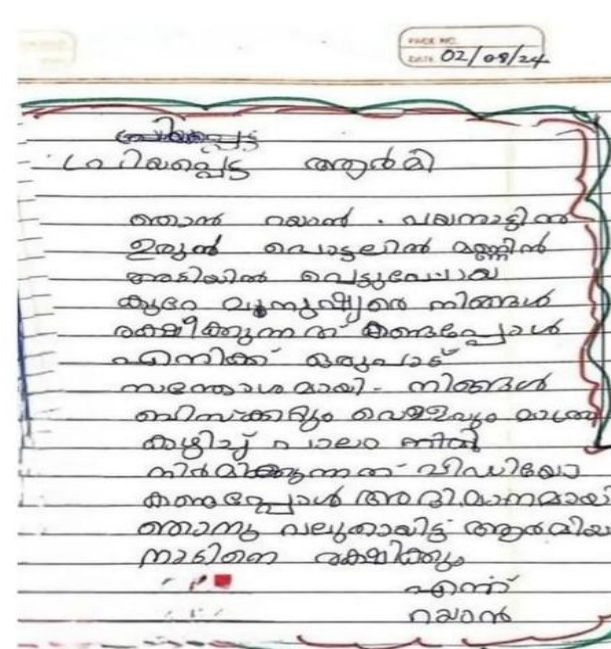
CONCLUSION

The study of CMR is even more important for the military because 'sensible civilian control' and 'strong military power' can together team up to ensure good governance, accelerated national growth, improved stability and robust national security.

PART –IV

OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

WAYNAD LAND SLIDES

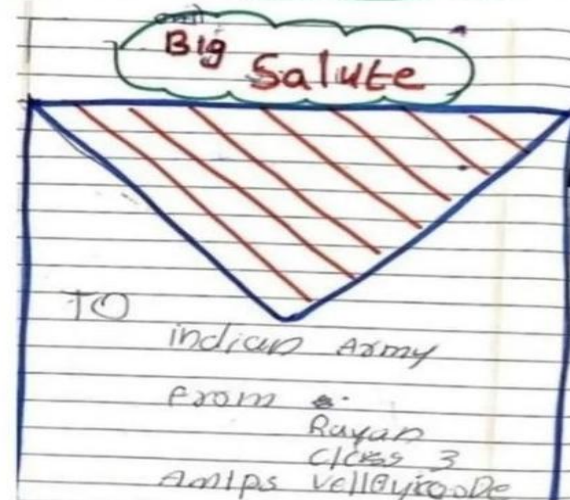


English Translation of the Letter

Dear Indian Army,

"I am Ryan. My beloved Wayanad was struck by a massive landslide, creating havoc and destruction. I felt proud and happy to see you rescuing people who were stuck under debris. I just saw the video in which you were having biscuits to sate your hunger and building a bridge. That sight moved me deeply and I aspire to join the Indian Army one day and protect my nation."

From
Master Rayan,
Class 3, AMLP School, Kerala



WAYNAD BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION



LATUR - 1993



TSUNAMI



KEDARNATH



UTTARKASHI TUNNEL



AID TO CIV AUTHORITIES



SERVICE BEFORE SELF

**Risking his life in a swift, daring rescue, Maj Vishva Deep Singh Attri of the Indian Army saved two young boys from drowning in Nagaland's Dhanasiri River
On 28 Oct 2024**

AID TO CIV AUTHORITIES



NAVAL RESCUE OPS ARABIAN SEA JAN 2024



INDIAN NAVY RESCUES 19 PAKISTANIS AND 17 IRANIS IN ANTI PIRACY OPERATIONS



CHILD RESCUE

- **A one and a half year child who fell into a narrow borewell in Dudhapur Village in Gujarat's Surendranagar was rescued by the Indian Army**
- **The child was stuck at around 20-25 feet below the ground level**

OUR EXPECTATION ?

*Word of Appreciation and Empathy of
Our Men when they Approach You*

**GET TO KNOW THE ARMED FORCES AND
CAPABILITIES**



Thank You