

This paper makes a case for the need for a renaissance of military history, and modern war studies in India. There is a wide gap in knowledge base of contemporary military history and war studies in India compared to advances made at global level. The three levels identified for policy focus being the university system, the official and government level and at units, formations and headquarters of the three services. The university system has to take the initiative to introduce subject studies to create the human resource and sustain public interest. At the government level the paper suggests the opening up of archives and doing away with over-exaggerated concepts of security. The capture and recording of historical events as related to military operations and war records also needs to be re-examined to ensure a higher order of professionalism in the services.

The Need for Renaissance of Military History and Modern War Studies in India



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- Composition and Regimental System of the Indian Army: Continuity and Change (2008)
- Trends in Thinking about Warfare, Strategic Analysis, Vol.33, No.6, November 2009
- Ways of Warfare and Strategic Culture, Defense & Security Analysis, Vol.25, No.4, December 2009
- Issues and Steps in Force Modernisation, Centre for Land Warfare Studies Journal, Winter 2010
- Mapping Chinese Oil and Gas Pipelines and Sea Routes, Strategic Analysis, Vol.35, No.4, July 2011
- Tibet and India's Security: Himalayan Region, Refugees and Sino-Indian Relations co-authored with Dr Jagannath Panda and Dr Zakir Hussain (forthcoming report of IDSA Task Force)

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The Need for Renaissance of Military History and Modern War Studies in India

Introduction

Military history and more so modern war studies can no longer be considered peripheral. They are the root discipline of strategy. There is a wide gap in knowledge base of contemporary military history and modern war studies in India. Globally, the study of contemporary military history has already gone way ahead of the drums, bugle and trumpet approach. Rather it also includes the war and society approach in which instead of studying battles, historians examine patterns of recruitment, the relationship between the arms industry and economic development, the daily life of soldiers or the relationship between group interests and emergence of military doctrines among others.¹ Unlike in the past the trends in warfare have changed from inter state to intra state combined with the rapid changes in technology. Military transformation and change has received inadequate conceptual scrutiny in India. In the force on force or the high end spectrum, technology is a vital input like nuclear weapons, missiles, space, electronics, computers, ships, aircraft, nano technology, information and communication technology and the like. This has now imposed new demands on historians to focus more on the science and technology of modern war studies. India is emerging as a global power. Yet there are serious deficiencies in this soft academic and policy field. The question that needs to be asked is what the Indian nation is missing out due to neglect of the subject? The thesis statement that emerges is that there is a need for a renaissance of military history, and modern war studies in India.²

¹ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: the Anatomy of Failure in War*, New York, The Free Press, 1990, pp.3-39.

² This article has not touched upon the diplomatic history post 1947, records and archives of which are with the Ministry of External Affairs.

This paper will first identify the problem and the need for study of military history. Then I will categorise military history as popular, official and academic with various nuances for conceptual clarity. Then I will demonstrate the gaps in knowledge, unprofessional attitudes and neglect of well established institutional practices at all levels. I will then fix the responsibility for the current unsatisfactory state of affairs at the academic and state level. Some new ideas are proposed for future use of military history. Finally I suggest the policies that should be put in place at three levels of the university system, the official mechanism and the military units, formations and headquarters.

The Problem

The ministries of war of the past have given way to ministries of defence. Security studies have expanded. Besides war, conflict and peace they now include international relations, internal security and non traditional or non military challenges. Post independence the priority given to development over defence meant that war studies were given low priority while paradoxically war and violence continued unabated. 'Strategic studies' which dealt with military dimension of international relations also were ignored. Diplomatic and military history are both vital and according to some they are the very blood line of study of polity and society. But in India modern military history was disregarded. This stunted the wholesome growth of security studies. Intellectually, the Indian academic and policy maker is devoid of this essential field of knowledge. The developed countries are way ahead in this field of enquiry. Indian security establishment mostly borrows ideas from abroad. Policy formulations in core issues of war and peace could have been much more nuanced and sophisticated if military history and modern war studies had been given their due importance. This is one great flaw which now needs attention.

It is a received wisdom that Indians are ahistoric. Ramachandra Guha in his preface to *India after Gandhi* points out that: "For children today history comes to an end with partition. In the academy, the discipline of history deals with the past, while the discipline of

political science and sociology deals with the present.... for Indian academy past is defined as 15 August 1947- when history ended and political science and sociology began”.³ In India, post independence history is neglected and with it military history. While chairing a session on “Sites of the 1857 Uprising in Meerut and Delhi” at the United Service Institution of India in June 2010, the historian Amar Farooqui of Delhi University admitted to the fact that since independence Indian scholars and institutions have neglected military history. It was felt that Indian academics have missed out on the history of the unfolding character and nature of war. He lamented that there is no Indian university with a history department that teaches military history. There is huge deficit in human resource in this field.

In specific terms the military dimension of international relations or strategy has not been studied professionally by the Indian academic community using the tools of history. A majority of the bright civil academics from Jawaharlal Lal Nehru University (JNU) and Delhi University (DU) are the feeders to world class Indian think tanks dealing with security and strategy. Yet in the JNU and DU (which does not have even a department of IR) there is no course in strategic theory, military history or modern war studies. With no grounding in military or diplomatic history, scholars in Indian universities learn strategy on their own. It is a hit and miss method.

There are very few academic historians who have worked on contemporary military history of India.⁴ The work is mainly on pre-independence period.⁵ A pioneer scholar in the study of Indian

³ Ramachandra Guha, *India after Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy*, London, Picador, 2008, p.xxii.

⁴ For one rare sample in this genre see Daniel P. Marston and Chandar S. Sundaram (Ed), *A Military History of India and South Asia : From East India Company to the Nuclear Era*, Westport, Praeger Security International, 2007. Some other Historians who have worked on Indian military being SL Menezes, DeWitt Ellinwood, Douglas Peers, Chris Bayley, Tim Moreman and Sho Kuwajima.

⁵ One example being Partha Sarthi Gupta and Anirudh Deshpande (Ed), *The British Raj and Its Indian Armed Forces, 1857-1939*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2002.

military Stephen Cohen recalls that: “While the standard of historians in India was very high in places like University of Calcutta, military history was a minor field, just as it was in the West”.⁶ There are just about half a dozen Indian historians who study and research contemporary military history.⁷ Most give it up after their PhD as there are no openings, climate, jobs or archives. With this demand - supply problem, only foreign historians are studied or referred to in any discourse on the revolution in military affairs (RMA) or the much talked about Fourth Generation Warfare.⁸

Why History ?

It is often required to ask why study history? It is because we need to guard the tendency to generalise from false premises, based on inadequate evidence, to understand the past with a historical imagination and, so as not to abolish the past.⁹ Even if history has its limitations as a guiding sign post, it shows the right direction but

⁶ Stephen P. Cohen, “Approaching India’s Military and Security Policy, with a Detour Through Disaster Studies”, *India Review*, Vol.7, No.4, October-December, 2008, pp.295-319.

⁷ From history departments in India they are less than a handful - Kaushik Roy, Indivar Kametkar, Anirudh Deshpande. I realise that I have probably missed out another half a dozen names due to lack of knowledge. In the diaspora I also must include Pradeep P. Barua, associate professor of history at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, Apurba Kundu and Chandar Sundaram. Others non Indians being Douglas Peers, at York University, Canada, and David Omissi, at Hull University, UK.

⁸ “Special Issue : The - Information Technology Revolution in Military Affairs”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.33, No.4, August 2010, Jeremy Black, “The Revolution in Military Affairs: The Historian’s Perspective”, *The RUSI Journal*, Vol.154, No.2, pp.98-102, Williamson Murray, “History, War and the Future”, *Orbis*, Vol.52, No.4, Fall 2008, pp.544-563, and Tomoty J. Junio, “Military History and Fourth Generation Warfare”, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.32, No.2, April 2009, pp.243-269.

⁹ Michael Howard, *The Lessons of History*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1991, pp.6-20.

gives no details about the road conditions.¹⁰ According to Ramachandra Guha :

Facts are open to multiple interpretations. The historian must be attentive to this polyvalence and must be prepared to express his own choices and preferences. He is required to both tell a new story and tell it well. The first requirement rests on the uncovering of sources previously unseen or unused; the second on the capacity for evaluative judgment.”¹¹

For the armed forces bent upon ‘lessons learnt’ type of attitude it needs to be remembered that:

Military historians can recognize trends, and give advice, perhaps pointing out that something purportedly new has been actually tried before. Moreover, while events do not repeat themselves, patterns in war can be usefully discerned.¹²

As argued by historian Niall Ferguson, the past is the only reliable source of knowledge. History is not just how we study the past; it is how we study time itself.¹³

Categories of Military History

It is unfortunate that clichés such as ‘military history is military music’ have been taken as gospel truth. History is the root discipline of war studies. John A. Lynn has identified three manifestation of

¹⁰ B.H. Liddell Hart, *Why Don't We Learn From History*, London, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1972, p.15.

¹¹ Ramachandra Guha, *How Much Should A Person Consume: Thinking Through Environment*, New Delhi, Black Kite/Permanent Black, 2006, p.42 and note 43.

¹² Gary Sheffield, “Military Past, Military Present, Military Future”, *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 153, No. 3, June 2008, pp.102-107.

¹³ Niall Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, London, Allen Lane/Penguin Group, 2011, pp.xv-xxx.

military history: a) Popular, b) Practical (or official) and c) Academic.¹⁴ According to the historian Paul Kennedy there is a 'history from the middle' as well. The focus being neither on the high or the low but on the middle rung of inventors, scientists, civil servants, company and commanding officers.¹⁵

Popular history can be a function of media stories or the stories of the bards of yore or folk lore. In India, unimaginative films and TV serials have presented a totally skewed view of war as for example the depiction of battle of Longewala of 1971 in the movie *Border*. This phenomenon is also reported in countries such as Russia where "military history has been invaded by journalists, film makers, art critics and television producers who pursue their own agenda".¹⁶

The second manifestation of military history is the official account. It needs to be highlighted that official history in the past - as over 100 years ago in Germany - was the handmaiden of the general staff, but today the situation has changed and the focus must be on the military and society. History has become a complex subject that can no longer just be narrated but also must be analysed. This analysis has frequently employed new tools from other disciplines.¹⁷ The key objective of official historical reports is to detail the lessons learnt, the administrative problems encountered and overcome, troop morale and the performance of equipment including new equipment and weapons. War diaries contain the historical records of operations and form a basis for future improvements in training, equipment, organisation and administration. While the aim is well defined, the

¹⁴ John A. Lynn, "Reflections on the History and Theory of Military Innovation and Diffusion", in Colin Elman and Miriam Fendius Elman (Ed), *Bridges and Boundaries: Historians, Political Scientists, and the Study of International Relations*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 2001, pp.359-382.

¹⁵ Paul Kennedy, "History from the Middle: The Case of Second World War", *Journal of Military History*, Vol.74, No.1, January 2010, pp.35-51.

¹⁶ Maj Gen V.A. Zolotarev, "Military History in Contemporary Russia", *Military Thought*, Vol.13, No.14, 2004, pp.96-109.

¹⁷ Robin Higham, "Introduction", in Robin Higham (Ed), *The Writing of Official Military History*, Westport, London, Greenwood Press, 1999, pp.vii-xii.

process of recording official history is highly underdeveloped in India as will be shown later.

The third manifestation is academic military history that includes monographs, memoirs and books.

The official/practical form of military history discussed above, should include two additional sub categories. Firstly, accounts of units, regiments and formations.¹⁸ This literature is the most extensive by far. As a tradition, regimental history project is the responsibility of the regimental centres. Some formations also have this tradition and it is funded by them. Academically inclined retired military officers are commissioned to do the work. Unit histories and field work may be undertaken, but no record that is classified is provided. These drafts are vetted by military intelligence to ensure that no security related data is revealed. This is the weakest link by far. Like their civil servant counterpart, the military bureaucracy too is paranoid about security. A number of historical accounts are classified.¹⁹ This work can not be made available to the scholars and public at large.

The second sub category in official/practical variety of military history is that which is written independently of the Historical

¹⁸ Some excellent histories of individual units also exist. This practice is more prevalent in the armoured corps. See Lt Gen Hanut Singh, *Fakhr- e- Hind: the Story of the Poona Horse*, Dehradun, Agrim Publishers, 1993 and Lt Col C.L. Proudfoot (Ed), *We Lead: 7th Light Cavalry 1784-1990*, New Delhi, Lancer International, 1991. It is learnt that this practice of units commissioning authors to write history is now being disallowed by Army HQ, the reasons for which are not known- this is a regressive step. However, retired authors in their individual capacity smitten by the love of the regiment continue to publish excellent books. See Brig Jasbir Singh, *Combat Diary : An Illustrated History of Operations Conducted by 4th Battalion, The Kumaon Regiment , 1780 to 1974*, New Delhi, Lancer International, 2010.

¹⁹ For example Brigadier (Dr), S.P. Sinha , *Forever in Operations Volume II: A Historical Record of 8 Mountain Division in Counter Insurgency Operations in J and K and Kargil War, 1990-99*, Headquarters 8 Mountain Division, General Staff Branch, c/o 56 Army Post Office, November 2004. This history of the role of the 8 Infantry Division in the Kargil operations of 1999 was made a restricted publication much against the wishes of the author who also had to struggle with military bureaucracy to get his name mentioned as author. Personnel communications with the author.

Division of the Ministry of Defence by the three services. The Indian Navy has taken the lead in this independent venture with professionalism and has a history division.²⁰ The Indian Air Force has got some good work done by think tanks and private institutes.²¹ The Indian Army has commissioned coffee table books on select military operations like Kargil.²² It has also got some serious work done under the aegis of the United Service Institution of India.²³ Other than this, the work is mostly hagiographic.²⁴ Poorly edited corporate inspired glossy books the result of desk top publishing are the standard practice.²⁵ Worse, some histories of battle encounters

²⁰ Five histories are available. See Satyindra Singh, *Under Two Ensigns: The Indian Navy 1945-1950*, New Delhi, Directorate of Personnel Services, Indian Navy, 1986, Satyindra Singh, *Blue Print to Bluewater: The Indian Navy 1951-1965*, New Delhi Lancer International, 1992, G.M. Hiranandani, *Transition to Triumph, History of the Indian Navy 1965-1975*, New Delhi, Director Personnel Services, 2000, G.M. Hiranandani, *Transition to Eminence, The Indian Navy 1976-1990*, Principal Director of Administration, 2005 and G.M. Hiranandani, *Transition to Guardianship, The India Navy 1991-2000*, New Delhi, Principal Director Administration, 2009. Work is based on interviews and secondary sources. Whether war diaries and after action reports are consulted is not known.

²¹ Jasjit Singh, *Defence from the Skies: Indian Air Force through 75 Years*, Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi, Knowledge World, 2007, R.T.S Chhina, *The Eagle Strikes, The Royal India Air Force 1932-1950*, Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, United Service Institution of India, 2006. The society for Aerospace Studies has brought out a good three volume History of the Indian Air Force.

²² Gurmeet Kanwal, *Kargil, 99: Blood, Guts and Firepower*, New Delhi, Regiment of Artillery in association with Lancer Publishers, 2000 and *Heroes of Kargil*, New Delhi, Army HQ, 2002.

²³ Major General Ian Cardozo (Retd), *The Indian Army: A Brief History*, New Delhi, Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research, United Service Institution of India, 2005.

²⁴ In hagiographic variety I include Brig S.S. Chandel, *Blood and Guts: the Saga of Indian Arms: Valour and Honour*, New Delhi, Army HQ, 2004 and Col Anil Shorey (Ed), *Milestones: Indian Army's Outstanding Landmarks*, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence, no date.

²⁵ For recent sample see restricted publication, *History of Army Air Defence: In Service of the Nation*, Army Air Defence Association, Directorate General Army Air Defence, 2008. Such books are poorly edited. For example at page 357, a US army medal has been shown as the Indian Distinguished Service Medal (IDSM). The Parma Vishist Seva Medal (PVSM) at page 358 has been mixed up with that of Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal (SYSM).

have been plagiarised. Units that never took part in an action have been said to have done so.²⁶ While this could be at the lowest tactical level, it cannot be ignored. This tendency if unchecked and not corrected will create a false data base. Military history demands integrity and ethics. Overall, as evidence shows, the Indian Army as an institution is weak in terms of its approach to the writing of military history.

Much can be learnt not only from the meticulous, thorough and time tested record keeping of the UK, but other countries as well. Two excellent institutions that exist in the US and Russia must also be mentioned as an example for India. Since World War II, the US has had combat historians. This is now incorporated in the 1986 Goldwater - Nichols Act. The essence is preserving essential facts for historians - official and unofficial - to be used when the time comes.²⁷ The second is the culture of using historical data to evolve tactical and operational norms in Russia as the evolution of the Soviet Deep Operation theory during 1920s and 1930s.²⁸ The Soviet

²⁶ PK Gautam, *Operation Bangladesh*, New Delhi, Manas Publishers, pp.79-81 and "The Open Action of 27 (Poonch) Medium Battery Near Hajiganj on 8 December 1971", *Royal Artillery Journal*, Vol. CXXIX, No.1, Spring 2002. This open action against the enemy of December 8, 1971 by 27 (Poonch) Medium Battery has been reported as that of the 197 Mountain Regiment. This factual error is based on a book brought out by the Regiment of Artillery. See Anjan Mukherjee, *God of War: History of the Regiment of Artillery*, 1966-1999, Directorate General of Artillery, in association with Lancer Publishers and Distributors, 2003, p.80.

²⁷ F.D.G. Williams and Robert K. Wright, "When Clio Marries Mars: The Combat Historian", in Robin Higham, *The Writing of Official Military History*, Westport, London, Greenwood Press, 1999, pp.135-150. The work of combat historian S.L.A. Marshall's, *Men Against Fire* is an enduring classic. Marine General Paul K. Van Ripper rates it as the most influential book. See Paul K. Van Ripper, "The Relevance of History to the Military Profession: An American View", in Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich (Ed), *The Importance of History to the Military Profession*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp.34-54.

²⁸ Thinkers like Frunze, Tukhachevskii, Svechin etc. See Shimon Naveh, *The Pursuit of Military Excellence: the Evolution of Operational Theory*, London, Frank Cass, 1997, p.175. With current military reforms in the Russian Federation post Russo- Georgia War of 2008, the divisional level has been removed. Brigades will directly function under corps HQ. The era of operational art based on the mass armies of the Great Patriotic War is now history.

Military Technological Revolution predates the American led RMA. Even the concept of mission command or *aufstragtaktik* needs to be studied from historical perspective as applied by German armies since the wars of unification in the 1860s. The academic rigour and related practices are absent in India and these need to be studied and debated for picking up the best practices.

The official history of the Indian Armed Forces in World War II is available in 17 excellent volumes in three categories (campaign in western theatre, eastern theatre and, activities related to organisation and administration²⁹). These were released after partition and are a treat to read.³⁰ As regards the official history post independence, the Indian government has made public only the official histories of the wars in J&K in 1947-48, Operation Polo- the police action in Hyderabad in 1948, Custodian Force India (Korea), the International Commission for Supervision and Control (ICSC) in Indo-China, and the liberation of Goa in 1961. The official history of the Indian National Army has also been finally cleared by the state for publication in 2010.

Recently the Ministry of Defence has released a truncated ‘non – official’, history of the 1965 Indo- Pak conflict.³¹ There is not much to celebrate as unlike the past practice, the history is not official. In the introduction the editor has been honest enough to admit that,

²⁹ There are also a number of excellent volumes covering the medical aspects of the war in a separate series.

³⁰ The general editor is Bisheshwar Prasad of the History Division. Not many libraries of think tanks in Delhi have all these copies. Surely many sets would be available in libraries in the UK or USA.

³¹ Manoj Joshi, “MoD offers stale fare in new 1965 war history”, *Mail Today*, March 28, 2011. The author points out that the manuscripts of 1962, 1965 and 1971 official war histories that had been circulated as “restricted” documents are already on the web by efforts of *Times of India* in 2000-2001.

Academic historians have already used them extensively. Examples being Bhashyam Kasturi, “The State of War with Pakistan” in Daniel P. Marston and Chandar S. Sundaram (Ed), *A Military History of India and South Asia : From East India Company to the Nuclear Era*, Westport, Praeger Security International, 2007, pp.139-156, my own, *Operation Bangladesh*, New Delhi, Manas Publications, 2007 and Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of the Nehru Years*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2009.

“The history as such does not reflect the views of either the Indian armed forces or government of India in any manner”.³²

Furthermore, there is no official history of the wars with Pakistan in 1971 or with China of 1962 or the Indian intervention in Sri Lanka or Maldives. Scholars point out that the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee and the Group of Ministers (GOM) follow up regarding publication of war history and declassification remain unimplemented. As a result of this minor matter of the lack of declassification two major problems have been created. First is ‘absence of history’ and second is expertise on the issue remains with only those official who dealt with it.³³ There is no statement by the government on this policy.³⁴ In open literature a number of explanations have been given as to why this happens. One plausible explanation is that this lack of transparency is not due lack of academic talent, but the reluctance of the civil and military bureaucracy and politicians to throw open archives to researchers. Four possible explanations for a lack of transparency of the Indian state on matters concerning military history have been given. They are personality cult that dominates Indian politics, suspicion of scholars by the bureaucracy, organisational inefficiency to handle de-classification procedures and, fear of bureaucracy of loss of credibility that might come from increased scrutiny of their past actions.³⁵ The government continues to believe that it is the sole

³² S.N. Prasad (Chief Editor), U.P. Thapliyal (General Editor), *The India – Pakistan War of 1965 : A History*, New Delhi / Dehradun, Natraj Publishers, 2011, p.XVII.

³³ Anit Mukherjee, *Failing to Deliver: Post- Crises Defence Reforms in India, 1998-2010*, *IDS A Occasional Paper* No.18, March 2011, pp.30-31.

³⁴ This is a subject of inquiry of civil military relations which is being attempted by my colleague Anit Mukherjee, a Research Fellow at IDSA. See Anit Mukherjee, “The Absent Dialogue”, *Seminar*, Vol.599, July 2009, pp.24-28.

³⁵ Anit Mukherjee, “Let Generals Have Their Stories——”, *The Indian Express*, June 06, 2007 at <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/let-generals-have-their-stories.../32876/>

repository of wisdom and protector of national interest.³⁶ Another reason could be over- securitisation and an exaggerated sense of self importance propelled by secretive knowledge *ex-cathedra*. According to media reports the manuscripts of the 1962, 1965 and 1971 official war histories were readied for publication with a foreword written and signed by the then defence secretary N.N. Vohra in 1992. But the Ministry of External affairs intervened.³⁷

For reasons of state craft and diplomacy, there will always be a difference in official and academic history. One classic example is of the Ultra Secret. Due to onset of Cold War, the official history of the Second World War did not mention the Ultra Secret which was the knowledge to break the German code and crypto system 'Enigma'.³⁸ In a similar way, in the case of India once the official history of the 1971 War is written, it may have December 3, 1971 as the day when the Indo- Pakistan war began, though academic historians including most regimental histories place it before that date. Similarly if official history of Operation Pawan (Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka) is written and released it is doubtful if it will include the training of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam by the Indian intelligence.

In Search of Accountability

Who is responsible for this state of affairs? Who is accountable? All. First in line are the history and IR departments of the Indian

³⁶ This behavioural trend is borrowed from Rajiv Kumar .See Rajiv Kumar, "Chinese Capitalism: Some Lessons For Us", at <http://in.mg50.mail.yahoo.com/dc/launch?gx=1&rand=03pjff8k35ufo> (April 17, 2011).

³⁷ Manoj Joshi, "MoD offers stale fare in new 1965 war history", *Mail Today*, March 28, 2011.

³⁸ David Kahn, "How Allies Suppressed the Second the Second Greatest Secret of World War II", *The Journal of Military History*, Vol.74, No.4, October 2010, pp.1229 - 1241. The secret was later revealed in a book by F.W. Winterbotham *The Ultra Secret*, London, George Weidenfeld, 1974.

universities. IR has a bedrock role in security studies. Warfare is an essential and unavoidable element in international relations.³⁹ Drivers of military transformation are mostly international⁴⁰ yet this is not well researched. It has been argued that “Part of the problem is the liberal and Marxist-inspired ‘anti-military’ mindset of many Indian academics which frowns upon defence studies and because of this India’s premier school of IR at Jawaharlal Nehru University does not have a strategic studies department”.⁴¹ Stephen Cohen notes that “the Indian army had been reviled by nationalists”.⁴² There is for example a tendency to valorise the Indian National Army of 1942-45 and to accord disproportionate attention to it compared to the vast army that fought for rather than against the British.⁴³ So

³⁹ Nicholas Gardener, “Military Thought from Machiavelli to Liddell Hart”, in Robin Hingham (Ed), *The Writing of Official Military History*, Westport, London, Greenwood Press, 1999, pp.61-83.

⁴⁰ Theo Farrell, “The Dynamics of British Military Transformation”, *International Affairs*, Vol. 84, No.4, July 2008, pp.777-807.

⁴¹ Anit Mukherjee, “India’s Experience with insurgency and counterinsurgency”, in Sumit Ganguly, Andrew Scobell and Joseph Chinyoung Liow (Ed), *The Routledge Handbook of Asian Security Studies*. London and New York, Routledge, 2010, pp. 139-157.

⁴² Stephen P. Cohen, “Approaching India’s Military and Security Policy, with a Detour Through Disaster Studies”, *India Review*, Vo.7, No.4, October-December, 2008, pp.295-319.

⁴³ Peter Stanley, “Imperial Military History” in Mathew Hughes and William J. Philpot, (Ed), *Modern Military History*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp.214-230. For an excellent work on the INA see Chandar S. Sundaram, “A Paper Tiger: The Indian National Army in Battle, 1944-1945”, *War & Society*, Vol. 13, No.1, May 1995, pp.35-59 and “The Indian National Army, 1942-1947: A Circumstantial Force”, Chapter 8, in Daniel P. Marston and Chandar S. Sundaram(Ed), *A Military History of India and South Asia : From East India.. Company to the Nuclear Era*, Westport, Praeger Security International, 2007, pp.123-130. It is because of a lack of history that some analysts incorrectly in recent discussion at IDSA have compared the INA with Mukti Bahini. One reason being absence of any worthwhile history of Mukti Bahini and inadequate understanding of the INA.

much is the “revulsion” that even the subaltern studies school of history has not done any work on the 1.5 million soldiers who fought the First World War or the 2.5 million of the Second World War. While society appreciates the many wars fought by the Indian Army for the nation and probably the Indian military is the only organisation which instils patriotic training, historians in Indian universities do not appear to be keen to see this historic change.

These pre-conceived notions still persist. Although some limited work from the pre-independence British period exists, there is no serious original work by an Indian scholar on the regimental system post independence. This leads to what academics term a second hand bias. From the grand stand of India attempting to be a knowledge power - it creates a flawed regime of ‘consumers of information rather than producers’.⁴⁴ As consumers, we refer to foreign historians and political scientists such as Stephen Cohen, Stephen P. Rosen, Tan Tai Yong, John Lynn and others.

Whatever limited work that exists by Indian historians, it is prejudiced. For example the regimental system inherited and now further refined for Indian conditions continues to draw the ire of historians without any evidence to show that it outdated or unsuitable for present times as they claim.⁴⁵ The truth is that no professional army in the world can do without this system.

⁴⁴ In the larger context of education, this has been mentioned by Professor Pratap Bhanu Mehta in his lecture “India as Knowledge Power”, during the National Security Lecture at USI of India on December 16, 2009. India’s Knowledge Deficit is also the theme of the Director General IDSA Shri N.S. Sisodia’s op-ed, “India’s Knowledge Deficit”: *The Tribune*, 9 April 2011.

⁴⁵ See review of Ian Cardozo (Ed), *The Indian Army: A Brief History* by Sabyasachi Dasgupta in *The Hindustan Times* of December 11, 2005. The reviewer places the blame of the 1962 debacle on excessive reliance on regimental pride and honour, which according to him is the prime legacy of the colonial army. To challenge this notion besides to fill the void and to encourage debate I researched on IDSA monograph *Composition and Regimental System of the Indian Army: Continuity and Change*, New Delhi, Shipra Publications, 2008.

The worst practice, which is not only applicable to historians, but to political scientists as well is the uninspiring tendency of non-use of archives even when they may be available in foreign countries. According to P.R. Kumaraswamy:

Even when official documents are declassified in other countries, there is a general reluctance among the Indian academia, especially those specializing on foreign policy, to take cognizance of them. The apathy towards declassified Russian documents following the disintegration of the Soviet Union is a classic example. Despite the long political, economic, and strategic ties between the two countries, primary work on Indo- Soviet relations are still limited and secondary. Declassified Soviet documents, for example, reveal how senior communist leaders periodically sought and obtained financial contributions from the Soviet Union for their party's activities in India.⁴⁶

The next to share the blame for this neglect of contemporary military history are the departments of defence and security studies(DSS) in universities such as Pune, Madras, Allahabad, Meerut, Panjab, Patiala, Gorakhpur etc. To make it sound contemporary and in line with the West, most have only shed their old nomenclature of 'military science'. Students join after graduation to get an MA or MSc degree. While the syllabus is not being discussed here, suffice to say that military history remains an optional paper. But where is the faculty? Former professors or retired military authors fill up this gap. This is adhoc and inadequate. In my research on this topic I am yet to find an Indian academic who has tracked the PLA since 1949, the US armed forces from say the Vietnam era or for that matter the Pakistan army. The Indian Council of Historical Research has likewise not

⁴⁶ P.R. Kumaraswamy "National Security : A Critique" in P.R. Kumaraswamy (Ed), *Security Beyond Survival : Essays for K. Subrahmanyam*, New Delhi, Sage Publication, 2004, pp.28-29. For archives author refers at note 34 to *Cold War International History Research Project Bulletin*, Woodrow Wilson Center, Washington, Issues 8 and 9, Winter, 1996-97, pp.262-263.

produced any worthwhile work on military history, or war and society post independence.⁴⁷

Think tanks also need to share the responsibility for this neglect. With a plethora of think tanks, one would have expected a clamour of voices calling for a systematic approach to be taken towards record management, declassification, and access to data.⁴⁸ Institutionally, the Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research of the United Service Institution of India has been pressing for an integrated record management policy in the Indian defence establishment.⁴⁹ But nothing seems to move. Apart from some individual scholars who undertake ‘sustained’ efforts for opening up archives⁵⁰, there is hardly any public discourse on the subject. In the volume *In Memoriam* the late K. Subrahmanyam has been criticised for not fully comprehending the importance of declassification. Rather it has been pointed out that the reason for supposed lack of strategic culture has more to do with government’s bureaucratic procedures which do not encourage declassification.⁵¹

But why just blame the academics and think tanks? As noted earlier the legitimate organ for use of coercive power and violence – the state itself, has not published official histories of major wars. Without

⁴⁷ None could be found on ICHR web pages.

⁴⁸ Two former Directors of think tanks did write web commemoratives for declassification and timely release of archives. See Lt Gen Vijay Oberoi, “Is Military History Sacrosanct, Article No. 1596 of 15 July 2010, *The Centre for Land Warfare Studies* at http://www.claws.in/index.php?action=master&task=597&u_id=12 and Satish Nambiar, “The Need for Declassification of War Histories and Other Documents”, *IDS A Comment*, July 6, 2011 at http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/TheNeedforDeclassificationofWarHistoriesandotherDocuments_snambiar_06071

⁴⁹ <http://usiofindia.org/CAFHR/Vision/>

⁵⁰ Anit Mukherjee, *Failing to Deliver: Post- Crises Defence Reforms in India, 1998-2010*, *IDS A Occasional Paper* No.18, March 2011, p.30.

⁵¹ Anit Mukherjee, *In Memoriam*, “K. Subrahmanyam and Indian Strategic Thought”, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.35, No.4, July 2011, pp.710- 713.

such records no worthwhile research can be done. Professors do not encourage students to pursue their interest in war studies because the sources to justify that study are not there. Fewer students means fewer people in society who have anything beyond the most rudimentary understanding of military issues. Lack of public interest means an even smaller political interest in the subject. This in turn leads to poor standards of public debate and the easy spread of misinformation.

This holding on to records is not in conformity with Public Records Act 1993, which lays down the law regarding the transfer of records into the public domain. The Act mandates the management, administration and preservation of public records of the central government and union territories. Yet awareness regarding this remains poor even within government. It is not just the matter of declassification and the transfer of military records that is a matter of concern. The very existence of these records is threatened by a near total lack of structural mechanism to deal with their holistic preservation. Only operational records are preserved. There is no mandated record room or record officer, a statutory obligation imposed by the PR Act. Within the services most records are treated as mere functional files to be kept as long as they are current or useful and to be destroyed by administrative procedure once they have outlived their perceived organisational utility.

Two discourses are at present current. One is that it is the military which does not want its records to be declassified. The other is that it is the civil leadership with bureaucrats at the helm that wants them kept under wraps. But the political leadership and the state has to have control. This is one pathological symptom of mistrust in civil military relations. So much is the mistrust that the Indian Navy has stopped sending its reports and returns to the history division and has started its own independent history division. There is no information in public domain as to where the Indian Coast Guard deposits its historic data - though as per newspaper advertisements and Annual Reports of the Ministry of Defence it is termed the 'fourth arm of defence'. Although the Kargil Review Committee and its follow up GOM Reports have been hailed as the first of

their kind in independent India – the war dairies have yet to reach the history division for even archival safety. It is well known that the Indian Air Force called that operation not “Vijay” (as it was termed by the army) but “Safed Sagar”. The status on that is also unclear.

This is as far as the practices, outputs and archives of the history division of the MOD are concerned. But where are the archives of paramilitary counter insurgency operations? Who will keep the historic data for study in future? The Ministry of Home Affairs is the answer. Insurgencies since independence have only increased. The scholarly community, policy makers or even concerned citizens want to know how insurgencies were tackled and ended. How will we be able to establish official patterns and policies to prevent them from recurring in the future? Both hard (now called kinetic) and soft (winning hearts and minds) options can be studied. This will facilitate in establishing patterns of budgetary support and recurring expenditure of the police and para military organisations. Presently, scholars have to extract basic data (which is not research in any case, but uses up the bulk of the time and energy) by laboriously going over speeches of ministers or mine annual reports for sanitised official versions.⁵²

India has to learn the same lessons over and over in the insurgencies it has confronted. In a study on Indian counter insurgency (COIN) by an American university it has been demonstrated that that Indians suffer from a ‘COIN amnesia’ which is no compliment.⁵³ Absence of official counter insurgency reports or data leads to confusion. Take the example of use of air power in counter insurgency. Serving

⁵² According to PM’s address at the Chief Ministers’ conference on Internal Security at New Delhi on February 1, 2011, a total of 23 battalions of BSF, CRPF and SSB were raised in 2010-2011. See PM’s Speech, *Strategic Digest*, February 1, 2011, pp.91-93.

⁵³ Sumit Ganguly and David P. Fidler, “Conclusion” in Sumit Ganguly and David P. Fidler (Ed), *India and Counter Insurgency*, Oxon, Routledge, 2009, pp.225-229.

military scholars face this dilemma and say that “there is nothing by way of official or unofficial written records of employment of air power by IAF in Naga and Mizo insurgencies in 1950s and 1960s”.⁵⁴ Arjun Subramaniam in his work on use of air power has asked the question “Have we forgotten the use of air power in joint operations against Mizo insurgency in the mid- 1960s?” He has then laboriously traced it using secondary sources.⁵⁵

Theoretically this confirms what historians find to be true for other militaries. That is, military institutions rarely have been interested in studying their own experiences with any degree of honesty. The major reasons why military institutions get the next war wrong is because they either deliberately fail to study the last war, or do so only in so far as it makes the leaders feel good.⁵⁶ The challenge is two fold. First to have the capacity and will to examine the past. The second is to overcome the universal tendency for historic amnesia which is not only confined to the military. Academics and policy makers may have to enter the field to guard against such tendencies. For this to happen, the human resource and expertise on such matters will need to be nurtured.

Utilitarian History

Theoretically, the three outcomes from the utility aspect of military history or ‘Utilitarian History’ are applicatory history, history in support of principles and history as a monument.⁵⁷ Applicatory

⁵⁴ Gp Capt, T.D. Joseph, VM, *Winning India's Next War: The Role of Aerospace Power*, New Delhi, Knowledge World, 2008, p.187.

⁵⁵ Arjun Subramaniam, “Strategies to Tackle Fourth Generation Warfare”, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.34, No.5, September 2010, pp.756-765.

⁵⁶ Williamson Murray, “The Past as Prologue: Thoughts on Military History and Profession of Arms”, in Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich (Ed), *The Importance of History to the Military Profession*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp.78-92.

⁵⁷ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: the Anatomy of Failure in War*, New York, The Free Press, 1990, pp.37-38.

history is a study made from point of view of the commander. Special narratives ask questions in order to judge whether the commander's action was correct given what he knew at that time. The history in support of principles is a lazy approach to applicatory method wherein judgments are determined by the principles of war. Scholars warn that this leads to a reckless ransacking of history for evidence to support *a priori* positions.⁵⁸ The monumental variety serves important myth making and morale building functions like pride in one's service or in one's regiment which contribute to military effectiveness and helps integrate officers, particularly the new ones into their organisations.⁵⁹ However this has also been shown to be the part of the problem as it tends to be overly solicitous of reputations, excessively unwilling to criticise high-level decisions and politics.⁶⁰ All the three kinds of history turn one's attention away from dissection of military misfortunes, and particularly from its study of organisational rather than individual failures.⁶¹

Policy makers need to grapple with these negative outcomes. Probably from a theoretical point of view, monumental myth making could be a strong driver for officials not to declassify records of the defeat in 1962 at the hands of the Chinese, but the reasons for reluctance to publish the monumental victory of 1971 are not clear.

Indian Military

There is no structured teaching of military history at the National Defence Academy (NDA) at present. Some military history is

⁵⁸ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: the Anatomy of Failure in War*, New York, The Free Press, 1990, pp.37-38.

⁵⁹ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: the Anatomy of Failure in War*, New York, The Free Press, 1990, pp.37-38.

⁶⁰ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: the Anatomy of Failure in War*, New York, The Free Press, 1990, pp.37-38.

⁶¹ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: the Anatomy of Failure in War*, New York, The Free Press, 1990, pp.37-38.

included in the foundation course for the 1st and final 6th term. In each battalion a few cadets study a specific campaign and then make a presentation.⁶² Later at the Indian Military Academy, there are no professors of war studies and the general duty Army Education Corps (AEC) is charged with preparing short presentation capsules for the cadets.⁶³ Thereafter, it is all self study for promotion and competitive examinations. This is superficial. At best some formations or training establishments have prepared presentations on some wars and campaigns. Being a joint training event, there is no academic rigour. Stuff is mostly cut and paste and at worst never gets published for wider readership due to poor standards with commentary type of anecdotal accounts. In the last few decades, after breaking an institutional practice in serious study of military history, the Indian Army thoughtfully reintroduced the subject of military history in the promotion and competitive examinations of the Staff College. The Indian Navy has also introduced this practice. Since 2005, the IAF has done away with a separate competitive examination. In its place it has now included history as a subject in the courses run for their officers. Surely the ends-or a knowledge of the history of air power- are more important than the means - like a separate examination or otherwise. It is too early to judge the impact of this experiment by the IAF.⁶⁴

⁶² I thank HQ IDS for providing this information. In the past, military history was taught by the best civilian professors at the National Defence Academy (NDA). For the civilian teachers as intellectual role models and mentors see Trilokinath Raina and G.D. Bakshi, *Forging Warriors: A History of the National Defence Academy*, Pune, NDA, 2008, p.10.

⁶³ Military history includes both world wars, the 1962 Sino- India war, 1971 Indo – Pak War, Iraq 1991, Arab Israeli Wars of 1967 and 1973 and Operation Vijay (Kargil 1999). Briefing by an officer at IMA Dehradun on December 20, 2010.

⁶⁴ I thank Brig M.S. Chowdhury (Retd), Chief Instructor USI of India and Wg Cdr Ajey Lele to bring the change to my notice (personal communication March and April 2011) . If the IAF experiment succeeds then other services may do likewise.

Unfortunately however, the prescribed reading list for post independence wars of India with major powers is not either official or authentic history. It is based on books written by well meaning veterans who may not be professional historians. In any case this academic work is half baked in the absence archival sources. The three general rules of military history are width, depth and context which should form its conceptual bedrock.⁶⁵ But these are not well appreciated and understood.

The fledgling Indian National Defence University (INDU) is expected to have a history section in its National Institute for Strategic Studies.⁶⁶ Linking modern war studies and military history directly to archival work is not mentioned. In the absence of consciously incorporating the History Division and archival work it is likely to again become 'IR centric'.⁶⁷ By IR centric it is implied that political scientists may distort and misinterpret history in attempts to prove some pet theory or model.⁶⁸ Presently even the human resource required for teaching and mentoring is absent.

The Indian military is also weak in the professional art of the mandated record initiation and keeping. One glaring lack is absence

⁶⁵ Lecture delivered in 1961 by Michael Howard and reprinted, "The Use and Abuse of Military History, *The RUSI Journal*, February 1993, pp.26-30.

⁶⁶ Discussion with INDU cell at HQ Integrated Defence Staff, New Delhi of March 3, 2011.

⁶⁷ Harinder Singh, "Professional Military Education: The First Steps in Indian Context", *IDS A Issue Brief*, November 30, 2010. The author suggests departments of research at four levels in INDU : area studies, strategic studies, IR and quantitative studies. There is no explicit mention of military history or war and society indicating status quo.

⁶⁸ Allan R. Millet and Williamson Murray (Ed), *Military Effectiveness* , Vol I, *The First World War*, Volume II, *Between the Wars* and Volume III, *Second World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010 (first published 1988), pp.xiii-xxi.

of maps and sketches post independence in after action reports.⁶⁹ Even the indexes of old era military history books are much more thorough. With computerisation including Geographical Information Systems, the decline in draughtsmanship and indexing can only be characterised as decay.⁷⁰

The first step is capture of inputs like historical reports and war diaries. Units are the building block originators or sensors. But no scientific training is imparted to regimental or staff officers who need to initiate these primary sources.⁷¹ Further there is a shortage of officers and units are overburdened with administrative work. This results in very shoddy inputs including the blanket term NTR (nothing to report). The final nail in the coffin is that the Indian Navy has done away with the system of sending mandated reports to the History Division of the Ministry of Defence. Besides, the Indian Army is yet to provide the history division with the war dairies of the 1999 Indo-Pakistan war in Kargil.⁷²

Training establishments are the font of professional and academic rigour. How tactical and operational doctrines have evolved along with equipment, human resources and war experience in modern times is an important study necessary for future projections. But

⁶⁹ I thank Brig S.P. Sinha in bringing this to my notice and confirming my own observations.

⁷⁰ While researching on the 1971 war I could only find good maps in the History of the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. See *History of the Electrical and Mechanical Engineers*, New Delhi, Army HQ, Directorate of EME, 1981.

⁷¹ Key objectives of historical reports are to identify, the lessons learnt, administrative problems encountered and overcome, morale and performance of equipment including new equipment and weapon. Aim of war diaries is to have historical records of operations and to base future improvements in training, equipment, organisation and administration.

⁷² Operation Vijay was also the name given to liberation of Goa in 1961. Giving the Kargil operation in 1999 the same name shows the lack of historical awareness among the Indian General Staff.

there is also no mechanism or awareness to record and write the histories of training establishments. In one example, the authors of the history of School of Artillery tasked to write the history in early 2000s ended the history at 1961 because all relevant records, documents and people were available only till that year.⁷³

The Result

Consulting archives - not in India but in the UK and other places - a handful of contemporary Indian authors have demonstrated the historian's craft and the methodology required to interpret military and strategic history post independence.⁷⁴ While archives are easily accessible abroad, in India it is a big struggle. Historical maps like those of Sino-Indian border in any case are a rarity. A former army officer turned academic Anit Mukherjee from Johns Hopkins University is struggling to get data on Indian military history post partition and is invoking Right to Information Act (RTI) as a research fellow at the government funded IDSA⁷⁵

The result of the state of affairs at the university and official level has led to a number of infirmities a few of which I will list out:

- (a) Due to absence of archival sources, academics are discouraged to pursue research relating to diplomatic or strategic and war

⁷³ Foreword, Maj Gen R.N. Sen and Brig P.N. Jayant, *History of School of Artillery, Vol.I (1918- 1961)* , Directorate General of Artillery in Association with Lancers Publishers and Distributors, 2003, pp.ix- xi.

⁷⁴ Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, *War and Diplomacy in Kashmir, 1947-48*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2002, Narendra Singh Sarila, *The Shadow of the Great Game: The Untold Story of India's Partition*, New Delhi, HarperCollins, 2005 and Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India: A Strategic History of the Nehru Years*, Delhi, Permanent Black, 2009. I thank Drs Ashok Behuria and Smriti Pattanaik in drawing my attention to *The Shadow of the Great Game* and also bringing to my notice the sad destruction as waste paper of old Pakistani newspapers at the Indian Council of World Affairs in the 1990s.

⁷⁵ Anit Mukherjee, "Conducting Research in Strategic and Defence Policies", presentation in morning meet of December 29, 2010.

related topics. No professor of history will ever grant PhD on the basis of secondary sources alone. War and its impact on society are neglected from historiography more so in the Northeast where Kohima and Imphal were battlegrounds in the fight against the Japanese. Books on wars in Europe, Russia or North Africa will be found in abundance in book shops and libraries both public and private. Unlike other militaries, there is no scope for any employment of the academic historian in Indian military training establishments. No young human resource is entering this field due absence of archives, and concomitant jobs in the system. That brain is migrating to the West or to other disciplines and jobs.

- (b) Historians are absent in strategic and security studies; or the studies are starved of historians. Historians seem to be demoralised or shy to enter this multi-disciplinary field of IS, IR, modern war studies and military history. This creates an environment in which the conduct of war is a poor cousin to the grand narrative and sweep of IR.⁷⁶ Due to this partial vacuum, the study of security and strategic studies has thus been overwhelmingly dominated by IR scholars: who as professionals can rely on secondary sources and still discover research puzzles or theories to be used, tested or discovered. Kanti Bajpai urges scholars to work on some military history related puzzles such as:
 - (i) Why did India not take control of whole of Kashmir in 1948 given that the Indian military was a better fighting force than Pakistan military?
 - (ii) Why did Nehru adopt the ‘forward posture’ against China when India’s preparedness for war was questionable?

⁷⁶ P.K. Gautam, “Trends in Thinking About Warfare”, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.33, No.6, November 2009, pp.849-860.

- (iii) Why did Indian forces stop at Lahore in 1965 when they were at the gates of the city?⁷⁷
- (c) On the 1962 war in Arunachal Pradesh we have not recorded oral history of the people. The same could be true for Ladakh. A myth which media has generated in Arunachal Pradesh is about Sela a local woman who was in love with rifleman Jaswant Singh and supplied him ammunition as he fought back the vanguard of the PLA ahead of Sela defences. During my interaction with retired Brigadier Laxman Singh (a veteran of the war and author) I found that he was also puzzled by this story. Accounts are also hazy regarding local attitudes during the war.
- (d) Embedded in public psyche is the belief that Chinese troop strength was overwhelming “ waves and waves of hordes”: whereas it has now been shown that in Walong sector the Chinese had one division, in other sectors of North East Frontier Agency(NEFA) or Kameng they had three divisions plus and a division in Ladakh.⁷⁸ This popular impression needs to be corrected. The capacity of the Chinese to operate on animal and man pack basis in those conditions with such swiftness must not only be admired but needs to be emulated

⁷⁷ Kanti Bajpai, “Obstacles to Good Work in Indian IR”, *International Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 1 and 2, January and April 2009, pp.109-128. The research puzzles of the war in J&K in 1947-48 have been addressed by C. Dasgupta in his excellent study *War and Diplomacy in Kashmir, 1947-48*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2002. Interestingly prospect of ceasefire question has been well covered in the Official History, see S.N. Prasad and Dharam Pal, *Operations in Jammu and Kashmir 1947-48*, History Division, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, Dehardun, Natraj Publishers, first published 1987, reprint 2005, pp.369-375.

⁷⁸ Maj Gen Ashok Kalyan Verma, *Rivers of Silence*, New Delhi, Lancer Publication, 1998, p.28.

with further research.⁷⁹ This capacity for mobility on foot in Himalayas cannot be substituted.

- (e) My interaction with senior military generals confirms institutional amnesia. The anecdote is that after the insertion of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) in Sri Lanka, it was found that the same mistakes were repeated which a staff study had identified in the 1962 Sino- India war. Relearning of lessons is an apt term.⁸⁰

Many more examples could be listed. What the nation is missing out on - is truth.

Two Views

Before any policy is suggested, it is clear from the above analysis that two views exist. The scientific and the phlegmatic. The scientific view hinges on the Public Record Act. This view technically is not even a revisionist one, but due to bureaucratic feudalism it has become fossilised over the ages. Source documents and archives are the oxygen of modern war studies. This path must be implemented and in so doing, archival records will become available and more scholars will commence work on this. This will be a dam burst or something akin to the new economic policy of early 1990s which released latent energies and set India on a new growth path.

The other is the 'phlegmatic' view. It is unlikely that the political leadership advised by the bureaucracy will release the archives. From a business-as-usual perspective probably the nation will have to live

⁷⁹ Topics could be the legendary capacity of the Indian army to march, animal transport including loss of biodiversity of local ponies and Yaks. With climate change and extreme weather events this capacity will remain vital. See Virander Kumar and P. K. Gautam, "Back to the Basics: Foot and Hoof Mobility in the Mountains", IDSA Policy Brief, September 2011.

⁸⁰ Anit Mukherjee, *Failing to Deliver: Post- Crises Defence Reforms in India, 1998-2010*, IDSA Occasional Paper No.18, March 2011, p.30.

with this. The non action by leading think tanks and strategic community is evidence of the acceptance of the status quo.

The scientific view has greater merit. It is via this route that India can become part of a global democratic academic discourse of international studies, IR, modern war studies and security studies.

Policy Suggestions

Suggestions are at three levels. Level one is concerned with the larger question of the Indian university system. Level two relates to the officials/government. Level three is about how units, formations and headquarters need to gear up to capture and report data for historical study.

Level 1.

If archival work is not done, we in India would have to continue to rely on second hand foreign accounts about our own country. Working on our archives would also ensure that Indian scholars are not excessively influenced by the conceptual frameworks developed elsewhere. Opening up the military and diplomatic archives would thus help in generating useful policy-related and academic work of a high standard. Some point by point suggestions are:

- (a) The Public Record Act must be implemented. This will revive the historical division which should be treated as a national treasure. It should become a centre of attraction cum excellence for archival work by scholars. It will be like a nutrient or fertiliser to a plant.
- (b) Departments of History, IR and DSS in Indian universities to include the subject. Indian scholars of military history also need to be incorporated into the embryonic Indian International Studies Association. This will enrich the field of international studies and IR. Pending availability of archival data, secondary sources including oral history must be used to construct history in universities and institutes at national level. For study of foreign militaries no archives are required, but mostly secondary sources are used. Nurturing of academic military historians

will lead to a better informed debate in a democratic set up. If properly done, this is going to result in better policy decisions in future.

- (c) Provide incentives for scholars to get jobs and employment in universities to create the required human resource. Link it with the initiatives of the Knowledge Commission.
- (d) Include military history and modern war studies in the INDU with use of archives, not as an afterthought, but with deliberation. Undertake a massive national mission of military history to have encyclopaedia of all wars. The Category A establishments of the three services like the War Colleges, Staff College, Infantry School, School of Artillery, Armoured Corps School, and other training establishments including those of the navy and air force must have military history and war studies departments. Force employment, conduct of war and logistics must be the main focus. HQ IDS is already charged with INDU, joint-manship and institutes such as the National Defence Academy (NDA), Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), College of Defence Management (CDM) and National Defence College (NDC). It will be the ideal HQ to also have a history division. Whether to have tenured or contractual professors can be worked out based on past experience at NDA.
- (e) In the absence of archives, *The Indian Foreign Affairs Journal: A Quarterly of the Association of India Diplomats* has commenced recording oral history.⁸¹ This is the most professional way to construct alternative diplomatic history. This can later augment or supplement archives once released. Other institutes can learn from this good practice. Oral military history needs to be undertaken before remaining veterans of 1947-48, 1962, 1965, and 1971 fade away.

⁸¹ Other institutions that have taken tentative steps are the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library and the Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research , United Service Institution of India.

Level 2.

- (a) A revival of the statistical branch of the armed forces (like archival documents on the First and Second World Wars) needs to be undertaken. Accurate and timely record management of historical data, war diaries and after action reports without modification/editing to suit current expedients must be institutionalised.⁸²
- (b) At the think tank level, there should be a wider debate on why the government is shy of declassification. Setting up a committee was suggested in the past. This needs to be followed through to review and then release historical record for access. Even for official history since released, archives must be made available to scholars for further work based on the same source documents from which the history was written. Many aspects not included in the official version could be researched. This process never ends. A fresh interpretation of history is an iron law.
- (c) Restart the flow of documents from service HQ to the history division for safekeeping and for use by academics and scholars once declassified. Debate the existing, time tested and evolved procedure for further improvement. Incorporate the Indian Coast Guard in the loop, which has not been done so far. Maps and sketches must be of a very good standard.
- (d) The Ministry of Home Affairs must now raise an historical division for all para military organisations, and police forces under it. Projects to record history of insurgencies with counter insurgencies to be undertaken with help and coordination of the MOD.

⁸² This is a repeat policy suggestion. See P.K. Gautam, *Composition and Regimental System of the Indian Army: Continuity and Change*, New Delhi, Shipra Publications, 2008, pp.82-83.

- (e) Ministry of external affairs must likewise consolidate its historical practices and institutions and integrate them with the MOD and MHA.
- (f) System analysis in developing new weapon systems using computerised war- gaming techniques and structure analysis is another area where history is a handy tool. A study in 2006 had suggested that a more enlightened approach can bring together military officers, historians, technologists and quantitative analysts.⁸³ For trend and technology forecasting, there is need for a history of science and technology and how it influenced research, development, production and absorption by users. This type of work will provide better answers to questions such as - What was the historical process in initiation and finalisation of qualitative requirement? What was the outcome of the many project management organisation?
- (g) Military history can be used to economic advantage. The major earner for Belgium are the battlefield tours (Ypres etc) of the Great War.⁸⁴ Similarly the Northeast, the scene of many World War II battles, is one region which can reap economic benefits by attracting tourists from the UK, the USA, Japan, Africa, and South Asia. Kohima, Imphal and other areas can benefit from this idea. Also the Indian Army's role in foreign countries can be mapped and our diplomats can go on assignments armed with this data to various regions in Asia, Africa, Europe, and China to pay homage to the fallen soldiers.

⁸³ General V.P. Malik and Brig Gurmeet Kanwal, "Defence Planning in India: Concluding Observations", in General V.P. Malik and Brig Vinod Anand (Ed), *Defence Planning: Problems & Prospects*, New Delhi, Manas Publications, 2006, p.192.

⁸⁴ I thank Sqn Ldr R.T.S Chhina in providing me this information after visiting Europe in 2010 (personal communications).

Level 3.

- (a) Update, and modernise the recording, preserving and analysis of military history by units and formations by way of war dairies and historical reports. It is a dynamic process that must be improved. The HQ Integrated Defence Staff could become the nodal agency of the military history dimension. Earmark officers to visit battlefields where wars are being fought to give first hand accounts.
- (b) Have short training capsules on the writing of war dairies and historical reports at service level. For a beginning, the Centre for Armed Force Historical Research of the USI of India in cooperation with history division of the MOD may consider bringing out a pamphlet for wide circulation. Young historians from universities may be co-opted in this. Funds for which may be given by MOD.
- (c) The concept of combat historians should be introduced.
- (d) Research on force employment and conduct of war should be revived. Some issues that are more relevant today being:
 - (i) Why was the link up with Skardu in 1947 and 1948 a failure or how the four submarines of Pakistan navy restricted our freedom of action in 1971 war.
 - (ii) Close air support by IAF is also a study which has contemporary relevance. Using historical data, there is a need to see how the policy was formed and reformed or revised after each war. This can be compared with secondary data on the use of air power by NATO and US forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya.
 - (iii) Out of area operations or force projection is a pressing issue of current research. Yet with no history of IPKF insertion and exit from Sri Lanka crucial lesson of administration, and logistics are not available for good policy work. Such work must be produced and released.

- (e) With archival records and data mining, many other facets of the new military history can be studied for help in recruitment and individual training. The Indian Army's record of military discipline in war conditions being one. The changes in physical standards can also be discerned from the recruitment and medical archives given the increase in lifestyle diseases. The mental resilience of the yeomanry peasant soldiers compared to the present semi-urban generation can also be analysed. This may well show how physical and mental toughness earlier taken for granted needs to be infused by new and better ways of training.⁸⁵
- (f) Under the banner of HQ IDS and INDU the subject of military history should be given a fresh look. At the academy level professional historians need to be recruited. For competitive examinations, like the civil service examination, a much broader study of modern war studies needs to be included. The standard of dissertations now being written by military officers under the aegis of neighbouring civil universities must now graduate to the rigour of INDU. This is applicable mainly to the higher command level and to the National Defence College. Work on this aspect must now commence before INDU gets established.

Finance. Budget and incentives for human resource development at Levels 1, 2 and 3 must be earmarked. It is unlikely that this social science type of activity would be costly. No high technology lab or expensive equipment is required. Even the new Nalanda University is giving priority to low cost social sciences.

⁸⁵ P.K. Gautam, "Geographical Factors in Planning and Conduct of Indian Military Operations", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.32, No.2, March 2008, pp. 245-258.

Conclusion

Work on military history studies and modern war studies need to be done at all the three levels so identified. While timely declassification in accordance with the Public Record Act and Rules (30 year cycle) is necessary, it is not sufficient. What is more vital is to ensure that the data is recorded and the records are preserved in the archives.

A fresh debate is needed on this key component of intellectual growth. The case here is just not to declassify (the issue may be that the operation or problem is still on going) but also to institutionalise the study. This in no case will militarise society, but would rather make our public in general and armed forces in particular more professional for dealing with external threats. It will also throw new light on various insurgencies and facilitate policy options for counter insurgency in a vibrant democratic India.