

CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES (CLAWS)
NATIONAL SEMINAR ON
INDIAN ARMY: EMERGING ROLES AND TASKS
15 OCT 2010

General

A National Seminar on “Indian Army: Emerging Roles and Tasks” was organised by CLAWS at the DRDO Auditorium on 15 October 2010. The COAS and other delegates were welcomed by Brig Gurmeet Kanwal (Retd), Director CLAWS. The Chief of Army Staff, General VK Singh PVSM, AVSM, YSM, ADC, delivered the keynote address.

The seminar was held in two sessions. Session I dealt with ‘Experiences since Independence’ and was chaired by Lt Gen Ravi Sawhney, PVSM, AVSM (Retd). Session II dealt with ‘Role Appraisal for Future Threats and Challenges’ and was chaired by Gen VP Malik, PVSM, AVSM (Retd). Vote of thanks was delivered by Maj Gen Dhruv C Katoch, SM, VSM (Retd), Additional Director, CLAWS.

Welcome Address: Brig Gurmeet Kanwal (Retd), Director CLAWS

The role and tasks of the Army are evolutionary in nature. Safeguarding the territorial integrity of our country would continue to be the primary role of the Indian Army. Though current challenges indicate that the future engagement of the army is likely to be predominantly in sub conventional conflict, yet the conventional threat cannot be wished away. Thus, the Indian Army has to train, equip and be prepared to undertake operations along the entire spectrum of conflict. Also, there have been rapid strides in technology which have ensured battlefield transparency and enabled the commanders to undertake real time decisions. These evolutions necessitate analysis of the changes necessary in organisation, training and equipping of the Force so that the Army maintains a very high state of operational preparedness for all future conflict scenarios.

Keynote Address: Gen VK Singh, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, ADC, COAS

China and Pakistan are two major irritants to India’s security concerns. It is hence imperative that we modernise and augment the country’s war fighting capabilities. China is building its military capabilities at a rapid pace and Pakistan is allowing anti India terror infrastructure to operate from its soil. To meet our future operational challenges, the country must have substantial conventional war fighting capabilities with the ability to even fight in a nuclear backdrop. While a conventional full scale war with either China or Pakistan looks remote at this point in time but skirmishes are certainly possible, hence, Army can’t digress from its primary role of safeguarding the territorial integrity of the country besides preparing for its secondary roles.

India is both a maritime and continental nation, hence our complexities are greater. Defence and development are contemporary issues and military is an important organ to achieve development of country as a whole. The numerous challenges which the country faces includes defence of our huge coast line and island/ coastal territories, problems of demographic shift in North East, proliferation of WMD by neighboring countries, global terrorism, challenges of providing aid to civil authorities, assistance/ protection to our outer space, cyber space and global communication.

Technology and battlefield transparency would play a major role in future war and we must strive to incorporate Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) in our strategy of dealing with future conflicts. India doesn't have any territorial ambition but it wants to retain independent strategic autonomy and deterrent capabilities in the nuclear backdrop. With this in view, the organisation of this seminar by CLAWS on a very contemporary and relevant issue is laudable.

Session I: Experience Since Independence

Experience in Conventional Operations: Lt Gen Aditya Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd), former GOC-in-C Southern Command**

George Bernard Shaw's statement that 'We learn from history that we learn nothing from history' is very apt. Spectrum of conflict has changed from 2nd to 4th generation. The lessons of earlier conflict if not imbibed will result in repeating our mistakes.

There is likelihood of short duration war in future but we have to prepare and train for long duration conflict which ipso facto will fit into our war preparedness for short duration conflict. There is a need to develop nuclear war fighting doctrine at the earliest. A major portion of the career span of an Indian Army officer is spent below the rank of a Brigadier where he is handling operations at tactical/ operational level. Promotions to subsequent higher levels take place in the limited residual service left to an officer. He is now expected to handle situations at the strategic level for which he has not been trained and thus could falter. Therefore, there is a need to identify officers with potential for higher rank at an early stage and train them for a future leadership role at a much earlier stage in his career.

It is a well-known fact that due importance to intelligence setup is not being given in the country. It is imperative to improve and revitalise the intelligence set up of the country at all levels.

Synergy amongst all three services is vital to our success as we have learnt from various operations in the past.

Media has an important role to play in shaping national perception. Perception management will form an important constituent of future conflict and officers need to be trained to interface with both the print and visual media. Post conflict management is equally important as is the handling of conflict since it remains in public forum and mind for a very long time even after the conflict is over.

Sub conventional operations: Lt Gen Ravi Sawhney, PVSM, AVSM (Retd), former DGMI

Sub conventional operations are complex operations with multiple dynamics involving numerous agencies. Each operation requires different approach, strategy and technique to handle it. Hence it would be unwise to blindly apply templates of successful operations which have been conducted earlier on future operation in the sub-conventional domain.

Sub conventional threat from our Western and Eastern border is a reality which we have to live with. Both Pakistan and China will continue to collude with each other in their attempt to destabilise and weaken India to serve their respective geo-political interests. Internal dimensions of sub conventional conflicts especially Left Wing Extremism (LWE) is growing at alarming pace, which is a grave concern for the nation. There is a need to develop capability and political will at National level for surgical strike to act as deterrent. The importance of a proactive strategy for dealing with sub conventional threats cannot be over emphasised.

Operation Other Than War (OOTW): Lt Gen V K Jetley, PVSM, UYSM (Retd), former MGO

Indian Army has been dealing with OOTW for last 60 years in various forms. OOTW are complex operations with multiple agencies involved, necessitating high order of civil-military coordination. An analysis of all OOTW undertaken by Indian Army both within the country as well as overseas post-independence was carried out and the need for synergy amongst all three services was emphasised.

The presence of media in OOTW is much more as compared to conventional operations; hence, it demands high degree of interaction with media for reinstating positive image of the Army. Role of Indian Army in OOTW are equally important as in conventional or sub conventional roles, hence, there is a need to train and equip ourselves to fulfill above roles.

SESSION II: Role Appraisal for Future Threat and Challenges

Introductory Remarks: Brig Gurmeet Kanwal (Retd), Director CLAWS

A view being projected by some military strategists in India is that 'conventional operations are passé'. This view is also being echoed by some thinkers from the American strategic and military fraternity. However, with the issue of Jammu and Kashmir as the main irritant in our relations with Pakistan, and a militarily growing China on our Northern and Eastern border, can we simply wish away a conventional threat? Whatever forms future conflict may take, the primary role of the Army will hence continue to be to protect the territorial integrity of the nation.

On the other hand we have been engaged in sub-conventional conflict in J&K for over two decades now. We also have a manifestation of such threat in parts of Northeast India and Left Wing Extremism has afflicted many parts of the country. Should this require a change in the primary role of the Army to tackling sub conventional conflict and enclosing within its ambit the ability to take on conventional operations? Some other issues which need to be debated are the need for intervention operations, in conformity with India's role as a growing regional power, either alone or in a coalition of the willing without even United Nations mandate?

Remarks of Chairperson: Gen VP Malik, PSVSM, AVSM (Retd), former COAS

The strategic environment with all its dynamics has undergone unprecedented change in recent times. The advances in science and technology clubbed with globalisation have impacted in a manner where in the separation of conflict between the tactical, operational and strategic levels have started blurring. Comprehensive security has become more prevalent today with social, environmental, political and economic factors impacting on security concerns besides cyber and space threats as against earlier standalone military threats. There is hence a need for an integrated civil and military approach in decision making.

Today, fast changing ground realities dictate that the junior leaders at Line of Control need to understand the political ramifications of their actions. Similarly, politicians have to understand the tactical and operational considerations which go into the conduct of operations. Defence planners and policymakers have to think of integrated capability and synergy of optimum utilisation of military power on a much larger canvas.

Likely Changes in Conflict and Intervention Operations: Lt Gen J P Singh, AVSM, DCOAS (P&S)

No change is likely in foreseeable future in primary role of Indian Army. We must understand that capability development cannot be achieved overnight; it is an expensive business and needs time. It takes over two decades to understand

and validate tactical and operational art fully to generate the requisite capability. In sub conventional warfare it has taken about a decade for the Rashtriya Rifles to grow into a heterogeneous force. If Indian Army does not retain its conventional capability, it will require a lot of effort and time to regenerate it; obviously this cannot then be put in cold storage. The situation demands a ready and relevant army to deal with conventional and sub conventional threats.

While India has no territorial aspirations, it still needs the military power to protect its strategic interests and maintain an independent deterrence capability. The Chinese presence in POK on humanitarian assistance, the modernisation of their armed forces and up gradation of strategic capabilities including the second artillery, bulk of our vulnerable areas and vulnerable points forming part of Chinese military targets and heavy investment by China in future technologies like space and belief in asymmetric warfare has to be factored in for any decision making. China openly propagates winning local wars and has heavily invested in rapid reaction divisional sized forces. Today, both strategic and conventional asymmetry is in their favor. How it gets manifested and how India should evolve its strategic capabilities needs to be debated in detail. Pakistan is well known for its anti-India animosity and rhetoric. Despite our conventional edge we have not been able to dissuade Pakistan from posing a sub conventional threat to India.

The dynamics of how the threat is going to manifest in short and long term are very difficult to define. The integration and vulnerabilities of the technology have to be clearly understood. The asymmetric threats can manifest in the form of cyber-attack on C2net works, satellite, strategic network, communication systems and also the asymmetric target can be to target the minds of the people to undermine the political leadership and Institution of Army.

India faces multi spectrum and multi front threats. There is thus scope to debate whether we require sector specific forces or adaptable multirole forces. In case of dual task forces the orientation from one role to other needs to be discussed. There is also a need to look at force projection to meet the strategic goals. For peace keeping operations as part of United Nations we need to have fully kitted forces.

To overcome the problems in acquisition of technology, there is a need to have defence acquisition specialists as it won't be easy to acquire right technology easily in near future.

Due to the service constraints for almost the first thirty years a service officer is operating at the tactical level. He hence has less than a decade to think and operate at the level of operational art and strategy in the few years he gets in higher ranks. We must develop systems to train officers in this aspect at a lower age and service profile.

Perception Management has been talked about earlier. Perhaps we need to consider having a Director General Perception Management to enhance our capability in this regard.

Employment in Sub-Conventional Conflict, Terrorism and OOTW: Lt Gen Prakash Menon, AVSM, VSM, Commandant, NDC

We must differentiate the war spectrum continuum in terms of regular and irregular war. In irregular war people matter the most or rather the focus is on people. Terrorism is merely a tool or methodology of any type of war to include conventional conflict. It constitutes an abuse of organisational violence for political purposes.

Army has to cater for conventional threat as its primary role. An analysis of the present prevailing environment in the country indicates that sub conventional conflict has arisen due to own domestic polity which has been exploited by external elements. A rising China and a destabilised Pakistan getting involved in Left Wing Extremism will shift the focus of the army to sub conventional conflict but this cannot be at the cost of the Army's primary role. We also need to consider other factors which could impact on India's strategic interests such as population growth, climate change, illegal migration and the like.

To cater for growing sub conventional threat the fundamental problem we face in expanding/ raising additional strength in army is the shortage of officers. Unbridled expansion without looking into this aspect will impact adversely on the Army's leadership. Sub conventional operations require leadership at junior levels which is lacking in other organisations dealing with this threat. A lateral movement of officers from the Army to paramilitary forces (PMF) can provide them with the leadership element, but there is a reluctance to accept lateral transfers. There is a growing demand to deploy the Army whenever such threats manifest themselves, but the better option would be to train PMF to perform their task. Should the army get involved, it would play the lead role and thus must be prepared accordingly.

Prolonged involvement in sub conventional operations exposes army to the dangers of poor practices of other organisations. Instead of letting such practices seep into the army, the army's good practices should be exported to enhance the functioning of other forces. The strengthening of local police rather than raising additional paramilitary forces may pay more dividends in the long run. The army should play the role of mentor, being better trained and organised and must help and encourage PMF and police to the maximum extent possible.

The use of improvise explosive devices (IED) by terrorists and insurgents constitutes the biggest threat to security forces engaged in sub conventional conflict. Therefore, there is a need to establish a national mission of people from diverse field to see how the threat of IEDs can be overcome. In due course of

time, Left Wing Extremism is bound to impact on urban areas also. We thus must train and hone the capability of PMF to fight in urban / built up areas on priority.

Today, sub conventional operations are characterised as an amphitheater with full media glare. The media runs the narrative which people believe; the people's belief firmly determines the winning side and shifts the fence sitters which constitute the majority in any conflict to the side which is believed to be winning. The role of the media in shaping perception hence assumes great significance. The insurgents and terrorists will exploit the 'Human Rights' narrative to further their own cause. The security forces need to be sensitive to this aspect and must ensure zero tolerance to any abuse of human rights. Should any such case occur, quick and transparent action against defaulters will assist in maintaining the credibility of the security forces amongst the population.

Prof Kamal Chenoy, JNU: Emerging Security Challenges: Role of the Army

The present situation in Jammu and Kashmir is worse than it has ever been in past. There are three truths prevailing in Kashmir today; one which we believe, one which militants believe and a mixture of both which the valley people believe. The Shopian case is an apt example wherein despite CBI inquiry people still believe in the 'rape version' of the story. Despite the Army not being involved in latest unwarranted developments, a reduction of visibility would enhance the Army's credibility in some of the more sensitive areas.

The civilians should do their own job and army should not come under pressure to get involved in Left Wing Extremism. Maoist problem is basically a civil uprising and is not a creation of external agencies, though some may try to stoke the fires that have been lit. The violence is a consequence of under development and in this movement two different forces are involved. The Adivasis do not want to overthrow the government but are agitating for decent wages, traditional forest use and basic human amenities. The ideological cadre and leadership of the Naxal movement however, are indoctrinated and seek to overthrow the state. They are the ones leading the revolution. As a large number of their central committee members have been killed or apprehended, the movement is not an immediate threat. It would be counterproductive for the Army to get embroiled in what is essentially a problem which has social and economic dimensions. Development of human security to include all aspects of livelihood can create the necessary conditions wherein the Maoist movement will become irrelevant.

In ethnic and religious strife the army restores order and moves out. In coming years, the Army's assistance in dealing with cyber terrorism shall be required. The need for an apex body in terms of a 'cyber' command is hence an operational necessity to cater for future threat scenarios.

The continued illegal migration of people from Bangladesh has already led to a demographic shift in some areas and this could further lead to de-stability of the

country. The issue has to be tackled on humanitarian grounds and due assistance in development of facilities in Bangladesh to control and stop migration from across the border.

Discussion

- India should have intervention capability to meet its strategic needs. Capability enhancement must be undertaken for the same. Force structures must be capability based and threat based.
- Deployment of army in civil / public for too long will antagonize the people and is not good for the army and state.

The system of COAS Citation to the units has started having a negative impact and should be reviewed.

- There is need for a doctrine to cover the interface between conventional and nuclear war/ threat.

Valedictory Address: Gen VP Malik, PVSM, AVSM (Retd)

Indian Army has a rich history and invaluable experience under different conditions of conflict. It is motivated and dedicated force incomparable to any in world. Along with external threat it manages the internal threat dynamics in its various manifestations. Internal security problems are on the rise and our police and PMF need to develop the skills to tackle them effectively.

The Army has a more difficult role than before to effectively deal with all threats along the conflict continuum. Battlefields have become much more transparent and commanders have to undertake real time decisions. The defence of Island Territories with huge coast line, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction by neighbouring country, global terrorism, illegal migration and demographic shift in North East poses a big challenge to the country. Protection of outer space, cyber space and technology advancement will play a leading role in future wars. Operational capability and political will to carry out surgical strikes can act as a deterrent. The revolution in military affairs would necessitate a revision of doctrine more frequently than was done in the past. Training in strategic concepts and operational art should be imparted to selected officers at an earlier stage in their careers to inculcate strategic thought over a longer span of time.