

Managing International Borders of India Strategic Stability Through Balance and Coherence

Brig Jaspal Singh (Retd)



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**Centre for Land Warfare Studies**

RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi 110010

Phone: +91.11.25691308 Fax: +91.11.25692347

email: landwarfare@gmail.com website: www.claws.in

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Managing International Borders of India Strategic Stability Through Balance and Coherence

Abstract

The text, comprising approximately 14,000 words, recommends a stable and sustainable system for the effective management of the land borders of India that should include the defence of our border zones as well. The persisting adhocism that prevails in the manner our Security Forces (SFs) are presently organised and deployed towards missions is to be regretted.

In the aftermath of the Kargil operations, the Committee on Border Management, presided over by Shri Madhav Godbole, former Home Secretary, had specifically recommended that deployments be effected on the basis of *one-border-one-force* which was partly implemented but discontinued midway—a phenomenon best described as regretful, and in that backdrop, the author recommends a systemic development, with emphasis upon distributive ministerial responsibilities that have greater relevance to a particular region. The Madhav Godbole Committee had confined its recommendations to the Border Guarding Forces (BGFs) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) only; in the dissertation now put forth, the Army is emphatically factored in on the basis of a threat perceived over a wider perspective, and the issues are analysed beyond mere policing of international borders.

Unity of command and homogeneity in the deployment of the SFs is emphasised so that on a particular International Border (IB), we are not saddled with an assortment of forces reporting to different ministries of the union government which, regrettably, is the system that presently prevails.

It is reasoned that, in the first place, ministerial responsibilities need to be rationalised and thence only the concept of *one-border-one-force*, as approved by the government can be effectively implemented. Having achieved the same, the homogeneity in the organisational structure of the SFs can thereafter be developed towards ensuring effectiveness!

The author has emphatically expressed concern over the ease with which the Indo-Pak IB was repeatedly pierced in the Jammu region in December 2013, in Gurdaspur in July 2015, and in the attack on our Pathankot air base in the first week of January 2016 when the attackers came dangerously close to threatening our strategic assets located therein.

In the backdrop, the author questions the effectiveness of the Border Security Force (BSF), its structure that led to the loading of the BGF with an inventory like equipping with an artillery arm, provisioning of 81mm mortars and two Light Machine Guns (LMGs) in each rifle section. The BSF needs primarily to be organised towards ensuring the surveillance and security of the IBs but the organisation, as it has evolved, apparently tends to duplicate the Army. A good percentage of its manpower is thereby engaged in managing assets like artillery, 81mm mortars and two LMGs per section and, consequently, is NOT available for deployment on the primary task of surveillance and security of the assigned IB to effectively defeat the repeated attempts at hostile infiltration.

The author has also put forth the reasoning that since substantial parts of our land borders are threatened with a situation that could conflagrate into a military conflict on the conventional plane, the forces that we deploy in such parts of our IBs need to be accordingly prepared and developed to respond effectively in a much shortened timeline.

The problem of leadership development in the BSF is addressed in detail. The author questions the suitability of the officer leadership placed at the helm and highlights the negative impact of such an arrangement which stifles the growth of the officer leadership of the BSF officer cadre. His proposal to transfer the leadership at the apex (or helm) to the Army in a temporary arrangement merits consideration.

Introduction

We have vast and expansive International Borders (IBs) on land over which we need to maintain surveillance, and as we commence the project study, we first profile the IBs:

S No.	Description of the IB	Lengths
1.	Indo-Pak IB. In the north from a point opposite Akhnoor (Jammu and Kashmir – J&K) aligned southwards through the states of Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat to Sir Creek in the Rann of Kutch.	2,300 km
2.	Line of Control (LoC) in J&K. The LoC stretches from the same point opposite Akhnoor but is aligned northwards to Kargil, thence farthest north, identified on the map as coordinate NJ 9842 at the southern point of the Siachin Glacier. The LoC delineated in the aftermath of the December 1971 operations serves as a de-facto border between the Indian state of J&K and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK).	778 km
3.	Siachin Glacier Sector: Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL). The AGPL was determined by the Indian Army in the sector and it secured the Saltoro Ridge on the watershed line, which Pakistan refused to accept.	110 km
4.	Total length of India-Pakistan borders, inclusive of Sers-2 & 3, which are in dispute.	3,118 km
5.	Indo-Bangladesh (BD) IB. The Indo-Bangladesh IB's length extends to 4,351 km and surrounds Bangladesh with the Indian territory in the pattern of a horse-shoe rim on three sides, and the Bay of Bengal coast lies to its south	4,351 km
6.	Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan borders.	Not a significant issue;
7.	India-China border. The India-China IB remains 'undemarcated' and presently, an underlying norm that identifies the boundary is a tacit observance of the geographic principle of 'watershed' that follows the crest of the highest mountain range dividing India and Tibet.	4,056 km
8.	India-Myanmar border. The IB with Myanmar marks the easternmost frontier of India and is clearly identified.	1,643 km

The lengths of the frontiers were taken from an article authored by Dr Pushpita Dass, entitled “Issues in the Management of India-Pakistan International Border”,¹ in the IDSA bi-monthly Journal, Vol 38 (May-June, 2014), pp. 307, 308.

The lengths of the frontiers with countries other than Pakistan are taken from the book authored by Col Gautam Dass titled, *Securing India's Borders: Challenges & Policy Options*² (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2011), p. 53.

The committee on border management assembled in the aftermath of the Kargil conflict 1999, and presided over by our former Home Secretary Shri Madhav Godbole, made sound recommendations that propounded the concept of *one-border-one-force*. The idea entailed that on a particular IB with a specific country, only one designated Border Guarding Force (BGF) should be deployed.

Accordingly, the implementation of the process had begun in the year 2002, in that, two battalions of Assam Rifles had even deinducted from the Indo-China (Tibet) IB and redeployed on the Indo-Myanmar IB and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) battalions, in turn, deployed in the locations vacated by Assam Rifles on the Indo-China (Tibet) IB. However, the process was halted after the redeployment of only these two battalions of Assam Rifles and the decision of deploying the BGFs on the basis of the concept of *one-border-one-force* was reversed. It was decided to retain the deployment of the BSF on the Indo-Myanmar IB as well.

Shri Madhav Godbole lamented the government's apathy in reversing the decision and expressed disappointment during his address at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) on December 03, 2014.

The concept of *one-border-one-force*, however, addressed to the deployment of the Border Guarding Forces (BGFs) under the Ministry of Home Affairs only and did not factor in the Army in the paradigm of border management. On the basis of the threat perceptions, it is essential that the Army be fully involved in the arrangements for managing our international borders on land.

Though the probabilities of all-out conventional wars have considerably receded, these cannot be ruled out altogether! We need to appreciate that conventional military operations with our potential adversaries, to our west (Pakistan) and north (China), will be in the backdrop of a 'nuclear overhang' and the warring countries will be equally concerned to prevent the hostilities

escalating to a nuclear exchange. In this backdrop, the threat perceptions visualised over a foreseeable future would, thus, tend to suggest that interstate military conflicts in all probability may well develop on a pattern involving a series of 'short-swift' military engagements at various places on the IB and remain confined to the border regions, in which the opposing sides will seek to gain a significant advantage in their own favour within the limited time span.

In view of the necessity, it is essential that the Army be fully involved in the arrangements for managing our international borders on land. The hostile military actions by our adversaries will need to be contained, stalemated and defeated locally at an operational level in the border region itself.

Certain important ground areas get identified, the denial of which to the enemy is vital, and there could also be a requirement towards the capture of specific areas of ground whose control may need to be wrested from the enemy to place us in a favourable position in the negotiations that follow! In the context, apart from the security and surveillance of the IBs, the defence of our 'border zones' also is of importance. On certain segments of our international borders on land, therefore, we need to sustain a defensive posture in order to remain prepared to meet contingencies that could involve military conflicts on a conventional plane.

Presently, it has become apparent that the deployment of our BSF, the country's prime BGF, is vastly stretched from the IB in the east, from Myanmar and Bangladesh, to the west, where it is deployed to cover the entire Indo-Pak IB. Thereafter, BSF sub-units are placed under the command of the Army's infantry battalions wherein their deployment gets extensively stretched along the entire Line of Control (LoC) from Akhnoor in the south to Kargil in the northeast of J&K state.

In the backdrop, strategising towards stability becomes essential and would imply that we develop and retain balance in our deployments that safeguard against a reactive approach to the enemy's moves and maximise the productivity of our resources deployed in a particular sector.

Regretfully, a situation persists on our IBs in which the SFs and other agencies deployed in the same border regions are reporting to different ministries in Delhi and the all-important arrangement of ensuring 'unity of command' in managing the security forces is not adhered to. We, therefore,

need to examine the prevailing deployments on our IBs for their balance and coherence to enable effective responses from our side to counter the activities of our neighbouring countries that are indicative of hostile intent and are inimical to our security. We, therefore, begin with defining an approach towards managing our IBs that could enable us to address the following:

- Distributive responsibilities between the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for the respective IBs.
- Deployment and categorisation of the SFs to be deployed for the surveillance and security of the respective IBs.
- Defence of the border zones.

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1. Dr Pushpita Dass, "Issues in the Management of India-Pakistan International Border", *IDSA Bi-monthly Journal*, Vol 38, May-June 2014, pp. 307, 308.
2. Gautam Dass, *Securing India's Borders: Challenges & Policy Options* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2011), p.53.

Chapter I

India-Pakistan Border

The India-Pakistan border is organised in three specific segments, as described below:

Segment I: The IB, which was demarcated and confirmed through the Radcliffe Award, 1947, extends from a point opposite Akhnoor in the Jammu region in the north and is thence aligned southwards, separating the areas of West Punjab and Sindh in the west which were to form part of Pakistan from own provinces of East Punjab, Rajasthan and Gujarat.

The IB is settled, and duly indicated with boundary pillars installed, regularly spaced, and from our side, strengthened with fencing along its entire length except in the portion of the Ravi river bed where a gap is left as no fencing is possible in this particular area. The IB is managed by the MHA and the BSF is deployed for its surveillance and security and is charged with the responsibility in a 'no-war situation'.

In the recent times, however, we have experienced a potent military threat emerging from Pakistan with greater vigour at the sub-conventional level in the form of persistent terrorist strikes and increased fire assaults across the Indo-Pak IB. There is evidence of repeated illegal crossing of the Indo-Pak IB by Pakistan-based terrorists who have repeatedly pierced our security apparatus with comparative ease—commencing with the Jammu region in December 2013 in which the military camp that housed a cavalry regiment of the Army was targeted, resulting in the killing of the second-in-command and wounding of the Commanding Officer of the regiment.

The pattern was later followed in Gurdaspur in July 2015, and as the New Year dawned, on January 02, 2016, well trained hard-core terrorists crossed over from the Shakargarh area of West Punjab (Pakistan) and attacked our Pathankot air base. The attack was defeated after a brave fightback by the security sub-units deployed at the air base but the attacking terrorists came dangerously close to a possible destruction of the strategic assets located therein.

Recently, on November 29, 2016, we again faced a terrorist attack on our Army camp at Nagrota (J&K) which endangered the lives of the officers'

families living in the camp. The attack was defeated by our troops but it cost us the lives of two officers in the course of a brave fightback! The terrorists who infiltrated the Indo-Pak IB are known to have come through a tunnel dug beneath the fencing on the IB.

It has now become very clear that the transgressions through covert routes and the fire assaults emanating from the Pakistani soil are not confined to threat of war or actual war situations but may well continue to occur in environments that appear to be normal!

In the immediate aftermath of such events, solutions are often sought through the ritual strengthening of the security force by adding to the numbers of personnel, and provision of the related equipment. However, the problem lies elsewhere and needs an in-depth examination, including of the origin and development of the BSF, as also its excessively stretched deployment that has led to fatigue and stagnation amongst its personnel.

Essential aspects relating to the BSF deployments are discussed in a subsequent part of this chapter, as also in the later relevant chapters of the project study.

Segment 2: At the Line of Control (LoC) in J&K, there is an acute situation consequent to the deployment of the BSF being stretched from the Indo-Myanmar IB at the country's eastern extremity thence moving westwards to the IB with Bangladesh and thereafter, along the Indo-Pak IB. Such stretched deployment is further compounded with substantial quanta of BSF personnel deployed along the entire 778 km length of the LoC in J&K in such a manner that the BSF companies are detached from their parent battalions and deployed piecemeal by being placed under the command of the Army infantry battalions¹. Such an arrangement lacks cohesiveness and adversely disturbs the effectiveness of the BSF as also of the Army. Persisting with such an arrangement would continue to breed inefficiency. The corrective action would suggest that the LoC be manned exclusively by the Army, and the BSF companies should revert to serve in a cohesive arrangement within their parent BSF battalions only.

Segment 3: Siachin Glacier Area: An Indo-Pak military conflict ensued over the control of the Siachin Glacier in 1984 and the Indian Army successfully secured the watershed line of the Saltoro Ridge. Consequently, the Army was able to determine the watershed line as the 'Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL)' which the Pakistan Army

refused to agree to and the dispute lapsed into a stalemate which remains unresolved. The total length over the AGPL alignment is determined as 110 km and is manned exclusively by the Army.

Indo-Bangladesh (BD) Border

The IB between India and Bangladesh is fully settled and there is no military threat to India from across this particular IB. The Land Border Agreement of May 2015, concluded between India and Bangladesh, ensures that the IB on land between the two countries is now aligned more in contiguity, and, hence, enables improved surveillance by the security forces of both countries engaged on this common border.

The main threat across this IB is that of unabated infiltration which is primarily due to economic causes. Large scale migration continues from this part of the subcontinent to the Indian states contiguous to the Indo-BD border, in particular, West Bengal, from where the migrants gradually spread to other parts of India in search of livelihoods.

It is to be emphasised that the time has come to implement the concept of *one-border-one-force* in the larger interest of national security, and that would involve **splitting the BSF** deployed on the Indo-Pak and Indo-BD borders. Bangladesh has been an independent country for a period of 45 years, with an intervening space of Indian territory that extends over a width of 1,500 km between Pakistan and Bangladesh. A single Border Guarding Force (BGF) assigned to man the IBs with two widely separated independent nation states would suffer from incompatibility as the prevailing state of the relationships and ground situations are at a marked variance. To continue with such an arrangement could as well run the risk of unproductive deployment of resources.

A separate BGF under a Director General based at Kolkata should be made exclusively responsible for the surveillance and security of the Indo-Bangladesh border. The proposed BGF could appropriately be designated as the Eastern Frontier Rifles (EFR) – a force with this designation was deployed in the area prior to the Partition in 1947, and its assets were transferred to Pakistan that raised the East Pakistan Rifles (EPR) on its nuclei². On the secession of East Bengal from Pakistan, the EPR was later to become the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and is now known to be designated as the Bangladesh Border Guards (BDBG).

The events of May-July 2016 suggest a possibility of terrorist infiltration/exfiltration across this IB and reported smuggling of 'Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICNs)', as indicated convincingly with the interception in the Malda district of West Bengal. Further, with the reported rise in the involvement of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) sponsoring home grown terrorists in Bangladesh, the SFs of both countries need to remain alert and operate in complete cooperation to intercept the cross-border movement of such criminal elements.

Indo-Nepal and Indo-Bhutan Borders

The arrangements of border guarding are under the aegis of the MHA and there is no military threat from across these borders. The IBs with these countries are in close proximity to each other and the extent of the border lengths being small, a single Border Police Force designated as the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) is deployed to effect surveillance of the borders with both countries that maintain open borders with India. The arrangements have proved to be very satisfactory, and stability on these IBs is ensured.

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2. Author's discussion with the DG Bangladesh Rifles at Tekanpur (Gwalior), in 1998.

Chapter 2

India-China Border

The India-China (Tibet) border extends over a length of 4,056 km, from a point south of the Pamirs and thence eastwards to a point at the tri-junction of India-China-Myanmar. The India-China IB remains 'undemarcated' and presently an underlying norm that identifies the boundary is a tacit observance of the geographic principle of the 'watershed' that follows the crest of the highest mountain range dividing India and Tibet.

The area of 596 km out of the total length of the India-China (Indo-Tibet) border relates to the boundary line indicating the IBs between our states of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim. The remainder 3,460 km¹ of the IB with China is referred to by the Chinese as the Line of Actual Control (LAC), distributed over Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, which remain in dispute!

Ladakh Region: It is not in the scope of the dissertation now being put forth to delve into the genesis of the dispute over the identification and delineation of the IB between India and China. The particular requirement is being dealt with by the specialised teams engaged in the rounds of negotiations since 1981. The responsibility that enjoins upon us is to safeguard the areas presently in our possession and prevent further transgressions or violations in order to ensure the sanctity of the IB. Towards the same, we need to understand the background to the situations at the operational level as they emerged, and prevail in the IB region in the present times.

The *Sunday Guardian*² newspaper, dated April 28, 2013, depicted an illustration of China's occupation of the entire snowy desert area of Aksai Chin and its claim line extending to the Karakoram mountain range marked in a north-south alignment. In the same illustration, the Indian claim line, however, extends to the Kunlun mountains to the east, which indicates Aksai Chin as belonging to India and which was surveyed and demarcated in 1865 by WH Johnson, a British surveyor in the service of the Maharaja of J&K. The Johnson Line was shown as the boundary of Kashmir in an atlas published under the authority of the Government of Jammu and Kashmir³ in 1868.

In 1890, Captain Younghusband (who fourteen years later led a military expedition to Lhasa) was sent to the Pamirs with the objective of tracing the theoretical limits of China's claim. The Chinese would not negotiate with Younghusband and are simply known to have informed that their boundary ran along the watershed between the Indus and the Tarim Basin. Later, in 1892, the Chinese reportedly gave physical expression to their claim by erecting a boundary marker at the Karakoram Pass with an inscription proclaiming that the Chinese territory to the east began from that particular point⁴.

A fact that needs to be understood is that the surveyor, WH Johnson, demarcated the boundary that included Aksai Chin within the territory of J&K state in 1865, and the boundary of Kashmir was accordingly and very distinctly shown in an atlas published in 1868. The Chinese, however, gave physical expression to their claim through a boundary marker at the Karakoram Pass only in 1892 – a good 24 years after WH Johnson had completed his survey, with the boundary duly ratified in the atlas published in 1868 wherein Aksai Chin was included within the territory of the J&K state.

WH Johnson's survey was later ratified and updated in print in the Imperial Records illustrated through *Collins Atlas of the World*, published by William Collins Sons & Co Ltd, Glasgow, Scotland⁵. On the integration of the J&K state into the Indian Union, the Imperial Records indicating the delineation of the boundary with Tibet were inherited by the Government of India.

The dispute in the Ladakh region is deadlocked, with rival claims over the possession of the vast snowy desert of Aksai Chin.

In the year 1949, the Communist-led government in China seized power and occupied Tibet in 1950. A year later, in 1951, they began the construction of a road through Aksai-Chin from Sinkiang (now Xinjiang) province of China which gave the Chinese a reliable route to reach western Tibet directly from the heartland of China via Xinjiang instead of from central Tibet in the east, over the hostile Khampa dominated mountains. As per the Chinese perception, this road was a strategic necessity but they unilaterally enforced their occupation of the Aksai Chin desert area and, consequently, impinged upon the sovereignty of India!

Arunachal Pradesh: The IB in this region is also aligned along the watershed line which is the highest crest line of the eastern Himalayas from Myanmar, at the eastern extremity of the IB with Bhutan to the west. The alignment is known as the McMahon Line, named after Sir Henry McMahon

the then Foreign Secretary who drew this line to designate the delineation of the boundary between India and Tibet. The *Collins World Atlas* in which the details are drawn from the Imperial Records, very specifically denotes the McMahon Line aligned along the watershed line from Myanmar at its eastern extremity to Bhutan at its western end!

The Chinese, however, considered the area south of the McMahon Line as territory belonging to them and the 'Indian Boundary' at the time of Partition was that accepted by the Chinese along the foothills that implied, it was aligned along the 'southern limit' of what is now the Indian province of Arunachal Pradesh. The Chinese, since then, have persistently referred to this area as 'Southern Tibet'. A 400-year-old Buddhist monastery which is located in the border town of Tawang, in the earlier times was known to collect taxes in the region and deposit a part of the revenue with the Head Monastery at Lhasa.

In 1938, the imperial government in India moved to assert its claim up to the line drawn by Sir Henry McMahon and a column of Assam Rifles troops under a British officer was sent to occupy the town of Tawang but had to withdraw under the pressure of vehement Tibetan protests from the Lhasa monastic authority.

Later, in 1951, after the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese in 1950, the Nehru government of independent India moved decisively with a strong Assam Rifles detachment to Tawang to assert its claim up to the farthest point on the watershed line at a place named Bum La where an outpost was established⁶. It is now a well-developed Border Outpost (BOP) manned by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and a Chinese border outpost is also set up opposite, on the Tibetan side of the IB.

Markings in the Chinese maps, however, show that the alignment of the McMahon Line, for reasons which remain unexplained, falls on to the valley floors of the Namka Chu river as it approaches the Bhutan border at its western end. The highest feature on the 'watershed' in the area is the 'Thagla Ridge' along which McMahon had actually drawn his line⁷ but on the map, it was found approximately four miles north of the point along which, the Chinese insist, the alignment of the McMahon Line is indicated. At the time of the Sino-Indian War-1962, Thagla Ridge was found to be in the illegal possession of the Chinese and remains so in the present times as well.

In the region of the eastern Himalayas, the Chinese had accepted the McMahon Line as the boundary between India and Tibet but only as marked on their map which excludes the 'Thagla Ridge'. The dispute in this region remains deadlocked over this issue.

Despite negotiations with China since 1981 to find a peaceful resolution of the boundary question, the impasse persists! After this long phase of stalemate, the Chinese have now again begun to stake a claim over the entire Arunachal Pradesh that involves 96,000 sq km of Indian territory, and continue to refer to this area as 'Southern Tibet'.

In an analysis towards understanding the Chinese stance, Monica Chansoria, in an article published in the *CLAWS Journal*, Summer 2016 Issue,⁸ stated (excerpts reproduced);

The writing on the wall is clear. China has the political and military will and capability to notch up tensions in the Himalayas with India, at any time and place of its choosing, and the stealthily recurring transgressions/incursions are aiding China in strengthening its leverage against India, both by means of hardening its diplomatic stand during negotiations and stepping up military pressure. (Article Text, p.14).

The Sino-Indian territorial and boundary dispute holds the potential of flaring up into a border conflict, limited or otherwise, placing the overall strategic balance in Southern Asia at risk. (Article Text, p.14).

The likelihood of the dispute 'flaring up' into a military conflict may well entail the capture of Tawang as the prime focus of a possible Chinese offensive.

Central Sector: Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand

In this sector, the environment may appear stable but with an undercurrent of fragility! Across the IB in Uttarakhand, our vulnerability to an offensive by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) across Kaurik Pass into the Barahoti Plain is discerned, which may well pave the way to the country's heartland! The Army has initiated steps to deploy troops in the sector². The ITBP deployed in the same isolated sector is not under the command of the Army and reports directly to the MHA. Ensuring a unified command chain and integration of logistics in such an isolated area

in mountainous terrain, is essential, and, thus, it is a flaw which needs correction!

Sikkim-Tibet Border

Sikkim was an independent country which became a protectorate of British India through a treaty ratified in February 1817 and this status was retained and transferred to India when it became independent in 1947. In the year 1975, Sikkim was integrated into India through a democratic process in which its inhabitants gave a majority consensus in favour of a merger with India and now have an elected Chief Minister heading a popularly elected government, like any other constituent state of India.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) acknowledged the integration of Sikkim with India but has yet to formally grant recognition. Even though the Sikkim-Tibet boundary was agreed upon between Britain and imperial China, regretfully, the PRC places in dispute even minor issues along this 'agreed' boundary as well. In the year 1967, the dispute erupted into an exchange of fire between the Indian and Chinese troops in which we applied our artillery assets to the maximum and inflicted heavy punishment upon the Chinese. Since then, a lull has prevailed on this segment of the border but use of force by the Chinese in the future, is not ruled out.

Managing the India-China Border in the Present Times

The purpose of highlighting a brief historical background was primarily to emphasise upon the volatility of the issue that could well be the nearest to a situation conflagrating to a 'limited war' on the conventional plane!

The settlement of the India-China border dispute appears most unlikely in the foreseeable future, and deployment on this IB would necessitate the following:

- Our troops remain 'battle ready' with a the ability to respond militarily which could well entail delivering a telling riposte with massive artillery fire in a minimal time-span should the security needs at the local level so require;
- A well-established 'logistics organisation' that can effectively support the existing deployments and any tactical operations that we may need to undertake in the areas.

In the backdrop, thus, explained, it needs to be emphasised that the responsibility for the security and surveillance of the IB and the defence of the border zones along the entire length of the India-China (Tibet) IB needs to be transferred to the MoD which should be designated as the 'nodal-agency' and the responsibilities in the field thence be assumed by the Army.

Our former National Security Adviser (NSA) Shivshankar Menon, on assuming charge in 2010, found that the ITBP, a force specifically trained for border guarding duties on the India-China (Tibet) IB, was being used by the Home Ministry for internal security duties in the Naxalite-infested areas of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa¹⁰. It is to be highlighted that diversion of a security force which is specifically trained for guarding our northern border, leads to disturbing the balance and coherence in our deployments on the India-China IB. In this context, our proposal emphasising upon the 'unity of command' amongst the forces in the field finds greater relevance.

Hence, we recommend and emphasise upon greater cohesion amongst the SFs in the field which should entail the integration of the ITBP with the Army. In such a dispensation, the ITBP will need a change of nomenclature and it becomes more appropriate to designate it as the Indo-Tibetan Border Scouts (ITBS), and the present Army Scouts like the Ladakh, Dogra, Garhwal, Sikkim and Arunachal Scouts can also become part of such an outfit. The proposed ITBS should thence be categorised as a Para-Military Force (PMF) and eventually officered by the Army. In a transitory arrangement, however, the existing officer cadre of the ITBP will need to be absorbed into the Army.

We primarily advance our reasoning on the basis of the very essential requirement of ensuring 'unity of command' which is best facilitated through the homogenous characteristics of the forces deployed in the field. The proposed ITBS units/sub-units, if made part of the Army, can then be integrated in the tactical battle plans of the local Army field formations.

In respect of the Indo-China IB, the duality in the chain of command leads to inevitable frictions: the Army-ITBP blame game over the Chinese incursion in Ladakh in the area of the Depsang Bulge on April 15, 2013, is a pointer!

Notes

1. Gautam Dass; *Securing India's Borders: Challenges & Policy Options* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2011), p.53.
2. Extract of map reproduced in the newspaper, *Sunday Guardian*, April 28, 2013, depicting the Chinese incursion and the rival claim lines.
3. Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (Dehra Dun: Natraj Publishers), pp.26-27.
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6. DK Palit, *War in the Himalayas* (Lancer International; updated publication in 1991), Ch 2, pp.41-42.
7. Maxwell, n.4, pp.292-293.
8. Monica Chansoria, "Where From, Where to? The Inveterate India-China Talks on the 'Boundary Question'", *CLAWS Journal*, Summer 2016, pp.1-19.
9. Shishir Gupta, *Himalayan Face-Off* (Gurgaon: Hachette Book Publishing India Pvt Ltd), pp.226 and 228.
10. *Ibid.*, Observations by the former NSA, Shivshankar Menon, p.227.

Chapter 3

Indo-Myanmar Border

The committee on border management, presided over by our former Home Secretary, Shri Madhav Godbole, made sound recommendations in propounding the concept of *one-border-one-force*. As highlighted in the introductory part of the project study and now briefly repeated, the process had begun to be implemented in the year 2002, and two battalions of Assam Rifles had been even deinducted from the India-China (Tibet) IB and redeployed on the Indo-Myanmar IB. The ITBP battalions, in turn, were deployed in the locations vacated by Assam Rifles on the India-China (Tibet) IB'. The process was halted after the redeployment of only these two battalions of Assam Rifles and the decision of deploying the BGFs on the basis of the concept propounded as *one-border-one-force* was reversed. It was decided to deploy the BSF on the Indo-Myanmar IB as well?

The problem has been further compounded because for meeting the commitment on the Indo-Myanmar border, the BSF has placed a demand for additional manpower, requiring 41, 000 of all ranks¹. Further, in the context of the Home Minister's statement, reported in the *Hindustan Times*², October 18, 2016, it was announced that the BSF is required to seal the border with Pakistan completely by December 2018. This would involve sealing the frontage of 2,473 km of the IB with Pakistan wherein the BSF may even need to add to its manpower which gets stretched further.

In the January 2014 issue of *Geopolitics*³, it was reported that on the Indo-Myanmar border, the BSF would deploy at the zero-line on the IB whilst Assam Rifles will deploy to the rear and conduct counter-insurgency operations only. Such an arrangement, in which two different agencies of the government are deployed in close proximity in the same border region, with the functions of border guarding and conduct of counter-insurgency divided between them is highly inadvisable. The functions involving the surveillance of the IB with Myanmar and conduct of counter-insurgency are very much compatible and should be performed by only one single agency of the government in the same border region. Dividing these functions between the two different agencies will only lead to friction and conflict apart from the

resultant non-productive appropriation of resources. Herein, once again, the concept of *one-border-one-force* stands violated.

Deployment of the BSF in the manner described, has had a very unbalancing effect upon its organisation which will be compounded when the deployment is further stretched towards meeting the requirements specified in the *Hindustan Times*⁴, October 18, 2016.

The BSF is best placed to effectively guard only the Indo-Pak IB and should not be diverted for tasks on IBs with countries other than Pakistan. This aspect is emphasised in the backdrop of its initial development, as primarily it was raised to integrate all the state armed police units assigned to the IBs of the Indian provinces bordering Pakistan and accordingly built strong foundations in the border regions.

The BSF has not yet taken over the responsibility of the Indo-Myanmar border and the author strongly recommends that the proposed planned deployment of the BSF on the Indo-Myanmar border be reversed. India should strictly adhere to the concept of *one-border-one-force*, as stipulated in the Madhav Godbole Committee report and the BSF should be assigned only the Indo-Pak IB in the west.

In a similar vein, Assam Rifles is most suitable for undertaking the commitments of border guarding along the entire length of the Indo-Myanmar border as the force enjoys a chequered history which integrates and blends ethnically and culturally with the northeast region of India. Raised initially in 1835 in the country's northeast as the "Cachar Levy", it grew and was nurtured in the same area for more than 178 years! The rank and file of Assam Rifles is well informed of the local lore and intelligence and, in most part, speak the same language as well.

A potent military threat persists on the Indo-Myanmar IB at the sub-conventional level and was convincingly manifested in the ambush of the Army convoy on June 04, 2015, near Chandel in Manipur (on the Indo-Myanmar IB) in which the Army suffered 18 killed. The incident is indicative of a deliberate attempt towards the revival of the 'Naga insurgency' consequent upon a faction of underground Naga insurgents (led by a dissident leader Khaplang) having junked a 14-year-old ceasefire with the government⁵.

A dispassionate macro-view needs be undertaken before we develop a methodology towards guarding the international border with Myanmar. A 'Memorandum of Understanding' (MOU) on border cooperation was signed

between India and Myanmar at Nay Pyi Taw on May 08, 2014, which, besides other provisions, specifically entailed exchange of information in the fight against insurgency, arms and drug smuggling.

In consonance with this agreement, our government reacted swiftly and the Indian Army launched an immediate riposte against the insurgents who, after an attack on our troops at Chandel, had retreated into their sanctuaries across the border to the east in Myanmar. In the riposte thereof, the Indian Army used a force of 60 personnel from its Special Forces that were landed across the border by helicopters and supported by fire from the M-35 attack helicopters⁶.

In an article published in the *Hindustan Times*, on June 07, 2015, former Home Secretary, Shri K Padmanabhaiah wrote: “Government should seek cooperation from the Myanmar authorities to deny safe havens for militant groups active in India. The international border is to be managed in an effective manner to stop crossing-over of militants.

“Taking into account the cross-border movement of the insurgent groups in the Northeast, the sealing of the India-Myanmar border should be the sole responsibility of the Army⁷”.

In view of the foregoing, we should be left in no doubt that the ministerial authorities and security forces should be so deployed in order to effectively manage the IB with Myanmar. The threat perceptions are clearly indicative of a sustained high-intensity insurgency which may well entail a series of armed engagements at the sub-conventional level. Appropriately, the task of ensuring the security of the IB with Myanmar should be transferred to the MoD as the nodal agency, and in the field, the Army should be entrusted the responsibility, with the Assam Rifles transferred under its command—an arrangement that now stands implemented, and it is strongly recommended that it should be firmed in.

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4. *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), June 05, 2015.
5. IDSA, *Strategic Digest*, Vol 44, No 05-06, May-June 2014, p. 286.
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7. K Padmanabhaiah, former Home Secretary, in *Hindustan Times*, June 07, 2015.

Chapter 4

Restructuring BSF: An Essential Long Overdue

Appropriately, we commence this chapter by reproducing an excerpt from an editorial appearing in the *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), December 02, 2016, whose headline read¹;

Smart Borders Alone Won't Work!

The BSF and Other Security Forces Need to be Educated on Border Management

A relevant excerpt is reproduced below:

the Indian side should continuously look at how to strengthen the border through soft measures. Illegal migration from Bangladesh is largely an economic issue. India should, therefore, seek to provide a legal visa path for such workers. Keep in mind that the number of Indian workers attracted by Bangladesh's thriving textile sector is not insignificant. Some sort of reciprocity in this area should be worked out. Otherwise, economic incentives will ensure that criminality and smugglers will find means to get through even the smartest of borders. The experience of the US and Mexico, where much of the migration is now governed by temporary work visas, should be instructive. India already has open border arrangements with Nepal and Bhutan.

Border management with Pakistan will have a different set of priorities, almost all related to security. But first smart reform needed is to improve the training and internal compliance structures of the Border Security Force and related bodies like the Assam Rifles.

In Chapter One, we have highlighted the repeated successes of the Pakistan sponsored terrorists who managed to pierce our international borders with ease, and came dangerously close to destroying our strategic assets at the Pathankot air base on January 02, 2016. Later, on December 29, 2016, they succeeded in reaching the officers' family quarters of our Corps

Headquarters (HQ) location at Nagrota, where an attempted attack on the officers' family quarters was averted as a result of a brave fightback by our troops that cost us the lives of two officers.

In the backdrop of our analysis of the repeated success of the Pakistan sponsored terrorists in piercing our international borders, we recorded this in Chapter One, and repeat for emphasis.

In the immediate aftermath, solutions are often sought through a ritual strengthening of the security forces by adding to the numbers of personnel and provision of related gadgetry. Regretfully, the problem lies elsewhere and needs an in-depth examination, including of the origin and development of the BSF, as also, its excessively stretched deployment that has led to fatigue and stagnation amongst its personnel.

In order to ensure appropriate, timely and lethal responses, the BSF on the Indo-Pak IB needs to be strengthened through a restructuring of its composition, with greater emphasis upon its prime activity levels of the rifle platoon and company, and a major shift in its inventory with inputs of technology.

The role defined for the BSF was evolved by a Government of India Study Group in the **year 1968**. It virtually duplicated that of the Army and has never been reviewed ever since. Hence, the BSF is saddled with an inventory comprising 20 regiments of artillery which involves committing a total of 12,000 personnel for manning 360 artillery guns², for which, according to report in the *Geopolitics* magazine, March 2016, the BSF has now demanded Rs 100 crore towards their modernisation. The artillery arm of the BSF is positively a non-productive asset that gets compounded by authorising one 81mm mortar platoon in each battalion comprising six infantry mortar guns, thereby committing 30 personnel in each battalion to man these weapons. Consequently, in the 200 BSF battalions as on date, the sum total of holdings will amount to (6x200 battalions)—1,200 infantry mortar guns and 6,000 personnel (30x200 battalions), specifically committed to man these weapons.

A cost assessment undertaken at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) in the year 2011 indicated that maintaining the artillery and mortars could cost Rs 500 crore annually, and adding an escalation of 10 percent per annum leads to no productive outcome either?

Lack of understanding in determining an appropriate inventory that is compatible with the primary task of the BSF led to a second Light Machine Gun (LMG) being added to the inventory of each rifle section, and total

holdings in the force add up to a whopping 21,600 LMGs, whereas from a professional stand-point, even half the numbers (10,500) may well be found excessive. A much improved productivity in the budgetary provisions is achieved if the sum spent towards the maintenance of artillery, infantry mortar guns and excessive LMGs is instead appropriated towards procuring state-of-the-art communications and surveillance equipment, three sniper detachments in each platoon and a percentage of rifles fitted with night-aiming devices.

The vastly stretched deployment of the BSF also led to a situation in which the span of control in each BSF battalion was extended to include seven companies and the arrangement adversely affected the strength at the activity level, normally found to be only 50–60 all ranks in each company. In consequence, the BSF is unable to muster reserves at the tactical levels and also unable to effect periodic turnovers of any kind that could enable rest and relief.

Shri Madhav Godbole's lament about the non-implementation of *one-border-one-force* in his address at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) on December 03, 2014, was followed by an intense discussion and debate. The innate desire and quest that resisted the proposal of *one-border-one-force* appeared to be nothing but protecting and expanding the established turf!

As highlighted in Chapter One, “persisting with the arrangement of continuing piecemeal deployments of BSF companies under the Army infantry battalions on the LoC in the J&K would only continue to breed inefficiency. Corrective action would suggest that the LoC should be manned exclusively by the Army and the BSF companies should revert to serve in a cohesive arrangement within their parent BSF battalions only”.

As for taking over the responsibilities on the LoC, it is expected that the Army will say that it lacks the manpower for the purpose. Regretfully, over the span of eight years, during the period 2000-07, accretions to the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) increased by 167,000 personnel³. The BSF, deployed with the Army on the LoC, numbers approximately 8,000 personnel⁴ only. Thus, out of the accretions for the CAPFs over the period 2000-07, an equivalent number of 8,000 could have been planned for the Army and instead, the BSF personnel with the Army released to join their parent battalions in the BSF.

The arrangements as explained would not have enjoined recruitment of additional personnel nor incurred significant additional expenditure but

would have enabled the Army to deploy a cohesive force structure to exclusively man the LoC, and the BSF companies, released to join their respective battalions, would have thereby ensured cohesion in their parent BSF battalions and contributed towards efficiency at that end as well!

We can only regret the lack of integrated manpower planning at the apex governmental level which eventually leads to such wasteful budgetary expense. The problem will get further compounded if the plan propounded by the Home Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh, declaring the intent to 'seal' the Indo-Pak IB³ by 2018 is eventually implemented. The demand for manpower for the BSF will continue to increase.

There is a positive need for more integrated manpower planning in respect of the SFs to be institutionalised under the aegis of the central government. A proper assessment of roles/tasks becomes necessary in order to ensure maximising productivity in the employment of manpower. Piecemeal deployment of the BSF sub-units under the Army infantry battalions, as explained, does not augur well for the enhancement of the efficiency of the BSF battalions.

The LoC with Pakistan in J&K should appropriately be manned exclusively by the Army under the aegis of the MoD designated as the sole nodal agency for the de-facto border that was mutually agreed and defined as the LoC in the year 1972. The BSF's responsibility is thereby restricted to the surveillance and security of the Indo-Pak border along the Radcliffe Line. The arrangement proposed is very much in consonance with the concept of *one-border-one-force!*

Personnel and Equipment for BSF Rifle Company: Need to Blend with the Essentials

At the outset, we need a correct and appropriate identification of the role of the BSF in our security paradigm. To our mind, it could best emerge as:

Ensure effective surveillance and security of the International Border (IB) with Pakistan so as to deter and counter attempts at infiltration, and/or any other form of unauthorised crossing of the IB by personnel operating from the territory of Pakistan.

Such clear 'role identification' would provide specific directions towards devising the tasks within the required framework of our national security paradigm which, in turn, would make it possible to determine the appropriate SF, its personnel strength, and compatible inventory for facilitating the role and specific tasks on the assigned IB.

As for determining the personnel staffing of a BSF battalion, in the project study, we can only conceptualise the requirements on the basis of which the details can be determined subsequently at the organisational level. Towards the same, we identify and place below the relevant aspects for consideration:

1. The span of control of the BSF battalions needs to be reduced to four rifle companies instead of seven companies to which figure it has drifted in an ad-hoc manner as a result of the perception of requirements more on a day- to-day basis.

During my assignment with the BSF over the years 1994-2000, I remained directly involved in imparting instructions at the BSF Senior Command Course and on all the serials of the particular course wherein the serving Battalion Commanders attending the course would strongly recommend the reduction of the span of control to four companies only.

2. The manpower base at the activity levels of company and below needs a marked increase. The strength ideally should be 200 all ranks per company and a BSF battalion should comprise four rifle companies only. The fifth company in the battalion would need to be organised as the Headquarters Company, comprising a platoon to staff the Battalion Headquarters, specialist platoons to include the Communications Platoon to organise line and radio communications, and the Quartermaster and Mechanical Transport Platoons for facilitating the administration of the battalion.

The strength of the Headquarters Company may also build up to 200 all ranks, and in this manner, the BSF battalion could, in sum total, reach 1,000 all ranks!

3. At the basic foundational level will be the 'rifle platoon' whose strength we recommend should comprise 60 all ranks, which is recommended as the minimum strength that should be appropriated for the manning of a Border Outpost (BOP).
4. The undermentioned weapons are essential for a BSF company deployed on the western border with Pakistan;
 - One section MMG (Medium Machine Guns) (Two-MMGs Mag-58);
 - One 84mm rocket launcher per platoon;
 - Sniper detachments – 9 in each company (one per rifle section).

In the organisational structure, thus, conceptualised, the activity and functional levels are adequately staffed. A company can still have 150 all ranks available towards deployment for tasks on the IB, even if 25 per cent, strength is away on leave and temporary duties.

One pressing reason to organise seven companies per battalion could well be an attempt to seal gaps and enable interception of infiltrators from the company post only. Herein, we emphasise that it would be impossible to seal 'all the gaps' by increasing the BOPs within a battalion and a better way to intercept unauthorised crossings or hostile infiltration is to deploy patrols in multiple ambushes in a 'planned matrix', with ambushes being sustained over a period of 48-72 hours! Periodically, the location of the ambushes should be altered.

Essential Training Inputs at the Rank and File Level

In our analysis, we have identified a very specific role of the BSF and in that backdrop, an organisational structure is required at the basic activity level. The organisational structure discerned primarily ensures enhancement and maintenance of functional efficiency in the sub-units whilst engaged in the performance of tasks.

At the foundational level of the rank and file, training inputs are discerned and emphasised upon which would enable development and maintenance of the functional efficiency at the rank and file level. The training inputs identified are:

Basic Military Training (includes inputs towards basic tactical training).

1. Physical Training (PT).
2. Drill.
3. Weapon training.
4. Fieldcraft.
5. Map reading.
6. Tactics, to include, and emphasise upon, section and platoon battle drills.
7. Patrolling: basics to be developed in the backdrop of environments which the rank and file will face whilst undertaking patrolling tasks on the IB—a primary task of the force.

The weapon training and other subjects need to be cemented with a vigorous and honest schedule of live firing practice. Writing in the Guest Column of *Bureaucracy Today*, January 16-31, 2015, Mr Jai Kumar Verma, former Director, Cabinet Secretariat, drew attention to the lack of infrastructure for training in the BSF and made a pointed reference to the lack of adequate firing ranges, an area that needs to be addressed⁵.

The deployment pattern at the level of a BSF battalion along the IB should enjoin:

- Three companies to be deployed along the IB; and
- One company held as the reserve.

Following up with developing standardisation up the chain, the deployment pattern in the BSF sector should include three BSF battalions on both counts, minimum and optimum, and ideally;

- Two battalions deployed on the IB;
- One battalion remains uncommitted and provides additional reserves, that is, over and above one company reserves in each battalion;

Organising reserves at battalion and sector levels is essential because it improves balance in the planning and conduct of tactical operations through flexibility and increased options.

Developing Institutional Strength Within the BSF

The model of the Indian Army needs to be understood. It is the Army regiment which supports recruitment, initial training and regulates retirement. The battalions of the regiments, once organised and formed, are never again split, and retain the homogeneity of the institution. The Regimental Centres serve as the 'soul' of the regiments, and a sense of belonging to the regiment is a major motivational factor contributing towards the development of leadership.

In respect of the BSF, the battalions, once organised, should remain cohesive outfits and should not be split. Direct tasking of the companies by the headquarters above the battalion should cease! We emphasise that a battalion should retain cohesion through tasking of the 'battalion as a whole' by the Sector Headquarters and, in turn, the Battalion Commander should assign tasks to the companies under his command which form part of the battalion.

Deployment in the militancy infested areas becomes inescapable but that commitment should be undertaken by the reserve battalions in the sector and troops should not be drawn from the battalions deployed on the IB.

What is stated above can be explained with help of a case study published in the magazine *Geopolitics*, September 2016. The caption on the cover of the magazine reads⁶, "*The Inside Story of how CRPF is losing its Cohesion and Sheen!*" The article appearing on pages 66-70 makes a scathing attack, stating;

The lack of operational and organisational understanding of India's lead internal security force, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has not only cost it in terms of blunting the effectiveness of the force but is also leading to destruction of the structure, ethos and cohesion of the units.

The author, Mayank Singh, then goes on to state in the article;

The CRPF Directorate General has issued an order on July 5, 2016 that Annual Change Over (ACO) was being stopped and to start rotating the 25 per cent of the manpower in the form annual transfer.

What is the policy being implemented? Now, 25 per cent of the manpower of units will be transferred and that too within four zones which India will be divided into, as per the deployment. The earlier policy was that a unit used to move as a whole from one deployment to another in any part of the country. Before we talk about the voices which gave strong reasons against the new policy, let us understand how a body of troops is shaped into a unit and why their integration as a whole, officers and men, is a matter of importance. Trust in each other is a matter of life and death when troops operate in the Counter-Insurgency, Counter-Terrorism and Left Wing Extremism areas. It takes time in building trust, thus, more time is needed to weave troops to function as a group.

The importance of battalions developing into cohesive outfits on the lines of the Army is evident. Cohesion within the battalions will enable development of good understanding between the leader and the led; the measure of camaraderie and the emergence of 'well-directed leadership' gets nurtured and strengthened with the passage of time.

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Chapter 5

Leadership Development: Officers

The alma-mater of the Border Security Force (BSF) is the BSF Academy at Tekanpur. I consider my posting as the Chief Instructor to this prestigious institution as a great honour bestowed upon me, and take pride in having served the institution for duration of six years over the period 1994-2000!

My analysis may sound critical: however, the intention is not to undermine the institution but to recommend essential improvements to elevate the standards which, in turn, will develop leaders of a quality that will overcome the inadequacies observed and widely lamented at present.

The courses conducted at the BSF Academy at present fall into two categories;

1. Basic Foundational Training Courses

- Basic officers entry course identified as the Assistant Commandants Direct Entry (AC-DE) Course; and
- Basic entry course for the cadre recruited directly as Sub-Inspectors (SIs). The course is appropriately identified as the Sub-Inspectors Direct Entry (SI-DE) Course.

The minimum academic qualification required for candidates who apply for the entrance examination to these courses is graduation.

2. In-Service Courses

In addition to the two basic courses, a number of in-service courses are conducted at the institution and these are listed below from the lowest levels to the highest;

- Platoon Commanders Course (SIs Direct Entry).
- Platoon Commanders Course (SIs promoted from the ranks).
- Company Commanders Course (Officers promoted from the ranks).
- Company Commanders Course (Asstt Comdts Direct Entry); towards the end of my tenure, this particular course was redesignated as the Junior Command Course (JC Course).
- Senior Command Course (SC Course).
- Higher Command Course (HC Course).

I will first discuss the in-service courses, as serialised in the list.

1. Platoon Commanders Course (SIs Direct Entry).

The course is primarily conducted for the Sub-Inspectors (Direct Entry). The particular trainee Non-Gazetted Officers (NGOs), whose minimum academic qualification at the entry stage is stipulated as 'graduate', have already gone through the regimen of training that involves the tactics and techniques of a rifle platoon in detail whilst undergoing the course at the entry level.

Now, the same trainee officers are made to repeat the training after they have spent some time with their units. These repetitive training courses, in the manner described above, are not necessary, and could be discontinued.

2. Platoon Commanders Course (SIs promoted from the ranks). Whilst in the rank of Head Constables (equivalent Havildars in the Army), they are trained and tested in the mandatory promotion cadres which they are required to pass before they are promoted to the rank of Sub-Inspectors (SIs). The training conducted in this course is repetitive and should, therefore, be discontinued.

3 & 4. Company Commander's Course: There should be only one course for all categories of Officers, that is, the direct entry officers from the AC (DE) Courses, officers promoted from the lower ranks that is to include, officers inducted through the SI (DE) Courses, as also, those promoted from the BSF rank & file."

5. Senior Command Course: This is not required and should be discontinued. The instruction attempted is entirely Army oriented, 'sans expertise'.

I recall my own experience in the same. It was in September 2000 that I reported at Tekanpur (near Gwalior) where I was assigned the appointment of Chief Instructor at the BSF Academy. On the very first day, I went over to meet the trainee officers attending the Senior Command Course which was in progress. The course was modelled in most part on the lines of the Senior Command Course conducted at the Army War College, Mhow.

I put the officers at ease with an assurance of informality in the discussions to follow between us, and invited questions. The very first question put to me was, "Sir, what is this bypassing and outflanking?" The officers were

somewhat agitated and went on to state that the instructional staff that had put this question to them, had appeared themselves to be unable to find a convincing answer. I expressed regret that they had been questioned in this manner and after briefly educating them on the environment in which such a discussion could take place, I emphatically stated that discussions of that kind had no place in the functioning of the BSF. I assured them that henceforth such questions would not be put to the BSF officers attending the courses at this institution!

6. Higher Command Course: Introduction of this course was primarily due to an ego fixation of the Director (Commandant in Army parlance) in the year 1999-2000. The particular Director was an ex-ECO and harboured bitter memories of his rejection by the Army in the year 1964. No in-depth examination was conducted and the decision was taken unilaterally. The ego problem could be discerned as being that because the Army conducts such a course, the BSF should also conduct a course with the same designation. I strongly recommend that the Higher Command Course presently conducted at the BSF Academy should be discontinued.

It is appropriate to highlight the fact that the syllabi designed for all the courses listed, which include both courses at the basic foundational level and the in-service courses for progression of knowledge, are derived from the precis for the Cadets Course at the Indian Military Academy, Dehra Dun, Platoon Commanders (PC) Course at the Infantry School, Mhow (MP) and JC Course at the Army War College, Mhow (MP). The orientation, therefore, is more towards teaching about 'Operations of War' and the 'Organisation and Administration (O&A) of various 'Army Field Formations' which have no relevance to the job context that the trainees from the BSF Academy face when they join their respective units.

As the officers add up more service years, they come to attend the Company Commander's Course at the BSF Academy, now renamed the BSF Junior Command (JC) Course in an effort at 'aping' the course with the same designation at the Army War College, Mhow (MP). The BSF JC Course is oriented towards the study of tactics required to be adopted in operations of war. The approach towards the conduct of instruction is regrettably 'moribund', and, in good part, does not prepare the trainee officers for

the jobs they need to undertake in the environments in which they will be required to operate in the immediate or near future.

I need to illustrate the observations recorded with two specific events that I experienced at the Academy some time in 1995.

During a visit to the training site during day-time, I observed the troops rehearsing for a demonstration of the Forming up Point (FUP) marking by night. I questioned the utility of this demonstration as I could not visualise a situation in which a BSF battalion would in any way be tasked to mount a set-piece attack by night.

The concerned officers searched for an answer and what was conveyed to me was that the Army was known to be practising the particular demonstration, hence, they also practised it. My immediate instructions were that the demonstration on the particular subject be discontinued forthwith.

A second event was related to the briefing of a patrol by its leader; "*Patrol ke ambush ho jane par, RV pichhla bound hoga!*" Again a moribund adherence to the teaching evolved in the Army during the Burma Campaign in 1941-44!

In the year 1998, I was informed by the trainee officers attending the AC-DE Course that they were introduced to the subject of attack in operations of war through a slide which projected that a attack in operations of war is conducted in four phases which were explained as:

- Phase-1: Preparatory period.
- Phase-2: Break-in period.
- Phase-3: Dog-fight period.
- Phase-4: Break-out period.

We presume that the professionals in this particular field are by now convinced about the prevalence of a confused mindset not only among instructors at the BSF Academy but also the hierarchy at the 'helm' as well! The lack of communication between the 'helm' and the instructional staff at the Academy was very obvious. Apparently, the situation is compounded with the suitability of the leadership placed at the helm or apex of the BSF being questionable. This aspect is intended to be debated further in a later part of the text.

The only demonstration that I introduced in 1995 was on the 'Section Battle Drill' that was evolved to overcome a group of four militants for which the rifle section was to be organised into four sub-groups;

The sequence that was set is illustrated in a tabulated format:

Deployment of Groups		Methodology of Conduct
1.	Scout Group	2 OR On being fired upon, the scouts will take up positions to return the fire from the militant group and fix their position.
2.	Rifle Group	4 OR Rifle group moves up, say, to the right flank, deploys and augments the fire of the scouts who are engaged with the militant group.
3.	LMG Group	3 OR LMG group moves up, to the left flank, that is, to the flank other than to which the rifle group had moved up and deployed.
4.	Cut-Off Group	2 OR Cut-off group (2-OR) moves independently on a wide outflanking move and places itself behind the militant group to cut off the route of escape of the militants.
5.	Total Rifle Section	11 OR Under cover of the LMG group, the rifle group moves up in pairs to close-in with the opposing militant group and lobs grenades into the huts in which they were shown as hiding, and liquidates them.
6.		Two militants are shown escaping and are intercepted by the cut-off group. One is shown as shot dead and the other is captured alive.
7.		Bull-headed assaults and the ritual shouting of C H A R G E was discouraged and eliminated from the drill eventually introduced in the training curricula.

The demonstration became a standard format for all the in-service and basic foundational courses at the BSF Academy since 1995. It always generated an intense discussion and debate! Evidently, the trainees were finding it useful because the event was very relevant in the job context in which the BSF units were operating.

It was a 'far cry' from the '*mechanised warfare manoeuvres*' and the periods of attack at the '*corps level*' which were being drummed in till then.

We now examine the basic foundational courses that are conducted at the BSF Academy, Tekanpur.

Assistant Commandants Direct Entry (AC-DE) Course

We first address the Assistant Commandant Direct Entry (AC-DE) Course which is the prime basic foundational level course and is hereinafter referred to in an abbreviated form as the AC-DE Course. Entry to this course requires

candidates to have the minimal educational qualification of 'graduation' in any discipline.

First, a written competitive examination is conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), and then the physical efficiency tests and interview by the Departmental Selection Board are carried out. Candidates who successfully qualify are selected to attend a 'one-year course' at the BSF Academy, Tekanpur. As for the conduct of the course, the syllabi is based on the cadets course at the IMA, Dehra Dun, and there is an excessive thrust on the military orientation of the course that includes in large measure, the military 'operations of war'.

While a good foundation through basic military training and tactical training directed towards the job environments in the immediate and near future is highly recommended, considering that it is a basic foundational course for the direct entry officers who are to form the core of the BSF, the sound development of leadership qualities is also essential. This requires a well thought out academic course tailored alongside the basic military training to develop a more complete personality in the new entrant officer. The duration of the basic course should preferably be extended for a period of 18 months, scheduled over three terms of six months each, and including within the proposed schedule, a one-month break between each term.

I attempt a 'conceptualised thought' in respect of the desired syllabi of the basic foundational course required for the AC-DE entrants at the BSF Academy;

Inputs of a Comprehensive Training Schedule

S No.	Academic Subjects	S No.	Military Subjects
1.	English	1.	Physical Training
2.	Mathematics	2.	Drill
3.	Computer Science	3.	Weapon Training
4.	Social Studies	4.	Fieldcraft
5.	Geopolitics	5.	Map Reading
6.	Law	6.	Tactics

7.	Psychology: Basics only, with an emphasis upon human behaviour and interpersonal dynamics. Study of the subject could help control impulsiveness through an understanding of human behaviour. Thus, it is an important discipline that needs to be learnt at the foundational level only, for development of leadership qualities with the adding of years in the service.		
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Academic inputs will eventually be decided by expert staff who would need to be deployed at the Academy. Considering that the trainees are inducted at the stage of graduation from the colleges, the subjects would need to be concise, with the ultimate objective being to bring the trainees on a grid that enables better absorption of military specialist education.

We would emphasise that the foundation of good leadership in the BSF is laid through the foundational course as now conceived. Development and sustenance of leadership is ensured and furthered through institutionalisation within the organisation and judiciously identified essential in-service courses!

Sub-Inspectors Direct Entry (SI-DE) Course

As per the system prevalent in the BSF, officers from a particular cadre who mostly later become gazetted officers, eventually serve as the 'support cadre' to the officers from the AC-DE Courses.

The syllabi for the SI-DE Course should be excerpted from the AC-DE Course but the duration of the course should be reduced to 12 months unlike the AC-DE Course which is recommended to be scheduled over an 18-month period.

An Independent Officer Cadre for the BSF

Earlier in the text, I had questioned the suitability of the existing leadership placed at the 'apex', which entails officers from the Indian Police Service (IPS). All the aspects have been discussed in detail as regards the role of the BSF and the inputs that are essential towards training and development. Hopefully, there is no doubt about the need to give a military orientation to the training, albeit, detailed up to the rifle company level only, as that relates

to the deployment and functioning of the BSF. The expertise required is with the Army and not the IPS!

It is obviously realised in the established hierarchy that the BSF is a military oriented organisation and in the present times, mostly, it is required to operate in environments that are identified as combat oriented. It becomes essential that the BSF is eventually managed by its own dedicated officer cadre. Presently, in the top hierarchy of the BSF, 44 posts¹ are known to be reserved as quota vacancies for IPS officers.

We have reasoned that the IPS officers placed at the apex of the BSF hierarchy are NOT compatible with the job environments in the BSF. Ideally therefore, the BSF should have an independent officer cadre that develops through exposure to the command, staff and instructional appointments at various stages within the BSF only. Officers who emerge through such a grind are better placed to manage responsibilities at the higher command, staff and instructional levels in the BSF organisation and the select few from amongst the 'BSF cadre officers only' thence get placed at the 'apex'! However, as of now, the officer cadre in the BSF is not yet developed enough to manage responsibilities at the higher echelons of the organisation and, therefore, it is appropriate that the responsibilities in the selective higher echelons are taken over by the Army as a temporary arrangement which presently may necessitate a duration extending to a period of 10-15 years?

We emphasise that the leadership in the BSF cannot develop with mere guidelines through an aide-memoire of 'Do's & Dont's! An independent cadre needs to be developed from within the organisation and in this context, a quote from a former Director in the Cabinet Secretariat Shri Jai Kumar Verma, referred to partly in the previous chapter as well, is relevant.

The directly recruited BSF officers feel that the chances of their promotions are limited as the top posts are reserved for the IPS. In fact, the persons who are aware of the ground realities are too junior to take decisions and the officers who take decisions (IPS officers), possess limited knowledge of the ground realities. This anomaly should be resolved. All these factors demoralise the officers and men of the BSF, which is unfortunate. On the one hand, it kills the vigour of junior and middle level officers and, on the other, the force fails to achieve its targets.

We conclude this chapter with significant recommendations;

- The 'BSF officer cadre development' will involve a government notification in accordance with which the officers' seniority list incorporating both direct entry through the AC-DE and the SI-DE Courses, is drawn up.
- In the latter case (SIs-DE), seniority is determined from the day the officers are promoted as Assistant Commandants.
- Eventually, entries to a permanent and independent BSF officer cadre will only comprise officers who have successfully completed their training at the BSF Academy on the AC-DE & SI-DE Courses.

Army officers' entry would first entail;

- Lieutenant General inducted as the Director General, BSF.
- Lieutenant General inducted as the Director, BSF Academy.

An expert academic staff would need to be deployed at the Academy to impart instruction in the academic subjects identified.

Reference

1. blog.timesofindia.indiatimes.com, October 31, 2016, PTI News Feed, October 18, 2016.

Concluding Thoughts

We have vast international borders on land that are shared with five different nations and the nodal agency at the apex which manages all the IBs is the Ministry of Home Affairs. A situation that presently persists is that the SFs and other agencies deployed in the same border regions are reporting to different ministries in Delhi and the all-important arrangement of ensuring unity of command in managing the security forces is not adhered to.

In the text, therefore, we have reasoned that the responsibilities of the nodal agencies that are placed at the apex should be shared between the Ministries of Home Affairs and Defence in accordance with the threat perceptions, and thereby, the SFs are to be identified and deployed on the respective IBs.

Over the first three chapters, we have extensively discussed this aspect, and placed below is a profile that has emerged for the control of the IBs and deployment of security forces to ensure surveillance and security, and where necessary, defence of the border region as well;

S No.	IB Identified	Nodal Agency Recommended	Recommendation of the SF to be Assigned Responsibility
1.	Indo-Pak IB	MHA	BSF
2.	LoC J&K: Indo-Pak IB	MoD	Army exclusively
3.	Indo-BD IB	MHA	Proposed EFR
4.	IBs with Nepal & Bhutan	MHA	SSB
5.	Indo-China (Tibet) IB	MoD	Army exclusively, with ITBP integrated as the ITBS
6.	Indo-Myanmar IB	MoD	Army with Assam Rifles under command

In the aftermath of the Kargil military engagement with Pakistan in 1999, a review committee was set up at the strategic level to ascertain shortfalls in our defence apparatus. As part of the review committee, a committee on the border management, presided over by Shri Madhav Godbole, former Home Secretary, examined the issues in an overall strategic perspective.

The committee on border management specifically recommended deployment of the border guarding forces on the basis of *one-border-one-force* and its relevant recommendations were;

- The BSF to deploy one Additional Director General each for the IBs with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- Assam Rifles to deploy exclusively on the Indo-Myanmar border.
- Indo-Tibetan Border Police to remain deployed exclusively on the Indo-Tibetan border and take over the areas vacated by Assam Rifles.

Deployment of the BSF on the Western Borders

The western borders with Pakistan are identified in two distinct segments. The IB with Pakistan would commence from a point opposite Akhnoor (J&K) thence aligned southwards to Sir Creek in Kutch (Gujarat). In the north, an unsettled Line of Control (LoC), commencing from the same point opposite Akhnoor, and delineated northwards, indicates a divide between Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK) to the west and the Indian held Kashmir to its east.

The Indian held Kashmir was liberated by forcing the Pakistan sponsored tribal raiders out of the areas of J&K after the military action by the Indian Army in 1947-48. BSF sub-units are deployed in this part of the IB region, under the command of the Army infantry battalions and are dispersed piecemeal along the LoC.

Adhering to the concept of *one-border-one-force*, it is recommended that the BSF's deployment on the LoC in J&K be terminated and the entire LoC should be managed by the Army.

The BSF should be entrusted with the responsibility of security and surveillance of the Indo-Pak IB as delineated in accordance with the Radcliffe Award, 1947!

Creating a Separate BGF for the Indo-BD IB

BSF deployment on the Indo-BD IB was effected in the year 1965 when Bangladesh was a province of Pakistan and referred to as East Pakistan. The Kargil review committee recommendations, as amplified in the text earlier, only advised that BSF to deploy one Additional Director General each for the IBs with Pakistan and Bangladesh. However, the implications of the recommendations were that on a specific IB with each independent country, only one designated BGF would be assigned.

In this manner, continuation of the BSF's deployment on two IBs with Pakistan and Bangladesh in the immediate aftermath could only be construed as an interim arrangement. However, despite a lapse of 18 years since the recommendations were accepted, only one BGF continues to guard the IBs with two different independent countries which are separated with intervening Indian territory over a width of 1,500 km.

In the backdrop of the concept of *one-border-one force* only, we suggested the creation of a separate BGF for the IB with Bangladesh to be designated Eastern Frontier Rifles (EFR). We recommended its creation by splitting the BSF, and with an independent Director General (DG) to be located at Kolkata (WB) to manage the proposed EFR and the Indo-BD border.

In the proposed arrangement, eventually, the BSF would be entrusted with the responsibility of surveillance and security on the Indo-Pak IB.

India-China (Tibet) IB : Deployment of the Army in the Paradigm of Border Management

In the recommendations of the committee on border management, a marked omission is that the Army is not factored in with the responsibility of border management of the IBs. We also need to analyse threats that call for policing of borders more than ever, and in the details explained in the chapters, we perceived situations on our land borders that could as well conflagrate into conventional military conflicts, and the necessity to defeat the enemy's designs in a much shortened timeline within the border region only.

It is essential for the Army to be fully involved in the arrangements for managing our international borders on land. In particular, we discern the India-China (Tibet) IB region where the possibility of the situation conflagrating into a conventional military conflict is most likely to develop. Integrating the ITBP with the Army is strongly recommended.

Intra-Confictual Situation on the Indo-Myanmar IB

We have put forth elaborate reasons against the proposal towards the planned deployment of the BSF on the Indo-Myanmar border again. We have emphasised against dividing the functions of 'border guarding' and the conduct of 'counter-insurgency operations' in the same IB region between two different agencies of the government. The methodology employed by

the BSF in respect of border guarding in the western region cannot, and should not, be transplanted in the far eastern region of the Indo-Myanmar border!

The terrain configuration of the Indo-Myanmar region in the country's far east is at complete variance from the Indo-Pak region in the west. The border region on the Indo-Myanmar IB is a densely forested hill region, with loose soil which is held together by the dense afforestation that has developed over a period of centuries. Any attempt at developing Border Outposts (BOPs) linked by a border track and installing fencing along the entire length of 1,600 km of the IB is fraught with the risk of defoliation, resultant landslides, and construction not only being repeatedly delayed but developing into an unending phenomenon. It will never be possible to intercept all cross-border movement. In any case, the tribals on either side have the right to move across the IB into India or Myanmar without travel documents over a distance of 16 km on either side. Thus, we would like to question how such movements can be denied.

The best way to effectively guard the IB in the Indo-Myanmar border region would be to deploy the SFs close to the populated centres and effect surveillance on the IB through a periodic census of the population in the hamlets and the issuance of identity cards (UID-Aadhar). In case a marked increase in population is observed, with people not having UIDs, appropriate actions become necessary and may be undertaken.

Focus upon BSF

We have dwelt at length on the BSF's organisational structure and questioned the compatibility of the inventory authorised to the organisation. Most regretfully, in the initial approach towards determining, and subsequent persistence with, the inventory, there is a rigidity in the approach adopted towards line-item budgeting instead of a more cost-effective performance-based approach.

We strongly recommend that the artillery arm, infantry mortar guns and the second Light Machine Guns (LMGs) in each section be shed and the manpower so released should be deployed in the rifle companies. Also, the BSF needs to be equipped with more productive assets like state-of-the-art communications and surveillance equipment, and sniper rifles to enable 'precision shooting' whilst intercepting unauthorised crossings.

We have undertaken a thorough analysis and accordingly addressed the BSF organisation from the grassroots level upwards. Particularly, we have emphasised upon a strengthened manpower base at the activity level of the rifle platoons and rifle companies.

Road Ahead: Model of BSF Organisation: The model of the BSF organisation at the level of a rifle company and below, presented in Chapter 4, could well be emulated in the organisations of all the Border Guarding Forces (BGFs). It may prove useful for all the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) as well.

BSF Academy at Tekanpur

We have elaborated upon the prevailing training systems and the lack of objectivity existent therein. A systemic and objective approach to training and development is recommended and has been illustrated with the conceptualised syllabi.

As for the training and development of leadership, this cannot be achieved without sound training at the foundational level first.

The suitability of the leadership given by the officers from the IPS assigned to the BSF was questioned, with detailed and convincing reasoning. The ultimate solution towards ensuring the stability of the BSF lies in the development of an independent and dedicated officer cadre from amongst the officers of the BSF itself, who should handle responsibilities at the higher levels of the organisation and eventually at the 'apex'!

It will take some time for such a cadre to emerge and develop. In the interim, therefore, the responsibility of managing the force that involves managing responsibilities at the 'apex' and staffing at the technical levels, should be transferred to the Army.

Road Ahead: BSF Academy, Tekanpur

We have strongly recommended adherence to the concept of *one-border-one-force*, and if accepted, this would imply that the guarding of international borders will get distributed over a number of forces that will include the BSF, the proposed EFR, SSB and ITBP. In the backdrop, the BSF Academy should appropriately be designated as the Border Guarding Forces (BGFs) Academy that should meet requirements of all the BGFs so organised.

A Final Word

In the recent past, we have been confronted with incidents involving Pakistan sponsored terrorists crossing the Indo-Pak IB in the region of Pathankot (Punjab) on January 02, 2016, and attacking the Pathankot air base as the year 2016 dawned! Later, in the closing months of the same year, on November 29, 2016, terrorists from Pakistan again crossed the IB in the southern part of J&K and attacked the Nagrota Army Camp. In this case, it was discovered that the terrorists from Pakistan had crossed the IB through a tunnel dug beneath the fencing installed on the Indo-Pak IB.

In the backdrop of the prevailing and emerging security environments in the western regions of the Indian subcontinent, tactical operations undertaken by the BSF on the 'zero-line' of the Indo-Pak IB, with the Army located in the cantonments close to the IB and other agencies located in the vicinity, there is now a positive need to adopt an approach that is *synchronous* and *synchro-meshed* amongst the organisations involved in the security and surveillance of the IBs!

Our detailed proposal on the reorganisation of the BSF, with specific emphasis upon a strengthened manpower base at the activity levels, determining a compatible inventory and transfer of command responsibility to the Army at the apex should be viewed in the backdrop of threats to our vital installations in the region of the Indo-Pak IB.

