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Political Masters and Sentinels: Commanding the Allegiance of the Soldier in India

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Political Masters and Sentinels: Commanding the Allegiance of the Soldier in India

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To my wonderful parents Lolita and Shantanu Ray who helped realize my dream

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Political Masters and Sentinels: Commanding the Allegiance of the Soldier in India

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This study is a serious effort to make a significant contribution to the under-examined field of Indian civil-military relations. The objective of the study is to set up a framework that helps explain changes in the division of labor between civilians and the military in India from 1947 to the present day. There are three basic themes in this dissertation that I seek to develop and explain in various chapters. The first theme examines key issues which directly address the divide between civilian and military functions. In discussing the division of labor between civilians and the military and changes affecting India's structure of civil-military relations, I borrow Samuel Huntington's general framework outlined in *The Soldier and the State*. Huntington's framework provides the starting point for my argument by informing the reader about issues that emerge in the contestation of civilian space by the military. The second theme highlights the very different nature or experience of civil-military relations in India when compared to the United States. The third and final theme of this study seeks to illustrate differences in the nature of the Indian and American political systems. A major conclusion reached in this study is that the advent of nuclear technology in India has reduced the space between civilian and military functions, giving the military a greater role in shaping policy.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

I. A General Definition of Civilian Control

Civilian control of the military is considered a critical necessity for effective democratic governance. It is the principle of civilian control that differentiates democracies from authoritarian states. In authoritarian regimes, the military performs a dual role of fighting wars *and* making policy. However, democracies pride themselves in a clear demarcation of roles between civilian and military functions.¹ In most democracies, the executive, whether the President or the Prime Minister, is responsible for formulating policy while the military is designed to be a war fighting force entrusted with the responsibility of protecting the country's territorial sovereignty from external and internal attacks.

In outlining a general definition of civilian control, three features of civilian control warrant attention. First, civilian control can be understood as a set of functions that the political leadership of a state performs; functions that clearly give the political establishment more power over other institutions in society. These functions are generally associated with decision making over issues such as national security, domestic policy and military strategy. A political leadership's power over other institutions derives from the primacy of political decisions in the formulation of national security, domestic policy and military strategy.

Civilians have the "final say" (whether right or wrong) over a particular policy and by doing

¹ Douglas Bland provides a neat description of the division of labor between civilians and the military. According to Bland, civil authorities are responsible and accountable for some aspects of control while military leaders are accountable and responsible for others. Also, the responsibilities for control are not fused. For more on this issue, see, Douglas Bland, "A Unified Theory of Civil-Military Relations", *Armed Forces & Society*, 26:1 (2001), pp.7-25.

so exercise more power than any other institutions within a state. The ability of civilians to enjoy and exercise more power than other existing institutions in decision making is a critical feature of civilian control.

A second feature of civilian control is a recognition or acceptance of the political leadership's authority to make decisions in various policy matters (irrespective of whether these decisions are right or wrong) by other institutions in society. In other words, decisions made by civilians in matters of national security, domestic policy or military affairs are seen as legitimate and lawful. A political leadership's control in decision making, therefore, derives from a tacit acceptance of such control by all other institutions of society.

A third and equally important feature of civilian control pertains to the mechanisms by which civilians institute a system of control. In a democracy, powers of the political leadership to make decisions and execute policy are enshrined in a written document called the Constitution. For instance, in the United States, the Founding Fathers' distrust of the armed forces manifests itself in many of the provisions of the US Constitution. The President is the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces and the Congress which consists of the elected representatives of the people has the power to declare war, raise and support armies and maintain a navy.² Also, the political establishment institutes a system whereby it can continue to remain in power and make decisions without the fear of losing control. A system of checks and balances makes it extremely difficult for any other institution in society to challenge civilian capacity to make and execute decisions. A common method of instituting a system of checks and balances is to distribute power to various institutions in a way that neither institution has excess power over the other. In democracies like India and the United States, the legislature and judiciary effectively play this role. Another way of

² Elmer J. Mahoney, "The Constitutional Framework of Civil-Military Relations" in Charles Cochran, *Civil-Military Relations: Changing Concepts in the Seventies*, (New York: Free Press; 1974), p.35.

setting up institutional checks is by punishing those who challenge civilian authority and rewarding those who obey civilian orders. For example, in the military, explicit refusal to accept civilian orders can range from demotion in rank to court martial or complete dismissal from service. On the other hand, upon successful execution of civilian directions, a soldier can be rewarded through promotions or a raise in salary. In this way, a general edifice of civilian control is built and sustained through various institutional checks available to the political leadership. And precisely because of the existence of an institutionalized system of civilian control, any possible challenges to civilian control rarely have the capacity to topple civilian leadership.

II. Indian Literature on Civil-Military Relations

One of the prominent and earliest analyses of civil-military relations in India is Stephen Cohen's book, *The Indian Army*. Cohen focuses on explaining why India's political establishment has never been challenged by its military while neighboring countries like Pakistan have been frequently prone to the rise of dictatorships. Cohen explains the absence of coups in India by pointing to the Indian army's high degree of professionalization which, according to the author, was a result of years of indoctrination, selection and training. Moreover, civilians in India strengthened their own position vis-à-vis the military through constitutional constraints and high levels of party control.³ The mechanisms used by civilians to exercise tight control over the military as well as the training imparted to the armed forces made the latter completely subordinate to civilian authority. This explains why India's political establishment has never been challenged by its military and why the armed forces are a professional war fighting force continually enacting civilian decisions.

³ Stephen Cohen, *The Indian Army* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Cohen's primary contribution lies in explaining the absence of coups in India and the general structure of civilian control. However, the author's analysis of civil-military relations in India provides the reader with only one side of the story. While the Indian military has been subordinate to civilian authority and not directly challenged civilian control, on several occasions (as I demonstrate in various chapters) the armed forces have been found to be critical of civilian policy especially in those areas where the military had greater faith in its own expertise to deal with strategic issues. A reading of Cohen's book primarily helps in explaining the meaning and mechanisms by which a system of civilian control in India has been instituted. Also, Cohen provides the reader with a framework that emphasizes the primacy of civilians in shaping policy. However, evidence from the India case suggests that from the 1960s, civil-military relations in India underwent dramatic changes and there were documented instances of civilians trying to interfere in military affairs or the military trying to influence the outcome of political decisions. Such types of changes that have occurred in the history of Indian civil-military relations pose serious questions about the blurring of the division of labor between civilian and military functions. Such questions remain unaddressed in the Indian literature.

While Cohen does not specifically address questions relating to the division of labor between civilians and the military, to his credit, one of his observations implies an evaluation of changes in the relationship between civilians and the military. Cohen argues that a political leadership incapable of managing the affairs of the nation should expect to incur disagreements from the military. If the military views the politicians as incompetent, it becomes unsure about the capacity of civilians to deliver the goods. The military may also become suspicious of securing a proper share of resources from the civilians. A feeling of mistrust within the military can then generate major problems in civil-military relations not

just during war time but also in peace time. This is an important issue because a disgruntled military can either overrule civilian directives or try to influence policy. By doing so, the military changes the balance in civilian and military functions in its favor.

Addressing the subject of civil-military relations in India, Rebecca Schiff in 1997 challenged the idea of a strict separation in civilian and military functions. Instead, Schiff attempted to explain the possible overlap of civilian and military functions. But the overall purpose of Schiff's analysis was to explain the absence of military intervention (absence of coups) in India. Schiff proposes a theory of "concordance"⁴ between civilians and the military in India and argues that if and when the civilians, armed forces and society agree on four issues, then military intervention in politics is less likely to occur.⁵ The four issues are: make up of officer corps, political decision making process, recruiting, rank and file and military style. Schiff claimed that when the civilians, military and society were in complete agreement over these four issues, military intervention would be unlikely. Therefore, in Schiff's analysis, the likelihood of military intervention is tied to the level of disagreement between civil-military-societal groups over four specific issues. Second, specific historical and cultural conditions at different times determine the extent to which the political, military and societal institutions could either agree or disagree on such issues.

Schiff's claims are problematic for a number of reasons. First, it is almost impossible to conceive of any practical situation where not just civilians but the military and society are in complete agreement over all four issues. Second, Schiff provides little evidence from the Indian case to support her claim. Third, it is unclear how important the four issues are not just relative to each other but in understanding the extent of agreement or disagreement

⁴ I interpret this word to mean agreement or consensus between civilians and the military.

⁵ Rebecca Schiff, "The Indian Military and Nation Building: Institutional and Cultural Concordance" in John P. Lovell and David E. Albright, *To Sheathe the Sword: Civil-Military Relations in the Quest for Democracy* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1997).

between civilians, military and society. A careful reading of India's historical record indicates that of the four issues raised by Schiff, most disagreement occurs over shaping policy in the political decision making arena. This is because the military is not always satisfied with the manner in which civilians make decisions. Military style can be hailed as the second most important issue because it directly addresses whether or not the military is willing to obey and execute civilian orders. Of the remaining two issues, rank and file and recruitment have not been as critical in influencing the relationship between the political establishment and the military in India. Agreement or disagreement over the political decision making process or over military style are important problems but it would be more useful to demonstrate how such instances of agreement or disagreement influence the existing division of labor between civilians and the military.

A separate argument but one that examines the extent to which the Indian army has moved away from its traditional area of war fighting is made by Veena Gill who focuses on "political perspectives" of the military. The author argues that instead of just studying the ways in which civilians have institutionalized control over the military in India, it is necessary to address how and why the military in India has tried to achieve various political ends. Gill argues that trends towards corruption and civilian interference in military appointments and placements have blurred the division of labor between civilians and the military eroding the military's professionalism and making it more skeptical of the civilians' ability to make decisions.⁶ Moreover, the growing role of the Indian armed forces in curbing internal unrest and dealing with secessionist movements in Punjab and Kashmir has further increased its capacity to influence political decisions making it less of a professional force and more of a political body. Gill's argument is useful as it highlights the problems associated with

⁶ Veena Gill, "India" in Constantine P. Danopoulos and Cynthia Watson eds., *The Political Role of the Military*, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1996).

displacement of military functions. As the division of labor between civilians and the military becomes less rigid, it becomes difficult to say with any degree of certainty whether civilians are still making policy or the military is making policy and the civilians are merely implementing the wishes of the military. Gill's analysis helps explain how the military's role in India has expanded beyond its traditional war fighting functions and moved to areas of governance and policy resulting in a blurring of the division of labor between the two domains.

Scholars such as Veena Kukreja and Apurba Kundu have also written extensively on civil-military relations in India. However, their work fits into a descriptive narrative of civil-military interaction during war time and peace time. Moreover, their arguments are limited to understanding the absence of coups in India and do not discuss issues related to changes in the division of labor.⁷ As I am specifically interested in addressing the shift in civilian and military functions and the resulting ability of the Indian military to influence political decisions, I have limited myself to addressing the writing of those scholars whose work may have something to say on the subject. I would also like to add that besides the general literature on civil-military relations in India, there is a significant body of literature on Indian nuclear strategy. The most prominent scholarship on the subject is Ashley Tellis's *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture*, George Perkovich's *India's Nuclear Bomb* and Raj Chengappa's *Weapons of Peace*.⁸ Although the authors are not concerned with explaining civil-military relations in India per se, their books provide several clues or insights into how nuclear

⁷ Veena Kukreja, *Civil-Military Relations in South Asia: Pakistan, Bangladesh and India* (New Delhi: Sage, 1992); Apurba Kundu, *Militarism in India: The Army and Civil Society in Consensus* (New Delhi: Tauris, 1998).

⁸ The most well known books on India's nuclear strategy see, Ashley Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2001); Raja Menon, *A Nuclear Strategy for India* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000); George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation* (California: University of California Press, 2001); Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest To Be A Nuclear Power* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2000); Kotera Bhimaya, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: Civil-Military Relations and Decision Making", *Asian Survey*, 34:7 (1994).

weapons may have influenced the relationship between civilians and the military in India. Their writings are also helpful for my study especially in my discussion on the development of nuclear strategy and its relevance of civil-military relations in India.

III. Objective and Methodology of the Study

Given a general overview of some of the major arguments in the Indian literature on the state of Indian civil-military relations, one of the major limitations in analyzing such arguments is that with the exception of Stephen Cohen, few scholars have examined the subject with any degree of seriousness. This explains why besides Cohen's book, there is no single, exclusive account on civil-military relations in India. The literature on civil-military relations in India suffers from two serious drawbacks. First, arguments on civil-military relations in India are theoretically unsophisticated. Besides Cohen's contribution, there is no theoretical framework for discussing salient issues in the history of Indian civil-military relations. Second, contemporary issues in Indian civil-military relations cannot be ignored given the changes that have occurred in the relationship between civilians and the military *over time*. To assess the changes accurately and develop a better grasp of civil-military relations in India, one has to adopt a broader perspective and study the historical context from 1947 to the present time. For instance, if one looks to the US literature on civil-military relations, scholars such as Richard Kohn and A.J. Bacevich have tried to account for the changing relationship between the American political establishment and the US military in different periods of time.⁹ Such scholars have also successfully compared American civil-

⁹ For a discussion of the challenges to civilian control in the United States see, Richard Kohn, "Out of Control: The Crisis in Civil-Military Relations", *National Interest*, 35 (1994); Russel Wiegley, "The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClelland to Powell", *Journal of Military History*, 57, (1993); A.J. Bacevich, "Civilian Control: A Useful Fiction?", *Joint Forces Quarterly*, 1994-1995; Don Snider, "US Civil-Military Relations: In Crisis or Transition?", *CSIS Report*, Washington D.C.

military relations at various critical junctures to make a strong case for possible changes in the relationship. In contrast, the scope of the Indian literature in assessing civil-military relations during specific historic moments and under different conditions is rather limited. Given the inadequacies in the literature on civil-military relations in India, I seek to make a significant contribution to this under-examined field by setting up a framework that will provide much needed answers to explain changes in the division of labor between civilians and the military in India from 1947 to the present day.

This study is based on fieldwork conducted in India. Substantial parts of my data were collected over a period of eight months from January 2006- August 2006. Data were collected through a series of elite interviews directed at three groups: The first group included former government officials, diplomats, and high level bureaucrats. The second group comprised senior officers from the army, navy, and air force. The third group included journalists and academics. While elite interviews are the primary research technique, data has also been obtained from secondary materials such as newspapers, press reports and numerous books on the subject. A majority of the archival data was readily available from the Nehru Memorial Library, The Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses, and Jawaharlal Nehru University Library, New Delhi. The Perry Castaneda Library at the University of Texas at Austin has also served as an excellent resource by providing easy access to major Indian defense journals, annual reports published by the Ministry of Defense and other important Indian documents such as the Kargil Review Committee Report.

IV. Primary Themes of the Study

There are three basic themes in this dissertation that I seek to develop and explain in various chapters. The first theme examines key issues that directly address the divide

between civilian and military functions. In discussing the division of labor between civilians and the military and changes affecting India's structure of civil-military relations, I borrow Samuel Huntington's general framework outlined in *The Soldier and the State*. Huntington's framework provides the starting point for my argument by giving the reader an idea of various issues that emerge in the contestation of civilian space by the military. In addition to Huntington, I include other relevant arguments on the subject by prominent American scholars. The second theme highlights the very different nature or experience of civil-military relations in India when compared to the United States. In this context, I provide major examples from the American historical experience to demonstrate how the American military has enjoyed a much more open relationship with its political leaders. While conflict or disagreement in American civil-military relations is a frequent feature, it has been considered important in shaping the American military into a more professional fighting force. This has, at times, been a reason for grave concern in American political circles, especially during the Cold War when the degree of freedom enjoyed by the American military in the management of nuclear weapons made it imperative for civilians to take back some of the control that had been delegated to the American forces. In the Indian case, an open and clear dialogue between civilians and the military is generally absent. Unlike its American counterpart, the military in India was never allowed to engage in an open dialogue with civilians. The advent of nuclear technology, however, produced a noticeable change in Indian civil-military relations. For Indian policy makers, the advent of nuclear technology has raised similar issues concerning the management of nuclear weapons as was witnessed in American civil-military relations during the Cold War period. An examination of American civil-military relations, therefore, is meant to demonstrate to the reader, the very different type of relationship that has existed between India's political leadership and its military in

addressing grand strategy. The third and final theme of this study is to illustrate differences in the nature of the Indian and American political systems. In India, the structure of higher defense organization is markedly different from the type that exists in America. This too has impacted Indian civil-military relations in significant ways. In discussing these three themes, I provide the reader with some of the major arguments made in the American literature on civil-military relations.

(i) Military Professionalism and Military Expertise: Core Issues in the Civil-Military Divide

Within a general rubric of civilian control, there can be two kinds of relationships between the civilians and the military. First, there can be a situation where a clear division of labor exists between military and civilian functions. Civilians recognize the military's autonomy in its own sphere of functioning and the military in turn recognizes the political leadership's authority over decision making. The second relationship can be one in which the existing division of labor between the civilians and the military is blurred and there is a marked absence of agreement between civilians and the military on the nature of their exact functions. In both types of relationships or situations, the division of labor can be contested by the military. In this context, a discussion of Huntington's arguments about the relationship between civilians and the military as described in *The Solider and the State*, establishes the basic framework for examining issues that may arise when the civilian space is contested by the military.

Huntington was one of the very first scholars to address the distinction between civilian and military functions and the blurring in the division of labor between the two domains. Huntington's theories were later developed by Peter Feaver who provided a more

sophisticated understanding of questions related to the contestation of civilian space by the military. While Huntington's study is more attentive to issues of military professionalism and military expertise, Feaver's theory is centered on questions of military disobedience.¹⁰ For the purposes of this study and in assessing general issues that regularly dominate scholarly writings on civil-military relations, Huntington's framework is particularly useful. The two issues at the heart of Huntington's examination of civil-military relations are military professionalism and military expertise. At first glance, these two concepts may appear separate but in fact are quite related. A professional military is often considered an expert in military matters. Conversely, military expertise is considered a necessary element of military professionalism. I examine these issues at greater length to explain how and when the division of labor between civilians and the military becomes fuzzy. I start with Huntington's definition of civilian control.

In explaining civilian control, Huntington claims that civilian control exists "when there is a subordination of an autonomous profession to the ends of policy".¹¹ While the statesman acknowledges the integrity of the military professionalism and its subject matter, the military in turn remains politically neutral and accepts political guidance from the state.¹² Huntington's definition of civilian control implies two things. First, civilians make policy and all policies implemented by other institutions remain subordinate to civilian policies. This is because the political leadership of a country exercises an ultimate say in deciding whether a policy is right or wrong. Second, with specific regard to the armed forces, even if civilians respect the military as an autonomous institution with expertise on issues of strategy, final decisions on military strategy remain the prerogative of the civilians.

¹⁰ Feaver refers to instances of military disobedience or insubordination as shirking.

¹¹ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957).

¹² Ibid.

Huntington further claimed that there are two types of civilian control: *objective* control and *subjective* control. Objective control, according to Huntington, is a situation in which there is a clear separation between civilian and military functions. Civilians make policy and the military fights wars. Subjective control can include multiple scenarios ranging from an overlapping of civilians and military functions, the excessive presence of civilian influence in military affairs or the visible presence of military influence in political decisions. Under objective control, civilians make all decisions regarding policy and strategy while the military works primarily as a professional war fighting force. On the other hand, under subjective control, the political leadership may feel the necessity to exercise greater control over the military or vice versa. Huntington's concept of subjective control is where most debates on the division of labor between civilians and the military can be located. Under subjective control, when civilians feel the necessity to exercise stricter control in military affairs or the military attempts to influence civilian policy, there is a simultaneous change in the existing division of labor. This change produces a new relationship that moves away from the traditional civilian function of making policy and the military function of fighting wars. Given this basic understanding of what Huntington means by objective and subjective control, for the purpose of this study, an examination of the scope of the military's influence in contesting civilian boundaries is more important. An extension in the military's influence on civilian policy is mostly connected to the military's level of professionalism and expertise.

What is military professionalism? Huntington argues that the degree of professionalism of any military is determined by its function of being a war fighting force and nothing more. This means that the military is organized, managed and effective only for the purpose of fighting war and making strategy. When the military begins to take on different roles such as aiding civilians in internal operations or maintaining law and order (as

a police force), then it gradually begins to lose its professional character as its new role takes it much beyond conducting strategy and fighting wars.

For Huntington, the further removed a military is from its war fighting functions, the less professional it becomes. In such situations, the ability of civilians to control the military can significantly deteriorate leading to a greater likelihood of the military's entry into the civilian realm of policy making. In other words, once the military starts performing other functions besides war fighting, it starts exerting its influence on different sectors of society. For example, the military might get involved in curbing internal unrest within a state and by doing so also acquire the role of a police force. In such capacity, the military's function expands to maintaining law and order in addition to fighting insurgents. The experience that the military gains in such different environments makes it a reliable source for teaching the civilians a lesson or two on how to frame counter-insurgency policies. Therefore, a shift in the military's function from a war fighting to a policy making role blurs the division of labor resulting in a change in the civil-military dynamic.

In the Indian case, the outbreak of secessionist movements in the states of Punjab, Kashmir and Assam from the mid-1980s and the use of the Indian military by civilians in counter-insurgency operations has led to serious debates about a breakdown in the Indian military's levels of professionalism. In 1983-84, Punjab was the first state to be affected with the outbreak of a Hindu-Sikh communal conflict. The military was called in to crush internal unrest and maintain law and order. The operation launched to evict a number of Sikh insurgents from the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab, (codenamed *Bluestar*) was akin to a military campaign. In 1989, the state of Kashmir also became severely affected by movements for internal secession. The breakdown of state machinery in Kashmir left the military as the sole arbiter of law and order. Likewise, the Indian armed forces became

involved in curbing internal secessionist movements in the state of Assam. In all these instances, the involvement of the Indian military in counter-insurgency operations gave it a completely new role; a role that was clearly much more than fighting wars on the battlefield (as had been the case until the 1960s). This new role of the Indian military in tackling counter-insurgency brought it closer to the realm of governance. India's political leadership began accepting military inputs on decisions regarding the management of internal administration in insurgent-affected states. Consequently, the relationship between civilians and the military changed with the military assuming the function of decision maker in such matters. Therefore, a marked change in the existing division of labor between civilians and the military in India has raised questions about military professionalism; questions similar to the ones Huntington outlines.

A second issue that lies at the core of understanding the civil-military divide is the issue of military expertise. To understand the relevance of military expertise, one has to pay closer attention to the way in which the military perceives its specific functions and whether or not it places any faith in civilian policies. Whenever a military is suspicious of a civilian directive (which mostly happens when civilians display their ignorance in military affairs) the armed forces become more inclined to challenge civilian policy. In contrast, the military is more likely to follow civilian directives if it thinks that the political establishment has carefully weighed the pros and cons of executing military decisions. In this context, Peter Feaver's observations about the scope of military expertise and its effects on civil-military relations are helpful to anyone who is interested in understanding the conditions under which a blurring between civilian and military functions may occur. Most types of friction that emanate in civil-military relations and that inevitably lead to a blurring of functions

between civilian and military policy arise when the military tries to assert its expertise in civilian policy.¹³

In *Armed Servants*, Peter Feaver demonstrates how the military's way of thinking about specific issues increases its propensity to disobey civilian orders; a phenomenon he calls "shirking." On closer examination, Feaver's usage of the word shirking is just another way of explaining how the military finds ways to assert its own professionalism and expertise in military affairs. Feaver makes a number of claims. First, the military might care about a specific policy and have a general idea about what to do with that policy.¹⁴ For example, the military might agree with civilians about the dangers of an external threat but might find it unsuitable to rush into a war that could carry heavy costs; something that the civilians might not readily understand. Second, the military's desire for respect plays a critical role in whether or not it is ready to accept civilian orders. If the military feels that obeying defective civilian orders may compromise its position in the future, then it is highly inclined to disregard those orders. In other words, the military prefers applause for maintaining high professional standards instead of facing blame for executing faulty civilian directions. Third, regardless of what the military is asked to do, it prefers minimum civilian interference. In military policy, this means that the military takes pride in executing its functions by applying its expertise and prefers to rely as little as possible on civilian directions. By its very nature, this constitutes the ethos of any professional army. Thus, most, if not all of Feaver's major claims about military behavior stress the importance of military expertise and military professionalism. There are a number of examples from the American history of civil-military

¹³ Peter Feaver, *Armed Servants: Agency, Oversight and Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Peter Feaver, "The Civil-Military Problematique: Huntington, Janowitz and the question of Civilian Control", *Armed Forces and Society*, 23:2 (1996).

¹⁴ Feaver, n-13, p.63; pp.69-70.

relations that will help illustrate the very high value a military designates to issues of professionalism and expertise.

A prime example of the military trying to tell the civilians how to fight a war is the well known case in which Douglas MacArthur challenged Harry Truman during the Korean War. MacArthur and President Truman shared a fundamental disagreement on how to conduct the war in Korea. While MacArthur wanted a free hand in tactical operations, Truman was more concerned with limiting the war and avoiding escalation.¹⁵ However, MacArthur was adamant in prosecuting the war his way. Without civilian knowledge, MacArthur convened a press conference issuing an ultimatum to the enemy. By doing so, MacArthur violated Truman's directives. Disturbed by MacArthur's actions, Truman ordered the General to retire from the army. Feaver claims that MacArthur usurped authority in order to pursue a policy that was directly against what the civilians wanted and by doing so, he shirked. What is important for any careful reader of civil-military relations is not whether MacArthur shirked his responsibility. Instead, the more pointed question to ask is whether MacArthur wanted a free hand in tactical operations solely because of a greater confidence in the military's expertise and a lack of faith in civilian policy.

The MacArthur case is one of many in the history of American civil-military relations replete with examples that demonstrate how seriously the American military weighs its own expertise against civilian directives. Eliot Cohen, another well known civil-military expert, has shown how the military's irritation with civilian restraints continued beyond MacArthur's time. Cohen maintains that during John. F. Kennedy's Presidency, civil-military relations became "truly dreadful".¹⁶ Kennedy's, Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara was

¹⁵ Russell Weigley, "The American Military and the Principle of Civilian Control from McClelland to Powell", *Journal of Military History*, 57 (1993).

¹⁶ Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesman, and Leadership in Wartime*, (New York: Free Press, 2002).

determined to replace the Pentagon's "institutionalized wheeling and dealing with his version of rational decision making."¹⁷ The military felt that their most cherished programs were being challenged by people who knew little about such issues. As a consequence, they provided advice that represented their own view of foreign policy rather than the government's view. For example, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, at the very initial stages, the Joint Chief of Staffs made the liberation of Cuba their ultimate objective while the President wanted a more restricted agenda of removing weapons from the island. When asked what the Soviet reaction would be to massive air strikes, the JCS answered, "unknown". It almost seemed that the response of the Joint Chief of Staffs was one of sheer defiance against the most favored policy of the government. Kennedy was quick to judge the military, so much so that he later remarked to his successors to "watch the generals" and not think that "just because they were military men, their opinion on military matters were worth a damn."¹⁸

Another example illustrating the importance of military expertise is an episode during the war when General Curtis Le May, Chief of Air Staff from 1961-1965, tried to subvert civilian authority during President Kennedy's tenure. Kennedy's ideas on the doctrine of flexible response had received little sympathy within the US Air Force, who wanted to stick to the use of air power as had been demonstrated in World War II and the Korean War. General Le May believed that if civilian orders were not to his liking on issues relating to nuclear weapons, then he would just go ahead and do what he wanted.¹⁹ In addition, Le May noted that "the administration spouted new phrases and things of that sort,

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ For more on this issue, see Fred Kaplan, *Wizards of Armageddon*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983); David Rosenberg, "A Hulking, Radiating Ruin at the End of Two Hours: Documents on American Plans for Nuclear War with the Soviet Union, 1954-55", *International Security*, 6:3 (1981-1982).

but as far as the Air Force was concerned, we had no radical change in thinking at all.”²⁰ Le May did not stop at just making statements. The General received flak when he tried to pressure civilian leaders to change safety rules to enable immediate deployment of a nuclear bomb entering the stockpile.²¹ Le May’s intransigence to civilian authority demonstrates the accuracy in both Huntington and Feaver’s ideas about military expertise. Most professional militaries rely heavily on their own expertise and take pride in executing military functions with minimal civilian interference. All the examples noted above indicate that while a military will not contravene political orders in an outright fashion, it will strongly adhere to its military expertise when the civilians are wrong.

Issues relating to military professionalism and military expertise, therefore, rest at the core of examining the divide between civilian and military functions. In this study, it is my attempt to highlight similar issues observed in the history of India’s civil-military relations. For example, the question of military expertise became extremely important in the Indian case in the aftermath of the 1962 war in which the Indian army suffered a crushing defeat by the Chinese forces. Since the Indian military, during the time, had no power in making decisions on military strategy, the political leadership used the war to exert tight control over the armed forces. This was a time when Defense Minister V.K. Krishna Menon resorted to excessive interference in both strategic and tactical matters even though the military had superior knowledge about such issues. Undue interference by political elites resulted in faulty decisions taken by the civilians; decisions for which the Indian military had to pay a very heavy price. To signal their dissatisfaction with political directives, a number of senior

²⁰ Quoted in David E Johnson, “Modern US Civil-Military Relations: Wielding The Terrible Sword”, *McNair Paper 57*, Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, Washington DC, July 1997.

²¹ Scott Sagan, *The Limits of Safety: Organizations, Accidents and Nuclear Weapons*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.72-73.

military officers resigned during the course of the war or expressed their displeasure with civilian decisions.

The more interesting dynamic that emerged at the end of the 1962 war was a change in the relationship between civilians and the military. The defeat of the Indian forces signaled to the civilians that the political leadership had been unreservedly “wrong” in its calculations of the Chinese threat and had made a series of imprudent decisions while the military had been “right” in its assessment of the Chinese threat including its strategy for fighting the enemy. The Indian military repeatedly cited civilian interference as the cause for military defeat in the war. This made New Delhi adopt a more cautious stance towards the military when faced with a second war with Pakistan in 1965. In the 1965 war, instead of meddling in military affairs, the political leadership led by Prime Minister Shastri ceded most of its decision making powers to the military.²² The 1965 war is one of the first documented cases in which civilians gave complete autonomy to the three service chiefs in tactical decision making. In the absence of undue interference by inexperienced civilians, the armed forces led by General J.N. Chaudhri formulated military strategy, executed battlefield plans and defeated the enemy. The effects of the 1962 war, therefore, are crucial to understanding how important military expertise is in shaping civil-military relations.²³ The immediate post war period witnessed increased military participation in decision making facilitated by civilians who set up a number of different committees to elicit military advice on matters of strategy. The political establishment became cognizant of the military’s institutional autonomy in decisions of strategy. The 1962 war is just one example in India’s history of civil-military

²² Kotera Bhimaya, “Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: Civil-Military Relations and Decision Making”, *Asian Survey*, 34:7 (1994), p.653.

²³ For an account of the 1962 war with China, see, Naville Maxwell, *India-China War* (Bombay: Jaico, 1970). On the effects of the 1962 war on the existing balance between civilians and the military, read General S.K. Sinha’s *Of Matters Military*, (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1987), p.95.

relations that is important for an assessment of the Indian military's professionalism and expertise in military affairs. In the following chapters, I develop the theme of military professionalism and military expertise by drawing on several other cases such as the development of nuclear weapons, the Brasstacks Crisis, the Kargil war and Operation Parakram. These cases help explain the significance of military expertise in the Indian military's growing ability to influence civilian policy.

(ii) Contrasts in Indian and American Historical Experiences

Another important question in analyzing civil-military relations in India is whether or not the Indian military has enjoyed significant freedom in shaping strategic policy. To get some answers into this question, a reading of India's historical context is necessary. Also, a comparison with the United States becomes especially useful. The late 1940s was a very critical time in the history of civil-military relations in both the United States and India, but for rather different reasons. Two critical events made the experience of civil-military relations in India dramatically different from the United States. The first was the Indian military's inexperience in fighting a total war on the scale of World War II, and second, was the Indian military's inexperience in the development of nuclear strategy.

World War II was a period of mass mobilization.²⁴ Industry was made to conform to war ends, wage and price controls were instituted and domestic policy was subordinated to war efforts.²⁵ During the war, so far as major decisions in policy and strategy were concerned, the American military ran the war and the power of the professional military

²⁴ Charles Moskos, "The Emergent Military: Civil, Traditional, or Plural?", *The Pacific Sociological Review*, Volume 16:2 (1973).

²⁵ Richard Kohn, "Civil-Military Relations in the United States Today", Paper presented at the Security Studies Seminar, MIT, October 12, 2005.

reached unprecedented heights.²⁶ When faced with the Second World War, the American military had very little choice but to accept it. The military began to actively participate in political decisions. American forces underwent enormous expansion in scope and size. In 1942, the creation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) reflected a military necessity.²⁷ The JCS extended its activities and interests into the areas of diplomacy and politics. Moreover, the involvement of military agencies in political decisions began to penetrate lower levels of military hierarchy. By 1945, the War Department was completely involved in foreign policy.²⁸

Huntington argues that the enormous role of the American military during the Second World War produced a rather interesting dynamic in American civil-military relations in the post-war period. The vast experience of the American military in conducting and participating in a total war made it an indispensable organ for civilians in the construction of foreign policy. As a consequence, military policy and political policy became much more closely related in the post-war period. The increased demand for a merger in political and military functions became a new method in the American government's approach to the military. However, along with the merger of military and political functions, there also arose a greater possibility for confusion in the implementation of strategic policy. Close collaboration between military and civilian functions often made it difficult to see who was making policy. This began to produce a period of heightened tension in American civil-military relations. Yet, interestingly, even though American civilian and military officials disagreed over the formulation of policies in the Cold War period, disagreement was not viewed as a bad thing. Instead, it was considered vital for an open dialogue in American civil-military relations.

²⁶ Huntington, *opcit*, p.316.

²⁷ Huntington, *opcit*, p.318.

²⁸ Huntington, *opcit*, p. 324.

When we look at the history of Indian civil-military relations in 1947 and beyond, a very different picture emerges. While India gained independence from British rule in 1947, the Indian military inherited much of the legacy of the British military of keeping itself far removed from political decisions on grand strategy. The real difference between American and British systems of conducting war was that the expansion in powers of the American military brought it closer to policy. But the British military enjoyed a very restricted role in its relationship with the British polity which gave it a more professional military outlook. The Indian army inherited much of its professional character from the British military but in doing so was also taught to stay away from policy making. Therefore, the Indian military found itself at a marked disadvantage compared to the American military. The participation of the American military in the Second World War and its experience with total war had given it a much more powerful role in shaping grand strategy, thereby increasing its influence on civilian policy. On the other hand, the lack of the Indian army's experience with total war had given it a much less powerful role in policy making.

Second, at the end of World War II, fearing the growth of Soviet Communism, the United States embarked on the development of nuclear weapons with an emphasis on their strategic use in conflicts abroad. America's involvement in the Korean War added to American military's already existing dominant role. In the post-Korea environment, policy makers gave the military a huge role in the building and management of nuclear weapons and the shaping of nuclear doctrines.²⁹ More specifically, the growth of military doctrines around nuclear deterrence and massive retaliation had an enormous impact on the American Air Force. What sharply differentiates the history of American civil-military relations from

²⁹ On the development of the American atomic bomb, see, Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (Simon and Schuster, 1995); Robert Norris, *Racing for the Bomb: General Leslie R Groves, the Manhattan Project's Indispensable Man* (Steerforth, 2003); F.G. Gosling, *The Manhattan Project: Making the Atomic Bomb* (DOE/MA 0001; Washington: History Division, Department of Energy, January 1999).

the history of Indian civil-military relations was the debate over the development and custody of nuclear weapons in America and the role of the American military in the formulation of nuclear strategy. In contrast to the American experience with nuclear weapons, when India gained independence in 1947, Indian policy makers were more concerned with developing an independent position in world affairs (commonly understood as non-alignment), alleviating the problems of partition and creating a democratic state. The creation of Pakistan and the emergence of a military dictatorship had made Indian policy makers even more fearful of developing a strong military. Therefore, instead of building a strong military, India's political leadership tried to exercise as much control as possible over the military to prevent it from becoming like the Pakistan army. Also, even though India embarked on a nuclear weapons program, nuclear weapons were not considered weapons of strategic use. Therefore, the very different historical experiences that India faced on achieving independence gave Indian civil-military relations a rather different character.

The program to develop the American nuclear bomb, commonly known as the Manhattan Project was initiated under the aegis of the American army led by General Leslie Groves. While top scientists like Robert Oppenheimer and David Lilienthal respected Groves' inputs in nuclear policy, they were wary of Groves' attempts at usurping total control over the custody of nuclear weapons. Therefore, even though the Atomic Energy Act of 1946 established civilian control over nuclear policy with Lilienthal serving as Chairman of the AEC, Groves continued to assert the military's importance in the management of nuclear weapons. Groves believed that the nuclear project was his very own brainchild. He also had little respect for the role of scientists like Lilienthal in the

development of the nuclear program.³⁰ The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) made their very first attempt to wrest control over the nuclear stockpile in 1946 when the military made arguments stating that the utility of an atomic weapon depended on their familiarity with its use.³¹ President Truman who was initially fearful of allowing the American military too much control over the development of nuclear weapons changed his position during the outbreak of the Korean War and went on to place nine nuclear capsules with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. During the Eisenhower administration, the nuclear stockpile was gradually transferred over to the military and civilian custody of nuclear weapons finally ended in 1967 when President Johnson directed the AEC to deliver all completed nuclear weapons to the military.³²

The decision to place America's nuclear weapons stockpile with the military was not an easy one. Prior to the decision, American civil-military relations were marked by bitter conflict over the custody of nuclear weapons. This issue is particularly significant in addressing the tension in civilian and military functions because American scientists repeatedly questioned whether civilian control could be maintained once nuclear weapons were transferred to the military. As America's rift with the Soviet Union grew, the demand for a robust nuclear arsenal also expanded. Yet, civilians maintained caution and even chose to exclude the armed forces from training to use these weapons. However, the Military Liaison Committee, part of the AEC kept reminding the civilians that it was imperative for the American military to be included in the management of the nuclear arsenal as fighting a possible nuclear war would require familiarity with the use of such weapons. In 1952, a

³⁰ For a history of the conflict in relations between the American military and the AEC during the initial stages of the development of nuclear weapons, see, Richard G. Hewlett and Oscar E. Anderson, *A History of the United States Atomic Energy Commission, The New World, 1939/46* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962); Robert S. Norris, *Racing for the Bomb: Leslie R. Groves, The Manhattan Project's Indispensable Man* (Vermont: Steerforth Press, 2002).

³¹ On this issues, see Peter Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); pp.95.

³² For an Indian perspective on the American military's role in the development of nuclear weapons see, Matin Zuberi, "Custody of Nuclear Weapons: The American Experience", *Aakrosh*, 9:30 (2006).

document called “Agreed Concepts Regarding Atomic Weapons” was approved by President Truman. This document outlined the custodial policy on the management of nuclear weapons and made the Department of Defense solely responsible for controlling the nuclear weapons stockpile to assure military readiness. While nuclear components were kept under civilian control, the non-nuclear parts were held by the military. Yet, once the Department of Defense was granted this exceptional responsibility, it became very hard for the civilians to retain physical control over the stockpile.

The development of nuclear doctrines such as flexible response and massive retaliation also heightened the role of the American military in the management of nuclear weapons. When President Eisenhower took over power, he thought seriously about the possible use of nuclear weapons in a prolonged conflict with the Soviet Union. Under the Eisenhower administration, there was a marked departure from Truman’s policies and from the mid-1950s, the Atomic Energy Commission became more of a producer of nuclear weapons losing its complete control over nuclear policy. Also, in 1953, complete nuclear weapons were allocated to field commanders overseas, a move sanctioned by Eisenhower who gradually transferred most of the nuclear stockpile to the military. By the end of 1956, almost all operational weapons had been transferred to the military. Finally in 1967, President Johnson issued an executive order that directed the AEC to transfer all completed nuclear weapons to the military.³³

What is specifically important in the development of nuclear policy in the American case is the active presence of the American military in the management of nuclear weapons. The decision to concede the custody of nuclear weapons to the military was the result of a long process marked by serious and acrimonious disagreements between America’s top

³³ Daniel Shuchman, “Nuclear Strategy and the Problem of Command and Control”, *Survival*, 29:4 (1987).

generals and civilians; a process that questioned the strict divide between civilian and military functions. However, even though the final decision to authorize a nuclear strike remained with the civilians, the American military had successfully taken control over the nuclear arsenal. Once civilians relinquished that control to the military, a major problem in American civil-military relations was how the political leadership would succeed in wresting back their control.

A reading of Indian civil-military relations illustrates quite the contrast in civilian policies on the development of nuclear weapons. As I demonstrate in Chapter 3, the development of the nuclear weapons program in India began under the aegis of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission. However, in stark contrast to the American experience, in the Indian case, New Delhi completely excluded the Indian military from decisions on nuclear policy for almost four decades! While this created tremendous disappointment within the military, with the exclusion of generals like Sundarji, there were very few military officers who had the courage to speak out openly against total civilian control over India's nuclear weapons program. However, what is rather illuminating from the American case is that Indian civil-military relations had to face a problem similar to what the American military faced, when strategic considerations from the late 1980s (Pakistan, and later China) made it imperative for India's political leadership to begin seriously thinking about the possible use of nuclear weapons. These issues have been discussed in chapters 4 and 5. I want to underline the fact that even though civilians in India have refrained from outlining a clear nuclear policy and repeatedly stress the non-strategic use of nuclear weapons, the 1998 nuclear tests followed by the Kargil war in 1999 intensified the debate in political and military circles over the possible strategic use of nuclear weapons in a war with Pakistan. At the end of the war, there was a move towards constructing military doctrines that reflected

the possible use of nuclear weapons. More importantly, these developments also raised questions pertaining to the command and control of nuclear weapons. All these events have had the net effect of producing a shift in the existing division of labor between civilians and the military by allowing the military greater influence in shaping nuclear policy. The development of nuclear-related doctrines and the debate over command and control of India's nuclear arsenal are explained in great detail in chapter 6.

(iii). Differences in Political Structures in India and the United States

A third and final theme which is developed in Chapter 2, is how the nature of India's political structure established a very strong central government exercising complete control over all other institutions in society. A comparison with the US political system illustrates how sharply different political systems produce markedly different styles in civil-military relations.

A careful reading of Huntington's theory of civil-military relations in the United States indicates three noticeable differences between American and Indian political structures of decision making. First, the American political system allowed a prominent political role for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. This was made possible because of a number of developments. The experience of the Cold War years necessitated a fusion in civilian and military functions transforming the JCS into an indispensable military and policy institution. The immense powers enjoyed by the JCS were also made possible, in part, by the recommendations of the Rockefeller Committee which in 1953, pointed to the drawbacks in creating a distinction between civilian and military affairs.³⁴ And, finally, the political nature of the JCS, at different times, emerged more as a product of its relationship with specific

³⁴ Huntington, *opcit*, p.395.

statesmen. For example, the Truman administration encouraged greater participation from the armed forces in political decisions. During the Truman administration, the views of the JCS coincided with a strong military ethic and were frequently expressed.

In contrast to the American case, a closer examination of Indian civil-military relations will reveal the total or complete absence of a political role for the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), the equivalent of the JCS, in its relationship with civilians. Although a few instances in the history of Indian civil-military relations may reflect the presence of a common rapport between the COSC and India's political leaders, for most part, civil-military interaction was limited by professional boundaries. So, for instance, even extremely blatant generals like Maneckshaw or Sundarji were allowed to express themselves only within the professional role ascribed to them. Hence, with hardly any exceptions, India's political leadership rarely allowed the COSC too much control. The complete dominance of civilian policy over military institutions in India was also the product of a very different strategic environment; one that did little to challenge the distinction between civilian and military functions. Thus, compared to the American case, in India, a "fusion" of civilian and military functions was never felt necessary as the country neither engaged in a total war nor dealt with an adversary along the lines of the Soviet Union.

Second, framers of the US constitution established the separation of powers as a basic governing principle which also had an important bearing on the nature of American civil-military relations. In the period prior to the start of the Cold War, the separation of powers principle considerably limited the development of military professionalism in America.³⁵ However, strategic changes in America's international environment magnified the importance of military policy during the Cold war. This introduced a substantive change in

³⁵ Ibid, p.412.

Congress-military relations by providing the JCS greater and direct military access to the Congress. There was also a major move from the Congress to directly engage with the military on defining military policy. So, for instance, at the end of World War II, Congress insisted that military views should be directly presented to congressional committees. Moreover, the National Security Act of 1949 allowed a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff after informing the Secretary of Defense to present to Congress “on his own initiative any recommendation relating to the Department of Defense that he may deem proper.”³⁶ Such direct access exercised by the JCS in its relations with the American Congress is a feature that is completely missing in the Indian political system to the extent that it has produced a very different dynamic in Indian civil-military relations. While the increasingly energetic role of the JCS during the Cold War introduced greater friction or disagreements in Congressional-military relations, in the Indian case, a non-political role of the COSC, made the Indian military not only more professional but also subservient to complete civilian control, reducing all its leverage in political decision making. This situation however has begun to change in the period after the Kargil war with India’s political leadership trying to set up various institutional mechanisms to allow for a more integrated military in decision making. These changes are discussed at length in the following chapter.

The third and final palpable difference in the nature of American and Indian political systems is the organization of higher defense in both countries. For the United States, the end of the Second World War unequivocally placed the JCS in a very strong position in civil-military relations. Not only had the JCS discharged its military functions very effectively during World War II but it had also engaged in serious policy framing. At the end of the war, the absence of a civilian institution to replace the policy functions of the JCS made it an

³⁶ Ibid, p.416.

extremely powerful institution, also allowing it direct access to the Congress and President. The JCS worked within the Department of Defense and its recommendations were directly submitted to the President and the Secretary of Defense.

The organization of higher defense in India is fundamentally different. Unlike America, in India, the Chief of Staff Committee (COSC) does not share a direct relationship with the Prime Minister and the cabinet. This is because the COSC in India has to first answer to the Ministry of Defense, a separate institution which takes the recommendations of the COSC to the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs. Therefore, most, if not all proposals initiated on the military side has to be sanctioned by the Ministry of Defense before they can be scrutinized by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs. This peculiarity in higher defense organization in India gives the Ministry of Defense excessive control over the Indian armed forces while its American counterpart is free of such external control. Moreover, the American military's ability to submit its proposals directly to the Congress or the President, gives it much greater influence in policy making. Conversely, the Defense Ministry in India works more like a bureaucracy with its own rules and procedures that the military must submit to. This has impacted civil-military relations in significant ways because in India, one notices greater friction in the relationship between India's armed forces and the Ministry of Defense. In American civil-military relations, there is less friction between the JCS and the Department of Defense as both organizations are dependent on each other. Therefore, given the marked variations in the nature of India and American political systems, I develop this theme in greater detail in the next chapter and also address some of the institutional changes made by India's political leadership in giving the Indian military more power in policy making.

V. Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 examines the evolution of India's higher defense organization from 1947 to the post-1998 nuclear period. A number of important institutional changes in Indian civil-military relations are noted and the implications of these institutional changes for the relationship between civilians and the military are analyzed at great length.

Chapter 3 addresses Indian civil-military relations before and after the advent of nuclear technology. The chapter provides the reader with a glimpse into ambivalent political approaches towards the development of nuclear weapons in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and consequent military responses to the development of nuclear strategy in the 1980s. The chapter also tries to compare the Indian experience with nuclear weapons to the American experience with nuclear weapons.

Chapter 4 emphasizes significant changes in Indian civil-military relations once India becomes a declared nuclear weapons state in 1998. More importantly, the possibility for a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan does not diminish which leads to serious political and military thinking on the development of strategic doctrines.

Chapter 5 addresses various cases relating to the military's role in unconventional operations and tries to explain some of the major problems in using the military as an instrument of state policy. The importance of military professionalism is strongly emphasized in this chapter.

Chapter 6 concludes by providing an overview of the primary arguments made in the dissertation which help explain the blurring in the division of labor between civilians and the military in India. The conclusion also discusses some of the policy implications of the presence of nuclear weapons in the relationship between civilians and the military.

CHAPTER 2

The Evolution of India's Higher Defense Organization

I. Introduction

The experience of Indian civil-military relations in the pre-independence period shaped, to a large extent, the structure of civil-military relations in the post-independence period. More specifically, the country's exposure to external and internal conflicts and the development of nuclear weapons impacted the structure of Indian civil-military relations in unique ways. India's political leadership for the longest time kept the Indian armed forces out of decision making despite the existence of a distinct civil-military apparatus. However, India's exposure to external wars and the development of nuclear policy necessitated the creation of agencies which could facilitate better civil-military communication. In the next few sections, I provide the reader with the following sequence: major issues in Indian civil-military relations in the pre-independence period, the structure of civil-military relations in the post-independence period and various stages in the evolution of India's higher defense organization. In discussing these three critical aspects in the experience of Indian civil-military relations, I draw comparisons with the institutional structure of American civil-military relations wherever deemed necessary.

II. Issues in Civil-Military Relations Pre-Independence

The revolt of 1857, a spate of military reforms in the early 1900s, the role of the Indian military during the Second World War, and the experience of partition which led to the creation of Pakistan were some of the key events that shaped the structure of Indian

civil-military relations in the pre-independence period. There exists a large body of literature on the history of the Indian armed forces in the pre-independence period.³⁷ And much of this literature outlines specific functions performed by the Indian military under British tutelage. But the most defining feature in Indian civil-military relations in the pre-independence period was the absence of a sophisticated civil-military structure as this structure was still in a stage of infancy.

The revolt of 1857, popularly known as the Sepoy Mutiny or the First War of Independence,³⁸ is a landmark event in India's colonial history. After the 1857 revolt, the East India Company lost much of its control and India came directly under the Crown along with her Army.³⁹ The commissioned ranks of the Indian army came under the exclusive preserve of the British and a special category called the Viceroy's Commissioned Officers (VCOs) was created from within the Indian army's rank and file to serve as the primary communication channel between the British officer and the sepoy (jawan).⁴⁰ In 1895, the Army was thoroughly reorganized and four regional commands were created, each under a Lieutenant General: Punjab-West of the Yamuna river, commanding the Frontier Force as well; a truncated Bengal command; Madras (with Burma); and Bombay with Sind, Quetta and an extension in Aden.⁴¹

A number of proposals and recommendations in the early 1900s suggested the setting up of a preliminary institutional framework for civil-military relations. In 1902-03,

³⁷ For a general overview of the Indian army's history in the pre-independence and post-independence period, visit: <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/ARMY/History/1765/Overview.html>.

³⁸ The sepoy mutiny was a major expression of Indian discontent with British rule. Sepoys who were Indians trained as British soldiers heard rumors that cartridges for their Enfield rifles was greased with lard and beef fat. Since the cow is sacred to Hindus and the pig abhorred by Muslims, there was mutiny, i.e. revolution in the ranks of soldiers. Although this mutiny was successfully crushed by the British, it is considered to be India's first revolutionary war against British rule.

³⁹ Much of this information is available at the Indian army's official website: <http://indianarmy.nic.in/arhist1.htm#Command.%20Staff%20and%20Organization>

⁴⁰ On this issue, see, Apurba Kundu, *Militarism in India: The Army and Civil Society in Consensus* (London: Taurus, 1998), pp.10-13.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Lord Kitchener attempted to streamline military functions. This was followed by a wave of reforms.⁴² For example, in 1904, a radical step was taken to reorganize the Indian armed forces through the recommendations of the Esher Committee. The Esher Committee's recommendations emerged within the context of the Second Boer War of 1899-1902 which had exposed major weaknesses in the British army. The committee's recommendations, therefore, tried to rectify those drawbacks by suggesting specific changes. From the perspective of civil-military relations, the most vital recommendation of the committee was the creation of a General Staff which would "consist of two departments attentive to military problems."⁴³ The reforms of the early 1900s expanded the Army Headquarters, created a General Staff Branch and a Director-General Ordnance Branch in addition to the existing Adjutant General and Quartermaster General Branches. Two territorial commands, the Northern and Southern Commands were also created and the Field Army was subdivided into a Field Force and Internal Security Troops totalling 152,000 (nine Divisions and eight Cavalry brigades) and 82,000 respectively.⁴⁴

The significance of military reforms which set up the initial framework for civil-military relations becomes apparent by studying the impact of British rule and the Indian nationalist movement. The late 1800 and the early part of the 1900s were a critical time in India's history, characterized by India's movement for independence from British rule. However, nationalist demands to open up commissioned ranks to Indians were frequently resisted by the British until the First World War. The experience of the First World War added momentum to the Indian nationalist struggle by organizing a separate movement for

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "More British Army Reform: Radical Recommendations of the Esher Committee", *The New York Times*, February 19, 1904.

⁴⁴ <http://indianarmy.nic.in/arhist1.htm#Command,%20Staff%20and%20Organization>

change. This change was a result of participation by nearly a million Indian troops in the First World War. Immediately after the First World War, a Military Council was formed, with the Secretary of Army Department and the Financial Adviser as members. Once again, four regional Commands were set up with the Field Force getting an additional element - that of covering troops for the North-West Frontier. The Command system was designed to serve both empire building and external imperial policing (Egypt, Burma, China, Mesopotamia).⁴⁵ It is necessary to keep in mind the while Britain advocated institutional reforms, such changes were only meant to support England's expansionist policy abroad. The reforms were by no means intended to increase the status and powers of the Indian military. In particular, these reforms were primarily a method to institutionalize a framework that could facilitate a smooth relationship between the British government and the Indian armed forces during times of war.

Even though the British tried to quell frequent waves of nationalism which were penetrating all levels of Indian society by the 1900s, there came a time when the Indian nationalist movement could no longer be ignored. Leaders spearheading the nationalist movement were displeased at the way in which the Indian armed forces were being used by the British in conflicts abroad. To appease the Indians, the British launched a new phase in reforms popularly known as "indianization" and "modernization" of the officer corps. These changes were initiated by the British as a way of conceding self government to India.⁴⁶ The period of indianization and modernization lasted approximately from 1918-1939 during which there was an effort to end British monopoly over the army by opening the officer cadre of the Indian army to educated Indians. Also, the move toward modernization was

⁴⁵ <http://indianarmy.nic.in/arhist1.htm#Command,%20Staff%20and%20Organization>

⁴⁶ Peter Hees, "India's Divided Loyalties?", *History Today*, 45:7, July 1995.

intended to maintain the British army as an effective war fighting force.⁴⁷ The impetus from these movements led to the creation of the modern Indian commissioned officer corps and the Royal Military College (RMC) in Sandhurst which was also opened up to Indians. Further, in 1932, the Indian Military Academy (IMA); a carbon copy of the RMC was established. However, the officer cadre of the Indian army continued to remain under British control until 1946.

The Second World War produced further changes in Indian civil-military relations. While Indian forces under the British army did not engage in the experience directly, this was a time when the British Indian army boasted the largest all volunteer force in the country with over two million soldiers.⁴⁸ After the fall of France and the withdrawal of the British from Dunkirk, the British employed Indian troops overseas and more specifically, in the Middle East. The requirements of World War II introduced the need for a major expansion in the Indian armed forces.⁴⁹ The British were successful in recruiting a large number of educated Indians into the officer corps as Emergency Commissioned Officers (ECOs). But while such measures were being taken to expand the Indian forces, the country was facing a simultaneous challenge in the emergence of a separate organization known as the Indian National Army (I.N.A.).

The I.N.A. was primarily a national liberation army but was different from other national liberation armies across the world in that it was mostly controlled, at all times, by

⁴⁷ For details on the process of indianization and modernization, see Partha Sarathi Gupta and Anirudh Deshpande, *The British Raj and Its Indian Armed Forces* (New Delhi: Oxford, 2002). Also read, Pradeep Barua, *Gentlemen of the Raj: The Indian Army Officer Corps* (Greenwood Publishers, 2003). For the various issues that emerged in opening up the British army to Indian officers, read W. Murray Hogben, An Imperial Dilemma: The Reluctant Indianization of the Indian Political Service, *Modern Asian Studies*, 15:4 (1981); Kaushik Roy, *The Military System in India: 1900-1939*, *The Journal of Military History*, 64:2 (2000).

⁴⁸ See, "A Historical Overview of the Army", <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/ARMY/history/1765/Overview.html>

⁴⁹ For details on this subject, see Stephen Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), p.140.

Indians themselves. The I.N.A. which had been part of the British army subsequently separated itself from its parent organization and under the leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose, sought to galvanize the nationalist movement for independence and also supported the victory of major Axis powers during the war. Therefore, in terms of purpose and ideology, it posed a huge threat to the fabric of the Indian military's professional core which was still in the process of development. But the most remarkable aspect of the Indian army's experience during the Second World War was that most officers maintained their loyalty to their British commanders and performed their duties with distinction. Stephen Cohen makes this vital contribution of the Indian military clear when he explains how officers in the Indian military believed that maintaining their loyalties with the British army would only help serve Indian political interests in the long run.⁵⁰ For instance, as early as 1929, Motilal Nehru urged the officers to remain loyal to the British until the day of India's independence. The nationalist leaders believed that it was more likely that the British would grant them independence in the near future while Japan's imperial interests were, at best, suspect. Therefore, the Indian military's experience serving the British army during the Second World War and simultaneously withstanding challenges posed by defected officers in the I.N.A only helped strengthen its professional character. However, the experience of the I.N.A had also made Indian political leaders wary of the Indian military which would condition their approach to the Indian military in the post-independence period.

Perhaps, the most prominent role of the Indian military emerged during partition which led to the birth of a separate state called Pakistan.⁵¹ Partition was a time when

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.154.

⁵¹ For British literature on partition, see Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London: Hale, 1982); Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit* (Delhi: Oxford, 1998); C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright, eds. *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives 1935-1947* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970). For an Indian perspective see, V.P. Menon, *Transfer of Power in India* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1957); P.N. Chopra eds., *Towards Freedom: Documents on the Movement for Independence in India, 1937* (Delhi: Oxford, 1986).

approximately 15 million people were displaced from their homes. While a majority of Hindus in Pakistan moved to the neighboring state of Punjab in India, a large number of Muslims traveled to Pakistan. The creation of two separate states driven by a Hindu-Muslim divide was an extremely turbulent period and was characterized by large scale looting, arson and rape of innocent Hindus and Muslims. As the situation became precarious, the Indian military was invited to assist the government in the maintenance of law and order in the region. This role performed by the Indian military during partition is commonly understood as aid to civil power. When civil administration had completely broken down and there was no suitable alternative in place, the Indian army became the only instrument that could restore law and order. The military's experience in supporting the Indian government during such turbulent times gave it a remarkable character as it had made a strong contribution to nation building during a time of national instability.⁵² Ever since then while the decision to involve the army in aid to civil operations has been considered a civilian prerogative, the Indian army is frequently asked to provide assistance to India's political leadership during times of war and natural calamities.⁵³ These major key events in the pre-independence period establish the context for examining new patterns in India's institutional framework of civil-military relations that were gradually emerging in the post-independence period. With the end of British rule and India's newly declared independence in 1947, the organization of civil-military relations became one of the biggest concerns for India's political leadership.

⁵² S.K.Sinha, "Indian Army Before and After Independence and Its Role in Nation Building", *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, CXXVI: 526 (1996).

⁵³ S.K.Sinha, *Of Matters Military*, (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1980), p.151.

III. The General Structure of Higher Defense Organization Post-Independence

Soon after India gained independence in 1947, Lord Ismay, Secretary to the Defense Committee of the British cabinet and Chief of Staff to Winston Churchill, was asked for his suggestions on setting up a structure for India's higher defense organization. In making his recommendations, Ismay took into consideration the Indian army's role in the maintenance of law and order during partition.⁵⁴ Accordingly, he suggested changes that would keep power in the hands of the government while simultaneously giving consideration to the opinions of the three services (army, navy and air force). In order to achieve this end, Ismay recommended the setting up of a series of committees.

The committees were of two types: political and military. The political committee included ministers and bureaucrats and the military committee consisted exclusively of service officers. These two major committees were further broken down into various sub-committees. Within the political committee, the *Defense Committee of the Cabinet* was established at the highest level. It was presided over by the Prime Minister along with other ministers including the Defense Minister. The three service chiefs, the Defense Secretary and the Financial Advisor were expected to attend all the meetings of the Defense Committee of the Cabinet. The *Defense Minister's Committee* worked below the Defense Committee of the Cabinet and was presided over by the defense minister and the three service chiefs, the Defense Secretary and the Financial Adviser.⁵⁵ There were also a series of smaller, more specialized sub-committees such as the *Principal Officers Committee* and the *Principal Supply*

⁵⁴ S.K.Sinha, "Higher Defense Organization in India", *USI Papers*, 7 (1980).

⁵⁵ The Defense Minister's Committee has played a limited role in decision making since 1974. This committee was superseded by the Committee for Defense Planning which was established in 1978 under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary. Other members include the Secretary to the Prime Minister, the secretaries of Defense, Defense Production, Finance and External Affairs as well as the three service chiefs. For more on this issue, see, Jerold F. Elkin and Andrew Ritzel, "The Debate on Restructuring India's Higher Defense Organization", *Asian Survey*, 24:10 (1984), p.1071.

Officers Committee and their members were allowed to submit recommendations directly to the Defense Minister's Committee.

The military committee was led by the *Chief of Staffs Committee (COSC)* and consisted of the three Service Chiefs. Irrespective of rank, the Service Chief who served the longest on this committee was designated the Chairman of the committee. Functioning under the Chief of Staffs Committee were a number of smaller sub-committees such as the *Joint Planning Committee*, the *Joint Training Committee* and the *Inter-Service Equipment Policy Committee*. The Chief of Staffs Committee (COSC) comprising the three service chiefs participated in decision making on military affairs but only in an advisory capacity. Although the COSC was considered the highest authority on military matters, its recommendations were subject to approval or rejection by a small number of officials in the Defense Ministry. Therefore, the COSC exercised very little power. The *Defense Minister* worked as the principal link between the cabinet and the three service chiefs and was responsible for endorsing or modifying proposals submitted by the military. The Defense Minister also has a secretariat led by the Defense Secretary. The secretariat was responsible for implementing military policies on finance, supply and administration. Besides the Ministry of Defense, the *Joint Intelligence Committee* served as a channel for communication between the defense and foreign affairs bureaus.

The establishment of various agencies introduced after India's independence were meant to institutionalize a formal system of civilian control over the military. In doing so, the creation of separate political and military committees and the importance given to the Ministry of Defense reflect the formation of a close alliance between India's political

leadership and the Ministry of Defense.⁵⁶ What is unique to the Indian case is that in instituting a structure of civilian control, India's political leadership downgraded the Indian military's position both administratively and socially by executing deliberate changes.⁵⁷ For example, as early as 1947, the position of the Commander in Chief (who was the main advisor to civilians on military affairs in the pre-independence period) was abolished.⁵⁸ Replacing the Commander in Chief's role, the President of India was made the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces.⁵⁹ The abolition of the post of Commander in Chief was felt necessary by India's political leadership to prevent the Indian armed forces from directly challenging civilian authority. And hence, the presence of the Ministry of Defense as an intermediate agency between civilians and the military minimized any express threats to civilian authority. The role of the Defense Ministry was also expanded to control information and make critical decisions. Matters relating to defense production and other such military functions were placed under the control of the Ministry of Defense. Moreover, India's political leadership strengthened the civil service by setting up a hierarchy of ranks where civil servants or bureaucrats were ranked higher than senior military officers.⁶⁰ For instance, while previously a secretary to the government of India ranked lower than a Lieutenant General, after 1947, the former was ranked with a full general.⁶¹

The nature of institutional changes in the immediate post-independence period had the net effect of keeping the Indian military far removed from policy making. When compared to the United States, the Indian case stands out as exceptional more so because civil-military relations were instituted in a way that gave the Ministry of Defense colossal

⁵⁶ For more on the process of institutionalization of civilian control in India, see Stephen Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990).

⁵⁷ Lloyd Rudolph and Susanne Rudolph, "Generals and Politicians in India", *Pacific Affairs*, 37:1 (1964), p.9.

⁵⁸ Cohen, *opcit*, p.171.

⁵⁹ Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, *opcit*.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.172.

powers over the military. The exceptional powers accorded to the Ministry of Defense are explained in detail in the last section of this chapter. For now, I want to highlight the uniqueness of the India's higher defense organization when compared to the general structure of American civil-military relations.

The organizational structure of higher defense established in the post-independence period is markedly different from the type that exists in the United States. First, the President of the United States is the Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and his principal assistant is the Secretary of Defense (the American Defense Secretary is equivalent to the Indian Minister of Defense).⁶² In India, while the President is considered to be the Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, he exercises very little power in reality. Instead of the President, the Prime Minister and his cabinet reign supreme over the Ministry of Defense. And the President works as a ceremonial head. Second, in the United States, there is an agency called the National Security Council to advise the American President on domestic, foreign and military policies relating to national security. This council consists of the President, Vice President, Secretary of State, The Secretary of Defense, and the Director of Emergency Planning. Other secretaries can be appointed to the Council as desired by the President, the NSC or the Secretary of Defense.⁶³ Such an external agency to advise the President on military and foreign matters was absent in Indian civil-military relations for several decades. Only after India's overt nuclearization in 1998, New Delhi tried to set up a National Security Council along the lines of its American counterpart. After 1998, the Indian NSC was given powers to advise the government on political, economic and strategic matters. Until then, from 1947-1998, the functions of the Indian NSC were performed by the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. In 1998, to copy the American model, the

⁶² S.K.Sinha, *opcit*, p. 27

⁶³ *Ibid*, p.28.

Indian Chiefs of Staff were made members of the NSC. Third, while the American Department of Defense consists of the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Joint Chiefs of Staff, in India, the Ministry of Defense operates as a separate agency between civilians and the military. The Chief of Staff Committee (COSC) is not part of the Ministry of Defense. And so, the Indian Ministry of Defense primarily acts as a conduit between the Prime Minister and the Chief of Staffs Committee (COSC).

The general organization of higher defense established in the post-independence period began to undergo changes after India's exposure to external wars and the development of nuclear weapons. While these changes made the structure of Indian civil-military relations more sophisticated, they also influenced the nature of civilian and military functions. This is because while the changes were incremental and created several new agencies, it was not clear what exact functions these agencies were meant to perform. This created a great deal of confusion in political and military functions until the 1990s. An examination of the stages in the evolution of Indian defense policy is meant to illustrate how the lack of adequate institutional arrangements between civilians and the military hampered the military's involvement in policy making until strategic and nuclear interests made civilians set up additional agencies to provide a better system of communicating with the military. These changes are described below.

IV. Stages in the Evolution of India's Higher Defense Organization

There are three distinct phases in the evolution of India's higher defense organization since the country's independence from British rule. The first stage which lasted from 1947-1962 was marked by the obvious absence of a defense policy and confusion over the delineation of military functions. In the post independence period, Indian policy makers

were pre-occupied with the enormous task of economic reconstruction and democratic consolidation which made them less attentive to military affairs. Ironically, while India had set up an institutionalized system of higher defense in the post-independence period, it is not clear whether the various agencies performed any functions at all. This is because the Indian political leadership's marked disinterest in military affairs in the immediate aftermath of independence, led to an isolated military, a dysfunctional defense policy and no clear idea on how to structure civil-military relations. But the situation changed somewhat when India had to fight its first war against China in 1962. The aftermath of the India-China war (popularly known as the Sino-Indian conflict) led to important changes in India's higher defense organization only to make the Indian military more adept at fighting wars. In addition, India got involved in short-term crises situations with Pakistan in the 1980s.

The period from 1962 to 1998 documents India's exposure to various conflicts and crises which caused changes in civilian perceptions of the military as well as creating the necessity to develop institutions that would enable greater military access to decision makers. Finally, the culmination of changes in higher defense became apparent after India's overt nuclearization in 1998. The period after India declared itself a nuclear weapons state and developed a nuclear doctrine, was followed by another phase of re-organization in higher defense. This was a time when Indian policy makers seriously addressed shortcomings in India's higher defense organization. Because the development of nuclear doctrines required close civil-military collaboration, the development of new agencies that could allow the military and the civilians to work together on nuclear policy became extremely critical.

(i) Absence of a Clear Defense Policy (1947-1962)

Commenting on the structure of civil-military relations in the early post-independence period, a noted Indian military official, General V.R. Raghavan, recalls: “soon after independence, in the 1950s, the armed forces were seen as instruments of colonial power. Prime Minister Nehru and his cabinet took many decisions which in retrospect were designed to maintain a hierarchical order of the military. In the 1950s, during General Thimayya’s time, the sentiment was that the cabinet will decide and the military will implement. The 1948 campaign clearly showed that the military had been an important instrument in state building. But in the lead up to the 1962 Indo-China war, military assessments were disregarded. There seemed to be a mismatch between Nehru’s ideas of Panchsheel and the reality of what the Chinese were doing.”⁶⁴

Raghavan’s observation points to one of the biggest problems in the organization of civil-military relations in the post-independence period. During this time New Delhi’s assessment of the Indian military’s role and functions were largely conditioned by the effects of British rule in India. A major consequence of British rule was the depletion of India’s economic resources. As a result, during the first ten years after India’s independence, civilian leadership in India, under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, made serious efforts to industrialize the Indian economy. Improving the standard of living and embarking on a mixed-economy model were of highest priority for India’s political leadership. Consequently, as most resources had to be utilized to raise millions above the poverty line, defense matters received little attention. Defense expenditure was subject to very strict civilian controls and between 1947 and 1962, defense expenditure averaged no more than 2 percent of the Gross

⁶⁴ Author’s interview with Director of the Delhi Policy Group, General V.R. Raghavan, New Delhi, April 27, 2006.

National Product.⁶⁵ Also, to ascertain that the military did not become too powerful so as to pose a threat to the civilians, Nehru ensured that defense expenditure would not cut into the resources available for investment.⁶⁶ Nehru's fears of the rise of a powerful military were driven by the experience of Pakistan which had recently fallen prey to authoritarian leadership.

Despite Nehru's inherent fears of the military, the country's defense organization had to be given some structure. This became even more important because in the aftermath of partition and independence, the entire structure of defense organization was in complete disarray. Faced with the question of reorganizing the Indian military apparatus, Nehru consulted an outside expert on the state of defense matters in India. This expert was a famous British physicist by the name of P.M.S Blackett. Nehru delegated to Blackett the responsibility of preparing a report outlining measures necessary for India's self sufficiency in defense production over a period of seven years.⁶⁷ The Blackett Report suggested several proposals for a new Indian defense policy. More specifically, it outlined proposals for initial reductions in defense expenditure to encourage growth in other sectors, a strategy for minimizing the effect of defense imports on foreign exchange reserves, recommendations to improve the missions of the Indian Navy and proposals to control the armed forces both politically and financially.⁶⁸ Even though Blackett's recommendations were accepted by Defense Secretary, H.M.Patel, there was no real effort on part of the Indian government to implement these recommendations. The absence of a pro-active civilian approach to military

⁶⁵ P.Chaudhuri, *The Indian Economy: Poverty and Development* (Crosby Lockwood Staples: London, 1978), p.52.

⁶⁶ Chris Smith, *India's Ad Hoc Arsenal: Direction or Drift in Defense Policy?*, (Sipri: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.48.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ For details on the Blackett Report, read, Chris Smith, n-66, pp.48-55.

policy yet again perceptible in the political leadership's inherent distrust of the military and Nehru's personal conflict regarding the Indian military's role.

Nehru's policy of maintaining a strong army while withholding every inch of power from it led to a very fragmented system of civil-military relations. In fact, given the hesitance on part of Nehru and other political leaders toward developing a solid foundation for civil-military relations, there was a noticeable absence of defense policy. Chris Smith, who spent a great deal of time analyzing this relationship argues that even though India had a structure of higher defense organization post-independence, it is not clear whether the country had any clear defense policy at all. In Smith's words, "defense policy appeared to be in drift rather than evolution."⁶⁹ Other Indian defense experts such as Raju Thomas make a different argument. Instead of blaming India's political leadership for its neglect of military affairs, Thomas argues that the absence of a clear defense policy can be explained by the absence of external threats soon after 1948 and the absence of influential defense ministers.⁷⁰ Thomas's account is incomplete as there is no strong reason to believe that the absence of external threats impacted civilian approaches to military affairs in any significant way. Instead, a careful reading of India's historical context provides greater evidence in support of the claim that the absence of a well develop structure of civil-military relations, was the direct result of total civilian control and civilian fear of the armed forces. Prime Minister Nehru's personal memoirs provide the best support for such claims as Nehru describes, in his memoirs, the major dilemma he faced in giving the Indian military too much power in policy making. Nehru's memoirs also indicate that while he would have preferred military assistance in the development of the country (based on the Indian army's history of aiding civilian governance), he was afraid that doing so would make the military too powerful and pose a

⁶⁹ Ibid, p.63.

⁷⁰ Raju Thomas, "Armed Services and Indian Defense Budget", *Asian Survey*, 20:3 (1980), p.280.

serious challenge to civilian control.⁷¹ And so, Nehru's personal conflict played a tremendous role in the neglect of military affairs in the post-independence period. Maroof Raza, a well known Indian defense journalist notes that the only rational way out of Nehru's dilemma was "his obsession with keeping the armed forces out of the public eye to maintain the authenticity of the civilian leadership."⁷²

Nehru's philosophy had the inverse effect of alienating India's armed forces to the extent that the military became unhappy with the lack of a clear defense policy. A good example of the military's displeasure with Nehru's policies was in their efforts to develop strategy despite Nehru's policy of restricting defense expenditure. However, in spite of the political leadership's neglect of defense policy, the Indian military submitted to political demands and refrained from usurping power. This is because the experience of British rule had taught the Indian military to be a highly professional force.⁷³ And so, in the initial years after India's independence, even though the Indian armed forces felt neglected, their reticence resulted in maximum civilian control in all areas of society, and a fairly non-existent role for the Indian military in defense policy. I would like to add here that the absence of a visible defense policy until after the 1962 war does not imply that the Indian armed forces were weak in any way. In fact up until General Maneckshaw, all Indian Chiefs were commissioned in Sandhurst and had battlefield experience.⁷⁴ Moreover, the Indian military's role in aiding civilians had given it an extremely professional character; one that the armed forces were proud to uphold. But the neglect of the Indian military and the absence of a defense policy seemed unavoidable due to lack of political will. This, however, began to

⁷¹ For a glimpse into Nehru's own personal and political beliefs, see, Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995)

⁷² Author's interview with India's leading defense journalist, Maroof Raza, New Delhi, June 23, 2006.

⁷³ For an excellent analysis of why the Indian military has never really been coup prone, see, Apurba Kundu, *Militarism in India : The Army and Civil Society in Consensus* (New Delhi: Tauris, 1998).

⁷⁴ Author's interview with former Chief of the Indian Army and Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, General Krishna Rao, Hyderabad, March 1, 2006.

change from the late 1950s because of two reasons. First, there emerged a very powerful Defense Minister in the form of Krishna Menon and second, India was faced with its first war against China in 1962.

(ii) Changes in Institutional Structures in the Context of External Wars (1962-1998)

The first big change in India's higher defense organization came in the aftermath of the 1962 war which required serious thinking about a suitable defense policy. To assess the changes, a discussion of events leading up to the war is essential. From 1957 onwards, civil-military relations underwent a transformation with the emergence of a powerful Defense Minister. When Krishna Menon took over as Defense Minister, he shifted the political leadership's attention back to the military with a view to improve the status of the Indian armed forces.⁷⁵ In order to achieve this end, Menon used his personal rapport with Nehru to bring a renewed interest to military affairs. His close relationship with Nehru also helped Menon to exercise greater influence on policy making.⁷⁶ One would think that given the civilians' neglect of military affairs, the military would have been elated at the emergence of an individual like Menon who was paying greater time and attention to military matters. Instead, the military did not share Menon's views on defense policy and national security and were suspicious of the Nehru-Menon rapport. On matters of defense policy, the military fundamentally disagreed with Menon who frequently claimed that the biggest threat to India was Pakistan and not China, and that New Delhi should encourage cordial relations with China.

The beginning of the 1962 war sharply highlighted the difference in civil-military views on defense policy. The 1962 war with China was the first conventional war that tested

⁷⁵ Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, *opcit*, p.14.

⁷⁶ Raju Thomas, *opcit*, n-70, p.280.

the Indian army's war fighting capacity.⁷⁷ As the Indian military had been completely isolated from policy making and exercised very little power in military affairs, civilians used this war to exert tight control over the armed forces. While Defense Minister Krishna Menon had argued all along for a professional military, his own actions spoke otherwise. Instead of allowing the Indian armed forces their fair share of autonomy in tactical operations, Menon took complete control over both strategic and tactical matters.

The military's lack of faith in the Defense Minister as well as the political leadership before and during the war is an important, albeit understudied topic in Indian civil-military relations. The significance of tensions in civilian and military approaches to defense policy during the 1962 war relate directly to issues of military professionalism and military expertise which lie at the heart of the civil-military divide. In an interview with General Krishna Rao, India's former Chief of Army Staff, the General suggests that during the 1962 war, the Indian military assigned a very high value to their own expertise and levels of professionalism and were perfectly capable of executing the war with China without undue civilian interference.⁷⁸ Rao explained the ways in which the Indian military tried to warn New Delhi about an impending danger from China. These events are briefly re-visited below.

General Thimayya who was field commander at the time was aware of a possible war with China. So Thimayya wrote a letter to the Indian government underscoring the presence of Chinese forces along India's Himalayan border. The letter clearly mentioned Chinese attempts at building a road to Aksai Chin. Thimayya warned civilians that the Indian army had neither the troops nor the reinforcements to deal with the Chinese along the Tibetan

⁷⁷ For a thorough account of the 1962 war, refer to D.K.Palit, *War in the High Himalaya: The Indian Army in Crisis* (London: C.Hurst and Company, 1988).

⁷⁸ Author's interview with former Chief of the Indian Army and Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, General K.V. Krishna Rao, Hyderabad, March 1, 2006.

border.⁷⁹ When Krishna Menon was alerted to Thimayya's letter, instead of placing faith in the general's expertise, Menon immediately replaced Thimayya and in his position, made Lieutenant General Kaul the new field commander. The biggest problem, however, was Kaul's inexperience as a field commander. Kaul believed that the role assigned to him was much beyond his capabilities.⁸⁰ As a result, Menon's lack of faith in General Thimayya's expertise proved extremely costly for the Indian government. The Chinese forces dealt a severe blow to the Indian army and General Kaul's inexperience resulted in the defeat of Indian forces. This is a good example that serves to demonstrate the downside of bad civilian control. Political leaders often perceive themselves as right even though they may have very little knowledge of military affairs. And this over-confidence in their abilities often leads to a neglect of sound military expertise. The biggest lesson that emerges from the 1962 war is that had Krishna Menon and Nehru paid careful attention to General Thimayya's advice, the war may have been averted or the Indian forces may have, at the very least, been better prepared to face their enemy. During the war and later, a number of senior Indian military officers resigned to express their displeasure with civilian decisions. Hence the 1962 war stands out as a great example of a conflict in civilian and military functions and highlights the significance of military expertise in shaping policy.

Issues of military expertise that emerged during the war influenced the institutional structure of civil-military relations in the post-war period because changes in civil-military relations that followed the end of the 1962 war reflected a shift in civilian approaches to military affairs. Not only did New Delhi set up various committees to enhance civil-military dialogue but India's political leadership began to give the military a free hand in tactical operations. First, as an immediate recognition of political failure, Defense Minister Krishna

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Menon was made to resign. Second, when India was faced with the scenario of a second war (this time with Pakistan), the political leadership led by Prime Minister Shastri gave the military complete autonomy in tactical decisions.⁸¹

The 1965 war is significant in the history of Indian civil-military relations as it displays a sharp contrast to the 1962 experience. In the absence of undue interference by inexperienced civilians, the armed forces led by General J.N. Chaudhri formulated military strategy, executed battlefield plans and were successful in defeating the enemy. Important decisions such as when to cross the ceasefire line were taken jointly, by both the political leadership and the military. Third, the end of the 1965 war witnessed increased participation of military officers in decision making facilitated by civilians who set up a number of different committees to elicit military advice on matters of strategy. Y.B. Chavan, the Defense Minister during the time, started a series of meetings known as the Defense Minister's Morning Meetings. This meeting was attended by the Minister of State in the Defense Ministry, the Cabinet Secretary, the three service Chiefs, the Defense Secretary, the Secretary of Defense Production, Scientific Advisers and all Joint Secretaries.⁸² Besides an institutionalization of regular meetings between the three Service Chiefs and the Defense Minister, New Delhi also embarked on a program of military modernization that aimed to build a forty five squadron air-force, an army with ten divisions trained and equipped for higher altitude warfare, and an effort to modernize the navy.⁸³ Therefore, the 1962 war

⁸¹ Kotera Bhimaya, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: Civil-Military Relations and Decision Making", *Asian Survey*, 34:7 (1994), p.653.

⁸² S.K.Sinha, p.8.

⁸³ For more on these changes, see Raju Thomas, *Indian Defense Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

significantly shaped Indian civil-military relations at the institutional level as New Delhi had begun to display a greater respect for military affairs.⁸⁴

During the 1971 India-Pakistan war which led to the creation of Bangladesh, further institutional changes were introduced in India's institutional structure of civil-military relations. This time, under the leadership of Indira Gandhi a new agency known as the Political Affairs Committee of the Cabinet was established.⁸⁵ Moreover, to receive frequent military feedback during the war, the Policy Requirements Committee was created. This organization worked in providing a continuous link between the Ministry of Defense and the three services. This committee was created and presided over by the Defense Secretary and attended by all three Service Chiefs, the Scientific Advisor to the government and other concerned officials. A point worth underscoring here is that despite the existence of all these committees, major strategic and tactical decisions were taken by a cabal of individuals, the most prominent of whom were Indira Gandhi, Y. B. Chavan and J.N. Chaudhuri. Thus the Prime Minister, the Defense Minister and the Chief of the Army Staff consulted each other regularly and ran most of the show. This organizational structure of Indian civil-military relations remained intact for the decades that followed witnessing changes in political leadership and India's short but uneventful crises situations with Pakistan. A need to introduce further dramatic changes in India's higher defense organization was felt almost unnecessary until India became a nuclear state in 1998. The presence of nuclear weapons made it imperative to re-haul India's existing civil-military structure.

⁸⁴ For an account of the 1962 war with China, see, Naville Maxwell, *India-China War* (Bombay: Jaico, 1970). On the effects of the 1962 war on the existing balance between civilians and the military, read General S.K. Sinha's *Of Matters Military*, (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1987), p.95.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

(iii) Creation of New Agencies in the Context of Weaponization (1999-2006)

The third and final stage in the evolution of India's higher defense organization can be traced to India's declaration of nuclear capability in 1998 and the experience of a limited conflict with Pakistan in 1999. While India's political leadership embarked on the nuclear weapons program way back in the 1950s primarily at the behest of a group of scientists, the 1998 nuclear tests added further momentum to questions about the management of nuclear weapons. A few months after the 1998 nuclear tests, Manvendra Singh stated that the Planning Directorate had prepared a paper titled "Options for India-Formation of a Strategic Nuclear Command" which had been approved by the three services. The three services had expressed the need for setting up a tri-service organization called the National Strategic Nuclear Command (NSNC), and a National Command Authority.⁸⁶ In the first week of January 1999, Defense Minister George Fernandes promised to merge the Defense Ministry with the Service Headquarters.⁸⁷ Moreover, various recommendations were made with regard to the creation of a Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) who could exercise primary control over the management of nuclear weapons.

The debate over the creation of the post of CDS heightened when India faced Pakistan in the Kargil war of 1999. This conflict was different from previous conflicts as it was fought in the shadow of nuclear weapons. Both countries had tested nuclear devices in 1998 reducing any ambiguity in international circles about their nuclear status. While Indian forces successfully pushed back the Pakistani army during the Kargil war, the experience of a war in the shadow of nuclear weapons compelled India's political establishment to address possible gaps in defense planning. In the wake of the crisis, a report known as the Kargil

⁸⁶ Manvendra Singh, "Who Should Control the Nuclear Button? Armed Forces Have a Proposal", *Indian Express*, September 1, 1998.

⁸⁷ Gurmeet Kanwal, *Nuclear Defense: Shaping the Arsenal*, (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2001), p.159.

Review Committee Report was published which made several recommendations for improving defense policy and intelligence.⁸⁸ While many of the recommendations have not taken full effect, a task force on higher defense management was established under the aegis of Arun Singh. This task force recommended the creation of the post of a *Chief of Defense (CDS)* held by the three services on a two year rotational basis. The creation of the CDS was meant to integrate the three services in the political decision making process, giving the military a larger voice in the management of overall security.⁸⁹

While the proposal to create a CDS is still pending approval in the legislature, to ensure a higher degree of coordination between the Services and facilitate inter-service and intra-service prioritization, the Indian government has set up the *Integrated Defense Staff*, headed by the *Chief of Integrated Staff to Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC)*, to support the Chiefs of Staff Committee and its Chairman in the performance of their roles and functions.⁹⁰ The CISC supervises the Integrated Defense Staff and chairs all multi-Service bodies. The *Defense Crisis Management Group (DCMG)* is responsible for the coordination of long-range plans, five year plans and annual budgetary proposals of the three Services in consultation and co-ordination with the Integrated Services Headquarters. The CISC offers advice to the Government on various subjects. These subjects include: organization of force levels and capabilities, formulation of joint doctrines in consultation with Service Headquarters, conceptualization of programs on joint planning and military education, evolving responses to non-conventional and unconventional threats to national security and proposing measures for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the

⁸⁸ *From Surprise to Reckoning: Kargil Review Committee Report* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000).

⁸⁹ Gurmeet Kanwal, *Nuclear Defense: Shaping the Arsenal* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2001), p.160.

⁹⁰ For further details on the functions and role of these organizations, look at the Official Website of the Ministry of Defense, <http://mod.nic.in/aboutus/body.htm#as5>

planning process through intra and inter-Service prioritization.⁹¹ New Delhi also set up the *Defense Intelligence Agency* (DIA) under DG DIA to co-ordinate and synergize the intelligence Wings of the Services. The DIA is responsible for providing integrated intelligence inputs to the higher echelons of Defense Management.⁹² In addition to agencies such as the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), the National Security Council (NSC) works parallel to the CCS and is supported by the Strategic Policy Group (SGP) and the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB).⁹³

While proposals such as the creation of the CDS are yet to be implemented, the ability to develop various agencies in the post-1998 period, reflect in part, civilian desires to include the military in the decisions regarding the management of nuclear weapons. Some experts also argue that the presence of nuclear weapons have made conventional war less likely, thereby increasing civil-military interdependence on how to use nuclear weapons.⁹⁴ To facilitate interdependence, a sophisticated structure of civil-military relations is still in the process of evolution. But a discussion of various stages in the evolution of India's higher defense organization, gives the reader a glimpse into major issues that impacted the different phases in India's development of higher defense organization. This leads me to a final analysis of those issues in Indian civil-military relations that give it a rather exclusive character when compared to the American experience of civil-military relations. These issues are firmly rooted in the nature of India's political system, an understanding of which is essential to understand problems that emerge when there is a conflict between civilian and military functions.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Gurmeet Kanwal, "Command and Control of Nuclear Weapons in India", *Strategic Analysis*, XXIII: 10 (2000).

⁹⁴ Author's Interview with Indian journalist on defense affairs, Maroof Raza, New Delhi, June 23, 2006.

V. Distinguishing Features in the Indian Structure of Civil-Military Relations

What can one learn by examining India's institutional structure of civil-military relations? First and foremost, for a complete outsider, a reading of India's higher defense organization provides a scant understanding of civil-military relations. This is because India's institutional structure of higher defense organization remained quite weak for almost four decades and the Indian military's position in the country's higher defense organization was abysmal. As one commentator on Indian defense issues recalls, while civilians developed a variety of different committees to improve defense planning and direction, in reality, they lacked a fundamental interest in military affairs. Moreover, it is not clear what these committees were actually supposed to do. The armed forces also received little or no guidance from the government in formulating a national security doctrine or publishing a Defense White Paper which was a direct result of the lack of "an institutionalized interface between civilians and the military."⁹⁵ While the 1998 nuclear tests and the 1999 Kargil War produced a more serious outlook within India's political leadership towards military matters, many of the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee Report of 2001 are yet to be implemented because of a "lackadaisical approach on part of the government."⁹⁶

Now whether it was Nehru's fear of the armed forces or a general lack of political will displayed by India's political leadership, civilian disinterest in military policy was quite the permanent feature; and one which continues to dodge the institutional structure of Indian civil-military relations even today. But in all fairness, civilian attitudes have changed, to an extent, given strategic considerations of the 1990s. One could well argue that the presence of nuclear weapons has acted as the sole external drive in improving India's

⁹⁵ Auhor's interview with Indian commentator on defense affairs, Major General Ashok Mehta, New Delhi, April 21, 2006.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

institutional structure of civil-military relations. In other words, had there been no nuclear weapons, very little would have changed in India's existing institutional arrangement of civil-military relations established post-independence.

Second, the most prominent institution in framing Indian defense policy is not the military itself but the Ministry of Defense. When thinking about who is in charge of defense policy, most Indian scholars seem to disagree about the extent to which India's political leadership created defense policy. Instead, a vast majority of commentators on Indian security point to the growing importance of the Ministry of Defense in shaping military affairs. These claims are in fact quite true as a reading of Indian history will demonstrate how the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Finance and the role of specific Defense Ministers and Defense Secretaries have been critical in shaping the structure of civil-military relations in India.⁹⁷

But this still begs the question. How did the Ministry of Defense attain such a powerful position in Indian policy making? Shouldn't the Indian military have been able to exercise greater voice in military matters being the country's chief defense expert? These are questions that any thoughtful reader of civil-military relations would inevitable pose. Indian military officials provide different interpretations about the powers exercised by the Ministry of Defense. For instance, when asked about how the Ministry of Defense and other agencies may have come to exercise greater control over the military, General Satish Nambiar, former Deputy Chief of the Indian Army responds by saying that, "the entire idea of civilian control of the military came to fore after independence. This was a time when the concept of dealings between the civilians and the military began to take root. But there was an

⁹⁷ For specific details on the how the Ministry of Defense regulates military policy and interacts with the Ministry of Finance, read, Raju Thomas, *The Defense of India : A Budgetary Perspective of Strategy and Politics* (New Delhi: Macmillan, 1978) pp.88-94.

inadequate understanding of the military. We had to learn as we went along in building the nation. Because of the lack of understanding of military affairs on part of the civilians, and the distrust of the military, the civilian bureaucracy placed itself between the political leadership and the military. And so, the civilian bureaucracy became the interpreter.”⁹⁸

Similarly another commentator on Indian security affairs suggests that “between 1950 and 1962, the institution of civilian control in India became more bureaucratic vis-à-vis political.”

⁹⁹ During this time, the Defense Ministry emerged as a very powerful institution under the sole leadership of Krishna Menon. The period up until the 1962 war shows how Menon revitalized the Ministry of Defense by giving supreme importance to military affairs. General Nambiar’s statement implies that political neglect of military affairs made the Ministry of Defense much too powerful. But this interpretation does not explain why even though civilians are paying greater attention to military affairs today, the Ministry of Defense continues to remain as powerful as before. Similarly, General Mehta’s implication about Krishna Menon’s personal leadership does not explain why, even after Menon’s departure from the political scene decades ago, there has been little change in the powers exercised by the Ministry of Defense. The Ministry of Defense continues to dominate the relationship between the political elites and the military even today.

The exceptional role played by the Ministry of Defense in Indian defense policy can be explained by the nature of India’s political system itself. In India, as the Service Headquarters (the army, navy and air force) are not part of the Defense Ministry, it allows the Ministry of Defense to function as a “second tier” between the political elite and the military. This is where General Nambiar’s interpretation is true. However, had the political

⁹⁸ Author’s interview with former Deputy Chief of the Indian Army and former Head of Mission , UN Forces in Yugoslavia, Lt General Satish Nambiar, New Delhi, April 25, 2006.

⁹⁹ Author’s interview with Indian commentator on defense affairs, Major General Ashok Mehta, New Delhi, April 21, 2006.

structure not been set up in a way that created an intermediate agency between civilians and the military, the Ministry of Defense may have been prevented from attaining such enormous powers. Because the Ministry of Defense works as a separate agency and does not include the three services, it shares two important relationships; one with the political leadership and the other with the COAS. And such a system allows the Ministry of Defense to directly influence civilians. In America, the situation is dramatically different as the recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are submitted directly to the President and the Secretary of Defense without its proposals being scrutinized by any third party. In essence, the separation of the Chiefs of Staff Committee from the Ministry of Defense in India has created a hierarchical system in civil-military relations, leading to the vast powers exercised by the Defense Ministry in shaping military affairs. For example, most proposals from the military side have to be sanctioned by the Ministry of Defense before they can be received by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs. As a result, the Defense Ministry becomes a bureaucracy of its own with its own rules and procedures that the military must submit to. Also, the Defense Secretary virtually acts as the Chief of Defense Staff even though he is much junior in rank.

Given the enormous role accorded to the Ministry of Defense due to the existence of a structural hierarchy in civil-military relations, another issue that begs discussion is how the Ministry of Defense's position in military policy has influenced the general relationship between civilians and the military in India? Instead of facilitating adequate communication between India's political leadership and the military, the exclusive powers enjoyed by the Indian Ministry of Defense have impeded a smooth relationship between India's political leadership and its military. The type of bureaucratic control exercised by this agency has generated negative military perceptions of civilian control in three ways. First, over the years,

the military has become frequently disillusioned with the functioning of political leaders. They believe that lack of political knowledge on the civilian side has made the bureaucrats too powerful. Second, controls within the Ministry of Defense are rather tight and top ranked bureaucrats want to keep the military waiting. This has been achieved through various techniques but the most common one is a refusal or delay in sanctioning military projects which require immediate attention. This makes the military even more frustrated with civilians because they are aware that it may take up to 10 long years for a project to get sanctioned by the Defense Ministry! A third reason for the existence of negative perceptions about the civilians on the military side is the absolute control exercised by the Ministry of Finance in the allocation of funds to the three services within the military for tasks such as defense procurement. Defense expenditure reduced dramatically in the 1990s, prompting a former Defense Secretary to note that if this situation were to continue, the individual services would be left with very little money for defense modernization which in turn would affect its levels of defense preparedness.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the Ministry of Finance has often allotted more or less money to one of the three services generating inter-service rivalry between them.¹⁰¹ While the military remains unhappy about the effects of inter-service rivalry, the civilians in collaboration with the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Finance have used inter-service rivalry as yet another way to keep the military out of policy decisions.

Differences in American and Indian institutional arrangements of higher defense are important in addressing questions that routinely emerge in discussions regarding tensions in civil-military functions. India's former Chief of Army Staff, General Shankar Roy Chowdhury, in an interview, revealed the unusual character of India's political system when

¹⁰⁰ For more on this issue, see A.K.Ghosh, *India's Defense Budget and Expenditure Management in a Wider Context* (New Delhi: Lancer, 1996), pp. 8-9.

¹⁰¹ For an analysis of the Ministry of Finance's role in defense spending, see, Jasjit Singh, *India's Defense Spending: Assessing Future Needs* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2000), p.54.

compared to that of the United States. Roy Chowdhury suggests that the major difference in American and Indian political systems emerges from the distinction in presidential and parliamentary systems. In his words, “in America, the US military can directly interact with the Senate and Committees of Congress. In India, however, the military has no direct contact with the government and the closest they come to interacting is with the Standing Committee on Defense.”¹⁰² Also, as the President of the United States has a direct relationship with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the JCS has greater capacity to influence political decisions. In contrast, as the Indian COSC does not share a direct relationship with the Prime Minister and cabinet, it is harder for the COSC to influence political decisions. Moreover, a fairly integrated relationship between the military and civilians in America increases the possibility of frequent conflict in civilian and military functions. In contrast, a clear separation of powers between civilian and military agencies in India reduces the likelihood of conflict between military and civilian functions. Hence the dramatically dissimilar structures of higher defense organization in both countries create very diverse issues in addressing the relationship between civilians and the military.

Finally, India’s parliamentary system of governance has also impacted the nature of defense policy and the relationship between civilians and the military in significant ways. Following the British tradition, the parliament is considered to be the cornerstone of the Indian political system. The Indian parliament, like the US Congress in America, is the prime legislative branch of the political system. The Indian Parliament consists of two Houses known as the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the Rajya Sabha.(Council of States). The biggest difference between a parliamentary system and a presidential system (like the United States) can be found in the manner in which power is distributed between legislative and

¹⁰² Author’s interview with former Chief of the Indian Army, General Shankar Roy-Chowdhury, Calcutta, June 1, 2006.

executive branches of a state. For instance, in the Indian parliamentary system, there is a fusion of executive and legislative powers which not only makes the ruling coalition the main authority in policy making but also the one that is responsible for the passage of a majority of laws, including those on defense policy.¹⁰³ A fusion of legislative and executive powers was considered vital in the post-Independence period to be responsive to the needs of the Union. Consequently, under the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution, the Indian Parliament was given legislative jurisdiction over all matters pertaining to defense.

The establishment of such a system may have seemed appropriate in the aftermath of partition. Yet, in hindsight, a fusion of legislative and executive powers resulted in too much power in the hands of India's governing leadership. Again, the American political system marks a sharp contrast to the Indian system as it is characterized by a separation of powers between legislative and executive functions. Moreover, a system of checks and balances has prevented any one of the agencies (Congress, Executive and Judiciary) from becoming too powerful. As the Indian political structure lacks a "checks and balances" system similar to the type found in the United States, the Indian legislature and the executive exercise much greater control over all policy issues including defense matters. While this may be considered a pre-requisite for civilian control, it often leads to situations where the political leadership is free to do as they please without any limitations on their authority. In doing so, the political leadership can turn authoritarian with little regard for other institutions in society. Examples of the Indian military's displeasure with civilian leadership, during various periods, can therefore be explained, in part, by India's distinct political structure. Moreover, the fusion in legislative and executive functions and a lack of safeguards against usurpation of power by any one agency opens up the possibility for greater confusion in the

¹⁰³ See Raju Thomas, *opcit.*

delineation of civilian and military functions. On the other hand, given the clear separation of powers between legislative and executive branches in America, there is a lower risk of confusion in assigning different agencies their designated roles. Therefore, while the American political system has facilitated an open dialogue between civilian and military institutions, such dialogue is absent in India because of the way in which power is distributed between various agencies. Therefore, the nature of India's political system is an important factor to keep in mind while addressing possible moments of friction between civilian and military functions.

The next chapter examines contradictions in civilian approaches to military affairs that emerged specifically when the time came to develop a nuclear policy. While India's political leadership gave the Indian military autonomy in tactical issues as witnessed during the 1971 war, they were hesitant in introducing the military to nuclear policy. The chapter provides the reader with reasons explaining why this may have been the case.

Chart 1.1: The Structure of Higher Defense Organization in India

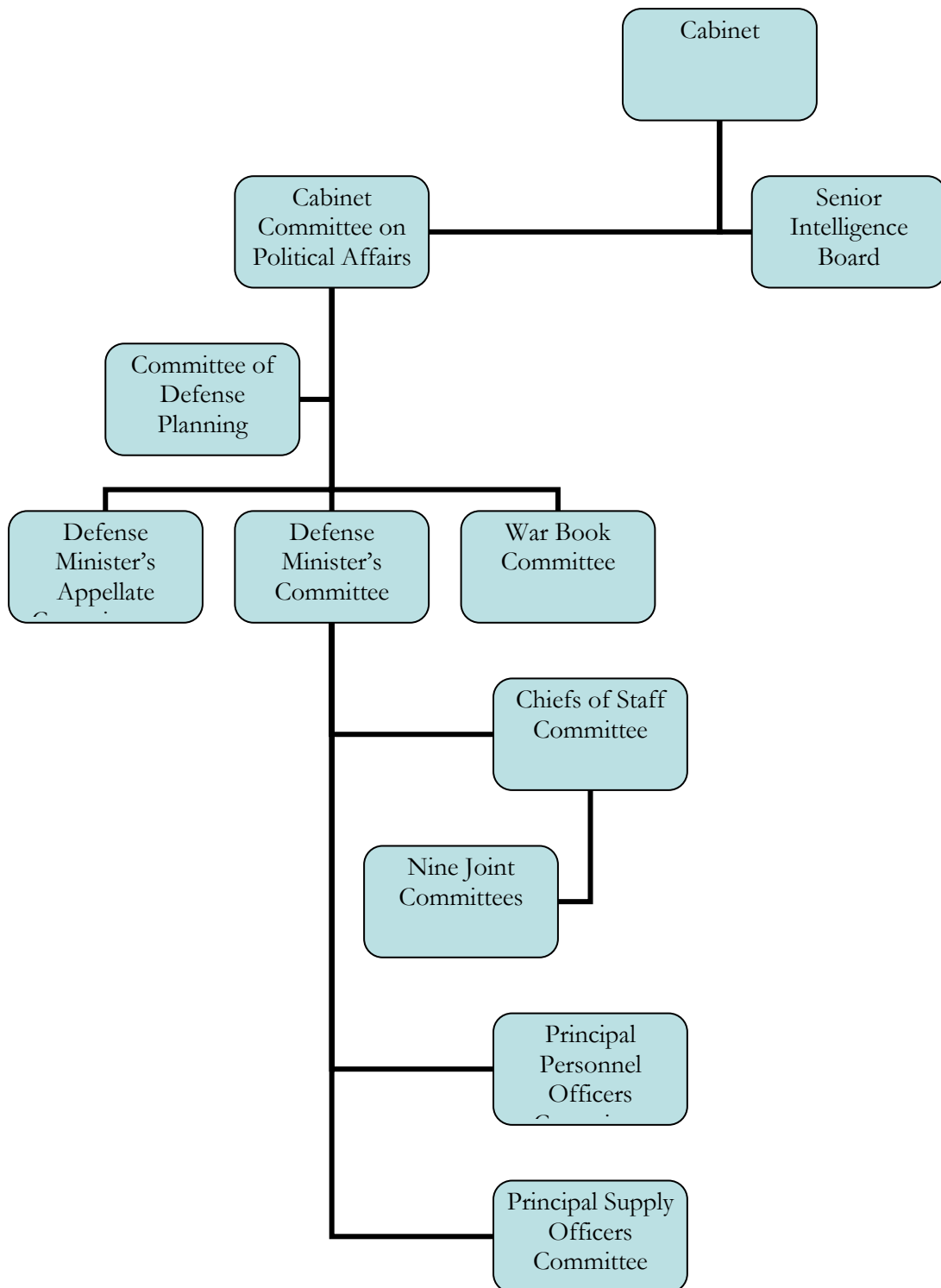
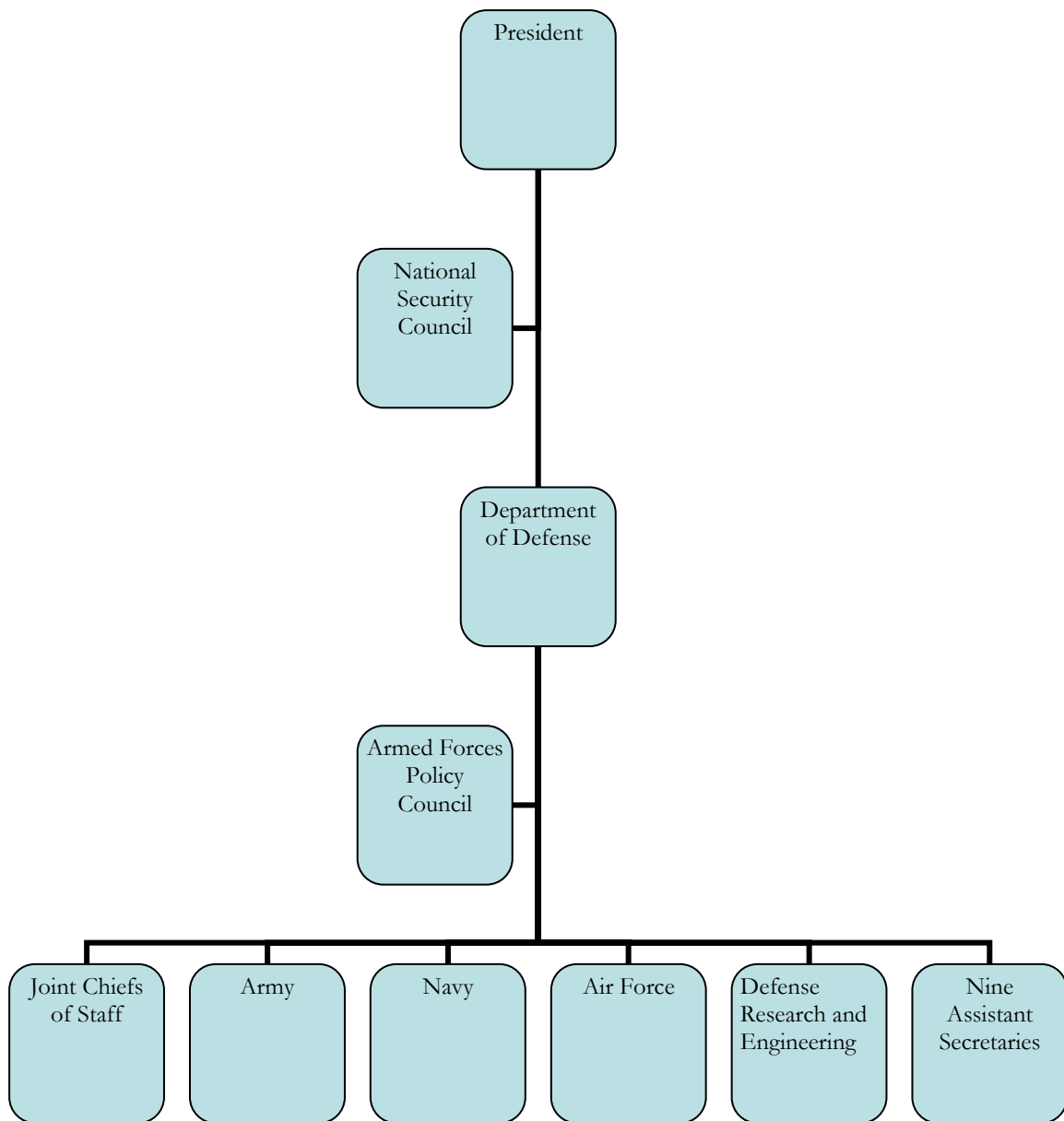


Chart 1.2: The Structure of Higher Defense Organization in America



CHAPTER 3

Nuclear Weapons Development in a Strategic Vacuum

I. Introduction

Civil-military relations in both India and the United States were greatly affected by the development of nuclear weapons. The presence of nuclear weapons raised new and different questions for the division of labor between civilians and the military. When compared to the United States, however, the effect of nuclear weapons on Indian civil-military relations was very different. In the United States, the development of nuclear weapons arose out of the conduct of the Second World War and the American military was deeply engaged in the development of nuclear strategy. The American military's role in the development of nuclear strategy posed a serious challenge for civilians who had to find a way to take back some of their control over the American nuclear weapons stockpile. In India, nuclear weapons were originally a civilian project and were developed in isolation from military use. India conducted its first nuclear tests in 1974. Yet, the nuclear tests had little meaning for Indian grand strategy. However, strategic considerations from the 1980s introduced serious military thinking on the use of nuclear weapons in a future war with Pakistan. And the biggest challenge for India's political leadership was to find a way to give the military some control over India's nuclear weapons policy.

II. The American Military's Role in the Development of Nuclear Strategy

America first began developing nuclear weapons during the Second World War after receiving orders from President Roosevelt. The need for nuclear weapons was conditioned

by American fears of engaging in a potential race with Germany to develop such a weapon.¹⁰⁴ After a slow start under the direction of the National Bureau of Standards, at the urging of British scientists and American administrators, the program was placed under the Office of Scientific Research and Development. In 1942, the program was officially transferred to the US army and became known as the Manhattan Project. Under the direction of General Leslie Groves, over thirty different sites were constructed for research, production, and testing of components related to bomb making. In 1946, the Atomic Energy Act made the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) the chief custodian of nuclear weapons and the US army's responsibilities were transferred to the AEC under the leadership of David Lilienthal.

Civilian efforts to designate the AEC as the chief custodian of nuclear weapons did not preclude the American military from exerting its influence on the American nuclear weapons program. Senior military officials like General Leslie Groves were reluctant to share the nuclear project with David Lilienthal. Groves considered the nuclear project to be his own creation and frequently referred to the scientists as "well-intentioned novices who had wandered into waters far above their heads."¹⁰⁵ The Joint Chiefs of Staff made their very first attempt to take back control over the nuclear stockpile in December of 1946. President Truman quickly rejected the military's demands as he was aware that the armed forces "would never give up without a fight", making it all the more necessary to maintain strict civilian control over the military.¹⁰⁶ When General Groves was replaced by General K.

Nichols as Commander of the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project (the military agency

¹⁰⁴ For details on the Manhattan Project, visit the U.S Department of Energy's website of Office of History and Heritage Resources at: http://www.mbe.doe.gov/me70/manhattan/cold_war.htm

¹⁰⁵ See Richard G. Hewlett and Oscar E. Anderson, Jr., *A History of the United States Atomic Energy Commission, The New World, 1939-1946* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1962), pp. 644, 645.

¹⁰⁶ Truman had made the American military's intentions of wresting control over nuclear weapons explicitly clear to David Lilienthal. For more on this subject, see, David Lilienthal, *The Atomic Energy Years, 1945-1950* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p.118.

responsible for nuclear weapons), Nichols argued that nuclear weapons would work only if they remained in control of the military as the military was the only organization familiar with the use of such weapons.¹⁰⁷

But very little changed in Truman's attitude towards the military until America got involved in the Korean War. By this time, David Lilienthal, a staunch supporter of civilian control over nuclear weapons, had retired. When General Curtis LeMay took over as Commander of the Strategic Air Command, he too seemed bitter about the lack of military control over the existing nuclear weapons stockpile.¹⁰⁸ Gauging LeMay's dissatisfaction with civilian policy, Truman made a few concessions to the American military by transferring nine nuclear capsules to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General LeMay, however, never returned those nuclear capsules to the AEC. Further compromises were made by Harry Truman in 1952, when a document known as "Agreed Concepts Regarding Atomic Weapons" outlined a new custodial policy and made the Department of Defense responsible for the nuclear weapons stockpile outside the United States. This initiative was taken by America's civilian leadership to ensure military readiness but in doing so, Truman gave the American military total control over the custody of nuclear weapons.¹⁰⁹ As the American nuclear weapons stockpile expanded, nuclear components remained under civilian control while the American military was made responsible for non-nuclear parts.

¹⁰⁷ See Peter Feaver, *Guarding the Guardians: Civilian Control of Nuclear Weapons in the United States* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp.112-113.

¹⁰⁸ For details on General LeMay's leadership over the Strategic Air Command and his influence on nuclear warfare, see Charles Wilfre Bosanko, *Architecture of Armageddon: A History of Curtis LeMay's Influence on Strategic Air Command and Nuclear Warfare* (Michigan: University of Michigan Ann Arbor Press, 2005); Theodore Jamison, "General Curtis LeMay, the Strategic Air Command and the Korean War", *American Aviation Historical Society Journal*, 41:3 (1996), pp.190-199; Richard Kohn and Joseph Harahan, eds., *Strategic Air Warfare: An Interview with General Curtis LeMay*, Leon W. Johnson, David A. Burchinal and Jack J. Catton (Washington D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1988).

¹⁰⁹ See Janne E. Nolan, *Guarding the Arsenals: The Politics of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), p. 51.

When Eisenhower replaced Harry Truman as President of the United States, political attitudes towards the possession and development of nuclear weapons took on a different form. More specifically, Eisenhower began making decisions on pre-delegation in the mid-1950s and approved the use of nuclear weapons for the air defense of U.S. territory.¹¹⁰ He supported policies that would allow for a quick reaction to other forms of nuclear attacks when there was not enough time to communicate with higher authorities.¹¹¹ The military agencies authorized by Eisenhower for executing such policies included the Commander-in-Chief, Strategic Air Command (CINSCAC), Commander-in-Chief, European Command (CINCEUR), and Commander-in-Chief Atlantic Command (CINCLANT).¹¹² President Eisenhower's instructions for pre-delegation are now declassified documents and open to the public. For instance, in 1998, an official Presidential authorization dated May 22, 1957 was released to the public. This document included explicit instructions authorizing the Defense Department and various military commanders on the "expenditure of nuclear weapons in emergency situations."¹¹³

Eisenhower's approach to nuclear weapons demonstrates the high military value he and his political advisors attached to nuclear weapons in a possible nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union. With the aid of Defense Secretary, John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower launched a new military doctrine commonly known as Massive Retaliation. According to this policy, nuclear weapons were considered a means for deterring war and would be used as

¹¹⁰ William Burr, "First Declassification of Eisenhower's Instructions to Commanders Pre-delegating Nuclear Weapons Use, 1959-1960", *A National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book*, May 18, 2001, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB45/printindex.html>

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ "Instructions for the Expenditure of Nuclear Weapons in Accordance with Presidential Authorization Dated May 22, 1957" Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Records of the White House Office of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs, NSC Series, Subject Sub-series, Box 1, File Title, *Atomic Weapons, Correspondence and Background for Presidential Approval and Instructions for Use of Nuclear Weapons*. This document is available at: <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB45/printindex.html>

first recourse in the event that deterrence failed. As Richard Betts notes, Eisenhower had a preference for nuclear war over conventional defeat.¹¹⁴ For Eisenhower, nuclear weapons were essential to maintain American military commitments abroad. Because the Strategic Air Command was the only agency with a nuclear offensive capability, the military was accorded a significant role in executing a policy of nuclear deterrence. By 1953, complete nuclear weapons were allocated to American field commanders overseas. In 1954, mutually acceptable agreements were set up between the Department of Defense and the Atomic Energy Commission to ensure the readiness and maintenance of nuclear weapons. By 1959, approximately 80 per cent of the American nuclear weapons stockpile was handed over to the military.

On January 20, 1961, the Kennedy administration replaced Eisenhower's policy of massive retaliation by introducing a new military strategy called Flexible Response. As Francis Gavin notes, this new strategy was meant "to improve deterrence by providing the President with flexible nuclear options and increased conventional capabilities to deal with any number of military crises in Europe."¹¹⁵ But during the Kennedy administration, a debate emerged over crafting an appropriate tactical nuclear weapons policy. While America's political leadership wanted to maintain a centralized form of control through the doctrine of flexible response, in order to use the weapons effectively, they had to be pre-delegated to various military commanders. This posed a huge dilemma for American policy makers as they wanted to give the military sufficient autonomy in tactical operations without jeopardizing overall civilian control. McNamara expressed this dilemma quite pointedly

¹¹⁴ Richard K. Betts, "A Nuclear Golden Age? The Balance before Parity", *International Security*, 11:3 (1986-1987), p.25.

¹¹⁵ Francis J. Gavin, "The Myth of Flexible Response: American Strategy in Europe During the 1960s", LBJ School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas at Austin, (2001) Article can be accessed at: <http://www.utexas.edu/lbj/faculty/gavin/articles/mofr.pdf>, p.1.

when he asked how “one could preserve command and control in a tactical atomic environment?”¹¹⁶

Even though American political leaders transferred a majority of nuclear weapons to the military, the success of the American military in its fight for control over nuclear weapons did not come easy. American civil-military relations had been fraught with tensions from Truman’s presidency and continued well beyond Eisenhower’s tenure. American political leaders had to constantly worry about whether the military was becoming much too powerful through its control of nuclear weapons. Tensions in the civil-military divide had surfaced as early as 1945 when civilians along with the military had first begun thinking about the strategic use of nuclear weapons. For instance, President Truman was first introduced to the subject of nuclear weapons during a meeting with Henry Stimson and General Leslie Groves way back in 1945. While Truman had been well aware of the destructive potential of nuclear weapons, in his memoirs, he describes how he believed in “the use of the bomb as a military weapon” and that these weapons could be used to “end the war.”¹¹⁷ Nuclear weapons were different from other weapons of war as these weapons were capable of unleashing massive destruction. Even though American political leaders were reluctant to give the military too much control over the management of nuclear weapons, they agreed with the military on one thing: a possible strategic use of nuclear weapons in a war with Soviet Union. In accordance with this philosophy, American policy makers from Truman to Eisenhower and even Kennedy believed that while the question of

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p.14.

¹¹⁷ For more on Truman’s approach to nuclear weapons, see John Lewis Gaddis, *Cold War Statesman Confront the Bomb: Nuclear Diplomacy since 1945* (London: Oxford University Press), p.16.

nuclear use should be left to the President, the military should be ready to use nuclear weapons, if and when the President so ordered.¹¹⁸

The nature of nuclear weapons made it imperative for civilians to recognize the American military's expertise in using these weapons as the introduction of nuclear doctrines like flexible response and massive retaliation had significantly increased the American military's role in nuclear strategy. Commenting on the role of nuclear weapons and the importance of the American military in using these weapons, Bernard Brodie wrote that the "whole purpose of nuclear armament must be different from the traditional purpose of forces in being."¹¹⁹ Brodie claimed that until the advent of nuclear weapons, the chief purpose of the American military had been to win wars. However, once America became a nuclear weapons state, the role of the military changed. The military was now required not to win wars, but to avert them. In such a situation, "most questions about the actual use of nuclear weapons in war, whether strategic or tactical had to be left to the military who had to shoulder the responsibility for picking specific targets, and who were also expected to give guidance about the kinds and numbers of nuclear weapons required."¹²⁰ Indeed, when it came to nuclear policy, the American military were the experts.

III. Indian Political Thought and Nuclear Strategy in the 1970s

The American experience with nuclear technology indicates the value of nuclear weapons for strategic use. The Indian case, however, provides a different picture. In India, despite the existence of external security threats in the 1970s, India's political leadership found no compelling reason to develop nuclear weapons for strategic use. In fact, any kind

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.32.

¹¹⁹ Bernard Brodie, *The Absolute Weapon* (New York: Harcourt, Grace, 1946), p.76.

¹²⁰ Bernard Brodie, "The Development of Nuclear Strategy", *International Security*, 2:3 (1978), p.65.

of serious thinking about the strategic use of nuclear weapons was missing on the political side.

In the aftermath of the 1962 and 1965 wars, China and Pakistan were considered immediate threats to Indian security. The possibility for future conventional wars with both countries could not be ignored by civilians. In 1964, China conducted its first nuclear tests. China also established a two-pronged relationship with Pakistan and the United States. While China pursued a military relationship with Pakistan, it simultaneously engaged in diplomatic camaraderie with the United States. With regard to Pakistan, China accepted Islamabad's request for arms and assisted the country in the development of its domestic arms production capabilities. It also provided Islamabad with several anti-aircraft guns and approximately 700 T-59 and PT-76 tanks.¹²¹ With regard to U.S. policy, Sino-American friendship became an important policy instrument for both Republicans and Democrats in Washington.¹²²

American policy in the subcontinent from 1967 had also become increasingly sympathetic towards Pakistan. In the spring of 1967, the U.S. resumed the sale of military spare parts to Pakistan. In October 1970, there were reports that Pakistan had been supplied with new American bombers and armored personnel carriers.¹²³ America's military relationship with Pakistan and Pakistan's military relationship with China compounded India's external threat environment. For Indian political leaders, China appeared to pose a much greater threat to India's external security given its nuclear capabilities and its close military relationship with Pakistan. In its annual report for 1967-1968, the Indian Ministry of

¹²¹ Raju Thomas, "Indian Defense Policy: Continuity and Change under the Janata Government", *Pacific Affairs*, 53:2 (1980), p.225.

¹²² Ibid. p.227.

¹²³ Raju Thomas, *Threat Perceptions, Non-Alignment and the Defense Burden* (New Delhi: MacMillan, 1978), p.54; for details on the US-Pakistan relationship see, Dennis Kux, *The United States and Pakistan 1947-2000: Disenchanted Allies* (Johns Hopkins: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

Defense emphatically stated that “the Chinese danger posed to be a long term one while the danger from Pakistan centered on certain problems which did not give it such a long term character.”¹²⁴ The report also emphasized the “accelerated pace” at which China’s nuclear weapons program was developing and outlined fears about Pakistan’s receipt of military supplies from China and the United States.

To counter the threat posed by China and Pakistan, New Delhi began to significantly increase the country’s defense expenditure and turned towards the Soviet Union for military guarantees. The Indian Ministry of Defense, Annual Report 1964-1965, set up a defense plan which would be implemented over a period of five years. This plan included strengthening India’s defense production base to eventually meet the requirements of arms and ammunition, and improving the field of procurement, storage and training.¹²⁵ New Delhi also entered into a production agreement with the Soviets to make MIG-21s in India.¹²⁶ As a result, there were noticeable increases in defense production as well as defense expenditure in the early 1970s. From 1967 to 1971, India imported 150 SU-7 fighter bombers, 450 T-54 and T-55 tanks, 150 PT-76, amphibious tanks, and six Petya class frigates from the former Soviet Union. The Soviet-India defense relationship was exactly the type of external security blanket that New Delhi was looking for in the face of external threats. In 1971, India went a step ahead and signed the historic Soviet-India Friendship Treaty. This agreement secured diplomatic and military guarantees from the Soviet side and established a firm foundation for India’s continued diplomatic and military partnership with the Soviets.¹²⁷ But one of the glaring drawbacks in Indian defense policy during this time was that except for securing

¹²⁴ Annual Report, Government of India, Ministry of Defense, 1967-68, p.1.

¹²⁵ Annual Report, Government of India, Ministry of Defense, 1964-1965, p.2.

¹²⁶ Itty Abraham, “Producing Defense: Re-interpreting Civil-Military Relations in India”, ACDIS Paper, 1992.

¹²⁷ For details on the India-Soviet relationship, see, Santosh K. Mehrotra, *India and the Soviet Union: Trade and Technology Transfer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

military guarantees from the Soviet Union and increasing defense expenditure, India's political leadership was not doing much more to improve military affairs. The development of serious military strategy and improvements in conventional war fighting methods to deal with possible future threats from China and Pakistan were completely absent. Interestingly, by the early 1970s, India's nuclear weapons program, which began in the 1950s under the aegis of a small group of scientists, was making sufficient progress. But it would soon become apparent that the country's nuclear weapons program was completely disconnected from its defense policy.

On January 3, 1954, the Indian Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC hereafter) set up a new facility called the Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay (AEET).¹²⁸ On August 3, 1954 the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) was created with Dr. Homi Bhabha as Secretary. The DAE was made directly responsible to the Indian Prime Minister. The atomic energy budget increased 12-fold from 1954 to 1956. By 1958 the DAE consumed one third of India's research budget. In 1955 construction began on India's first reactor, the 1 MW Apsara research reactors with British assistance. And in September 1955, after more than a year of negotiation, Canada agreed to supply India with a powerful research reactor; the 40 MW Canada-India Reactor (CIR). Under the Eisenhower Administration's "Atoms for Peace" program, the US also agreed to supply 21 tons of heavy water for this reactor and it became known as the Canada-India Reactor, U.S. or CIRUS.¹²⁹

In early 1961, the U.S State Department asked its embassies to collect information on India's nuclear energy program even though Prime Minister Nehru appeared strongly opposed to nuclear weapons. People within the American administration were concerned

¹²⁸ Report, "India's Nuclear Weapons Program: The Beginning, 1944-1960", <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/India/IndiaOrigin.html>

¹²⁹ For the development of India's Atomic Energy Program, see, M.R. Srinivasan, *From Fission to Fusion: The Story of India's Atomic Energy Program* (New Delhi: Viking Books, 2002).

that despite Nehru's arguments, India was actively pursuing a civilian nuclear program.¹³⁰ After the Chinese nuclear tests of 1964, the U.S. State Department tried to cooperate with India on peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the belief that enhancing India's scientific prestige would dissuade it from developing its own nuclear weapons in response to the Chinese tests. Accordingly, the United States suggested recycling of plutonium as fuel for India's nuclear reactors.¹³¹ In 1966, the State Department had little evidence to indicate that India had decided to develop nuclear weapons but was aware that the country might be stockpiling plutonium from the CIRUS nuclear reactor to conduct a test.¹³² By the late 1960s, in a meeting with US officials, Homi Bhaba declined a potential India-Soviet agreement on exchange of nuclear technology. Bhaba also signaled New Delhi's refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as most Indians saw the NPT as discriminatory. Even though the United States could not produce enough evidence supporting India's quest for nuclear weapons, continuous civilian efforts to develop nuclear technology to maintain India's autonomy in world affairs may have been sufficient evidence supporting Indian intentions of building the bomb.¹³³

To reiterate, what is particularly striking in the Indian case is that even though India had a well-entrenched nuclear program, civilians displayed an intention to develop nuclear technology and the program was kept separate from Indian defense policy. Various political

¹³⁰ "Indian Capability and Likelihood to Produce Atomic Energy", June 1961, Decimal File, 1960-63; Central Files of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives, Washington D.C., <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB45/printindex.html>

¹³¹ Letter from John G. Palfrey, Atomic Energy Commission to Ambassador Llewellyn E. Thompson, November 23, 1964, titled: "Discussion Paper on Prospects for Intensifying Peaceful Atomic Cooperation with India", Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB45/printindex.html>

¹³² State Department Cable: "Possible Nuclear Weapons Development", March 29, 1966, Numeric File 1964-66; Central Files of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives, Washington D.C., <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB45/printindex.html>

¹³³ New Delhi's US Embassy Telegram: "Conversation with Senior GOI Nuclear Official", May 17, 1968, Numeric File, 1967-69; Central Files of the Department of State, Record Group 59; National Archives, Washington D.C., <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB45/printindex.html>

statements made to the public demonstrate that India's political leadership was not thinking of nuclear weapons in strategic terms. On August 2, 1972 and again, on November 15, 1973, the Prime Minister of India informed the Parliament that "the Department of Atomic Energy had been studying various situations under which peaceful underground nuclear explosions could prove to be of economic benefit; that progress in this new technology was constantly being reviewed from theoretical as well as experimental angles; and that underground tests for peaceful purposes would be undertaken."¹³⁴ Such public political statements clearly alluded to the non-strategic use of nuclear technology. However, in a move that shocked the international community, India went ahead and conducted its first nuclear tests in 1974.¹³⁵

The conduct of India's nuclear tests in 1974 did not contain any serious ramifications for Indian civil-military relations. Rather than think about the military use of nuclear weapons, India's political leadership maintained an ambiguous approach to nuclear policy. This was not uncommon as political arguments favoring a non-military use for nuclear technology had been made as early as the 1950s. India's political leadership had frequently argued in favor of the development of nuclear technology and not nuclear weapons. In making such claims, Indian political leaders were making a conscious distinction between the use of nuclear "technology" and the use of nuclear "weapons". For civilians, nuclear "technology" was "good" as it could be used for India's economic development. On the other hand, nuclear "weapons" were "bad" as they could be used in war to unleash

¹³⁴ Rikhi Jaipal, "The Indian Nuclear Explosion", *International Security*, 1:4 (1977), p.44.

¹³⁵ On the scientists' role in India's nuclear energy program, see, Omkar Marwah, "India's Nuclear and Space Programs: Intent and Policy", *International Security*, 2:2 (1977), pp.96-121. Scholars have advanced various political, economic and strategic explanations for the conduct of India's nuclear tests in 1974. For more on this subject, see, Ashish Nandy, "Between two Gandhis: Psychopolitical Aspects of the Nuclearization of India", *Asian Survey*, 14:11 (1974), p.967. Also see, George Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb* (California: University of California Press, 2001); P.N. Dhar, *Indira Gandhi, the "emergency" and Indian Democracy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Selig, S. Harrison, Paul H. Kreisberg and Dennis Kux, eds., *India and Pakistan: The First Fifty Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

enormous destruction. But this does not mean that civilians were unaware of the potential use of nuclear technology for strategic purposes. Stated simply, they were just not interested in developing nuclear technology for strategic use.

In trying to explain why Indian political leaders gave such little importance to the strategic use of nuclear weapons, Rajesh Basrur argues that throughout history, Indian strategic culture accorded a limited value to nuclear deterrence as a basis for national security and hence, was “consistently incremental in its responses to external and internal pressures for substantial policy change.”¹³⁶ When it came to nuclear weapons, the approach adopted by civilians was that of “nuclear minimalism.”¹³⁷ India’s leading defense and security expert, K.Subrahmanyam also notes that “nuclear weapons were not weapons of war; they were political weapons.”¹³⁸ This means that India’s political leadership perceived a very limited utility of nuclear weapons as a source of national security. Civilians also exhibited a political rather than technical understanding of nuclear weapons. On one hand, they recognized that power was an important requisite for security but at the same time they considered nuclear weapons morally reprehensible because of the risks associated with their use.¹³⁹ Indian defense experts further suggest that New Delhi’s lack of strategic thinking about nuclear weapons was directly tied to India’s inexperience with total war. Unlike the United States, India remained relatively isolated from the experience of the First and Second World Wars. India’s inexperience with total wars kept most sections of Indian society insulated from questions of national security and strategy.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, the “indifference and apathy

¹³⁶ Rajesh Basrur: “Nuclear Weapons and Indian Strategic Culture”, *Journal of Peace Research*, 38:2 (2001), pp.181-198.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Author’s Interview with K. Subrahmanyam, Convenor of the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), New Delhi, May 24, 2006.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Lieutenant General Satish Nambiar, “Fifty Years of Indian Independence: A Strategic Review”, *Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies Paper*, August 15, 1997, <http://www.ipcs.org/>

induced by years of British rule” just helped sustain a lack of strategic thought.¹⁴¹ Vijay Oberoi observes that the military had always been looked upon as “a repressive instrument of British policy and India’s political leadership continued to think along such lines even after independence.”¹⁴² And so, it is not unreasonable to claim that due to a very different set of historical experiences, the absence of Indian strategic thought on security issues may have been the single most important reason explaining why Indian political leaders were not thinking of nuclear weapons in strategic terms during the 1970s.

Political hesitancy in accepting the strategic value of nuclear weapons, of course, left Indian nuclear policy with no coherent shape or structure. Also, the collusion of India’s political leadership and scientific establishment in the development of India’s nuclear weapons program with no strategic purpose in mind had the net effect of excluding the Indian military from nuclear policy. Civilians had routinely shared the scientists’ optimism about nuclear weapons being the prime symbol of India’s technological prowess; a resource which could enhance India’s economic development by channeling its energy base. But some sections of the Indian military thought otherwise. More specifically, the Indian armed forces, just like their American counterparts, appeared unconvinced about the Indian scientists’ capability to develop nuclear weapons. The military believed that the scientists lacked the adequate wherewithal to develop and test nuclear weapons without military expertise. And so, when the 1974 nuclear tests were conducted, the Indian military appeared rather alarmed because the scientists had been able to pull off this gargantuan feat with the help of India’s political leadership. But why didn’t the Indian military make a stronger case for their inclusion in nuclear policy?

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Author’s Interview with former Vice Chief of the Indian Army, General Vijay Oberoi, New Delhi, June 7, 2006.

It may be unfair to place all the blame on India's political leadership for the Indian military's exclusion from nuclear policy during this period. Because, prior to the 1974 tests, there is no evidence to show that the Indian armed forces had made a powerful case for the strategic use of nuclear weapons. In fact, throughout the 1960s and up until the early 1970s, the Indian military had also remained quite ambivalent about the benefits accrued from nuclear weapons. Stephen Cohen notes that from a military point of view, an Indian nuclear weapons program in the 1970s seemed institutionally disruptive as the military would have to deal with questions regarding the control of nuclear weapons, the targets against which the weapons could be deployed and the effects of nuclear weapons on conventional war strategy.¹⁴³ As the Indian military had adhered to a nineteenth century organizational structure for several decades, its experience had been limited to relatively unsophisticated military technologies and it was completely unfamiliar with the use of nuclear technology. Hence, despite the inherent value of nuclear weapons for strategic purposes, the military's deep unfamiliarity with such modern weapons precluded them from exerting unnecessary pressure on the civilians to develop nuclear capability.¹⁴⁴ But this situation was soon going to change. In the 1980s, India's external security considerations and a series of crises with Pakistan would prompt a major shift in military approaches to the development of nuclear strategy.

IV. Indian Military Thought and Nuclear Strategy in the 1980s

From the late 1970s, India witnessed a surge in Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. Some South Asian scholars argue that Pakistan's nuclear weapons program was closely tied

¹⁴³ Stephen Cohen, "Security Issues in South Asia", *Asian Survey*, 15:3 (1975), p.209.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

to the Indian nuclear program.¹⁴⁵ As one Pakistani scholar notes, “India’s superiority in conventional weapons and its quest for political pre-eminence in the region appeared to be a plausible motivating force for Pakistani policy makers to pursue a bomb option.”¹⁴⁶ Moreover, various Pakistani leaders including Zulfikar-Ali-Bhutto, who served as Pakistan’s President from 1971 to 1973, had displayed concerns about India’s nuclear weapons program way back in the 1960s. Pakistan’s war with India in 1965, the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, and the 1974 Indian nuclear tests had aroused fears within Pakistani political circles about Indian intentions of developing a nuclear weapons program that could, in future, be used to deter Pakistan from attacking India. The Bangladesh war had also demonstrated India’s conventional arms superiority, which further compounded Pakistan’s insecurity.¹⁴⁷ And so, India’s conventional superiority may have caused Pakistan to step up its own nuclear weapons program.

The development of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program had begun around the same time India launched its nuclear program in the late 1950s. The Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission was established in 1955 to promote and develop nuclear energy for economic development.¹⁴⁸ From the 1960s, as relations with India began to deteriorate, Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program also underwent a simultaneous change. Discussing the reasons for a change in Islamabad’s nuclear weapons program, Samina Ahmed notes that the 1965 war with India marked an “important turning point” in Pakistan’s nuclear program because by

¹⁴⁵ “A Brief History of Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Program”, <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/pakistan/nuke/index.html>

¹⁴⁶ Rasul. B. Rais, “Pakistan’s Nuclear Program: Prospects for Proliferation”, *Asian Survey*, 25:4 (1985), p.463. For a detailed analysis of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program, see, Steve Weissman and Herbert Krosney, *The Islamic Bomb: The Nuclear Threat to Israel and the Middle East* (New York: Times Books, 1991); Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003).

¹⁴⁷ Carey Sublette, “Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons Program: The Beginning”; article can be accessed at: <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Pakistan/PakOrigin.html>

¹⁴⁸ Rais, opcit, n-146, p.465.

the end of the war, the conventional weapons disparity had quickly shifted in India's favor.¹⁴⁹ After the war, Pakistan entered into a military agreement with China. As part of this agreement, China supplied Islamabad with an armory of conventional weapons. Pakistan's defeat in the 1971 war with India further pushed Islamabad in the direction of a full-fledged weapons option.¹⁵⁰ In 1971, Pakistan began to operate a secret network to obtain necessary materials for developing its uranium enrichment capabilities. President Bhutto entered into an agreement with North Korea in September 1971 to obtain critical weapons, following which North Korea dispatched an arms shipment to Pakistan. During most of the 1970s, Pakistan acquired artillery, multiple rocket launchers and ammunition from North Korea.¹⁵¹ Also, under the leadership of Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, a German trained metallurgist, the country developed its first nuclear facility at Kahuta in 1976.¹⁵² News about the development of Pakistan's nuclear ambitions would soon reach the United States.

In the early 1980s, the U.S. State Department published a report outlining how Pakistan was well on its way towards developing a nuclear weapons program. This report further stated that Pakistan had obtained nuclear technology from Europe and China, and that China had cooperated with Pakistan in the production of fissile material.¹⁵³ In April 1981, US Senator Alan Cranston reported news of a construction activity at the Pakistani test site in Baluchistan. By the late 1980s, Pakistan published various articles on centrifuge

¹⁴⁹ Samina Ahmed, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: Turning Points and Nuclear Choices", *International Security*, 23:4 (1999), p.182.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p.183.

¹⁵¹ Joseph S. Bermudez, *DPRK-Pakistan Ghauri Missile Cooperation*, May 21, 1998.

¹⁵² For a very recent book on A.Q. Khan's influence on Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, see Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins, eds., *The Nuclear Jihadist* (Twelve Books, 2007); Gordon Corera, *Shopping for Bombs: Nuclear Proliferation, Global Insecurity, and the Rise and Fall of the A.Q. Khan Network* (London: Oxford University Press, 2006).

¹⁵³ State Department Briefing Paper, "The Pakistani Nuclear Program", June 23, 1983, National Security Archive, The Gelman Library, George Washington University.
<http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB45/printindex.html>

design, making its nuclear weapons capability public.¹⁵⁴ After 1988, Pakistan's ballistic missile program further expanded with aid from the Chinese and in 1989, Pakistan tested its short range nuclear missile, Hatf-I and Hatf-II.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, by the late 1980s, Pakistan's dexterity in developing a fairly sophisticated nuclear weapons program had become obvious to the entire world, including neighboring India.

The possession of nuclear capabilities by Pakistan exacerbated Indian security concerns. By the mid-1980s, India was clearly convinced of a Pakistani nuclear program.¹⁵⁶ Sumit Ganguly notes that "in the early 1980s, the clamor for the acquisition of nuclear weapons grew as US sources provided evidence of Pakistan's quest for nuclear weapons and the Chinese supply of a nuclear weapons design to Pakistan."¹⁵⁷ In 1983, India began to process weapon grade plutonium. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the scientific-military establishment in India was allowed to acquire a declared nuclear weapons capability. Several reports written during this time suggest that India had plutonium resources which were sufficient to build between twelve and forty weapons.¹⁵⁸ While debating on whether to keep India's nuclear weapons option open, Prime Minister Gandhi underscored a simultaneous shift towards military modernization. But few within India's political establishment realized how the development of Pakistan's nuclear program was going to affect Indian security in unexpected ways.

By the early 1980s, there were several indications that India's political and military leadership had begun to seriously think about the strategic use of nuclear weapons. George

¹⁵⁴ Anonymous, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program: The Beginning", can be accessed at: <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Pakistan/PakOrigin.html>

¹⁵⁵ Leonard. S. Spector, *Nuclear Proliferation Today* (Cambridge: Ballinger, 1984), p.107.

¹⁵⁶ Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2000), pp.329-332.

¹⁵⁷ Sumit Ganguly, "India's Pathway to Pokhran II: The Prospects and Sources of New Delhi's Nuclear Weapons Program", *International Security*, 23:4 (1999), p.163.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, p.165; Also see Steven. R. Weisman, "India's Nuclear Energy Policy Raises New Doubts on Arms", *New York Times*, May 7, 1988.

Perkovich claims that when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi came to power in 1980, she hoped to keep India's nuclear weapons option open. In 1981, Gandhi had raised concerns about Pakistan's ability to develop the nuclear bomb. Indira Gandhi argued that the possession of nuclear weapons capability by Pakistan had compelled New Delhi to weigh its nuclear weapons option more seriously. In other words, Pakistan's nuclear capability seemed to be directly pushing India's decision to declare her own nuclear capability.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, various American intelligence reports published in 1982 suggested that Indian military planners were urging Prime Minister Gandhi to draw up a plan to destroy Islamabad's facilities.¹⁶⁰ For example, following the induction of British procured Jaguar aircraft in the 1980, the Indian Air Force had developed a brief study in which it weighed the possibility of attacking Pakistan's nuclear facilities at Kahuta. The objective of the study was to neutralize the threat posed by Pakistan through a direct attack on its nuclear facilities.¹⁶¹ Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, however, did not support any preventive war plans due to fears that a Pakistani attack on Indian facilities would prove very costly for India.¹⁶² Yet, Gandhi kept India's nuclear option open in fear that Pakistan would declare its nuclear weapons capability.¹⁶³

By 1984, the possibility of a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan became real when Pakistani President, General Zia-ul-Haq, informed the United States that India was trying to emulate Israel's attack upon Iraq's Osiraq reactors with the prime intention of destroying Pakistan's nuclear program. This is an allegation that Indira Gandhi

¹⁵⁹ Michael Richardson, "Arms and the Woman", *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 25, 1981, p.20; Also see Sumit Ganguly and Devin Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crises in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (British Columbia: University of British Columbia) 2006, p.53; for a general discussion of the nature of India-Pakistan wars, see, J.N. Dixit, *India-Pakistan in War and Peace* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁶⁰ Don Oberdofer, "US sees India Pakistan Rifts Not as Signals of Imminent War", *The Washington Post*, December 20, 1982.

¹⁶¹ Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, p.240.

¹⁶² Milton R. Benjamin, "India Said to Eye Raid on Pakistan's A-Plants", *Washington Post*, December 20, 1982;

¹⁶³ Ibid.

vehemently denied.¹⁶⁴ Amidst such accusations, the inability of American satellites to locate two of India's Jaguar squadrons intensified the threat of a nuclear confrontation between the two adversaries.¹⁶⁵ The United States was alarmed that both countries were making public threats about going nuclear. But while neither side came up with any conclusive evidence about their intentions in attacking each other, this initial crisis forced India and Pakistan to seek commitments from their allies, the Soviet Union and the United States, respectively.¹⁶⁶ Pakistan's plea to the United States made India secure guarantees from the Soviets that in case of a nuclear conflict, the latter would intervene on India's behalf. But despite fears of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan, both countries reached an accord in December 1985, according to which they agreed not to attack each other's nuclear facilities.¹⁶⁷

However, tensions between India and Pakistan continued even after 1985. A second crisis erupted in 1986-87 and is popularly referred to as the Brasstacks crisis. In 1987, what began as a routine military exercise conducted by the Indian army contained the seeds for a nuclear confrontation with Pakistan. Under the leadership of General Sundarji, the Indian army launched an exercise to test the mechanization of the armed forces.¹⁶⁸ The Brasstacks exercise was General Sundarji's invention. Some scholars argue that Sundarji specifically wanted to integrate India's special weapons into day-to-day field maneuvers.¹⁶⁹ The exercise was held in the Northern Rajasthan and involved 10 divisions of the Indian army, including two strike corps and approximately four hundred thousand troops. But the large build up of Indian troops along the Line of Control (LoC) set off alarm bells in Islamabad. Fearing an

¹⁶⁴ P.R. Chari, "Nuclear Crisis, Escalation Control, and Deterrence in South Asia", *Working Paper*, Version 1.0, (Washington D.C: Henry Stimson Center, 2003). For more on Zia-ul-Haq's policies, see Robert Wirsing, *Pakistan's Security Under Zia* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1991).

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, September 8, 1984.

¹⁶⁷ Perkovich, pp. 276-277.

¹⁶⁸ Author's interview with Headmaster Doon School, Professor Kanti Bajpai, New Delhi, June 12, 2006.

¹⁶⁹ Seymour Hersh, "On the Nuclear Edge", *The New Yorker*, March 29, 1993.

attack from India, Pakistan also began deploying a large number of its troops along the LoC. Pakistani troops quickly moved close to the India-Pakistan border near Punjab in a dangerous maneuver which threatened to cut off communications between Kashmir and the rest of India.¹⁷⁰

During the height of the crisis, the international community had become legitimately concerned about the outbreak of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan (even though, in hindsight, such fears were exaggerated).¹⁷¹ While both countries refrained from engaging in a nuclear conflict, the crisis revealed how India's military leadership was thinking about the possible use of nuclear weapons. Anticipating Pakistani fears of a nuclear attack from India, certain sections of the Indian army felt that the military balance had shifted in India's favor. Moreover, Chief of Army Staff, General Sundarji, and other senior military officers believed that the situation was ripe to take out Pakistan in a first strike.¹⁷² Although India's political leadership did not share the military's views, General Sundarji had apparently made some of the army's sentiments clear to Defense Minister Arun Singh. Sundarji had also gone a step further by taking the Indian Air Force into confidence about the army's plans to divert forces to Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Accordingly, the Indian army began to seriously develop preventive war doctrines without complete knowledge of the civilians.¹⁷³ Of course, when Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi was informed about the military's plans, there was

¹⁷⁰ P.R. Chari, *opcit.*

¹⁷¹ According to one report, in an interview with an Indian journalist, Pakistan's nuclear scientist A.Q.Khan stated that Pakistan would use the bomb if required. The authenticity of this claim still remains dubious and does not count for a fact.

¹⁷² During this time, the Pakistanis were developing nuclear weapons but lacked the kind of advanced nuclear arsenal that India had.

¹⁷³ Such conclusions were drawn from interviews with military officials and are available in Kanti Bajpai, P.R.Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, Stephen Cohen and Sumit Ganguly, eds; *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995). Other scholars such as Raj Chengappa arrived at a similar conclusion. Sundarji's real plan was to attack Pakistan's Punjab and cut off its access to Sindh. The primary objective was to destroy Pakistan's nascent nuclear arsenal before it matured and prevented India from waging a conventional war without minimizing the risk of nuclear conflict. See Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to be a Nuclear Power*, (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2000), pp. 322-323.

immediate intervention from the political side. Rajiv Gandhi was particularly outraged at the way in which the Indian military had kept the civilians uninformed about their strategic plans for so long.¹⁷⁴

A third and final crisis, and perhaps, the most dangerous, occurred in 1990. In the 1980s, the Muslims of Indian held Kashmir had begun to organize themselves against the central government in New Delhi. In 1984, the Congress party ousted a popularly elected state government and rigged the Kashmiri state elections in 1987 creating further unrest amongst the Kashmiri youth.¹⁷⁵ Towards the later part of 1989, Pakistan conducted a large military exercise called *Zarb-i-Momin*. Soon after, there was a sharp increase in insurgent related activities in the Indian state of Kashmir. Pakistan began to extend its support to disaffected Kashmiri youth by arming and training Kashmiri Muslim terrorists.¹⁷⁶ New Delhi responded by strengthening its military forces in Kashmir and Punjab, which came as another big surprise to Pakistan's political leadership. Islamabad was apparently unclear about Indian intentions and feared that a larger number of forces may have been deployed by New Delhi to launch an offensive operation against it.¹⁷⁷ The conflict was prevented from escalating to the nuclear level through direct U.S intervention. William Clark, U.S. Ambassador to New Delhi, and Robert Oakley, U.S Ambassador to Pakistan, assured the public and the international community that the military on both sides had not made any large scale preparations for war. The Gates Mission, headed by the deputy director of the

¹⁷⁴ General Hoon of the Indian army accused General Sundarji of trying to engage Pakistan in a war without Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's knowledge. For more on this issue, see Lieutenant General P.N.Hoon, *Unmasking Secrets of Turbulence: Midnight Freedom to a Nuclear Dawn* (New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2000).

¹⁷⁵ Devin Hagerty, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: the 1990 Indo-Pakistani Crisis", *International Security*, 20:3 (1995). For a study on the causes of Kashmiri unrest and the birth of insurgency in the 1990s, see Sumit Ganguly, "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay", *International Security*, 21:2 (1996).

¹⁷⁶ P.R.Chari, *opcit.*

¹⁷⁷ For details on the 1990 crisis, read P.R. Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Stephen Cohen, *Perception, Politics and Security in South Asia: The Compound Crisis of 1990* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.84.

CIA, Robert Gates, marked the culmination of American efforts in resolving tensions between the two countries.¹⁷⁸

While most experts on South Asian security spend a great deal of time talking about the India-Pakistan crises as part of a general discussion on India-Pakistan conflicts, few have adequately examined what these crises meant for Indian civil-military relations. The development of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and the India-Pakistan crises in the 1980s point to the emergence a professional Indian military; a military which was seriously thinking about the strategic use of nuclear weapons. When compared to the 1970s, this shift in the Indian military's approach to nuclear weapons and its influence on nuclear policy was nothing short of dramatic.

V. The Significance of Military Expertise on Indian Nuclear Strategy

India's military encounters with Pakistan during the 1980s significantly shaped the character of Indian civil-military relations. The most perceptible change for both India's political leadership and the military was the change in the understanding of the use of nuclear weapons. The different crises had created legitimate concerns in Indian political and military circles about the possible use of nuclear weapons. And, the biggest push for the strategic use of nuclear weapons had come from a few senior military officers in the Indian army who were desperately trying to assert the military's expertise in nuclear policy. This, in itself, was the beginning of a monumental change in Indian civil-military relations.

It is common knowledge that as early as 1981, India's former Chief of Army Staff, General Sundarji, had been one of the first in the Indian army to compile two major essays

¹⁷⁸ For details on the negotiations and the Gates Mission, see Michael Krepon and Mishi Faruquee, eds., "Conflict Prevention and Conflict Building Measures in South Asia: The 1990 crisis", Occasional Paper No.17, (Washington D.C: Henry Stimson Center, 1994), p.6.

which called for the introduction of nuclear weapons into the Indian military.¹⁷⁹ Based on his conversations with General Sundarji, W.P.Sidhu notes that “throughout the 1980s, the armed forces tried to create doctrines and military formations that would meet both conventional and nuclear threats with existing hardware.”¹⁸⁰ Sundarji’s statement suggests that under his leadership, some sections of the Indian military may have been thinking about the development of nuclear doctrines alongside conventional doctrines. In other words, Sundarji was trying to prepare the Indian military for the development of nuclear weapons in the future. The Indian army had also acquired equipment with nuclear, biological and chemical defense capabilities and was trying “to incorporate a doctrine of denial based on an ability to disperse and concentrate quickly.”¹⁸¹ These new doctrines of mobility and mechanization also known as RAPID doctrines were tested in the Brasstacks exercise. For the Indian military, the creation of such doctrines had been a direct response to the Pakistani threat. In 1986, pointing to the problems emanating from Pakistan’s nuclear capability, General Sundarji wrote: “there are enough indicators to suggest that Pakistan has achieved or is close to achieving nuclear weapons capability. The Indian military was gearing its organization, training and equipment in such a manner that is not only effective in conventional use but in the unlikely event of nuclear weapons being used by an adversary in the combat zone, the Indian military would limit damage both psychological and physical.”¹⁸² And so, under the leadership of General Sundarji, some sections of the Indian military had begun to seriously think about the potential use of nuclear weapons.

¹⁷⁹ The two essays are: “Effects of Nuclear Symmetry on Conventional Deterrence” and “Nuclear Weapons in the Third World Context”, *Combat Paper 1-2* (Mhow: College of Combat, 1981).

¹⁸⁰ W.P.S. Sidhu, “Evolution of India’s Nuclear Doctrine”, Occasional Paper No.9, *Center for Policy Research Paper Series 2003-2004* (New Delhi: Center for Policy Research), p.17.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² “The Thinking Man’s General”, *India Today*, February 15, 1986, p.78.

Besides the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force was also taking a bold initiative in developing nuclear weapons. The Air Force wanted a strategy which would develop a conventional offense against nuclear weapons and create a Strategic Air Command that could effectively integrate aircraft missiles with strategic reconnaissance.¹⁸³ Moreover, in an attempt to ward off any possible preventive attack from Pakistan and develop doctrines of denial, the Indian air force dispersed its Jaguar, MiG-23 and MiG-27 tactical strike aircraft.¹⁸⁴ Evidence of such operational changes in military doctrines to deal with Pakistan's nuclear capability support how the Indian army and air force were thinking about the military utility of nuclear weapons. The attempt to develop sophisticated military doctrines which could incorporate the use of nuclear weapons also underscored a greater role for the Indian military in nuclear strategy.

From the mid-1980s, Indian military doctrine had begun to shape itself in a distinct manner. To address Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability, Indian military doctrine moved away from a purely conventional deterrent to "one that incorporated nuclear weapons."¹⁸⁵ Even though India lacked any sophisticated nuclear doctrine during this time, the presence of nuclear weapons was conditioning a debate in Indian civil-military relations about the effects of nuclear weapons on conventional war. Perkovich and Hagerty describe how Indian policy makers launched efforts to develop a missile based delivery system from the mid-1980s. The Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGDMP) called for a series of missile systems to be developed over subsequent years. Even though the program was run under the auspices of the Defense Research and Development Organization

¹⁸³ Ibid. Also see, Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, "The Strategic Deterrent Option", *Strategic Analysis*, 13:6 (1989).

¹⁸⁴ According to one report, by 1989, six squadrons of nuclear delivery aircraft were operational. See, "Indian Fixed Wing Nuclear Delivery a Reality", *Defense and Foreign Affairs Weekly*, 3-9 October, 1989.

¹⁸⁵ W.P.S Sidhu, "Evolution of India's Nuclear Doctrine", Occasional Paper No.9, *Center for Policy Research Paper Series 2003-2004* (New Delhi: Center for Policy Research), p.9.

(DRDO), Indian scientists had begun to tie civilian and military research together.¹⁸⁶ India also adopted a deterrence policy without actually developing nuclear weapons. The new deterrence policy discussed concepts like “existential deterrence” and “non-weaponized deterrence.”¹⁸⁷ Existential deterrence meant that while India had the capability to develop nuclear weapons, its nuclear weapons program was still rudimentary.¹⁸⁸ Yet, the presence of a growing nuclear capability was considered sufficient to deter Pakistan or any other enemy from attacking India in the first place. Emphasizing the impact of nuclear weapons on conventional war, General Sundarji noted that “while leaders on both sides had once viewed war as a means to achieve certain policy objectives, today, the same calculus did not apply.”¹⁸⁹

Along with existential deterrence, non-weaponized deterrence was a state in which India had all the components and scientific expertise to assemble first generation nuclear weapons. But while no one really knew what type of an assembly system was in place, the assumption was that India had either assembled nuclear weapons or deployed nuclear weapons in the field.¹⁹⁰ It is important to note here that the use of concepts such as non-weaponized deterrence or existential deterrence were important indicators of a shift in thinking about nuclear weapons. These concepts may have appeared primitive compared to American doctrines of massive retaliation and flexible response, but they were significant in that Indian political leaders and the military were struggling to adopt an appropriate

¹⁸⁶ A.Z. Hilali, “India’s Strategic Thinking and Its National Security Policy”, *Asian Survey*, 41:5 (2002), p. 760.

¹⁸⁷ Devin Hagerty, “Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: the 1990 Indo-Pakistani Crisis”, *International Security*, 20:3 (1995).

¹⁸⁸ Jasjit Singh, “Prospects for Nuclear Proliferation”, in S. Sur, eds., *Nuclear Deterrence: Problems and Perspectives in the 1990s* (New York: UN Institute for Disarmament Research, 1993), p.66.

¹⁸⁹ See Hagerty, *opcit*, n-187.

¹⁹⁰ George Perkovich, “A Nuclear Third Way in South Asia”, *Foreign Policy*, 91 (1993), pp.85-104. For more on the development of nuclear policy by Indian scientists in the 1980s, see, Gaurav Kampani, “From Existential to Minimum Deterrence: Explaining India’s Decision to Test”, *The Non Proliferation Review*, 1998.

deterrence policy for the first time and in doing so were simultaneously thinking about the strategic use of nuclear weapons.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the threat posed by Pakistan's nuclear arsenal and the dangers of an all-out nuclear confrontation with Pakistan had become obvious to almost everyone in Indian political and military circles. Interestingly, India's political leadership had also begun to pay careful attention to what the military was saying with regard to the country's nuclear options. At a seminar organized by the United Service Institute (USI) on March 10, 1990, serving and retired Indian officials from all three services, diplomats and academics debated on whether India should exercise its nuclear option. The deliberations of this meeting revealed that most senior officers were arguing in favor of building a strong nuclear arsenal. For instance, Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Nadkarni, argued that a functional nuclear policy would help offset Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability. Nadkarni further noted that a nuclear arsenal would be cheaper to maintain than conventional forces.¹⁹¹ Underscoring concerns about Pakistan's growing nuclear weapons capability, another senior military official, General V. N. Sharma remarked that India would have "no option" but to possess "nuclear capability" if a potential hostile neighboring nation "acquired a capability to deploy nuclear weapons."¹⁹² Other military officers also alerted Indian policy makers to the dangers of miscommunication and miscalculation between the two countries in a heightened nuclear environment. For instance, Lieutenant General M. Thomas said that prospects of miscalculation in the ambiguous climate between India and Pakistan were of biggest concern for the military high command in India.¹⁹³ Vice-Admiral K.K. Nayar, former Vice-Chief of Naval Staff, also pointed out that Pakistan's admission of

¹⁹¹ "Officials Comment on India's Nuclear Option: Navy Chief of Staff", *Telegraph*, Calcutta, March 11, 1990.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ "South Asia retains its nuclear option", *Washington Post*, September 30, 1991, pp. A1, A15.

having a capability to assemble a nuclear device “should force India to have a realistic assessment of security environment in the region.”¹⁹⁴ Such statements made by all three services of the Indian military provide further evidence of a push for military doctrines which included ideas about the strategic use of nuclear weapons. But while civilians were only now beginning to pay attention to what the military was saying, the Indian military had already taken the lead in the development of India’s nuclear strategy.

It is necessary to remember that the efforts of the Indian military to influence nuclear strategy emerged in response to a strategic vacuum which was driven by the absence of civilian thinking on strategic issues. Civilians in India had “not shown any professional interest in either strategy or tactics of military operations.”¹⁹⁵ And, “one of the gravest weaknesses of the Indian system was that civilians had not developed the necessary understanding of military matters.”¹⁹⁶ Some observers claim that “Indian political leaders had seen nuclear weapons as a way of enhancing their own domestic standing and were always reluctant to talk about their use in military terms.”¹⁹⁷ Similarly, “there had been no serious effort to institutionalize nuclear weapons by incorporating them into the armed forces through the development of doctrine and military organization.”¹⁹⁸ Such statements are frequently found in commentaries made by Indian strategic and defense experts. All these statements, undoubtedly, point to the absence of serious political thinking on the military utility of nuclear weapons. For decades, India’s political leadership had been sending ambiguous signals to the entire world about what nuclear weapons meant for Indian security policy. They had also kept the military far removed from nuclear policy due to fears that the

¹⁹⁴ “Military Experts Say Time for Nuclear Option” *The Hindu* (Chennai edition), February 10, 1992, p.9.

¹⁹⁵ Author’s Interview with K. Subrahmanyam, Convenor, National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), New Delhi, May 2006.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Sidhu, opcit.

¹⁹⁸ Rajesh Basrur, “Nuclear Weapons and Indian Strategic Culture”, *Journal of Peace Research*, 38:2 (2001), p.189.

military would become much too powerful if it was introduced to nuclear weapons.¹⁹⁹ But for the Indian military, the absence of strategic thinking by India's political leadership on such vital national security issues indicated a lack of commitment to develop serious military doctrines. Moreover, the ambiguity in civilian approaches to nuclear weapons, of course, made the Indian military very unhappy as "they were not getting what they wanted."²⁰⁰

And so, the Indian military's role in thinking about nuclear weapons in the 1980s was an attempt to fill the void created by an absence of political thinking on nuclear strategy in the 1970s. The need to fill this void was first and foremost fuelled by the nature of nuclear technology which introduced questions about the military's expertise in using these weapons. Harold Laswell notes that the military has a specific domain of competence which distinguishes it from civilian functions. This area of military competence is called the "the management of violence" and is separate from the act of violence itself.²⁰¹ The distinction between the military's role in the management of violence and the military's act of violence is critical in addressing why any professional military might want to assert its expertise in nuclear policy. The Indian military's push for nuclear strategy had emerged because of the military's dissatisfaction with a civilian policy which had frequently used the armed forces as an instrument of violence without giving it any power in the management of violence.

As Huntington correctly points out, the military can be used as "a tool of political advice" but "it is not a mindless tool because professional military officers possess expertise in judging the capabilities of the military instrument of power."²⁰² The nature of nuclear technology and the military functions associated with its use had introduced India's political

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Raj Chengappa, *Weapons of Peace* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2000), pp.260, 294-295.

²⁰¹ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957) p.11

²⁰² Martin Cook, "The Proper Role of Professional Military Advice in Contemporary Uses of Force", *Parameters*, Winter 2003, p.26.

leadership to the importance of professional military expertise in the use of such weapons. More importantly, as civilians had thought very little about the military use of nuclear technology in the 1970s, the problem of delineating political and military functions in nuclear policy had also emerged as a serious issue in Indian civil-military relations in the 1980s. As Gurmeet Kanwal notes, the biggest challenge to civil-military relations was that “India first went nuclear and then began to worry about things like doctrine and strategy.”²⁰³

The introduction of new weapons required new methods for the management of violence. And, Huntington underscored the fact that while the military man is conservative in strategy, he is inclined to be open minded and progressive with respect to new weapons.²⁰⁴ The Indian military and more specifically, General Sundarji and other senior officers, had clearly displayed evidence of such thinking during and after the brief military encounters with Pakistan. Some observers believe that Sundarji had used the Brasstacks exercise to “judge the military’s professional competence with new weapons.”²⁰⁵ Others claim that Sundarji tried to assert his expertise only because he was obsessed with Islamabad’s nuclear weapons capability and constantly worried about Pakistan’s use of nuclear weapons in an attack on India.²⁰⁶ By the late 1980s, it had become quite clear that the short conflict like situations with Pakistan had brought India’s political leadership face to face with the professional judgments of a military that was concerned about the management of conflicts in the shadow of nuclear weapons.²⁰⁷

The role of the Indian military in asserting its expertise in nuclear policy is not unique to the Indian case. The history of American civil-military relations indicates that

²⁰³ Author’s Interview with Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal, Senior Research Fellow, Observer Research Foundation, May 15, 2006.

²⁰⁴ Samuel Huntington, *opcit*, n-201.

²⁰⁵ Author’s Interview with Manoj Joshi, Editor of *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, May 16, 2006.

²⁰⁶ Author’s Interview with P.R.Chari, former member of the Indian Ministry of Defense and currently, Research Professor, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi, May 22, 2006.

²⁰⁷ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957), p.71.

America's political leadership had to face similar issues in the American military's fight for control over the custody of nuclear weapons. But, in India, very few scholars have discussed the importance of military expertise in Indian nuclear policy. This is probably because, unlike the American military, the Indian armed forces never made emphatic demands for the control of nuclear weapons. Yet, the Indian military had successfully found a way to tell the political leaders that nuclear weapons should enjoy an important place in Indian grand strategy. In both India and the United States, dramatic changes in the international environment and the changing nature of warfare associated with new technology had driven tensions in civil-military functions over nuclear strategy. Moreover, in both countries, the biggest challenge for the military in making arguments in favor of nuclear weapons was not only the need to define and clarify their expert knowledge about the use of such weapons but also communicate that knowledge effectively to civilians. Although final decisions about the use of nuclear weapons are the prerogative of civilians, the integration of nuclear weapons in grand strategy would inevitably require the informed engagement of all officers. More significantly, in both countries, the military asserted its expertise in the development of nuclear strategy without crossing the boundaries of its own jurisdiction.²⁰⁸ The only difference is that while the American military had made a much more forceful argument for the inclusion of nuclear weapons in grand strategy, the Indian military's response to the strategic use of nuclear weapons had been gradual.

²⁰⁸ For more on the division of labor between civilian and military functions and the military's professional expertise, see Lieutenant Richard K. Lacquement, "Understanding Professional Expertise and Jurisdiction", *Military Review*, 2003, p.61.

CHAPTER 4

The Effects of Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons on Civil-Military Relations in India

I. Introduction

India's military encounters with Pakistan and the rapid development of Pakistan's nuclear program in the 1980s dramatically shaped Indian approaches to the use of nuclear weapons in the 1990s. Not only was there a fundamental shift in Indian political attitudes towards the development of nuclear technology for strategic use but more importantly, the Indian military began playing a critical role in the development of new strategic doctrines which could effectively deal with a Pakistani nuclear attack. The Indian military's role in influencing the development of nuclear strategy is a critical part of the evolution in Indian civil-military approaches to nuclear policy. More importantly, the military's attempts to assert its expertise in nuclear policy are of fundamental importance in addressing challenges to the division of labor between civilians and the military.

II. Pakistan's Nuclear Capabilities and Indian Nuclear Strategy in the 1990s

By the mid-1980s, Pakistan's nuclear weapons program was developing at an alarming pace. In 1984, Pakistan acquired the capability for producing low enriched uranium.²⁰⁹ The leader of Pakistan's nuclear program, Dr. A.Q. Khan was holding periodic interviews with the press in which he publicly talked about Pakistan's developing nuclear program. And, during one such interview in February 1984, Khan claimed that Pakistan had

²⁰⁹ David Albright, Frans Berkhout and William Walker, eds, *Plutonium and Highly Enriched Uranium 1996: World Inventories, Capabilities and Policies, SIPRI Monograph* (Oxford University Press: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 1997).

already acquired nuclear weapons capability.²¹⁰ By the end of the 1980s, under Khan's leadership, the Pakistan Kahuta Laboratories acquired the means to produce highly-enriched uranium. But more importantly, Pakistan had begun trading nuclear secrets with Iran, North Korea and Libya.²¹¹ As Gaurav Kampani notes, beginning in the 1980s and during the 1990s, Khan and some of his top associates began "offering a one-stop shop for countries that wished to acquire nuclear technologies for a weapons program."²¹² All these countries had obtained blueprints, technical design data, specifications, components, machinery, enrichment equipment, and notes on Khan's P1- and next generation P-2 centrifuges.²¹³ In the 1990s, there were also frequent reports of visits by Iranian nuclear scientists to Karachi for technical briefings on Pakistan's nuclear designs.

Pakistan's clandestine nuclear operations did not go unnoticed. From the early 1990s, Washington began raising concerns about nuclear proliferation with Pakistan. In the mid-1990s, UNSCOM inspectors in Iraq had uncovered documentary proof that A.Q. Khan had approached Saddam Hussein's regime to assist the Iraqi nuclear weapons program in the area of centrifuge-based uranium enrichment.²¹⁴ But despite international concerns, on February 7, 1992, Pakistani Foreign Minister, Shahryar Khan, in an interview with the *Washington Post*, announced that the country had developed the capability to assemble one or more nuclear weapons.²¹⁵ Interestingly while Pakistan had begun developing nuclear

²¹⁰ Carey Sublette, "Pakistan's Nuclear Weapons Program Development", January 2002, <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Pakistan/PakDevelop.html>

²¹¹ For various reports on Pakistan's nuclear transfers to Iran, North Korea and Libya, see David Rhode and David E. Sanger, "Key Pakistani Is Said to Admit Atom Transfers", *New York Times*, February 1, 2004; Patrick Chalmers, "Pakistan's Khan Arranged Uranium for Libya", *Washington Post*, February 20, 2004; Glenn Kessler, "Pakistan's North Korea Deals Stir Scrutiny: Aid to Nuclear Arms Bid May be Recent", *Washington Post*, November 13, 2002.

²¹² Gaurav Kampani, "Proliferation Unbound: Nuclear Tales from Pakistan", CNS Research Story, February 23, 2004, <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/week/040223.htm>

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ For more on the development of Pakistan's overt nuclear capability see, David Albright and Mark Hibbs, "Pakistan's Bomb: Out of the Closet", *The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, January 1992.

weapons for strategic use, India's nuclear program was also developing simultaneously. But Shahryar Khan's public pronouncement made the international community increasingly worried about the effects of a Pakistani nuclear program on Indian nuclear policy. In 1988, the *New York Times* reported that India had embarked on an ambitious nuclear energy program which required the storage of tons of plutonium of potential use for nuclear weapons.²¹⁶ The report further stated that from 1985 to 1987, India had produced large quantities of plutonium from domestically built sites.²¹⁷ During the same year, a task force report published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace concluded that by mid-1987 India "may have accumulated a stockpile of 100 to 200 kilogram of plutonium which was sufficient to build 12-40 weapons."²¹⁸ And so, the biggest challenge for the international community in addressing nuclear proliferation concerns in South Asia was the growing evidence of nuclear weapons development for strategic use in both countries.

Pakistan's growing nuclear capability was slowly but surely influencing Indian approaches to nuclear policy. Public assertions of Islamabad's nuclear weapons program exacerbated Indian concerns about the strategic use of nuclear weapons by Pakistan in a future war with India.²¹⁹ More importantly, the 1990 crisis had demonstrated Pakistan's resolve to use nuclear weapons against India. During the 1990 crisis, India's political leadership had been alerted by the Indian military to the possibility of a nuclear attack from Pakistan. The Indian army had expressed concerns about Pakistani intentions to explode a nuclear weapon to communicate the threat of a nuclear attack against India. To effectively counter an imminent Pakistani attack, Indian Prime Minister V.P. Singh had ordered a group

²¹⁶ Steven R. Wesiman, "India's Nuclear Energy Policy Raises New Doubts on Arms", *The New York Times*, May 7, 1988.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Indian civil-military relations during the 1990 crisis had marked a perceptible shift in political approaches to the development of nuclear technology for strategic use.

of scientific advisors to undertake emergency measures which included a reconsideration of India's nuclear policy options if Pakistan "employed its nuclear power for military purposes."²²⁰ Towards the end of the crisis, V.P. Singh had consulted his Principal Secretary and noted that "the situation between India and Pakistan was scary" and that decisions "could not be left just between the Prime Minister and Scientific Advisor."²²¹ Singh was particularly concerned that in the event of a possible nuclear strike from Pakistan, "there was no formal procedure to decide who would do what."²²² And hence, civilians "would have to institutionalize it."²²³

Concerned by this apparent lacuna in military strategy, V.P. Singh enlisted the support of Minister of State for Defense, Arun Singh, who was asked to undertake a classified review of India's nuclear capabilities and work out the parameters of a nuclear command and control structure. Accordingly, Arun Singh set up an informal committee which consisted of members from the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO). Along with the scientists, senior officials from the Indian military and bureaucracy were also invited to be part of this committee. At the end of the deliberations, Arun Singh was "dismayed" to learn that the three services had not been adequately briefed about India's nuclear capability. Following the meeting, in an attempt to make the decision-making process transparent to both civilians and the military, Arun Singh commented: "it is clear that we had to end the wink and nudge approach. When it is crunch time you just can't ring up the Chief of Staff and say press the button. The army will not take the scientists' word that it will work. They will want to know

²²⁰ Press Report, "Indian Prime Minister on His Country's Nuclear Policy", Xinhua General Overseas News Service, February 21, 1990.

²²¹ Raj Chengappa, "End the Wink and Nudge Approach", *Weapons of Peace: The Secret Story of India's Quest to be Nuclear Power* (New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000) p. 355.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

if they do have a usable credible deterrent. Otherwise they are likely to say buzz off. It is a significant disadvantage if you don't have a command and control structure.”²²⁴ Arun Singh's conclusion indicated a major gap between the scientific and military understanding of India's nuclear policy, and, the absence of command and control system to deal with Pakistan's developing nuclear capability. The committee's deliberations only helped sharpen the ongoing debate about the Indian military's role in nuclear strategy.

For the Indian military, political discussions on the command and control of nuclear weapons were a significant development in itself. To aid India's political leadership in discussing nuclear command and control issues, senior Indian military officers like General Sundarji continued to emphasize problems with not having a sound nuclear strategy. To develop sophisticated command and control structures, Sundarji proposed the creation of a nuclear doctrine. He observed that “the lack of a nuclear doctrine in India and Pakistan was a dangerous thing. If you keep it under wraps, you don't know what will develop.”²²⁵ By the end of the 1990s crisis, Sundarji had also begun arguing for the creation of formal military doctrines which could control for possibilities of miscalculation in a war with Pakistan. To reduce the incidence of miscalculation, Sundarji suggested the adoption of a “declared” nuclear weapons posture.²²⁶

Political and military statements addressing nuclear command and control operations were indicative of an emerging agreement in Indian civil-military relations on the strategic use of nuclear weapons. When the V.P Singh government was replaced by a new BJP government, India's political leadership began paying even greater political attention to military inputs on nuclear strategy. There is evidence that the BJP government supported

²²⁴ Ibid, pp. 355-356.

²²⁵ General K. Sundarji, “Declare Nuclear Status”, *India Today*, December 31, 1990.

²²⁶ Ibid.

much of what the Indian military was telling the civilians. For instance, All India Secretary of the Bharatiya Janata Party, J.P. Mathur, concurred with General Sundarji's position on nuclear weapons and believed that India "should go in for nuclear weapons by national consensus without wasting more time."²²⁷ Also, in its election manifesto, the BJP proposed to arm the three services with nuclear weapons.²²⁸ The BJP's affirmation of military views was a major step in the evolution of Indian political attitudes towards the military's role in nuclear policy.

Encouraged by a change in civilian attitudes towards the military's role in nuclear strategy, the Indian armed forces began to expand their influence on nuclear policy. The three services stepped up their military programs to incorporate nuclear weapons in military strategy. By the early 1990s, the Indian Navy had begun developing a nuclear submarine project commonly known as the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) project. Vice Admiral Premvir S. Das observes that the Indian Navy's efforts to build nuclear submarines were deemed necessary to cope with threats from Pakistan, which was rapidly modernizing its Navy.²²⁹ A nuclear submarine project was also felt necessary to address "other burgeoning naval powers in the Indian Ocean."²³⁰ By early 1997, India's Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat, ordered a 'technical audit' of the ATV project. Under Bhagwat's leadership, there emerged a committed cadre of officers who were dedicated to designing and building nuclear and diesel submarines.²³¹ Reports of the Indian Navy's nuclear submarine project began appearing in various Indian local newspapers. By late 1997, *The*

²²⁷ Press Report, "BJP Advocates India Going Nuclear", *Times of India* (Mumbai) February 13, 1991.

²²⁸ Press Report, "BJP Manifesto Promises Nuclear Teeth for Defense", *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, May 2, 1991.

²²⁹ The Risk Report, "Indian Nuclear Milestones:1945-2005", 11:6 Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, 2005; <http://www.wisconsinproject.org/countries/india/india-nuclear-miles.html>

²³⁰ "Indian Navy to Build Its First Aircraft Carrier", *Jane's Defense Weekly*, Associated Press Report, August 23, 1995.

²³¹ Bharat Karnad, "The Perils of Deterrence by Half Measures", *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security: The Realist Foundations of Strategy* (New Delhi: MacMillan, 2002), pp.657-658.

Pioneer reported that India's nuclear submarine project was "on the verge of a critical breakthrough with the Prototype Testing Center (PTC) at Kalpakkam getting ready for trials."²³² The PTC, located within the Indira Gandhi Center for Atomic Research (IGCAR) was developed to test the submarine's turbines and propellers. Other reports also suggested the operations of similar testing facilities at Vishakhapatnam.²³³

With the Indian Navy having taken the lead in developing a nuclear submarine project, the Army and Air Force stepped up pressure on civilians to develop a more sophisticated nuclear arsenal. In what may be considered a monumental move in the history of Indian civil-military relations, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao permitted the "Chiefs of Staff" targets to be assigned to the Army's Prithvi-1 (150km-range/1,000kg payload) ballistic missiles.²³⁴ This development is extremely significant for Indian civil-military relations as civilians were taking specific measures to assign the military an appropriate role in nuclear affairs. Amidst such instances of civil-military collaboration on nuclear policy, New Delhi decided to conduct a second set of nuclear tests in 1998. But despite ongoing political debates about the military's role in nuclear affairs from the early 1990s, the decision to conduct nuclear tests in 1998 was made by civilians and scientists at the exclusion of the Indian military! Following a historical tradition of keeping the military subservient to civilian control, Indian political leaders appeared hesitant to seek the military's advice on the decision to test nuclear weapons. However, India's declared nuclear weapons status made it even more difficult for civilians to exclude the military from future decisions on nuclear strategy.

²³² Wilson John, "Secret Nuclear Submarine Reaches Vital Stage", *Pioneer*, New Delhi, May 21, 1997.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Bharat Karnad, opcit, n-231.

One of the major challenges for civilians in the immediate post-1998 nuclear environment was to think about the allocation of military responsibilities in nuclear decisions. A growing debate was emerging in political, military and academic circles about the effects of India's declared nuclear weapons status on the military. Most scholars agreed that a declared nuclear weapons posture would make it necessary to include the military in future nuclear decisions. A senior official from the Indian Navy noted that India's overt nuclearization would bring civilians and the military closer as the military had expressed a desire for adequate preparation time in a possible nuclear war with Pakistan.²³⁵ Former Indian Ambassador to the United Nations, Arundhati Ghose, also recalls that "post 1998, civilians had brought the military much closer into the decision making process."²³⁶ But debates concerning the Indian military's role in nuclear policy became even more visible after Pakistan also conducted nuclear tests in 1998 and launched a military attack on India in the summer of 1999.

III. Political Recommendations in Favor of Military Professionalism

The Indian nuclear tests of 1998 were immediately followed by the Pakistani nuclear tests. Pakistan's declared nuclear weapons capability and the short duration within which it tried to test India's nuclear threshold made the threat of a nuclear confrontation between both countries very real. While both countries avoided a nuclear confrontation, the end of the Kargil war witnessed the creation of several proposals which supported an expansion in the Indian military's war fighting methods. A few of these proposals also addressed the Indian military's growing importance in nuclear policy.

²³⁵ Author's Interview with senior Naval Officer, Vice Admiral Suri, New Delhi, June 23, 2006.

²³⁶ Author's interview with former Indian Ambassador to the United Nations and Chief Negotiator on the CTBT, Arundhati Ghose, New Delhi, May 25, 2006.

The operational planning for the Kargil war had begun soon after General Pervez Musharraf took over as Chief of Army Staff (COAS) in October 1998.²³⁷ Islamabad used the Kargil war to achieve three fundamental aims. First, the war provided Pakistan with an opportunity to internationalize the Kashmir issue.²³⁸ Second, Kargil was Pakistan's attempt to push infiltrators across Indian borders to keep cross-border terrorism alive. As Pakistan's extremist activities had been thwarted by the Indian army in the past, Islamabad wanted to reverse that trend. Finally, Pakistan initiated the conflict to test Indian military capability in the wake of the 1998 nuclear tests.²³⁹ By launching a surprise attack on India, Pakistani political leaders believed that if the Indian military could successfully push back Pakistani forces despite facing an element of surprise, then India could defeat Pakistan anywhere.²⁴⁰

The war, codenamed *Operation Vijay*, was marked by three phases. The initial phase began in early May 1999 during which Indian soldiers suffered heavy casualties and most Indian military operations failed until the induction of air power. On receiving reliable information on the location of intruders along the Drass-Batalik-Kaksar heights, the Air Force was called in to launch air strikes on Pakistani positions. During the second phase of the war, the Indian army consolidated its positions, cleared the Drass Heights, and launched a systematic campaign to evict the intruders. Following the Indian Army's capture of the Tololing Peak on June 13, 1999, the armed forces held an advantageous position vis-à-vis Pakistan. The third and final phase of the war was characterized by significant military victories on the Indian side. The Indian army captured vital positions such as Tiger Hills and

²³⁷ For various books and articles on the Kargil war, see, Jasjit Singh, "Pakistan's Fourth War", *Strategic Analysis*, August 1999, p.696; Jasjit Singh, *Kargil 1999: Pakistan's Fourth War for Kashmir* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 1999); Praveen Swami, *The Kargil War* (New Delhi: Leftword Books, 1999); Kanti Bajpai, Amitabh Mattoo and Afsir Karim, eds., *Kargil and After* (New Delhi: Har Anand, 2001).

²³⁸ Brahma Chellaney, "Challenges to India's National Security in the New Millennium", *Securing India's Future in the New Millennium*, (New Delhi: Orient Longman Press, 1999) p.538.

²³⁹ Ayesha Ray, *The Kargil War: Consequences for India's Security*, M.Phil dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2001, p. 21.

²⁴⁰ Jasjit Singh, "Pakistan's Fourth War", *Strategic Analysis*, August 1999, p.685.

successfully evicted intruders from Mushkok, Kaksar and Turtuk sectors in Jammu and Kashmir. In the final stages of the war, Pakistan's misadventure was stalled by speedy American intervention. In May 1999, U.S. Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright and British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, met with India's External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh. The United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan also held discussions with Indian and Pakistani envoys. The scenario began to steadily improve amidst frequent diplomatic activity. Hostilities ceased by early July when President Bill Clinton sent the Indian and Pakistani Prime Ministers an official letter urging them to respect the Line of Control in Kashmir.

As the Kargil war was fought in the shadow of nuclear weapons, Indian political leaders exercised a great deal of caution in preventing the war from escalating to the nuclear level. During the course of the war, civilians made all the strategic and political decisions while the Indian Army and Air Force enjoyed significant autonomy in tactical operations.²⁴¹ More importantly, Indian political leaders worked together with the military in fighting Pakistani forces. Commenting on civil-military relations during the war, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) during Kargil, General V.P. Malik, observes that after the Cabinet Committee on Security met on May 25, "the three chiefs were closely enmeshed in the political-military decision making process."²⁴² The decision-making process was "open and direct" and "after discussions, the concerned executive authorities including the three chiefs received directions from the Prime Minister and the National Security Advisor, Brajesh Mishra."²⁴³ In a changed nuclear environment, there emerged "an integrated approach to war management with the political, economic, media and military aspects enmeshed together cogently."²⁴⁴ The presence

²⁴¹ Major General Ashok Krishna, "Lessons, Precepts and Perspectives", in Ashok Krishna and P.R. Chair eds., *Kargil: The Tables Turned* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2001), p. 166.

²⁴² General Ved Prakash Malik, *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory* (New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2006), p.132.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid. p.133.

of nuclear weapons had also made the military less bashful in advising political leaders about the consequences of using air power against Pakistan. For instance, at a public press conference in Srinagar, when Air Chief Marshal A.Y. Tipnis was asked about the utility of an air offensive, he stated that consequences of the restricted use of air power had been made clear to the government. Such instances of civil-military collaboration on military strategy were common during the Kargil war.

The end of the Kargil war raised fundamental questions about Indian defense preparedness in a nuclear environment. In the immediate post-war period, a committee was set up to evaluate the success and failures of the war. The report produced by this committee is popularly known as the *Kargil Review Committee Report* (also called the *Subrahmanyam Report*, after its primary architect K. Subrahmanyam).²⁴⁵ The Kargil Report was an evaluation of the shortcomings in the conduct of operations undertaken during the war. In explaining the lessons of the Kargil war, the committee highlighted critical lapses in India's intelligence system and structural problems in India's higher defense organization. But more importantly, the Kargil Report made serious recommendations supporting the Indian military's professional role in nuclear policy.

Prior to highlighting the military's professional role in nuclear policy, the committee suggested a serious reorganization in India's higher defense system to allow for greater military involvement. The need to set up a National Defense Headquarter, a Defense Intelligence Agency, and create the post of National Security Adviser, was strongly emphasized. The committee further suggested that "members of the National Security Council, the senior bureaucracy servicing it and the Service Chiefs had to be continually

²⁴⁵ India Kargil Review Committee, *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000).

sensitized to intelligence pertaining to national regional and international issues.”²⁴⁶

Proposals outlining changes in India’s institutional structure of civil-military were meant to generate greater synergy between civilian and military branches and also provide the military with a large range of options in grand strategy. The report also underscored problems in coordinating different intelligence operations within India. The committee observed that “the present structure and processes in intelligence gathering and reporting” had led to “an overload of background and unconfirmed information and inadequately assessed intelligence.”²⁴⁷ There was an absence of an institutionalized process which could allow different intelligence agencies such as the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Intelligence Bureau (IB), and Border Security Forces (BSF) to interact periodically below the level of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). While the JIC was doing its job as the chief custodian of intelligence, subsidiary organizations such as RAW and IB were not doing as thorough a job. A sharp disconnect between various intelligence agencies had led to faulty intelligence reports during the Kargil war. For instance, as early as 1998, RAW had detected the presence of one additional Pakistani unit in Gultari but had failed to follow up on the lead through aerial reconnaissance flights. Moreover, as the Indian military had no shared system for exchanging intelligence information with agencies as the JIC and RAW, the armed forces could do very little to report Pakistan’s initial incursions.²⁴⁸ As a result of these problems, an immediate upgrade in India’s intelligence services was considered crucial.

With regard to the Indian military’s professional role in nuclear strategy, the Kargil Report made a critical recommendation. The report suggested that the Indian military had to

²⁴⁶ For the Executive Summary of the Kargil Report, see:

<http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/India/KargilRCB.html>

The effects of such institutional changes have been discussed at great length in Chapter 2.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Read Section II, “Intelligence”, Summary of the Kargil Review Committee Report,

<http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/India/KargilRCB.html>

be made as well informed as its Pakistani counterpart on nuclear policy. Committee members noted that during the Kargil war, Pakistani political leaders had been thinking very clearly about the role of nuclear weapons. The clarity in Pakistani political thought about the role of nuclear weapons was a result of strategic decisions being taken jointly by both civilians and the military. In India, the military's exclusion from nuclear policy for several decades had left it at a more disadvantaged position. Senior Indian military officers had alerted the committee to contradictory approaches taken by civilians on nuclear policy. Air Chief Marshal Mehra had observed that even though flight trials for the delivery of Indian nuclear weapons were conducted in 1990 and several political leaders from V.P. Singh to Rajiv Gandhi had sustained a nuclear weapons program, most Indian Prime Ministers had tried to keep the program confidential.²⁴⁹ Again, while civilians had routinely reassured the Indian public that the country's nuclear weapons option would remain open if Pakistan developed nuclear weapons, they had said very little about what a functional nuclear weapons program would entail. In sharp contrast to the political indecisiveness displayed by Indian leaders, several Pakistani political and military leaders such as Benazir Bhutto, Nawaz Sharif, and Chief of Army Staff, General Aslam Beg had openly shared information with the public about Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability.

Highlighting the problems in excluding the military from nuclear policy, the Kargil Report also noted that "the nuclear posture adopted by successive Prime Ministers had put the Indian Army at a disadvantage vis-à-vis its Pakistani counterpart. While the former was in the dark about India's nuclear capability, the latter as the custodian of Pakistani nuclear weaponry was fully aware of its own capability. Three former Chiefs of Army Staff had

²⁴⁹ Kargil Committee Report Executive Summary, February 25, 2000, <http://www.fas.org/news/india/2000/25indi1.htm#3>

expressed unhappiness about this asymmetric situation.”²⁵⁰ Moreover, the lack of an open dialogue between civilians and the military on nuclear strategy had the potential of harming the Indian military’s position in the management of nuclear weapons in future. At the end of the Kargil war, disturbed by the political neglect of its role in the management of nuclear weapons, the Indian military had expressed its dissatisfaction for not being included in the nuclear decision making loop. And so, to facilitate greater transparency in civil-military relations on nuclear strategy, the Kargil Report suggested the publication of a White Paper on India’s nuclear weapons program.²⁵¹

Besides making recommendations which supported the integration of the Indian armed forces in nuclear decisions, the Kargil Committee contained proposals for enhancing the military’s professional role in counter-insurgency operations. Members of the committee alerted the government to the inherent defects of using the military as a police force in counter-insurgency operations. In its recommendations, the committee noted that heavy involvement of the Indian Army in counterinsurgency operations had affected its military preparedness in defending the country against external aggression. The Committee further noted that such a situation has arisen because successive Governments had not developed a long-term strategy to deal with insurgency. Members of the committee feared that the military’s prolonged deployment in counterinsurgency operations would not only impede its training program in the future but could also lead to a military mindset which detracted from its primary function of fighting wars. The Ministry of Home Affairs, state governments and paramilitary forces has also frequently assumed that “the military would always be available

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

to combat insurgency.”²⁵² In addition, law enforcement agencies such as the Indian Paramilitary and Central Police Forces had not been adequately trained to deal counter-insurgency operations. This had led to an increased dependence on the military and “transformed it into an ordinary police force.”²⁵³ The Kargil Report suggested that to strengthen the military’s professional role, civilians would need to use the military in fighting conventional wars only.

The Kargil Committee’s recommendations outlining a professional role for the Indian military in future wars with Pakistan were an important development in Indian civil-military relations. But just as India’s political leadership began to follow through with the committee’s recommendations, Pakistani terrorists launched a second attack on India in 2001-2002, threatening the outbreak of yet another nuclear crisis in the subcontinent.

IV. The Military’s Critique of Political Objectives in a Conflict with Pakistan

On December 13, 2001, six individuals affiliated with a Pakistani militant organization, *Lashkar-e-Taiba*, attacked the Indian Parliament. The ensuing battle between assailants and Indian security forces claimed the lives of all six attackers and eight members of the Indian security forces. To prevent Pakistan from waging future attacks of a similar kind, the Indian military undertook a large scale mobilization of its troops along the Line of Control (LoC). The Indian military response to Pakistan’s brazen attack is popularly known as Operation Parakram.²⁵⁴ In response to the build-up of Indian military forces along the LoC, Pakistan announced to the world that its medium-range nuclear missiles were on high

²⁵² See Section IV of the Executive summary on the Kargil Report, CI Operations, Kargil and Integrated Manpower Policy, <http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/India/KargilRCB.html>

²⁵³ Ibid.

²⁵⁴ In some Indian strategic circles, the military mobilization during this crisis is considered to be the first full blown deployment since 1971.

alert. As the situation contained the possibility of a nuclear crisis between India and Pakistan, American officials intervened to alleviate Indian fears of a Pakistani nuclear strike. But despite American intervention, New Delhi maintained a deployed state of readiness along its borders claiming that Pakistan had done little to eradicate militancy in the subcontinent. The Indian military also remained resolute in its strategy against Pakistan. Chief of Army Staff, General Padmanabhan, noted that “any country that was mad enough to initiate a nuclear strike against India would be punished severely.”²⁵⁵ Despite Pakistani President General Pervez Musharraf’s assurances to end militancy, New Delhi maintained a posture of force and even went to the extent of testing a missile capable of delivering a nuclear warhead.²⁵⁶ On May 14, 2002, Pakistan launched a second set of attacks on an Indian army base in Kaluchek, Jammu and Kashmir. This attack killed over thirty innocent civilians. To make matters worse, a prominent Kashmiri separatist leader, Abdul Ghani Lone, was assassinated. By the end of May 2002, war appeared imminent and Indian troops deployments were strengthened along the border. The United States exerted diplomatic pressure on both India and Pakistan to end hostilities. By June 2002, there was a reduction in hostilities and by October 2002, the crisis was finally over.

India’s military encounter with Pakistan in 2001-2002 had significant ramifications for Indian civil-military relations. The crisis had generated robust military responses from the Indian Army. More importantly, during the crisis, the Indian military had become disappointed with political objectives. The Indian armed forces believed that there was a complete mismatch between strategic and tactical goals. The military underlined three basic

²⁵⁵ News Report, “We Are Prepared : Army Chief”, *The Hindu*, January 12, 2001.

²⁵⁶ For the most comprehensive account of the crisis, see, Lieutenant General V.K. Sood and Pravin Sawhney, *Operation Parakram: The War Unfinished* (New Delhi: Sage, 2003). For a clear description of the two phases of the crisis and for more on American diplomacy in the region, see, Sumit Ganguly and Devin Hagerty, *Fearful Symmetry: India-Pakistan Crisis in the Shadow of Nuclear Weapons* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003).

problems with political decisions during the crisis. First, the armed forces disagreed with civilians over adopting a defensive military posture against Pakistan. Second, New Delhi's indefinite stance on war objectives had significantly undermined Indian military operations.²⁵⁷ And, third, the military was unhappy with civilians for blaming the Indian armed forces for a slow response in fighting the militants.

Defending the military's position, Chief of Army Staff, General Padmanabhan noted that the Indian military's slow response during the crisis was a direct result of civilian indecisiveness rather than military unpreparedness. Reporting on poor civilian directions during the crisis, General Padmanabhan argued that "significant military gains could have been achieved in January 2002 had politicians made the decision to go to war. These objectives, he says, could have included "degradation of the other force, and perhaps the capture of disputed territory in Jammu and Kashmir. They were more achievable in January, less achievable in February, and even less achievable in March. By then, the balance of forces had gradually changed."²⁵⁸ Also, when Pakistan launched its attack on the Indian Parliament, the Indian army's strike formations were at peace locations and very little could have been done to mobilize large military forces across the Line of Control (LoC). General Padmanabhan argued that political strategies against Pakistan were faulty as the type of limited strikes civilians were pushing for would have been "totally futile."²⁵⁹ Addressing the military's hesitancy in applying limited war objectives, Padmanabhan stated that "if you really want to punish someone for something very terrible he has done, you smash him. You

²⁵⁷ Praveen Swami, "General Padmanabhan Mulls over Lessons of Parakram", *The Hindu*, February 5, 2004.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

destroy his weapons and capture his territory. War is a serious business and you don't go in just like that.”²⁶⁰

General Padmanabhan's criticism of civilian strategy during the crisis and similar sentiments expressed by serving and retired officers suggests that the biggest challenge for the Indian military was that India's political leadership had no clear plan on how to respond to a terrorist attack from Pakistan. Civilians also did not clearly understand the range of military options available or their potential consequences. On the military side, the crisis highlighted the need for a military doctrine which could go beyond just fighting a limited war. Pakistan's brazen and unpredictable attack on India had proven that a defense-oriented approach towards the enemy would be an ineffective military strategy in the long run. The Indian military was also concerned about the human cost of war. Political directives had resulted in a large number of military deaths. The Indian army had lost more men in Operation Parakram than in the Kargil conflict. During Operation Vijay (the codename for the Kargil war) 527 soldiers lost their lives. During Operation Parakram, more than 680 soldiers were killed.²⁶¹ Over 100 soldiers died while laying nearly a million mines near the border and as many as 110 soldiers died in road accidents. Despite such alarming statistics, the Indian government was unwilling to concede the extent of casualties. In fact, the government had projected the military operation as bloodless even though casualty figures suggested that the conflict had a human cost.²⁶²

General Padmanabhan's criticisms of political objectives during the 2001-2002 crisis was a way of asserting the military's expertise in adopting a more suitable military strategy against Pakistan. The significance of military expertise can be understood by looking at

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Sanjay Ahirwal, "Operation Parakram: Human Costs Outnumber Kargil", New Delhi, July 31, 2004, <http://www.defenceindia.com/26-jul-2k4/news32.html>

²⁶² Ibid.

recent events in American civil-military relations in the war on Iraq. Until recently, serving officers in the American military had been cautious in criticizing the Bush administration's military policies in Iraq. But as the situation worsened with mounting casualties on the American side, serving and retired generals began to discuss war objectives more openly. On October 12, 2006 the media reported that former commander in Iraq, retired General Ricardo Sanchez had criticized the Bush administration's Iraq policy, calling it a "nightmare."²⁶³ The American military's criticism of political objectives in the Iraq war further intensified after General Petraeus's testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2007. In his testimony, Petraeus described some of the major problems facing the American military in Iraq and expressed disappointment in the lack of progress toward political reconciliation in Iraq. And, in a letter addressed to his troops, Petraeus emphasized that although violence has diminished, "it has not worked out as we had hoped."²⁶⁴

A careful reading of military responses to political objectives in India and the United States suggests that the biggest concern for any professional military is to find appropriate methods which can match military objectives to political decisions. Civilian policies that do not reflect military objectives adequately, tend to compromise the military's professional expertise. Unless civilians can find ways to match military objectives with strategic policy, the military continues to remain critical of civilian policies. And, in an effort to introduce favorable civilian approaches to military strategy, the military uses a crisis or war to publicly criticize political decisions. By doing this, the military tries to transform civilian policy without overtly challenging civilian orders. The 2001-2002 India-Pakistan crisis had revealed

²⁶³ For various examples of the American military's criticism with war objectives in Iraq, see, New Report, "Ex General Calls Iraq a Nightmare", *Al Jazeera*, October 13, 2007; Thom Shanker, "Third Retired General Wants Rumsfeld Out", *New York Times*, April 10, 2006.

²⁶⁴ Michael Abramowitz and Karen De Young, "Petraeus Disappointed At Political State of Iraq", *The Washington Post*, September 8, 2007.

to the Indian military, the ineffectiveness of pursuing limited war objectives against Pakistan. In thinking about military responses to deal with a nuclear Pakistan, the Indian armed forces began taking a leading role in the formulation of new strategic doctrines which would privilege an offensive military strategy against Pakistan in future crises.

V. The Indian Military's Role in the Development of Strategic Doctrines

The Indian military's push for new strategic doctrines has to be understood within the context of certain events in Indian civil-military relations. On January 24, 2000, in an inaugural address to the Second International Conference on Asian Security in the 21st Century, Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes had introduced the Limited War Doctrine. Fernandes declared that the Kargil war was proof of India's ability to fight and win a limited war, at a time and place chosen by the aggressor.²⁶⁵ While the main tenets of a limited war doctrine remained unclear, Fernandes' statements had generated further thinking in strategic and military circles about the impact of nuclear weapons on conventional wars. Questions about the manner in which Indian military doctrines had to be tailored to deal with low-intensity conflicts and the Indian military's role in such operations became important in Indian strategic debates. As Swaran Singh notes, the creation of a limited war doctrine required sophisticated force structures which could address the entire gamut of contingencies ranging from a controlled nuclear war to maintaining civil defense awareness in suspected target locations.²⁶⁶ And in order to deal with various types of aggression –

²⁶⁵ Swaran Singh, "Kargil Conflict and India's Debate on Limited War", *Encounter*, 3:5 (2001), p.26. For more on this subject in the Indian context see, Swaran Singh, *Limited War* (New Delhi: Lancer, 1995).

²⁶⁶ Ibid. p.27.

nuclear, conventional, military and sub-conventional, the Indian Army would have to develop better war fighting techniques.²⁶⁷

It was also during the late 1990s that India's political leadership produced a formal nuclear doctrine which discussed the major features of India's nuclear capabilities.²⁶⁸ India's nuclear doctrine contained the following features. The doctrine enumerated a policy of minimum nuclear deterrence and no-first use. The nuclear command and control system would consist of a mix of land based, maritime and air capabilities.²⁶⁹ Additional guidelines published in 2003 indicated that nuclear weapons could be used to deter or retaliate against the use of biological or chemical weapons.²⁷⁰ While the nuclear doctrine established a framework for Indian nuclear policy, most scholars seem to agree that the nuclear doctrine was rather minimalist. In other words, sections of the nuclear doctrine were ambiguous and there was no detailed analysis of how civilians and the military would work together on nuclear decisions. But even though the nuclear doctrine lacked explicit references about the role of the military in future nuclear operations, civilian attempts to set up a command and control system had marked a crucial step forward in the military's inclusion in nuclear strategy. Discussing the importance of the Indian military in nuclear operations, Arundhati Ghose remarked that "even on the definition of "minimum" credible deterrent, civilians would need the military to come into the picture. Also, the military would insist on missiles

²⁶⁷ Ibid. p.28.

²⁶⁸ The timing of India's nuclear doctrine suggests that civilians had begun paying greater attention to nuclear strategy. The reasons for publishing a nuclear doctrine in the immediate post-Kargil period may have been two-fold. First, civilians may have felt the need to demonstrate a sense of seriousness on the issue of nuclearization especially since the Kargil war had made a nuclear scenario very real. Second, a nuclear doctrine which specified India's firm resolve in preventing future conflicts with Pakistan from spiraling out of control.

²⁶⁹ Indian Ministry of External Affairs, Draft Report of the National Security Advisory Board on Indian Nuclear Doctrine, August 17, 1999, URL: <http://meaindia.nic.in//disarmament/dm17Aug99.htm/>

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

being tested before they were willing to absorb such weapons into their arsenal. Hence, the real change in civil-military relations was on the nuclear side.”²⁷¹

For the military, the publication of an Indian nuclear doctrine demanded some serious thinking about deterrence strategies against Pakistan. Interestingly, the India-Pakistan conflicts of 1999 and 2002 had confirmed that the presence of nuclear weapons was making it harder to achieve political and military stability in the subcontinent. The Kargil war had demonstrated the failure of deterrence at the level of low intensity conflicts because the presence of nuclear weapons had encouraged conflict below the level of nuclear and conventional confrontation.²⁷² In such a situation while the existence of nuclear weapons had prevented total war, stability had been undermined by the possibility of sub-conventional conflicts or proxy wars.²⁷³ Some Indian experts also argued that post-weaponization, military stability had not been assured in South Asia because the presence of nuclear weapons had created possible scenarios for miscalculation and misperception of enemy responses.²⁷⁴ And so, India’s declared nuclear weapons status had created conditions for greater civil-military collaboration in keeping future military operations at the low intensity level.²⁷⁵ When asked about the effect of nuclear weapons on Indian civil-military relations, General Raghavan noted that “India’s no-first use doctrine would deter civilians from using these weapons in conflicts with Pakistan but this does not mean that the military had not thought seriously

²⁷¹ Author’s interview with former Indian Ambassador to the United Nations and Chief Negotiator on the CTBT, Arundhati Ghose, May 25, 2006.

²⁷² Kanti Bajpai, “The Fallacy of An Indian Deterrent” in Amitabh Mattoo, ed., *India’s Nuclear Deterrent : Pokhran II and Beyond* (New Delhi: Har Anand, 1998), p.178.

²⁷³ This is commonly referred to as the stability-instability paradox. For more on this issue, see, Glenn Snyder, “The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror”, in Paul Seabury, eds., *The Balance of Power* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1965). For a more detailed discussion of this concept in the South Asian context, see, Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

²⁷⁴ Scott Sagan, “The Perils of Proliferation in South Asia”, *Asian Survey*, 2001.

²⁷⁵ V.R. Raghavan, “The Kargil Conundrum”, *Hindu* (Madras), May 28, 1999.

enough about fighting with nuclear weapons.”²⁷⁶ General Raghavan’s statement suggests that in the aftermath of India’s overt nuclearization and subsequent conflicts with Pakistan, the importance of structured thinking in conducting future wars with Pakistan had become extremely critical. And more importantly, the Indian military was emerging as an important player in nuclear strategy.

The turn of the century witnessed the Indian military’s growing influence on creating sophisticated military doctrines in a war with Pakistan. The 2001-2002 encounters with Pakistan had left the Indian armed forces extremely skeptical with limited war objectives. The end of the crisis witnessed the Indian military’s efforts in developing doctrines which would be a more appropriate fit against a nuclear Pakistan. Accordingly, on April 28, 2004, the Indian Army officially introduced the Cold Start Doctrine. This new doctrine called for a “rapid deployment of integrated battle groups to conduct high intensity offensive operations.”²⁷⁷ The doctrine was the brainchild of senior military officers such as General Padmanabhan who wanted the Indian military to adopt a “blitzkrieg” like strategy in future operations which included all three services. While details of this doctrine remain classified, such doctrines had been used in NATO operations and included integrated groups in offensive military operations at highest levels.²⁷⁸ As part of this new strategy, the Indian military would have to undertake offensive military operations at the very outset of hostilities, short of a nuclear war. The objective of such a strategy was to deny Pakistan, or any other hostile South Asian state from counting on intervention by their external allies.

²⁷⁶ Author’s interview with former member of the Hans Blix Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction, and Director of the Delhi Policy Group, General V.R. Raghavan, April 27, 2006.

²⁷⁷ Captain Bharat Varma, “A Revolution in the Indian Mindset”, *Security Research Review*, 1:1 (2004), <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/>

²⁷⁸ For a very recent study on this subject see, Walter Ladwig, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars?: The Indian Army’s New Limited War Doctrine”, *International Security*, 32:3 (2007-2008); Subhash Kapila, “India’s New Cold Start War Doctrine Strategically Reviewed”, Paper No.991, *South Asia Analysis Group*, May 2004, http://www.saag.org/papers10/paper_991.html

Battle groups at various levels would be “task oriented in terms of varying composition of armor and infantry elements with integrated attack helicopters of the Army Aviation and the Air Force having close support from ground attack Air Force squadrons.”²⁷⁹ The battle groups could be used individually for limited operations or in conjunction with operations on a larger scale.

The Cold Start Doctrine was certainly different from previous Indian military doctrines as “a decisive military victory was no longer held as the only goal of any war against Pakistan.”²⁸⁰ The purpose of this doctrine “was to increase the range of options available to India for fighting and winning a war against Pakistan by moving away from an all or nothing strategy.”²⁸¹ The Indian military’s preference for an offensive military posture also implied that military intervention or pre-emptive military strikes would now be considered legitimate military options in South Asia.²⁸² To determine the effectiveness of this new strategy, the Indian Army tested the Cold Start doctrine in various military exercises. In early May 2005, the Indian army conducted an exercise called Vajra Shakti. This military exercise involved the use of an infantry division and an independent mechanized brigade of II Corps along with associated armored elements, integral to the Corps, to initiate offensive strikes at the outbreak of future hostilities. A year after conducting this military exercise, the Indian Army re-tested its Cold Start Doctrine in the summer of 2006. The second military exercise was code-named Sanghe-Shakti which not only tested the feasibility of the new doctrine but also the military’s capacity to respond to a nuclear, biological or chemical attack. Twenty thousand troops together with the Indian Air Force concluded the week-long exercise

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Y.I Patel, “Dig Vijay to Divya Astra – A Paradigm Shift in the Indian Army’s Doctrine”, *Bharat Rakshak Monitor*, 6:6 May-July 2004.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² For more on the Cold Start Doctrine see, Subhash Kapila, “India’s New “Cold Start” War Doctrine Strategically Reviewed”, SAAG Paper, No. 991, May 4, 2004. Also see, “Indian Army’s New “Cold Start” War Doctrine Strategically Reviewed-Part II: Additional Imperatives”, SAAG Paper, No.1013, June 1, 2006.

approximately 100 kilometers from the Indian border. At the end of the exercise, Lieutenant General Daulat Shekhawat, Commander of the elite II Corps (one of three key strike formations of the Indian Army) reported that there was room for a swift strike in case of a nuclear attack from Pakistan and that the exercise had validated the new military doctrine²⁸³ Moreover, senior military officials including Chief of Army Staff, General J.J. Singh, were jubilant at the integration which had been achieved between ground troops and the air force through the conduct of this exercise. Exercise Sanghe-Sakti appeared to have successfully achieved its objective of making all three services work together in the fulfillment of a doctrine which required a “quick response” against the enemy.

Interestingly, the impact of new strategic doctrines on Indian civil-military relations has been largely ignored in the Indian literature on the subject. Few Indian observers have paid attention to the implication of such new doctrines for Indian civil-military relations. While some scholars have discussed the significance of the Cold Start doctrine in terms of Indian responses to a Pakistani attack on India, other observers have focused on the merits of using a defense oriented Corps (better known as “Pivot Corps”) to launch offensive operations into enemy territory; a technique which, they argue, can be successfully employed by other strike formations.²⁸⁴ Yet, no one has tried to clarify what an offensive military strategy would mean for Indian civil-military relations.

The creation of the Cold Start Doctrine undoubtedly carries significant implications for Indian civil-military relations. First, a military doctrine which gives primacy to an offensive strategy reflects the military’s desire to disassociate itself from defensive military strategies that were used in the past. Scholars argue that for several decades, the Indian

²⁸³ News Report. “Indian Army Tests Its New Cold Start Doctrine”, May 19, 2006, <http://www.indiaenews.com/>

²⁸⁴ Kapila, opcit, n-282.

military had subscribed to a defensive war strategy at the behest of political directives. And, India's political leadership had always displayed a lack of political will in developing military power in accordance with the country's national security interests.²⁸⁵ By developing new doctrines, the military was not only trying to break away from antiquated military strategies but was also displaying the seriousness in taking effective steps against any future attacks from Pakistan. Underlining the importance of the military's role in developing such new doctrines, Indian nuclear expert and member of the National Security Advisory Board, Bharat Karnad, notes that "it is only now that the military is getting into nuclear matters."²⁸⁶ This is an exciting time in Indian civil-military relations as the "military is trying to define a role for itself."²⁸⁷ "From the 1990s, the Indian army had talked about the space for conventional war in a nuclear environment. And if the military was going to start a conventional war, the Cold Start Doctrine was a way of telling the government to start thinking beforehand."²⁸⁸ Indeed, the military's attempt to develop new doctrines was a way of asserting their professional judgment and expertise in strategic affairs.

A second implication of the military's push for new strategic doctrines is the shift from a clear separation in civil-military responsibilities to a convergence in civil-military functions. Charles Moskos notes that a convergence in civil-military functions is often the direct consequence of changes induced by sophisticated weapons systems.²⁸⁹ The American experience with nuclear technology indicates that the presence of nuclear weapons gave rise "not just to a need for technical proficiency but also for men trained in modern and

²⁸⁵ Subhash Kapila, "Indian Army Validates Its Cold Start Doctrine", June 7, 2005, <http://intellibriefs.blogspot.com/2005/06/indian-army-validates-its-cold-start.html>

²⁸⁶ Author's interview with former member of the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), Bharat Karnad, New Delhi, April 26, 2007.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Charles Moskos, "The Emergent Military: Civil, Traditional or Plural", *The Pacific Sociological Review*, 16:2 (1973), p.267.

managerial skills.”²⁹⁰ As America developed a sophisticated nuclear weapons arsenal, the military began playing a major role in the management of such weapons. Moreover, the possible use of nuclear weapons in a war with the Soviet Union introduced fundamental changes in the nature of American warfare. Various strategic doctrines began to be built around deterrence theory. But while nuclear capability was the bedrock of deterrence strategies, “to be effective, the American military had to exhibit a capability and credibility in pursuing policies other than nuclear war.”²⁹¹ The need to make the threat of a nuclear war credible, consequently introduced a complex dynamic in American civil-military relations as American political leaders had to work together with the military in the fulfillment of their political objectives.²⁹² More importantly, besides fighting a nuclear war, an effective deterrence strategy also required the American military to be trained in a variety of non-nuclear conflicts which demanded further civil-military collaboration. Thus, in the United States, the presence of nuclear weapons produced a convergence in civil-military functions and raised serious questions about the blurring in the division of labor between civil-military domains.

In the Indian case, military encounters with Pakistan from the 1980s had always contained a possibility for escalation to the nuclear level. By the late 1990s, new military doctrines which could include the strategic use of nuclear weapons in a war with Pakistan had become extremely critical. But the introduction of new strategic doctrines also required a more careful review of civil-military objectives. Offensive military doctrines demand a structured and speedy political decision-making process with sophisticated crisis-management procedures so that military operations remain unrestricted, and the element of

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Sam C. Sarkesian, “Military Professionalism and Civil-Military Relations in the West”, *International Political Science Review*, 2:3 (1981), p.288.

²⁹² Ibid.

surprise, vital to such doctrines, is not lost.²⁹³ Accordingly, in any future war or crisis, the Indian army's offensive operations would require regular and unrestricted civil-military collaboration on collection, collation and assessment of enemy information. This, of course, will integrate the military more deeply into the political decision making process. And, instead of working separately, the military can help civilians in executing a successful offensive strategy.

But as the American case demonstrates, the possibility for a convergence in civil-military functions significantly undermines the division of labor between civilians and the military. The success of the Indian military in the development of new doctrines in future will depend on the Indian political leadership's willingness to accept such new doctrines. For civilians, the introduction of offense-oriented military doctrines could very well open up possibilities for a reduction in the effectiveness of civilian control. Given the "quick response time" needed as part of this strategy, combat commanders would have to exercise far greater freedom for independent initiative than would be deemed acceptable by the civilians.²⁹⁴ More importantly, to make the new doctrine functional without compromising civilian control, there would be a greater need to develop institutions which support a rapid response doctrine. India's command and control system would also have to be sophisticated enough to withstand an increase in decision making activity generated by the nature of intense combat operations. And so, the biggest challenge for civilians in accepting new military doctrines is the likelihood of a convergence in civil-military functions. And, as long as there exists a possibility for future wars with Pakistan in the shadow of nuclear weapons, a clear separation in civil-military functions might be impossible to achieve.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ For more on how the civilians and the military would need to collaborate on executing the strategy, see, Y.I. Patel, "Dig Vijay to Divya Astra: A Paradigm Shift in the Indian Army's Doctrine", *Bharat Rakshak Monitor*, 6:6 (2004).

CHAPTER 5

The Indian Military's Role in Unconventional Operations

I. Introduction

The development of nuclear weapons is not the only issue that raised serious questions about the division of labor between civilians and the military in India. The Indian military's role in counter-insurgency operations is also an important part of the study of Indian civil-military relations as the outbreak of secessionist movements in various Indian states from the 1980s significantly influenced the Indian military's war fighting capacity. As the military's involvement in unconventional operations increased the scope of its military functions, important questions were raised about the military's professionalism. In this chapter, I examine the Indian military's role in unconventional operations in four separate cases: Punjab, Sri Lanka, Kashmir and Siachen. The last section discusses the relevance of these four cases in addressing issues of military professionalism.

II. The Indian Army in Punjab

From the early 1980s, the Indian state of Punjab became the theater for a virulent insurgent movement spearheaded by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Ironically, Bhindranwale rose to power with the assistance of the Congress government in the late 1970s. Bhindranwale had been picked by Sanjay Gandhi, son of Indira Gandhi to weaken the post-1977 anti-Congress coalition in Punjab.²⁹⁵ Sanjay Gandhi assisted the rise of Bhindranwale by creating a party called the Dal Khalsa which advocated the transformation of Punjab into an

²⁹⁵ Apurba Kundu, "The Indian Armed Forces' Sikh and Non-Sikh Opinions of Operation Blue Star", *Pacific Affairs*, 67:1 (1994), p.50.

independent Sikh state of Khalistan.²⁹⁶ Bhindranwale developed a strategy based on violence with an intention to foster communal unrest in the state of Punjab. The Dal Khalsa wanted to force Hindus out of Punjab and create a backlash that could unite the Sikh community in building a new homeland. But despite growing evidence of Bhindranwale's support to militant activities, the Congress party turned a blind eye to his insidious agenda only to secure his political support. The protection provided by the Congress government helped further the Dal Khalsa's sponsorship of terrorism until it began posing a serious threat to the peace and stability of Punjab.

The situation reached a climax on April 23, 1983 when the Deputy Inspector General of the Punjab Police, A.S. Atwal was shot dead outside the Golden Temple, the holy shrine of the Sikhs in Amritsar. This incident was followed by the hijacking of buses and trains and the widespread killing of innocent civilians.²⁹⁷ Bhindranwale and his cohorts later seized the Golden Temple and opened indiscriminate fire on the Central Reserve Police Force. As tensions escalated, Indira Gandhi requested the assistance of the Indian army on June 2, 1984.²⁹⁸ On June 5, 1984, the military launched an operation codenamed Blue Star to evict Sikh militants who had occupied the Golden Temple.²⁹⁹ On the military front, there were two main players in the campaign to flush out the Sikh militants: General Sundarji, who at the time was General-Officer-Commanding (GOC) Western Command, and Major General K.S. Brar, General-Officer-Commanding (GOC) 9 Infantry Division. Under their guidance, the Indian military's elite forces also known as Para Commandos entered the temple premises and stormed the main entrance. As operations picked up momentum, the

²⁹⁶ On the rise of separatism in Punjab see, Rajiv A. Kapur, *Sikh Separatism: The Politics of Faith* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishers, 1987).

²⁹⁷ Government of India, White Paper on the Punjab Agitation, Annexure VII, pp.110-162.

²⁹⁸ Kundu, *opcit*, n-1, p.52.

²⁹⁹ For an excellent commentary on Operation Blue Star, see Lieutenant General K.S. Brar, *Operation Blue Star: The True Story* (New Delhi: Sangam Books, 1993).

Indian forces suffered heavy casualties following which General Sundarji appealed to the Indian government to allow the military to use tank fire to neutralize the defenses. A bloody campaign ensued in which the Indian army successfully destroyed the Sikh militant base. For the military, casualties were very high: 4 officers and 79 soldiers were killed and 12 officers and 237 soldiers were wounded. Soon after the successful execution of operations, the state of Punjab was placed under military rule. But the continued military occupation of the Golden Temple quickly produced a sense of alienation within the Indian military's Sikh regiments.³⁰⁰

The Sikh soldiers questioned the government's decision to use the military as an instrument to end militancy in Punjab. Although a number of Sikh officers had participated in the campaign to evict Sikh militants from the Golden Temple, the episode had caused a sense of "humiliation and anger among all Sikhs".³⁰¹ The "army's entry into the Golden Temple was seen as a sacrilege and Indira Gandhi's handling of the situation had displayed a sense of drift."³⁰² The most horrific effect of this episode was the outbreak of a series of mutinies within the Sikh troops of the Indian army. The mutinies took the shape of eight separate rebellions. For instance, in the north-east Indian state of Bihar, a thousand Sikh soldiers went on rampage, killing their Hindu commander, and traveled to New Delhi chanting, "Death to Mrs Gandhi."³⁰³ Robert Hardgrave notes that "never in the thirteen years since Independence and the trauma of partition had India faced more difficult times

³⁰⁰ Ibid, p.134.

³⁰¹ Robert Hardgrave, "India in 1984: Confrontation, Assassination and Succession", *Asian Survey*, 25:2 (1985), p.133.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Ibid. p.133.

than in 1984.”³⁰⁴ The presence of Sikh mutineers within the military “introduced an element of distrust within the military that would have far reaching consequences.”³⁰⁵

Indeed, Operation Bluestar had generated negative attitudes in army ranks towards government policy. And, such negative attitudes had been more pronounced within the cadre of Sikh officers. Assessing Sikh and non-Sikh officers’ opinions on Blue Star, Apurba Kundu notes that the military blamed the central government for the growing dissatisfaction in military ranks. When asked about the role of the Central government in creating the circumstances where the army had to be called in, 34% of all officers and 56% of Sikh officers “blamed the central government’s decisions for deterioration in law and order.”³⁰⁶ Also, when asked if Operation Blue Star was an absolute necessity, 36% of all officers and 88% of Sikh officers believed that the operation was “not necessary.”³⁰⁷ Survey results of Sikh and non-Sikh officers’ opinions in the Indian military point to a number of important problems in Indian civil-military relations. First, India’s political leadership had been too quick to use the military in dealing with the Sikh militants. Instead of using the military, civilians could have requested the assistance of law enforcement agencies such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF). Second, survey results indicated major military disagreements on the political objectives of the operation. For instance, many non-Sikh officers in the military argued that even while military action was felt necessary, the amount of force used had been too excessive.³⁰⁸ But more importantly, the survey results indicate that the Indian military had taken serious objection to the manner in which civilians had handled the Punjab crisis. The military’s objections to flawed political decisions were obvious in the growing

³⁰⁴ Robert Hardgrave, “India in 1984: Confrontation, Assassination and Succession”, *Asian Survey*, 25:2 (1985), p.131.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Kundu, opict, n-1, Table 1

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, p.58.

sense of alienation among Sikh soldiers. The feelings of alienation became so extreme that it finally culminated in the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by two of her very own Sikh bodyguards.

To better understand the military's lack of faith in political decisions during Operation Bluestar, one should ask the following question: when is it appropriate to use the military in situations which require the maintenance of law and order? The course of events during Operation Blue Star suggests that irresponsible use of the military by India's political leadership had produced irresponsible reactions from the military. Also, an excessive demonstration of force by the Indian army during the operations had created a rather hostile view of the Indian military within the general public as well as the Sikh community. The Indian army, however, believed that such hostile public perceptions of the military's role in Punjab could have been avoided had politicians not used the military in a reckless manner. The Indian army also believed that erroneous political judgments had incited a majority of the Sikhs not only against the government's policy but also against the military itself. Had the Congress government not supported the rise of Bhindranwale, the military could have avoided hostile reactions from the Sikh community. Thus, Operation Blue Star highlighted serious military objections to political directions which had led to deliberate cases of military insubordination within the Sikh regiments.

III. The Indian Army in Peace Keeping Operations in Sri Lanka

A second case involves the Indian military's peace-keeping efforts in the neighboring country of Sri Lanka. The Indian military's involvement in Sri Lanka was felt necessary to curb the rise of a Tamil separatist movement that had begun to take shape in the early 1980s. When the Sinhalese government clamped down on the political freedom and rights of Indian

Tamil minorities, there was huge opposition to government rule. This gave rise to a Tamil separatist movement. And, within a few years, a number of militant groups such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (hereafter LTTE) mushroomed in the Jaffna Peninsula. These groups unleashed a series of vicious attacks against Sri Lankan armed forces. Fighting between the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and the militant groups continued for several years with no peaceful solution in sight.

In the summer of 1987, the Sri Lankan army launched a massive offensive against the LTTE. As the Sri Lankan forces made significant military gains in the Jaffna Peninsula, the situation began influencing India's security environment. The Indian government became increasingly concerned about the future of Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka. Indian political leaders empathized with the Tamils because the Indian state of Tamil Nadu had a significant Tamil population. Tamils were seen as brothers suffering under an oppressive Sri Lankan government. This is why New Delhi decided to extend its political support to the Tamil minority representative groups.³⁰⁹ During the first phase of the anti-militant campaign (1983-1987), New Delhi tried to resolve the civil unrest by mediating between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil separatists. But to everyone's surprise, Indian political leaders began allowing Tamil separatists a safe haven and even went to the extent of supporting the operation of dozens of training camps for Tamil guerillas in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu!³¹⁰ Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Colombo marked the second phase of India's involvement in Sri Lanka. During Gandhi's visit, leaders of both countries signed the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord on July 29, 1987. As part of this agreement, India was required to send an 'Indian Peace Keeping Force' (IPKF) to the northern and eastern areas of Sri Lanka.³¹¹ But

³⁰⁹ "Indian Air Force in Sri Lanka", <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/IAF/History/1987IPKF/Chapter1.html>

³¹⁰ Devin Hagerty, India's Regional Security Doctrine", *Asian Survey*, 31:4 (1991), p.353.

³¹¹ "Accord, Airlift and Discord", <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/IAF/History/1987IPKF/Chapter2.html>

the start of the IPKF operations in Sri Lanka produced a very different outcome than what had been previously intended. The Indian forces found themselves at the receiving end of a violent backlash from radical Sinhalese nationals, following which a series of military clashes broke out between the IPKF and the LTTE endangering the peace process.³¹² As a result, from 1989 onwards (the last phase of Indian involvement), New Delhi decided to withdraw the IPKF forces from Sri Lanka. By March 1990, most of the Indian soldiers had returned back to India despite continued fighting in Sri Lanka.³¹³ The role of the IPKF in Sri Lanka is important not because of the Indian military's successful attempts to curb violence. Instead the course of the IPKF operations had exposed grave problems with the way in which Indian political leaders had used the military to achieve its political objectives.

Perhaps the most egregious defect in India's political approach was the way in which Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had used the Indian intelligence agency, RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) and a number of former Indian military personnel to help train Tamil insurgents at various base camps in Sri Lanka. Gandhi had justified such a strategy to prevent the rise of resurgent separatism in Tamil Nadu.³¹⁴ And so, when civilians changed their approach and decided to use the Indian military against those very same insurgent groups, Indira Gandhi's "true intentions" towards the Tamil insurgents appeared rather "ambiguous."³¹⁵ Gandhi's apparent confusion in determining a suitable strategy to fight the Tamil insurgents suggests that Indian political leaders had deployed the military without a careful plan of action. Moreover, it is not entirely clear whether the IPKF forces were meant to work as enforcers of peace or mediators of peace. Rupesinghe argues that a major

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Devin Hagerty, "India's Regional Security Doctrine", *Asian Survey*, 31:4 (1991), p.353.

³¹⁴ Ibid, p.354. Also see, Shelton U. Kodikara, "The Continuing Crisis in Sri Lanka: The JVP, the Indian Troops, and Tamil Politics", *Asian Survey*, 29:7 (1989), p.718.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

problem with political decisions was that “the government of India did not conceive of a situation where its armed forces, initially welcomed by the Tamil people as their protectors, would be drawn into a protracted armed conflict with the LTTE. The intransigence on part of the LTTE and misperceptions by the IPKF of its own mandate were the key factors that led to the outbreak of hostilities. And when this happened, the IPKF did not have any contingency plans to minimize the loss of lives.”³¹⁶ Rupesinghe’s observation implies that the initial objective of IPKF operations did not involve fighting the insurgents. Instead the IPKF was supposed to work as an external mediator in settling the dispute between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE. But the ambiguity in Indian policy drew the Indian forces into a direct confrontation with the LTTE.

India’s political strategy of aiding Tamil separatists during the initial phase of the campaign had clearly backfired. In fact, civilian assistance to the recruitment and training of Tamil separatists had seriously affected the Indian military’s professional ethic. The Indian military felt that it had been used irresponsibly. Moreover, the Indian army had also felt inadequately prepared in dealing with a counter-insurgency operation abroad as it was already involved in fighting various secessionist movements within India. As a result, the Indian military became resistant to executing an effective counter-insurgency doctrine. Observing the military’s resistance to such strategies, Rajanayagam notes that “the frustration and growing sense of purposelessness among the Indian soldiers, who were not used to this kind of fighting and suffered heavy casualties, showed in their senseless retaliatory actions against the civilian population.”³¹⁷ In an interview to *The Frontline*, a former commander of the IPKF operations in Sri Lanka also observed that “when the IPKF

³¹⁶ Kumar Rupesinghe, “Ethnic Conflicts in South Asia: The Case of Sri Lanka and the Indian Peace Keeping Force”, *Journal of Peace Research*, 25:4 (1988), p.350.

³¹⁷ Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, “The Tamil Militants: Before the Accord and After”, *Pacific Affairs*, 61 (1988-89), p.604.

first went in, there was great public euphoria for two months. But the moment the fighting broke out in earnest and the body bags started coming home, the euphoria came down. Over a period there were dissenting voices on the government's decision, and indeed against the IPKF. One major political party placed its opposition to the involvement of the IPKF in its election manifesto. This seriously impaired the morale of the Indian soldiers fighting in the jungles of Sri Lanka.”³¹⁸

The lack of political guidance had also generated further confusion in military objectives with regard to the use of force. Disagreements between Chief of Army Staff, General Sundarji, and GOC-in-C, General Dipender Singh became frequent. While Singh was afraid that the use of force would involve the armed forces in an insurgency-like situation for the next twenty years, Sundarji “admonished” Singh for adopting “a defeatist attitude.”³¹⁹ Instead Sundarji had issued strict orders to the Indian military to use force against the LTTE. Indian scholars have routinely criticized Sundarji's actions in Sri Lanka. For instance, J.N. Dixit concurs that Sundarji “rejected the realistic advice given to him by Dipender Singh.”³²⁰ Maroof Raza also notes that “Sundarji's assertion to Rajiv Gandhi during the IPKF operations was that the military could pull it off. But 54 Division was not prepared and Major General Dipender Singh cannot be blamed because the brief was wrong due to Sundarji's over-assessment.”³²¹ The tenor of public criticisms leveled against General Sundarji suggests that he may have over-stepped his boundaries. While it is not clear whether General Sundarji shared the political establishment's view on the use of force against the LTTE, he had been guilty of portraying an optimistic picture of military objectives in Sri Lanka.

³¹⁸ “Of Forgotten Fighters”, *Frontline*, 16:15 (1999).

³¹⁹ Lieutenant General Dipender Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: South Asia Books, 1992), p.84.

³²⁰ J.N. Dixit, *Assignment Colombo* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1998), p. 212

³²¹ Author's interview with Indian Defense Analyst, Maroof Raza, New Delhi, Jun 23, 2006.

Yet, Sundarji's attempts to control the course of military operations can be understood as a way of asserting his military expertise in the absence of political guidance. Kanti Bajpai calls Sundarji's assertion, "a classic example of the military having expertise and providing influence."³²² Even though Sundarji may have over-assessed the situation, he was using the military's expertise in telling the civilians what to do. Thus, the IPKF operations in Sri Lanka had not only demonstrated confusion in political and military objectives to fight the Tamil militants, but had also revealed the military's influence in shaping the course of operations.

IV. The Indian Army's Counter-Insurgency Operations in Kashmir

By the late 1980s, the Indian army had been engaged in counter-insurgency operations in Punjab and Sri Lanka. But the Indian military had to face a much more serious threat in the rise of a separatist movement in Kashmir from the 1990s. From 1983 to 1987, the people of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) had grown disenchanted with the politics of the state government. In 1986, the state's National Conference Party (NC), which was widely accused of corruption, struck a deal with the Indian Congress Party. At the same time, a new party called the Muslim United Front (MUF) was formed. This party had a good chance of winning the 1987 state elections and attracted a large number of Kashmiri groups including pro-independence activists, disenchanted Kashmiri youth and pro-Pakistan Jama'at-I Islami. However, the 1987 state elections were deliberately rigged leading to the electoral victory of the National Conference Party. Following the NC victory, hundreds of MUF leaders were arrested. After the elections, militants belonging to the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) mounted major attacks on the state government and resorted to the bombings of

³²² Author's interview with Headmaster, Doon School, Kanti Bajpai, New Delhi, June 12, 2006.

government buildings and transportation. During this time, the Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) wing of the Pakistani army seized the opportunity and began supporting a secessionist movement by providing a huge supply of arms and foreign mercenaries to the disaffected Kashmiri youth. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force (BSF), the only two agencies which could effectively maintain peace and order in the region, failed to tame the violence that was spreading across the entire state.

In 1989, New Delhi requested the assistance of the Indian Army to help local agencies fight the insurgents and maintain law and order.³²³ The Indian military's role in fighting Kashmir insurgents expanded in the early 1990s when an elite army unit called the Rashtriya Rifles was specifically created for counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir. In 1995, the Special Task Force (STF) and Special Operations Group (SOG) were also created from within the J&K Police and were required to assist the Rashtriya Rifles in counter-insurgency operations. And so, from the 1990s, the Indian military became extensively involved in fighting Kashmiri insurgents and frequent fighting between Pakistani and Indian forces became a common phenomenon during the 1990s.

What is important to note is that despite the success of the Indian army in fighting Kashmiri insurgents, the extensive use of Indian military forces in counter-insurgency operations, over a decade, took a heavy toll on the Indian armed forces. More specifically, the military's continuous use in a protracted conflict in Kashmir began to significantly affect its war-fighting capacity. Several years of fighting Kashmiri insurgents had drained the Indian armed forces of men and resources leading to a situation where there were not enough

³²³ For a variety of different sources on the demands for secession in Kashmir and the Indian government's response, see, Sumit Ganguly, "Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay", *International Security*, 21:2 (1996); Major General Arjun Ray, *Kashmir Diary* (New Delhi: Manas, 1996); Manoj Joshi, *The Lost Rebellion* (New Delhi: Penguin, 1997); L.N. Subramanian, "CI Operations in Jammu and Kashmir", *Bharat Rakshak Monitor*, 3:2 (2000).

troops in the army that could effectively continue to engage in such operations. Indian defense journalist Rahul Bedi notes that there were a number of serious problems with the continuous use of the Indian military in counter-insurgency operations. First, military officials claimed that the Rashtriya Rifles and paramilitary forces had become “overstretched” reducing their capacity in dealing with a low intensity conflict. Second, as the Line of Control required constant supervision, a new doctrinal approach which could work effectively against frequent Pakistani incursions was felt necessary. The demands for a new strategy were also important in order to “attenuate the army’s resources and resilience.”³²⁴ Third, with no end in sight to the armed rebellion, peacetime duty tours of infantry troops decreased to around two years generating indiscipline in the ranks of soldiers.³²⁵ Many infantry units which had completed at least two or three counter-insurgency duties in Kashmir were being recalled for successive duties.³²⁶ Such frequent deployments had led to “mental breakdowns” and several instances of “fraggin” in which soldiers had shot dead their comrades before killing themselves.³²⁷

Not only had the military’s participation in counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir significantly affected the morale and discipline of Indian troops, but more importantly, new reports documenting human rights abuses committed by Indian security forces further tarnished the professional reputation of the Indian army. To add a caveat, most allegations of human rights violations implicated the Indian Border Security Forces and not the entire Indian army. In 2006, the Human Rights Watch report published shocking findings which pointed to several cases of extrajudicial executions by Indian security

³²⁴ Rahul Bedi, “India’s Over Stretched Forces”, BBC News, August 15, 1999, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/421359.stm

³²⁵ Ibid.

³²⁶ Ibid.

³²⁷ Ibid.

forces.³²⁸ Explaining the trend towards extrajudicial executions, the Asia Director of Human Rights Watch, Brad Adams observed that the immunity given to security forces deployed in Kashmir had encouraged them to commit numerous violations.³²⁹ Adams said that Indian security forces had “committed torture, and arbitrary detentions and had executed Kashmiris in fake-encounter killings.”³³⁰ Police and military officials, of course, justified extrajudicial executions on grounds that keeping hardcore militants in detention would be a security risk.³³¹ But despite several cases of human rights violations, the number of Indian security forces in Kashmir continued to grow over the years. By the beginning of 1995, over 400,000 troops were reportedly deployed in Kashmir, including eight army divisions and other independent brigades across the state. And “at least fifty-six of 148 battalions of Border Security Forces - each including one thousand men -were engaged in Kashmir.”³³² Interestingly, the Indian military became increasingly reluctant to participate in such operations. The reasons for such military thinking are discussed in the last section of this chapter.

V. The Indian Military’s Opposition to Withdrawal in Siachen

The Siachen Glacier is located in the eastern Karakoram range in the Himalayan Mountains along the India-Pakistan border. The conflict between India and Pakistan over the control of Siachen was the result of a cartographic dispute. During 1947, when the territories of India and Pakistan were delineated, the Line of Control (LoC) excluded the Siachen glacier on grounds of inhospitable terrain. The United Nations supervised Cease File

³²⁸ BBC News Report, “India Admits to Kashmir Abuses”, September 12, 2006.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Mukhtar Ahmad, “Rights Group Blasts Kashmir Abuse”, September 12, 2006, <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/asiapcf/09/12/kashmir/index.html>

³³¹ Op cit, n-34.

³³² The Federation of American Scientists, Intelligence Resource Program, “Border Security Forces”, <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/india/home/bsf.htm>

Line (CFL) of 1949 extended “from the international border between India and Pakistan near Chaamb in Jammu and Kashmir in a rough arc that ran nearly 800 kilometers north and then north east to a point called NJ982.”³³³ But the 1949 Karachi Agreement and the 1972 Simla Agreement merely mentioned that from the NJ9842 location on the LoC, the boundary would proceed “thence north to the glaciers.”³³⁴

Due to a poorly marked boundary, confusion over who controls the piece of land in and around Siachen became a major source of tension between India and Pakistan for several decades. India has used this line to claim that most of the Siachen glacier is lawfully part of its territory. On the other hand, Pakistan has rejected India’s interpretation on grounds that the 1949 agreement contained no reference to the CFL beyond NJ9842.³³⁵ India and Pakistan came very close to war in 1984 when the Indian army launched Operation Meghdoot and Pakistan responded with large-scale troop deployments. What followed was a bitter contest between the two armies in capturing the Siachen heights. The Indians gained control over most of the area and the Pakistanis were pushed back to the Salto Ridge. The two northern passes - Sia La and Bilafond La - were also secured by India. Since the 1984 confrontation, Pakistan launched several attempts to displace Indian forces but such attempts were met with little success. The line where Indian and Pakistani troops are presently holding onto their respective posts is commonly referred to as the Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL). But one of the tactical problems facing both the Indian and Pakistani armies was that the Pakistanis were unable get up to the crest of the Salto Ridge and the Indians could not abandon their strategic high posts due to fear of losing control over these positions. A cease fire went into effect in 2003 and since then, New

³³³ John Cherian, “Spotlight on Siachen”, *Frontline*, 16:15 (1999).

³³⁴ Maroof Raza, “The Siachen Glacier Dispute”, *USI Journal*, October-December, 2002, p.2.

³³⁵ Cherian, *opcit*, n-333.

Delhi has been trying to negotiate with Pakistan over a decision to withdraw troops from the region. The Defense Secretaries of both India and Pakistan last met in August 2004 to discuss various proposals which included the demilitarization of the glacier and the creation of a 'zone of disengagement'.³³⁶

It is in this context that the Indian military has emerged as an important player in the decision to maintain troop levels in Siachen. The Indian army has argued against the withdrawal of forces from the Siachen glacier because it is opposed to any agreement which does not include authentication of boundaries. The military has argued that if Pakistan reneged on its commitments and occupied the glacier, then it would become impossible for the Indian forces to re-capture the Siachen heights.³³⁷ The Indian military's open challenge to political decisions on Siachen have been noted by various journalists and defense experts. Siddharth Srivastava observes that India has never witnessed a tradition of the armed forces questioning the democratically elected civilian executive authority because in the past, the armed forces quietly executed their duties despite rumors of discontent.³³⁸ But the Indian army's clear refusal to comply with civilian policy on the Siachen issue is one area where the military is just not accepting civilian interference. Senior Indian military officials have also made their criticisms amply clear in a variety of public forums. For instance, Western Air Command Chief, A.K. Singh has argued that India and Pakistan need to demarcate boundaries before making any decision on demilitarizing the Siachen Glacier because such a decision would prevent Pakistan from making any counter-claims on India. Similarly, another high-ranking military officer has ruled out a compromise with Pakistan over troop withdrawals on grounds that the Siachen glacier is of strategic and diplomatic significance to

³³⁶ Bharat Bhushan, "Tulbul, SirCreek and Siachen: Competitive Methodologies", *South Asian Journal*, January-March, 2005.

³³⁷ Sharad Joshi, "A Ridge Too Far", *Foreign Policy in Focus*, November 7, 2007.

³³⁸ Siddharth Srivastava, "India's Army Digs in Over Siachen", *Asia Times*, November 16, 2006.

India. The officer claims that the two sides would have to mark current troop positions formally before any withdrawal can be considered.³³⁹ As the Indian military refuses to compromise its position on Siachen, it has become extremely hard for civilians to ignore what the military is telling them. It appears that until Indian political leaders can reach a mutually acceptable agreement with the Indian forces, successful talks on the withdrawal of Indian troops from Siachen, will be difficult to achieve.

VI. The Civil-Military Divide and the Critical Issue of Military Professionalism

When examined together, the Indian military's role in unconventional operations in Punjab, Sri Lanka, Kashmir and Siachen are extremely important cases for Indian civil-military relations as all four cases share a common theme: the military's efforts to move beyond its professional boundaries. The Indian military's attempt to expand its jurisdiction must be examined within the context of the Indian army's historical role in unconventional operations and its over-extended use by civilians in such operations in later years.

The Indian military's assistance to civilians during partition is well documented.³⁴⁰ The specific role performed by the Indian military during partition was commonly understood as aid to civil power. As partition was a period of immense turmoil, the army was required to aid and assist the political administration in the maintenance of law and order. Also, when civil administration had completely broken down, the Indian army was the only instrument which could restore law and order. Through its experience during partition, the Indian military developed a remarkable character and made a strong contribution to

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ For British literature on partition, see Alan Campbell-Johnson, *Mission with Mountbatten* (London: Hale, 1982); Penderel Moon, *Divide and Quit* (Delhi: Oxford, 1998); C.H. Philips and M.D. Wainwright, eds. *The Partition of India: Policies and Perspectives 1935-1947* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1970). For an Indian perspective see, V.P. Menon, *Transfer of Power in India* (Bombay: Orient Longman, 1957); P.N. Chopra eds., *Towards Freedom: Documents on the Movement for Independence in India, 1937* (Delhi: Oxford, 1986).

nation building at a time of national instability.³⁴¹ Ever since then, decisions to involve the army in aid to civil operations have remained a civilian prerogative and the Indian army has played a major role in providing assistance to civilians during times of war and natural calamities.³⁴² But over time, changes in the nature of external and internal threats expanded the Indian military's role to also include counter-insurgency operations. From the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the Indian army had begun fighting Mizo rebels in the north-east and in the 1980s and 1990s it became involved in fighting Sikh rebels in Punjab, Kashmir separatists in J&K, and Tamil guerillas in Sri Lanka.³⁴³ Commenting on the magnitude of the military's role in "aid to civil" operations, General S.K. Sinha notes that "between 1961 and 1970, the Indian army had to be called out in aid to civil power on no fewer than 476 occasions."³⁴⁴

But one of the major problems in developing a well structured counter-insurgency doctrine was that the Indian military had been primarily trained to fight conventional wars. In the 1960s, India had fought a conventional war with China and a war with Pakistan in 1965. Moreover, the 1971 Indo-Pak war had "highlighted the continuing threat of large scale conventional wars in South Asia."³⁴⁵ Even though civilians set up several infantry battalions to fight rebel guerillas in the north-east, these battalions were disbanded in the 1970s due to organizational problems, after which the army made "no further attempts at doctrinal or organizational innovation for counter-insurgency operations for almost two decades."³⁴⁶ The situation, however, changed in the late 1980s when separatist movements in Punjab,

³⁴¹ S.K.Sinha, "Indian Army Before and After Independence and Its Role in Nation Building", *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, CXXVI: 526, Oct-Dec 1996.

³⁴² S.K.Sinha, *Of Matters Military*, (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1980), p.151.

³⁴³ Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Restoring Normalcy: The Evolution of the Indian Army's Counterinsurgency Doctrine", *Strategic Affairs*, August 16, 2001.

³⁴⁴ Major General S.K. Sinha, "In Aid of Civil Power", *USI Journal*, pp.116-123.

³⁴⁵ Rajesh Rajagopalan, "Innovations in Counter-Insurgency: The Indian Army's Rashtriya Rifles", *Contemporary South Asia*, 13:1 (2004), p.26.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

Kashmir, and Sri Lanka demanded the military's immediate attention. As a consequence, the military's commitment to counter-insurgency operations increased dramatically and by the late 1990s, 44% of the Indian army's infantry battalions were engaged in counter-insurgency campaigns. In addition, as the possibility for conventional wars with Pakistan became real in the shadow of nuclear weapons, it became extremely important for civilians to maintain the military's performance in conventional wars. To maintain the military's effectiveness in conventional wars, counter-insurgency operations were divided between the military and paramilitary forces (special operations) such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) and the Border Security Force (BSF).

To further improve the military's effectiveness in conventional operations, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs sanctioned the creation of a counter-insurgency battalion known as the Rashtriya Rifles (RR) in 1990. The RR was composed of mixed infantry battalions manned by personnel deputed from different army regiments.³⁴⁷ As the Kashmir insurgency gained momentum during the early 1990s, the RR was meant to function as a counter-insurgency force as well as a rear-area protection force. But the new RR battalions lacked unit cohesion; an important determinant of combat performance. Over the years, the RR expanded and as of 2001, it was composed of 66 battalions. But it is unclear whether the creation and expansion of the RR relieved the Indian army of its counter-insurgency duties as the RR was manned fully by Indian army soldiers and officers. As Rajesh Rajagopalan explains, while regular battalions may have reduced their exposure to counter-insurgency duties, individual soldiers have not and "instead of isolating the army

³⁴⁷ Rajesh Rajagopalan, *opcit*, n-345, p.29.

from counter-insurgency operations, the RR has institutionalized the army's role in such campaigns."³⁴⁸

Despite the introduction of organizational innovations, a serious problem noted by the Indian military was that India's "counter-insurgency commitments were growing without any dilution in the Indian Army's conventional role."³⁴⁹ It is not at all clear whether Indian political leaders had developed a counter-insurgency doctrine which was separate from conventional war strategies. In the absence of doctrinal innovation, organizational innovation carried little significance. The absence of a suitable counter-insurgency doctrine during the army's operations in Punjab, Kashmir and Sri Lanka suggests that the military was often expected to participate in such operations without the presence of a clear military strategy. The military's visible discontent with regard to political objectives has been well documented in all of these cases. But it was the over-extended use of the military in a protracted conflict in Kashmir that produced maximum displeasure on the military side. Not only was the Indian military expected to participate in fighting the Kashmir insurgents but it was also expected to be prepared in fighting a conventional war with Pakistan. And so it was only a matter of time until the simultaneous use of the military in conventional wars and counter-insurgency operations began straining the military's resources. The prolonged use of the military in fighting the Kashmiri insurgents led to mounting deaths and fatigue within the ranks of the Indian army. A very good example that illustrates the downside of using the military in prolonged counter-insurgency operations is the American military's role in counter-insurgency operations in Iraq. More than five years after the 2003 invasion of Iraq, a substantial portion of the U.S military still remains in Iraq with "worn out equipment and weaponry and personnel exhausted by frequent tours of duty and insufficient time at home

³⁴⁸ Ibid, p.33.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p.27.

between deployments.”³⁵⁰ A report, undertaken by Dr. P.W.Singer of the Brookings Institution’s 21st Century Defense Initiative, notes that the American military is beginning to show unavoidable symptoms of distress. The warning systems “include the lowering of recruitment standards, the overuse of special operations, and frequent deployments that lead to pressure at home.”³⁵¹

Similar problems were also noticed within the Indian military. And a major consequence of using the military frequently in counter-insurgency operations was that it gradually became reluctant to engage in such operations. Manoj Joshi notes that “from the onset, the Indian military had been reluctant to enter into internal operations because they saw it as a subsidiary task.”³⁵² Joshi’s comment implies that the Indian military’s reluctance to engage in counter-insurgency operations was tied to the belief that it was better equipped and prepared to fight conventional wars only. Moreover, its frequent use in counter-insurgency operations was eroding the military’s professional competence in fighting conventional wars. What is important to note is that the military’s aversion to counter-insurgency operations could pose a major problem for civilians in the future as the military might become resistant to following political directions which compromise its professionalism. A good example of the military’s objections to political directions which compromise its professionalism is the experience of the American military during the Clinton years. A large section of the American military believed that the Clinton administration was using the military as a tool of domestic and international social work rather than strategic action. Using the American case as an example, Eliot Cohen argues that over time, the purist model of the professional military changed and eroded. The purist

³⁵⁰ Report, “U.S Ground Forces, Broken or Just Bent?”, *JINSA Online*, October 13, 2007, p.1.

³⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 2.

³⁵² Author’s Interview with Editor-in-Chief, *Hindustan Times*, Manoj Joshi, New Delhi, May 16, 2006.

professional model was one in which the soldier was viewed as someone whose technical expertise and detachment from politics made him both unique and difficult to manage. “As doctors and lawyers became politicized, and de-mythologized, so too have military officers shed the image of pure and apolitical expertise once ascribed to them. Like other interest groups, they lost a sense of uniqueness and learned how to play the game.”³⁵³ Cohen’s argument is especially relevant to the Indian case because civilians have often used the military like an interest group which has endangered its professionalism and politicized its functions.

The military’s continuous role in counter-insurgency operations also raises important questions for the division of labor between civilians and the military. Huntington notes “that the essence of objective civilian control is the recognition of an autonomous sphere of military professionalism and the essence of subjective control is the denial of an independent military sphere.”³⁵⁴ In the Indian case, the military’s functions have taken it beyond war – fighting and into the political arena of governance. As P.R. Chari correctly observes, “the nature of counter-insurgency operations does not make it a military operation. Instead, civilians and the military have to work together.”³⁵⁵ Interestingly, Huntington also argues that sometimes there can be a conflict between military obedience and political wisdom. And when this happens, “the superior political wisdom of the statesman must be accepted as a fact because there is no commonly accepted political value by which the military officer can prove to reasonable men that his political judgments are preferable to that of the statesman. It is not the function of military officers to decide questions of war and peace.”³⁵⁶ But

³⁵³ Eliot Cohen, “Civil-Military Relations: Are U.S Forces Overstretched?”, *Orbis*, Spring 1997, p.1.

³⁵⁴ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1957), p.83.

³⁵⁵ Author’s Interview with Research Professor, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies, P.R. Chari, May 22, 2006.

³⁵⁶ Huntington, *opcit*, n-354, p.76

Huntington's argument assumes that an ideal division of labor between civilians and the military can be achieved most of the time. However, as the Indian case demonstrates, an undisturbed separation between political and military functions can be hard to achieve especially when civilians use the military as an instrument of policy. To preserve a clear separation in political and military functions, "the statesman needs a clear understanding of the nature of the Army's expertise and the jurisdictions within which it can be applied."³⁵⁷ "Strategic leaders often endanger the army institution if they lose sight of the professional foundations of their role and allow themselves to be drawn into policy and other debates."³⁵⁸ As Lacquement notes, "it is a fine line between Clausewitz's wise counsel for officers to be sensitive to the political context within which they operate- and actually trying to step in to try to determine appropriate policy goals."³⁵⁹ Lacquement's statement means that it might be alright to use the military to fight wars but when the military is expected to participate in a variety of non-military functions, it can begin to shape policy. When this happens, the military moves beyond its professional war fighting functions and takes on an advisory role which results in a blurring in the division of labor between civilians and the military. The Indian military's experience in unconventional operations suggests that Lacquement's observation may be quite true.

³⁵⁷ Richard Lacquement, "Army Professional Expertise and Jurisdictions", Monograph, US Army War College, October 2003, p.34.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

In this dissertation I have tried to establish how the relationship between India's military and its political leadership underwent significant changes in various decades. The Indian military's influence on political decisions has been gradual but was made possible, to a large extent, by the advent of nuclear technology in the 1970s and the resulting change in the nature of warfare. Various cases examined in India's history provide the reader with a glimpse into the military's role in asserting its expertise in nuclear matters. Once India became a declared nuclear weapons state in 1998 and faced a war with Pakistan in 1999, the change in the relationship between civilians and the military became even more palpable. The military awakened to its growing importance in a nuclear environment and for the first time, India's political leadership became open to receiving and using military advice.

In drawing specific conclusions about what the change in the relationship between civilians and the military in India signifies within a broader context, I examine current issues in American civil-military relations and revisit Huntington's discussion of the division of labor between civilians and the military. I examine civil-military responses in America to the Iraq war and address those questions that have repeatedly emerged with regard to the military's expertise in the policy realm. In the end, I establish how the American debate is relevant for the India case in drawing long term conclusions about the Indian military's ability to influence civilian decisions on strategic and tactical issues. I also project possible future scenarios in the Indian case that would demand greater civil-military collaboration, narrowing the division of labor between the two spheres.

I. The War in Iraq and Issues in American Civil-Military Relations

What might have appeared to be a reasonable strategy once, has now become a source of friction between policy makers and the American military today. The decision to attack Iraq and the course of the war has revealed deep-seated divisions between the US military and the Bush administration over war objectives and execution of war plans. Levels of dissatisfaction within the American military are at a record high, the Iraq war having exposed some very serious issues with the way in which civilians are conducting the war. The primary criticisms leveled against the Bush administration by retired generals in the American military is that America's political leadership has not only compromised military expertise in the war but also reduced the American military's professionalism by manipulating the armed forces in an operation which has no clear aims or objectives. Below, I provide evidence of the American military's critique of civilian decisions taken on the war in Iraq followed by an assessment of what this means for civil-military relations in general.

The frequency with which the American military has begun to criticize the Bush administration's flawed policies in Iraq is commonly being termed as the "revolt of the generals."³⁶⁰ Opposition from the military to war objectives in Iraq emerged specifically in response to the policies of former Defense Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld. From early 2006, when the number of American soldiers dying in Iraq was steadily increasing, retired generals in the American military were publicly stating their frustration with Rumsfeld's policies, with some generals even demanding his resignation. In a *New York Times*, op-ed column, retired Major General Paul Eaton described Donald Rumsfeld as "incompetent strategically, operationally and tactically" calling for his resignation.³⁶¹ Retired Marine General Anthony

³⁶⁰ Michael Duffey, "A Revolt of the Generals?", *Time* (South Pacific Edition), Issue 16, April 24, 2006.

³⁶¹ Erin Solaro, "Retired Generals Rising Up Against Iraq War", April 16, 2006, http://seattlepi.nwsourc.com/opinion/266638_solarosub16.html

Zinni, a former Commander of the Central Command (CENTCOM) described the administration's behavior as ranging from "true dereliction, negligence and irresponsibility" to "lying, incompetence and corruption."³⁶² And, retired Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez lambasted US political leaders as "incompetent, inept, and derelict in the performance of their duties."³⁶³ Sanchez was particularly critical of President Bush's call for maintaining 160,000 troops until the end of 2007 despite the high number of casualties recorded. Addressing a gathering of military correspondents in Virginia, Sanchez said that "continued manipulations and adjustments to our military strategy will not achieve victory".³⁶⁴ Sanchez argued that US politicians in both the administration and the Congress had chosen loyalty to their political party above loyalty to the constitution because of their "lust for power."³⁶⁵ Another military general and former head of the US army's First Infantry Division John Batiste reported that the Bush administration had "repeatedly ignored sound military advice."³⁶⁶ Similarly, in an article addressed to *Time* magazine, retired Lieutenant General Gregory Newbold mounted a series of attacks on Donald Rumsfeld and others in the American administration alleging that those individuals were "unwilling to fundamentally change their approach."³⁶⁷

The tenor of military criticism leveled against the Bush administration's approach to the conduct of war in Iraq has a hidden implication: when making policy, civilians often believe they are doing the right thing even if the policy is flawed or considered a military failure. When this happens, the issue becomes a point of friction between policy makers and

³⁶² Ibid.

³⁶³ "Ex General Calls Iraq a Nightmare", *Al Jazeera*, October 13, 2007.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Thom Shanker, "Third Retired General Wants Rumsfeld Out", *New York Times*, April 10, 2006

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Thom Shanker, "Third Retired General Wants Rumsfeld Out", *New York Times*, April 10, 2006.

the military resulting in deep divisions or tensions in civil-military relations.³⁶⁸ The American military's position on the war in Iraq has spurred a series of debates in strategic and academic circles about the possible "crisis" in American civil-military relations. While a division between the Bush administration and many of the military officials is obvious, what is important from the perspective of this study is to examine the effect of such divisions on the overall relationship between civilians and the military. Is the Bush administration cognizant of the American military's frustration with war objectives? Is the political leadership willing to work with the military on improving the situation in Iraq? And, how much freedom are the civilians willing to give the military in the management of operations?

The answers to some of these questions have become obvious in the aftermath of General David Petraeus's testimony to Congress. While testifying to the House Armed Services and Foreign Affairs Committee, Petraeus remarked that additional combat troops could be pulled out of Iraq by the summer of 2008 as the current deployment of troops had made enough progress. However, Petraeus also alerted the administration to the fact that "a larger and speedier withdrawal" could prove dangerous.³⁶⁹ General Petraeus's testimony on the war in Iraq came on the heels of mounting criticism against the Bush administration's policy by retired American military generals. From the perspective of American civil-military relations, Petraeus's testimony is significant in a number of ways. First, from a military perspective, Petraeus's testimony was a clear expose of the general's reservations about troop withdrawals to the American political establishment. This suggests that the American military has the ability to engage in an open dialogue with civilians on the Iraq war. Second,

³⁶⁸ This aspect is not just limited to the American case. There has been evidence of frustration with civilian policy in Iraq within the British army. For concerns among the British military with regard to war objectives in Iraq, see, Andy Smith, "Army Chief Says British Troops Should Be Pulled Out of Iraq", *Independent*, October 13, 2006.

³⁶⁹ Peter Baker and Jonathan Weisman, "Petraeus Backs Initial Pullout", *Washington Post*, September 11, 2007. For a discussion on whether or not US military and diplomatic leaders are on the same page, see, Joe Klein, "The General v. the Ambassador", *Time*, September 17, 170:12 (2007).

from a civilian perspective, the Bush administration's attempt to devise a plan to reduce American troop levels by 2008 may be an indicator of the civilians paying closer attention to military expertise. And third, the Petraeus testimony indicates that the military can often go beyond its war fighting functions by telling the civilians how to make policy. These issues require a reevaluation of Huntington's observations on the division of labor between civilians and the military. In addressing Huntington's framework, I present some of the analytical issues currently being debated in the American civil-military relations literature on the war in Iraq.

II. Revisiting Huntington's Framework

The war in Iraq and the current friction in American civil-military relations has raised questions about the division of labor between civilians and the military. To understand some of the key aspects of this debate, returning back to Huntington's framework may be useful. In *Soldier and the State*, Huntington argued that in understanding civilian control of the military, we must look at the division of labor that exists between the civilians and the military. Huntington's framework in its strictest form suggests that civilians are the ones in charge of making policy and the military is responsible for fighting wars. However, anytime there is a change in this dynamic, that is, if the civilians try to fight the wars or the military tells the civilians what kind of policy to adopt, then the strict division of labor ceases to exist, leading to conflict and tensions in civil-military relations.³⁷⁰

Given the current problems in civil-military relations in Iraq and the frustration within the American military with regard to political directives on Iraq, several experts on American civil-military relations are analyzing this issue at great length. The conclusions

³⁷⁰ Samuel Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, (Belknap Press; 2007).

reached by these experts are at the very heart of Huntington's argument regarding challenges to the division of labor between civilians and the military. Michael Desch, in an article titled *Bush and the Generals*, recommends returning to Huntington's "old division of labor" in which civilians should make policy but also give due deference to the military's professional expertise in tactical and operational issues. Desch subscribes to Huntington's logic that a clear separation in civil and military functions is essential for maintaining effective civilian control and a professional army.

Other scholars such as Richard Myers, Mackubin Thomas Owens and Richard Kohn are skeptical of Desch's observations. Myers and Kohn claim that there is no such thing as a "proper civil-military balance."³⁷¹ They argue that the best relationship between civilians and the military is one in which both cooperate and collaborate but the military remains subordinate to civilians. Myers and Kohn also believe that the role of the military is "to carry out lawful policies but *not* to make them."³⁷² Similarly Owen argues that uniformed officers should convey their concerns to civilians when a policy is flawed but once the decision is made, they should carry out the orders to the best of their ability.³⁷³ While Myers, Owens and Kohn are correct to say that it is not possible to maintain a strict division of labor between civilians and the military at all times, the authors don't give the reader a glimpse into situations wherein one could expect a blurring in the division of labor. Also, their reasoning appears flawed when they argue for a military that can successfully advise civilians but simultaneously remain subordinate to the latter.³⁷⁴ Perhaps, Myers and Kohn ignore the fact that when the military is in a capacity to "counsel" civilians, it can acquire the capacity to "make" or "shape" policy. In doing so, the military can no longer remain subordinate to

³⁷¹ Richard Myers and Richard Kohn, "The Military's Place", *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2007.

³⁷² Richard Myers and Richard Kohn, "The Military's Place", *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2007.

³⁷³ Mackubin Thomas Owens, "Failure's Many Fathers", *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2007.

³⁷⁴ See Myers and Kohn, *opcit.*

civilians. Instead, it begins to shape policy. The Iraq war has made this issue abundantly clear in the relationship between America's armed forces and the Bush administration.

To explain the shift in the American military's role from merely advising the Bush administration to shaping policy on the war in Iraq, one issue warrants significant attention. That issue concerns the military's area of professional expertise. The military offers its advice to civilians based on its professional expertise on military strategy. During the early stages of the Iraq war, we heard little about the American military except in regard to the performance of its military duties in Iraq. However, this situation began to change when the Bush administration took on the task of not just securing America's political objectives in Iraq but also shaping military strategy. In other words, the moment the Bush administration entered the domain of military expertise, the response of the military to civilian directions took on a critical form.

According to Desch, a major problem in civil-military relations emerges when civilians try to act competent not only in the political sphere but also in military affairs.³⁷⁵ Once civilians begin to claim military expertise (which is traditionally a prerogative enjoyed only by the military), then a blurring in the division of labor occurs. And once the division of labor gets blurred, the military begins to question civilian competence in military affairs which results in friction. This is how Desch describes the current tensions in American civil-military relations over the conduct of the Iraq war. Desch argues that once America's political establishment began meddling in military affairs, the division of labor between the domains got blurred and opened up the possibility for a military response to political interference in military strategy. In Desch's words, "the problem with civilian meddling in the run up to the Iraq war was not that Rumsfeld or Wolfowitz overruled the senior army

³⁷⁵ Michael Desch responds to his critics in "Salute and Disobey", *Foreign Affairs*, 2007.

leadership on the number of troops necessary for reconstruction, but they did so claiming superior military expertise, rather than offering a compelling political reason for ignoring these military recommendations.”³⁷⁶

Desch’s observation tells us that had the civilians just done what they are best at doing, that is, framing policy, and left military matters to the generals, then they could have precluded any possibility of the military refusing to comply with their demands. But the moment America’s political leadership walked into military territory, they opened up an opportunity for friction with the armed forces. The cause of the friction centered on how to fight the war in Iraq. Mounting casualties and the failure of American troops in Iraq to quell repeated acts of violence alienated many of the America’s top general who began arguing that rising military deaths were a direct result of faulty civilian policy. As evidence has shown through the statements of various retired generals and the Petraeus testimony, friction between civilians and the military in America has now reached very high proportions which has made it impossible for the Bush administration to ignore what the military is saying. Thus the American military’s role in the Iraq war has moved away from merely advising the civilians on military matters but offering possible alternatives to shape a better policy on the war in Iraq. As a consequence, the strict division of labor between civilian and military functions is no longer apparent.

III. Relevance of the American Literature for the Indian Case

The American literature on civil-military relations addresses several key questions that may help clarify some of the issues in the relationship between civilians and the military in India. More importantly, the current debate in America over the war in Iraq and

³⁷⁶ Michael Desch replies to his critics in “Salute and Disobey?”, *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2007.

observations made by scholars such as Desch, Kohn and Mackubin Owens may hold some of the answers to why the Indian military has gradually made inroads into policy-making. Older arguments made by Huntington and Feaver on civil-military friction are important as theoretical tools to understand the classic separation of functions between civilians and the military and various challenges to the division of labor. However, those arguments are incomplete. While Huntington's framework is helpful in explaining the division of labor between civil and military domains, the framework is inadequate in explaining "shifts" in the balance of power between civilians and the military in India. Civil-military relations evaluated in terms of categories such as "objective" and "subjective" control provides a one-dimensional picture of what can be a rather complex relationship. Huntington may have acknowledged the possibility for tensions and friction between civilians and the military (which he referred to as subjective control) but his framework did not elaborate on the conditions under which such tensions are born.

Similarly Feaver's framework of shirking by the military is important to examine and understand cases of insubordination by military officials as a direct challenge to civilian authority.³⁷⁷ But even Feaver's analysis does not do a compelling job of explaining the subtle shifts in the balance of power between civilians and the military.³⁷⁸ To explain the shift in the Indian military's role from fighting wars to making policy, the very recent debates in American civil-military relations over the war in Iraq may be the much required source as these debates focus more sharply on the "balance" between civilian and military domains, making the discussion especially meaningful in the Indian context.

Perhaps the most critical issue addressed in the current debate on American civil-military relations and one that has direct relevance to the Indian case is that of military

³⁷⁷ For a detailed discussion of Huntington's and Feaver's arguments, please refer back to Chapter 1.

³⁷⁸ For details on Feaver's basic arguments, please see Chapter 1.

expertise and the military's competence in areas unfamiliar to civilians. In this context, Desch's observation about civilian incompetence in military matters is especially relevant for the Indian case. In India, the military was always suspicious when civilians took matters in their own hands. The Indian military's dissatisfaction with civilian incompetence on military matters is documented on more than one occasion. The Indian army's frustration with Krishna Menon's meddling in the India-China war, General Maneckshaw's critique of Indira Gandhi's war aims during the liberation of Bangladesh, General Sundarji's push to make the military more competent in nuclear policy, and until very recently, General Padmanabhan's public appraisal of Operation Parakram are just some of the examples of how the Indian military, at different times in history, urged the civilians to pay closer attention to military expertise.³⁷⁹

Whether General Maneckshaw was telling Indira Gandhi how to fight the war with Pakistan in 1971, or General Sundarji was advising Rajiv Gandhi on how many nuclear weapons to develop, it is clear that just like their American counterparts, these generals were advising civilians based on their past experience and professional expertise. It was their way of telling the civilians not to repeat past mistakes or compromise military professionalism. Today, the relationship between civilians and the military in India has reached a point where the political leadership is beginning to understand that military expertise is indispensable. And so, questions of military expertise are at the nub of the "balance" between civilians and the military. Whenever military expertise is compromised by civilians, the division of labor gets challenged. And when the division of labor cannot be maintained in its strict form, then the military makes a foray into policy making. Unfortunately, this issue has been completely

³⁷⁹ These cases have been examined at length in various chapters of the dissertation.

overlooked in the Indian literature on civil-military relations. But the American literature has been able to explain this issue more adequately.

IV. Observations from the Indian Case

My conclusions about the growing ability of the Indian military to influence civilian policy are drawn from extensive elite interviews conducted in India over a duration of eight months and an examination of relevant primary and secondary documents on the subject. While my observations are specific to the Indian case, I have attempted to draw conclusions that are broadly generalizable to the study of civil-military relations in democracies. In doing so, a comparison with American civil-military relations has been highly rewarding. I have also tried to make a historical case for the increase in the Indian military's ability to influence political decisions leading to a blurring in the division of labor between the two domains over time. I argue that the ability of the Indian military to influence political decisions did not occur in a day. Rather, it has been a gradual process fuelled by a number of developments that reduced the space between political and military functions, allowing the military to use its expertise judiciously in guiding civilian policy. Therefore most, if not all of my observations, are informed by the primacy of historical context. India's historical experience in the area of civil-military relations provides critical clues towards examining contemporary problems or issues in civil-military relations in India. Contentious issues in Indian civil-military relations have been examined by situating them in a historical context. Towards this end, I have provided a distinct timeline in India's history from 1947 to the present day to establish how the strict separation of functions that existed between India's political leadership and its military became less conspicuous through various decades. To summarize briefly, when India gained independence, civilians were extremely cautious in

preventing the rise of a powerful army. And, in order to keep the military professional and subservient to the policy makers, civilians exercised total control.³⁸⁰ But a series of developments made it hard for civilians to ignore military inputs in their decisions. Today, we are witnessing a relationship that is characterized by a greater fusion in civil-military functions. Below, I outline the major conclusions of my research.

The primary explanation for a blurring in the division of labor between India's political establishment and the armed forces can be traced to the advent of nuclear technology followed by changes in the nature of warfare. As long as nuclear technology was developed for peaceful energy purposes, the Indian military remained out of the decision-making loop.³⁸¹ But once the possibility for nuclear weapons use in a future war with Pakistan became real, the strategic use of nuclear weapons demanded the inclusion of the military into the decision-making process. The military's role in nuclear operations had to be clearly delineated by the civilians if the latter wanted the military to succeed in a war with Pakistan. This led to various attempts by civilians to create institutional agencies which could encourage military participation in nuclear policy.³⁸² The development and possible use of nuclear weapons for strategic reasons also had a direct impact on the nature of warfare and the rise of new military doctrines such as the Cold Start. Both civilians and the military realized that in any future war with Pakistan, they would have to work together to keep the conflict limited below an all-out escalation to the nuclear level. In a nuclear context, the Indian military has become an indispensable force for civilians as the Indian armed forces have had to develop strategies which can maximize India's military advantage in a war against Pakistan.

³⁸⁰ For details on why the civilians wanted a less powerful army, please see Chapter 1.

³⁸¹ Refer to Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of the role of scientists in the development of nuclear weapons for peaceful energy use.

³⁸² For more details on this issue, refer to Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

Another explanation for the increase in the Indian military's ability to influence policy decisions has emerged from the Indian army's role in controlling cross-border terrorism. For many decades, the Indian army was used by the government as an instrument in the maintenance of law and order in Kashmir. This created a deep sense of resentment within the military over time as the armed forces believed that working as a "police" force was significantly eroding its traditional war fighting functions and compromising its professionalism. The Indian army had a long history of helping the government deal with natural disasters and calamities. And, for many decades, India's political establishment received little or no resistance from the military on this issue. However, the rise in militancy in Kashmir from the late 1980s and the variety of responsibilities imposed on the military in Kashmir produced hostile reactions from the Indian armed forces. Retired and serving officers spoke frequently of problems in managing a dual role; that of combating cross-border terrorism and maintaining law and order in Kashmir. While one was distinctly a war fighting function, the other was a police function. This issue became so problematic that in recent years, it has influenced the dialogue between India's political government and the military to create separate agencies to deal with the maintenance of law and order in Kashmir while allocating sole authority to the army to fight the terrorists. Today, civilians are listening more carefully to what the Indian army is telling them and New Delhi is trying its best to respect the wishes of the armed forces by not using the military in operations which willfully compromise its professional integrity. This is another indicator of how India's political leadership has recognized the importance of military inputs in strategic decisions.

Finally, civilian control of the military in India remains complete. The advent of nuclear technology and the rise of cross-border terrorism may have given the Indian military a greater voice in strategic decisions but this does not imply that the military will overthrow

India's political establishment in a coup in the near future. The blurring in civil-military functions has allowed the Indian military an entry into the realm of policy making; a situation that was inconceivable in earlier decades. It is the uniqueness of this situation that makes a reading of India's civil-military relations rather important. While civilian control remains unchallenged, a blurring in civil-military functions leading to the military's growing influence on policy making indicates a change in the relationship between India's political leadership and the armed forces; a change that marks a significant departure from past interactions between civilians and the military in India. Thus in addition to arguing in favor of the Indian military's growing influence over civilian policy; I have tried to highlight the importance of this change by comparing it to earlier decades. The fact that this is a completely new phenomenon, still in the process of evolution, has significant implications for Indian civil-military relations. Below, I list a few observations about the broader significance of my conclusions.

V. Future Projections and Overall Significance of the Project

Once India became a declared nuclear weapons state in 1998, a major concern in India-Pakistan security issues was how to prevent an all out nuclear confrontation between the two long-standing adversaries. A group of scholars known as the proliferation pessimists have argued that an increase in nuclear weapons proliferation between India and Pakistan might increase the likelihood of nuclear crisis and accidents in the subcontinent.³⁸³ These

³⁸³ This is commonly referred to as the "always/never" problem. For a Western perspective on setting up sophisticated command and control structures, see Shaun R. Gregory, *Nuclear Command and Control in NATO* (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1996), pp. 3-4. In the Indian context, Gurmeet Kanwal has discussed the dilemma between positive and negative control of nuclear weapons. Perhaps the greatest challenge to civil-military balance is to maintain control over nuclear forces while simultaneously preventing an accidental launch. This may prove to be the biggest challenge to the division of labor between India's political leadership and the military. For more on setting up effective command and control systems in the Indian case,

scholars argue that nuclear weapons are controlled by military organizations and civilian bureaucrats who often have conflicting interests over the use of nuclear weapons. When such conflicts emerge, military organizations display a tendency to push for their own interests which changes the balance between civilian and military functions. From the perspective of civil-military relations, this issue is extremely important because to understand how a nuclear war will be fought between India and Pakistan in the future, one has to also examine the nature of civilian and military responses.

Borrowing from organization theory, Scott Sagan argues that sometimes military organizations have parochial interests.³⁸⁴ Top military leaders are not only concerned with the security of the state but also with protecting their own organizational strength. A problem arises when these parochial interests conflict with the state's national security interests. This problem often occurs over the formulation of military doctrine. As military organizations have parochial interests, they also have a common set of military preferences with regard to military doctrine. In fact, as Sagan observes, "functional organization interests and widespread organizational routines lead military officers to hold biases in favor of offensive doctrines."³⁸⁵ If this were to be true, then as witnessed in the Indian case, in the aftermath of Operation Parakram, the Indian army's decision to formulate offensive doctrines through the Cold Start doctrine is evidence of Sagan's observation. Moreover, Sagan correctly points out that military doctrine is a complex and technical matter and

see Gurmeet Kanwal, "Command and Control of Nuclear Weapons in India", *Strategic Analysis*, XXIII: 10 (2000).

³⁸⁴ Scott Sagan, "The Origin of Military Doctrine and Command and Control Systems", in Peter Lavoy, Scott Sagan and James Wirtz, *Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological, and Chemical Weapons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p.18.

³⁸⁵ Sagan provides evidence of how from the 1980s up until the 2001-2002 confrontation with Pakistan, India's military establishment believed that in a war with Pakistan, it would be advantageous to demolish the country in a first strike. Sagan's examples demonstrate that despite the presence of strong institutionalized civilian control, the Indian military has not hesitated in advancing its own ideas about how to fight a war with Pakistan.

sometimes civilians are ill-equipped to deal with war plans and operational procedures.³⁸⁶

Even though civilians might maintain overall control, the type of military doctrine gives the armed forces a significant edge over civilians in influencing policy.

If the main assumptions of organization theory are held to be true, what predictions can one make about the relationship between civilians and the military in India in a future conflict with Pakistan? In evaluating the nature of future conflicts between India and Pakistan, the primary concern for any strategic expert on India-Pakistan relations is to assess the nuclear doctrine in both countries, the type of command and control systems in place and the way civilians and the military would deal with the possible use of such weapons. With regard to the formulation of India's nuclear doctrine and the setting up of a robust command and control structure, tensions are alive between India's political leaders and the military. As the Indian military played a negligible role in the development of India's nuclear weapons program, an immediate problem for civilians today is when and how to release nuclear weapons into the hands of the military. For several decades civilians exercised tight control, sometimes, bordering on excessive. But with changes in the nature of warfare and India's overt nuclearization, the main issue for civilians is how to give the military the control it requires in nuclear command and control operations without jeopardizing political directions on nuclear policy. While the Army and Air Force have been made responsible for the control of delivery systems (either a Prithvi missile or an aircraft), the nuclear warheads are manned by civilians and more specifically, the DRDO (the Defense Research and Development Organization).³⁸⁷ Many Indian security experts believe that only when key

³⁸⁶ Ibid, p.22.

³⁸⁷ A study by the Institute of Defense Studies and Analyses (IDSA) in New Delhi suggests that the Indian Air Force will lead the three services in establishing a credible command and control system. This will be made possible as the Air Force already possesses the nuclear delivery platforms in the form of strike aircraft and PRITHVI missiles. With strike aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons, the Indian Air Force will be a

decision makers are convinced that a crisis could lead to a nuclear attack, would an order be issued to release nuclear warheads. This order would be conveyed from a national command post outside Delhi and a series of codes would be sent over several communication channels to authenticate the order.³⁸⁸ But the problem with such a system is that it would work only if a crisis developed over days or weeks and would be absolutely ineffective in the event of a surprise pre-emptive nuclear strike from Pakistan.³⁸⁹

Sidhu's observations are critical in understanding the extent to which the Indian military's ability to influence civilian decisions increases during a sudden pre-emptive attack from Pakistan. In situations where there is very little time for the execution of a second strike attack, civilians would have to rely a great deal on military expertise and operational plans. This would significantly increase the military's ability to not only conduct nuclear war but also make nuclear policy.³⁹⁰ Ashley Tellis has also arrived at similar conclusions. Tellis claims that if India's nuclear weapons are treated as offensive war-fighting weapons, then Indian conventional military forces would have to be "radically re-designed and re-equipped" for the conduct of military operations on a nuclear battlefield.³⁹¹ "An offensive use of nuclear weapons would require a large nuclear arsenal and incredibly accurate delivery systems maintained at high levels of readiness, a real-time intelligence gathering capability, a highly automated mission planning system and robust strategic defenses capable of dealing

key player in nuclear strikes against Pakistan. See, Air Marshal Ayaz Ahmed Khan, "India's Strategic Command", *Defense Journal*, Feb-March 1999, <http://www.defensejournal.com/feb-mar99/india-strategic.com>

³⁸⁸ For more on this scenario, see Raj Chengappa, "Worrying Over Broken Arrows", *India Today*, July 13, 1998; Manoj Joshi, "Atomic Age Warfare", *India Today*, July 20, 2008.

³⁸⁹ W.P.S. Sidhu, "India's Nuclear Use Doctrine" in Peter Lavoy, Scott Sagan and James Wirtz, *Planning the Unthinkable: How New Powers Will Use Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Weapons* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000).

³⁹⁰ Sidhu notes that as long as the military is confined to the conventional battlefield and civilian supremacy remains intact, a system of divided control will remain in place and the no-first use doctrine will be unchallenged. However, a shift in these variables could cause the entire arrangement to change. See Sidhu, p.155.

³⁹¹ Ashley Tellis, "India's Emerging Nuclear Doctrine: Exemplifying the Lessons of the Nuclear Revolution", *NBR Analysis*, 12:2 (2001).

with the ragged retaliation that will follow in the aftermath of the attack.”³⁹² Developing such an infrastructure would require high levels of military participation. A few military analysts have already begun arguing for a change in India’s conventional force posture to make it more suitable for fighting a nuclear war. Moreover, various sections within the Indian army have begun to privately argue the case for a variety of nuclear weapons.³⁹³ Discussing the prominence of the Indian military in a post-nuclear environment, India’s leading defense expert, K. Subrahmanyam notes that “it is not only inescapable that the armed forces would have to be involved, but to project deterrence they should also be seen to be involved.”³⁹⁴ A nuclear doctrine based on minimum deterrence should demonstrate its credibility through the command and control system and the overt involvement of the armed forces.³⁹⁵ If policy makers have to develop a credible nuclear command and control structure, they would make little progress without help from the military.

As per the predictions of organizational theory, the Indian military has, over time, made a much stronger case for an active role in the operational management of the nuclear arsenal and may even pressurize civilians for pre-delegation in a future war with Pakistan. Also, as India’s nuclear deterrence posture becomes more overt, there is a greater likelihood of the military being included in the decision-making process.³⁹⁶ The articulation of a clear nuclear doctrine, the setting up of a triad of nuclear forces, the establishment of institutions which enable better communication between civilians and the military are steps that have been taken by India’s political leadership to develop a sophisticated command and control

³⁹² Ibid, p. 63.

³⁹³ On this issue, see, J.K. Dutt, “The Army in the Nuclear Age”, *The Statesman*, August 10, 1998; Sharad Dixit, “IAF, the Pivot of Nuclear Power”, *The Pioneer*, October 25, 1999.

³⁹⁴ K. Subrahmanyam, “Underestimating India: Project a Credible Deterrent”, *Times of India*, May 15, 2000.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ On this issue, see Shekhar Gupta, “India Redefines Its Role”, *Adelphi Paper 293* (London: Oxford University Press for IISS, 1995), p.46.

system that is capable of responding to a nuclear attack from Pakistan. Civilians have begun to include the military in various operational and strategic aspects of nuclear policy making.

In considering how the Indian military can significantly influence policy and strategic decisions on nuclear issues in the near future, the effort by all three services of the Indian military to gain control over operational policy in the management of nuclear weapons is another important issue that can be explained in part by organization theory. Since the release of India's nuclear doctrine in 1998 and the clear enunciation of a nuclear triad-with distinct land, sea and air components, all three services of the Indian military have been enthusiastic in trying to gain control over parts of India's nuclear weapons delivery systems.³⁹⁷ This phenomenon is commonly understood as inter-service rivalry. From the point of view of the military's growing role in policy making, it is vital to understand the reasons for inter-service rivalry and the push by the military to control various delivery systems.

An explanation on military preferences that favor control over nuclear delivery systems requires a thorough re-examination of India's nuclear doctrine along with various statements made by India's political leadership about the use of nuclear weapons. Both issues are somewhat related. First, while India's nuclear doctrine espouses a policy of "No-First Use", the doctrine contains important sections on maintaining "survivable operation forces" to launch retaliatory strikes. More importantly, observers note that a section alerting the need for maintaining survivable operational forces undoubtedly makes the nuclear doctrine a proposal for nuclear war fighting; a fact that civilians are cautious to admit.³⁹⁸

³⁹⁷ The details of how the three services are trying to develop a robust nuclear arsenal and gain control over the delivery systems is discussed in detail in chapter 6. For more on this issue, see W.P.S. Sidhu, "Asian Nuclear Testing: India Sees Safety in Nuclear Triad and Second Strike Potential", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, Issue: PSA-2135, July 1, 1998.

³⁹⁸ This contradiction in India's nuclear doctrine has been neatly discusses by P.R.Chari in "India's New Doctrine: Confused Ambitions", *The Nonproliferation Review*, Fall-Winter 2000.

While civilians have refrained from elaborating on this aspect of the nuclear doctrine, active military participation in maintaining survivable forces has become much too obvious to the three services. The army, navy and air force have been demanding greater control over the nuclear delivery systems to be better prepared in a future nuclear confrontation with Pakistan. While the probability of a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan is unknown, the Indian military is right in understanding the need to develop a capability that could sustain the armed forces *if* a future war with Pakistan escalated to the nuclear level. Therefore, inter-service rivalry over the management of nuclear weapons can be seen as the one method used by the military to communicate its concerns to civilians. As organization theory predicts, the military adopts such methods to advance its own preferences over civilian policy.

A related reason underpinning the recent growth in inter-service rivalry post-nuclearization, is the ambiguity in various statements made by India's top political leaders about the specific role of nuclear weapons.³⁹⁹ Despite the fact that India is a declared nuclear weapons state and continues to develop nuclear weapons⁴⁰⁰, the civilian approach to questions about the role of nuclear weapons is not only ambivalent but rather non-serious. For instance, noted Indian defense expert P.R.Chari notes that while New Delhi upholds the principles of nuclear disarmament, it also talks about the need to build a triad of nuclear forces.⁴⁰¹ Similarly, in an interview with India's leading daily, *The Hindu*, when asked about the nature of India's nuclear arsenal, former Defense Minister Jaswant Singh gave a rather contradictory assessment of the role of nuclear weapons in Indian policy. Singh remarked

³⁹⁹ For specific examples on this issue, see Chapter 3, 4 and 5.

⁴⁰⁰ India has already developed the procedures for a thermonuclear device. For an argument on India going thermonuclear, see Bharat Karnad, "A Thermonuclear Deterrent" in Amitabh Mattoo, ed., *India's Nuclear Deterrent: Pokhran II and Beyond* (New Delhi: Har Anand; 1999).

⁴⁰¹ P.R. Chari, opcit, p.126.

that India's posture of minimum deterrence was only directed to deter the enemy (implying that nuclear weapons would never be used) but in the very same sentence he said that India would need a policy for retaliation, and for that to be effective, survivability of forces was critical (implying that nuclear weapons could very well be used!).⁴⁰² Such contradictory statements about the role and use of nuclear weapons are made much too frequently by civilians. The result has been greater confusion, frustration and unhappiness within the military with regard to civilian articulation of nuclear strategy. This has been another reason why inter-service rivalry is just another way for the military to bring their concerns to the political doorstep.

In the end I have tried to make a persuasive case for an increase in the Indian military's ability to influence civilian policy over various decades in India's history. I have underlined the basic arguments for why I think the Indian military has much more influence on policy decisions today than it had in the last 50 years in India's history of civil-military relations. A series of events and developments made this situation possible but the advent of nuclear technology provides the most accurate rationale for this noticeable change in Indian civil-military relations. I can firmly conclude by saying that my study is the first systematic attempt to unravel the relationship between civilians and the military by making a case for the growing importance of a professional and political military in decisions that have gone much beyond just fighting wars.

⁴⁰² Press Interview with former Defense Minister Jaswant Singh, *The Hindu*, November 29, 1999.

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