

A Historiographic Analysis of the Military History of Post-Independent India

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Centre for Land Warfare Studies
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A Historiographic Analysis of the Military History of Post-Independent India

India's military history is presently comatose. Like a terminally ill patient, who can do little more than wait for a miracle, it is slowly sinking. It is only a matter of time before it passes into oblivion, followed by certain death. Unless it receives urgent attention and aid, the end is inevitable.

— Maj Gen VK Singh (Retd)¹

Introduction

Historiography encompasses the principles, theory, and history of historical writing or in other words, the study of the study of history.² The historiography of military history in the Indian context is characterised by the fact that military history *per se* is not taught in any university or college in the nation. This is despite the fact that while over a dozen universities offer defence and strategic studies programmes, none extensively covers military history. Even in the Army, ostensibly, the primary purpose of including military history in the promotion examinations and entrance examinations is to sift the wheat from the chaff amongst the officer cadre and less to do with teaching military history. This approach to military history is totally examination-oriented, with study material and even guide books available for the same.

This is not a new phenomenon. Consider the following excerpt from the 1907 book by Capt JWE Donaldson;³

The young officer on entering the Service is usually only too anxious to learn his profession in all its branches. He is told to study Strategy and Tactics and to read Military History, in all of which he will in due course have to pass certain qualifying examinations. He accordingly acquires works on Strategy and Tactics, and learns therefrom certain definitions and principles, but has no conception of their practical value. He procures a history of some campaign and reads it carefully. He knows what the victor did, but not why. It appears to him that the vanquished courted disaster by blunders so egregious

as to be almost incredible, but he does not appreciate how the situation appeared to the defeated commander when shorn of the light thrown upon it by later events. He does not perceive any connection between the maxims and principles of his text-books and the incidents of the campaign he has read. Very probably, his whole attention has been seized by some vivid description of the tactical details of the great battle, the very point in which the study of the past warfare is of little value today.

After a few years' service, the officer has acquired a fair text-book knowledge of Strategy and Tactics and has read most of the important campaigns of the past century. He can pass, and has passed, a stereotyped qualifying examination in them...Some officers have acquired a knowledge of detail – nearly always, alas! (*sic*) tactical detail – almost marvellous in its accuracy and completeness. They can state off-hand the exact position of any unit at any given moment in a great battle.

But of what practical value is such a course of self-education? Clearly very little. Whatever knowledge has been, thus, acquired, is retained by an effort of memory. It has no reality, no life for its possessor. He cannot apply it in practice...His knowledge has not become part of himself, it is not part of his nature, and he would not make use of it intuitively.

An analysis of the military historical literature in India will primarily find personal accounts or hagiographic accounts mostly written by retired Army officers. While there is no denying the utility of these books, the dearth of pure objective analysis and recording of facts by trained historians is sorely missed.

The aim of this paper, therefore, is to *analyse the study of military history in India and recommend measures to improve the lacunae observed.*

Historiographic Analysis of Indian Military History Books

A cursory internet search of the books on the 1947–1948 Indo-Pakistan War is listed below as an example of this phenomenon. Out of the ten books that have emerged from the internet, written purely on the 1947–1948 Indo-Pakistan War, seven have been written by Army officers, one by an Air Force officer (about the air operations), one by an Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, one by an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer (SS Bloeria) and one by professional government historians. Ironically, this is the only official publication of the Government of India on any war in post-independence India.

Ser No.	List of Books on 1947–1948 WAR		Remarks
1	SN Prasad & Dharm Pal	Operations in Jammu and Kashmir 1947–1948	This is the official history
2	Lt Gen LP Sen	Slender Was The Thread: The Kashmir Confrontation 1947–1948	Personal accounts
3	Lt Gen EA Vaz	Without Baggage: A Personal Account of the Jammu and Kashmir Operations 1947–1949	
4	Lt Gen SK Sinha	Operation Rescue: Military Operations in Jammu & Kashmir 1947–1948	
5	Maj Gen Joginder Singh	Behind the Scene: Analysis of India's Military Operations, 1947–1971	
6	Col MN Gulati	Military Plight of Pakistan: Indo Pak War of 1947–1948	
7	Air Mshl Bharat Kumar	An Incredible War: IAF in Kashmir War 1947–1948.	
8	Maj Gen Kuldip Singh Bajwa	Jammu & Kashmir War: 1947 & 1948: Political & Military Perspective	
9	Sudhir S Bloeria	The Battles of Zojila 1948	
10	C Dasgupta, IFS.	War & Diplomacy in Kashmir: 1947–1948	Written using recently declassified material.

Restrictions on access to military documents, even those which have been declassified, remain the major problem for research scholars. All the authors in the list above were government functionaries and had either been part of the operations or had access to relevant material. If we carry out another study of the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the story is equally dismal. In all, eight books are listed below based on a simple Google search.

Ser No.	List of Books on 1962 Sino-Indian War		Remarks
1	Lt Gen BM Kaul	The Untold Story	Personal accounts
2	Brig JP Dalvi	Himalayan Blunder	
3	Maj Gen DK Palit	War in the High Himalayas: The Indian Army in Crisis 1962	
4	Maj Gen Niranjn Prasad	The Fall of Towang	
5	Lt Col JR Saigal	The Unfought War of 1962: The NEFA Debacle	
6	Neville Maxwell	India's China War	Foreign author who had access to the Henderson-Brooks Report. ⁴
7	Brig NK Arya	China-Tibet-India: The 1962 War and the Strategic Military Future	
8	Wg Cdr M Sadatullah	1962 War: Supplying from the Air	

One must take into account that the lists tabulated here are of books that concern only one particular war. Other books are available which cover all the wars or a group of wars. For example, Gen KV Krishna Rao's tome *Prepare or Perish: A Study of National Security* extensively covers all four⁵ wars, including the insurgencies that the Indian Army has been involved in since independence. However, for the purpose of simplicity, these books have not been included in this analysis. Books by foreign authors have not been included, barring one by Neville Maxwell, since it was essentially based on the Henderson-Brooks Report. In the case of the 1962 War too, the bulk of authors have been military men. Without taking away any credit from the abovementioned authors, one cannot help but quote Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich⁶ who state:

...military institutions rarely have been interested in studying their own experiences with any degree of honesty. Historians often argue that armies and navies invariably study the last war and that is why they get the next one

wrong. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, one of the major reasons military institutions get the next war wrong is because they either deliberately fail to study the last war, or do so only insofar as it makes leaders feel good. Ironically, in view of this myth, only the Germans studied the First World War at the tactical and operational levels with a degree of honesty that allowed them to carry those lessons forward into the next conflict. And because through that study they were able to understand more clearly the possibilities offered by future war, they won a series of devastating victories in the first years of World War II. General Hans von Seeckt, the father of the Reichswehr, created no fewer than fifty-seven different committees in 1920 to study the lessons of the last war. In contrast, the British created the Kirk Commission only in 1932 to examine the lessons of World War I, while the French ensured their historical examinations of the last war remained limited to what made their army look good.

Continuing our historiographical analysis of military writing in India reveals no improvement in the coverage of the 1965 Indo-Pak War. Strangely, this war produced far less authorship compared to the previous two wars. This could be attributed to the fact that the outcome of the war was ambiguous and was neither a victory nor an outright defeat. It could be argued that the 1947-48 War was also not a major victory, but the circumstances were different, since, in 1947, the question was of the survival of Kashmir. The outcome of the 1965 War was widely accepted as a stalemate, with Shekhar Gupta having, in fact, condemned it as having been a War of Mutual Incompetence.⁷

Ser No.	List of Books on 1965 War		Remarks
1	Lt Gen Harbaksh Singh	War Despatches	Personal account
2	SN Prasad & UP Thapliyal (Ed.)	The India-Pakistan War of 1965: A History	A quasi-official history since it was sponsored by the Ministry of Defence
3	Brig NK Arya	China-Tibet-India: The 1962 War and the Strategic Military Future	
4	R. Pradhan, IAS	1965 War - the Inside Story: Defence Minister's Diary of the India-Pakistan War	

The 1971 War with Pakistan resulted in a decisive victory for India. Going by the cliché about history always being written by the victors, one would have expected scores of books by Indian authors on the victory which resulted in the capture of 93,000 Pakistani Prisoners of War (POWs) and the creation of a new nation, Bangladesh. However, the customary Google search throws up a paltry list of seven books.

Ser No.	List of Books on 1971 War		Remarks
1	SN Prasad & UP Thapliyal (Ed.)	The India-Pakistan War of 1971: A History	Quasi-official history sponsored by Ministry of Defence
2	Maj Gen Kuldip Bajwa	India-Pakistan War 1971: Military Triumph and Political Failure	
3	Col Anil Shorey	Pakistan Failed Gamble: The Battle of Laungewala	
4	Lt Gen JFR Jacob	Surrender at Dacca: Birth of a Nation	
5	Srinath Raghavan	1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh	Author was an infantry officer for six years.
6	Samir Chopra and PVS Jagmohan	Eagles Over Bangladesh: The Indian Air Force in the 1971 Liberation War	
7	Sarmila Bose	Dead Reckoning: Memories of the 1971 Bangladesh War	

The culpability begins with the national and military leadership in that it has taken over 33 years for the quasi-official version of the history of the 1971 War to be published. The author is constrained to use the term 'quasi-official' since the book is described as having been "*sponsored by the Ministry of Defence*" and "*based on the original records preserved by the Ministry of Defence and the three Services Headquarters, including war diaries and after action reports*". A flyer boldly describes the following three books as "*THE INDIAN WARS TRILOGY, Post-Independence 1971, 1965, 1947 – 48*" as having been "*Published on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, Government of India*". Ironically, the third book mentioned in the flyer has

been published as an “Official History”. This inexplicable reluctance to grant official sanction to the other two wars, including the one which is hailed as a classic victory, is mystifying.

The historiography of the 1999 Indo-Pakistan War reveals a quantum shift in the nature of war history writing in India. The Google search reveals 16 books authored mostly by civilian analysts. The paucity of military authors is primarily attributed to the service of the participants in the operations. Most of the participants in the 1999 War were junior leaders and are still in service. In addition, there seems to be no intention of the Army or the Government to publish any account of the operations. Only six of the 16 books have been written by Army officers, out of which Gen Malik, who was the Chief of the Army Staff during the war, has written one. What is heartening is that hitherto lesser known aspects of the war have been thrown up by the civilian authors based on research and analysis. Thus, Dr. Pratibha Devendra, the head of the Department of Defence Studies, Fateh Chand College (Lahore), Hissar, has discussed the economics of war in the context of the 1999 conflict. The responsibility on the Armed Forces is extremely compelling and demanding while, at the same time, the Government is committed to the upliftment of its citizens. It is in this context that the need of the hour was to study the impact of the war finance on the Indian economy.

Further, Sita Ram Sharma, on the other hand, has discussed the ethics angle in the Kargil War with the exhumed bodies of six Indian soldiers being handed over by Pakistan in a mutilated condition, pointing to charges of unbecoming inhuman behaviour by Pakistan.

Ser No.	List of Books on 1999 War		Remarks
1	Gen VP Malik	Kargil – From Surprise to Victory	He was the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) during the war.
2	Air Cmde Jasjit Singh	Kargil 1999: Pakistan's Fourth War for Kashmir	
3	Maj Gen Ashok Krishna & PR Chari	Kargil – The Tables Turned	
4	Maj Gen Ashok Kalyan Verma	Kargil: Blood on the Snow: Tactical Victory Strategic Failure: A Critical Analysis of the War	
5	Brig Gurmeet Kanwal	The Heroes of Kargil	
6	Col Bhaskar Sarkar	Kargil War Past, Present and Future	
7	Sanjay Dutt	War & Peace in Kargil Sector	
8	M Neelammalar	Kargil Revisited: Images and Perceptions of the Kargil War After Ten Years	
9	Harinder Baweja	Kargil – The Inside Story	
10	RN Sharma, YK Sharma & RK Sharma	The Kargil War: A Saga of Patriotism	
11	Sankarshan Thakur	Guns and Yellow Roses: Essays on the Kargil War	
12	Pratibha Devendra	Funding for Defence and Development: Before and After Kargil War	
13	Suba Chandran	Limited War: Revisiting Kargil in the Indo-Pak Conflict	
14	Sita Ram Sharma	War Ethics and the Kargil Crisis	
15	Praveen Swami	The Kargil War Signpost 1 & 2	
16	Srinjoy Chowdhury	Despatches from Kargil	

Till now we have only analysed the books which have been written by Indian authors, including military men, which are directly about specific wars. A large number of books, memoirs and fictional novels have also been written about the Armed Forces by men and women in uniform and civilians alike. However, these have not been taken into account since the scope of this paper would expand unmanageably.

Historiographical Classifications and Scope

In military historiography, three classifications are commonplace; popular history (so loved by our media), official history and academic history. The last is the diamond in the dross. Resources, encouragement and opportunities must be provided to instil this intellectual climate for development of academic history. Internationally, this is what is accepted for informed analysis and debate

Military thought is constantly weighed against the opportunity cost towards economic and social development. Murray and Sinnreich⁸ have this to say on the scope of military history:

The military historian can no longer write about it without understanding that “military history” is only one dimension of the history of war that is of little value if not studied in its social and political context. Today, even the most unregenerate of military historians feels uneasy unless his or her work is legitimized by the rubric “War and Society.” The concept “War and Society” is as significant in its way as “War Studies.” If “War Studies” represented an attempt by military historians to extend their territory to cover the non-military aspects of warfare, “War and Society” was the enterprise of social historians exploring the impact of war on the whole structure, initially on industrial and post-industrial society, but eventually on social development throughout the age.

All conflicts are products of the societies involved and naturally war itself has a reciprocal influence on social institutions and government. The study of culture, representing the nexus of historical experience, attitudes, beliefs, and values, is now a recognised and growing area of study. History, myth, and perceived lessons have a particularly strong influence on how societies defend themselves. Thus, the study of strategy and civil–military relations is indivisible. It involves the interaction of those preconceptions about the nature of war and politics, and the irresistible but often contradictory impulses that emerge from their interaction.

Indian military history in the academic arena remains a niche which is dominated by a select group of accomplished scholars. One such author is Prof Kaushik Roy who specialises in the 'war and society' approach to understand the impact of the military on society and vice versa.⁹ This approach is now already being over-run by the latest approach to military history viz. the cultural approach to military history.¹⁰ Notwithstanding, for a country of India's size and military might, this miniscule population of military historians is fighting an uphill battle to retain significance in both the military and the academic world. The day the Indian military history enthusiast can produce a book on the lines of *British Military History for Dummies*,¹¹ it will be a red letter day because very few of the published books appeal to the general public since most military authors presuppose a degree of military knowledge and understanding.

Having seen the trends in Indian civilian and military authorship on the wars, an examination of the Indian Army's record-keeping and history writing process is the logical step forward.

Historiographic Mechanisms in the Indian Army

The historiographic mechanisms in the Indian Army have been affected by the following legislations:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Official Secrets Act 1923 • The Public Records Act 1993 • The Public Records Rules 1997 • The Right To Information Act 2005 | } | <p>Pertain to all government organisations in India</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Army Order 7 of 1983 • Army Order 8 of 1983 | } | <p>Pertain to the Indian Army only</p> |

At the functional level, in the Army, the Army Orders 7 of 1983 (AO 7/83) and 8 of 1983 (AO 8/83) govern the basic history writing mechanisms. Institutionally, the major stakeholders are the units, formations and Services Headquarters which generate the historical records and war diaries; the History Division which receives the records; and the academic community and think-tanks which are expected to study the records and publish findings. Only when the study of the historical records results in institutional introspection which leads to a tangible change for the betterment of the national security apparatus, can the historical Observe-

Orient-Decide-Act (OODA)¹² loop be considered closed; only then can the cycle be considered complete.

In this section, we examine the details of the functioning of these institutions and the peculiarities thereof. The essence of this section is based on numerous visits to the History Division, Ministry of Defence and National Archives.

The Legislation

The Public Records Act of 1993 (No 69 of 1993) came into effect on December 22, 1993, after it was signed in by KL Mohanpuria, Secretary to the Government of India. The purported aim of this legislation is:

...to regulate the management, administration and preservation of public records of the Central Government, Union Territory Administrations, public sector undertakings, statutory bodies and corporations, commissions and committees constituted by the Central Government or a Union Territory Administration and matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.¹³

It lays down the constitution of an Archival Advisory Board and directs that records older than 1892 cannot be destroyed without reference to the board. It also decrees in Section 12 (1) of the Act that:

...all unclassified public records as are more than thirty years old and are transferred to the National Archives of India or the Archives of the Union Territory may be, subject to such exceptions and restrictions as may be prescribed, made available to any bonafide research scholar. For the purposes of this sub-section, the period of thirty years shall be reckoned from the year of the opening of the public record.¹⁴

The government then went on to promulgate the Public Records Rules 1997¹⁵ to further elaborate the record management activity in the nation. Herein lies a contradiction since Rule 5 of the Public Records Rules 1997 lays down that:

The Director General or Head of Archives, as the case may be, shall accept for deposit and preservation public records of permanent nature which have been retained after recording by the records creating agency in its records room for the last twenty-five years or more.

This contradiction typifies the confusion that besets the bureaucracy. However, while the basic legislation is barely satisfactory, the implementation of even such a minimalistic act has been woefully inadequate. Josy Joseph of *The Times of India* highlights¹⁶:

On rare occasions, when the bureaucratic stranglehold relents and declassifies files, the National Archives is not equipped to handle them. Today, almost 2,00,000 government files are dumped in the under-staffed National Archives with no one to sift through them. Symbolic of the state of affairs is the fact that the centralized air-conditioning at the National Archives complex was defunct for almost two years (2012-2013), exposing these precious documents to Delhi's scorching summer.

Anit Mukherjee lists out three possible explanations for this bureaucratic apathy towards the situation: firstly, he says that the bureaucratic insecurity about ending up '*looking bad*' governs this reluctance to declassify; secondly, the existing myths and rumours due to lack of information suit the bureaucratic dispensation; lastly, he charitably claims that the bureaucracy genuinely believes that there is nothing to be gained from studying history.¹⁷ PK Gautam lists out four reasons for the same state of affairs. He identifies the *personality cult* that dominates the Indian polity, a deep-rooted suspicion of scholars by the bureaucracy, basic *organisational inefficiency to handle declassification* and the bureaucratic fear of *losing credibility* as the reasons for the current situation.¹⁸

The Official Secrets Act 1923 is a draconian Act of almost a century ago with penalties ranging up to life imprisonment for infringements of a subjective nature, coupled with the long drawn out legal procedures in the country is deterrent enough to ensure that even the most committed researchers steer clear of classified matters.

The Right to Information Act 2005¹⁹ is the latest entrant and has provided some relief to those seeking information. The stated mandate of the Act is:

To provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority, the constitution of a Central Information

Commission and State Information Commissions and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

To its credit, the Act has been used by the public at large and by the newly evolved Right to Information (RTI) activists to draw out a large amount of information from the government offices. However, 22 security organisations have been left outside the ambit of the Act, though the defence forces do not form part of this list. The flip side of the RTI debate is that the government functionaries take too much time to respond to all the RTI applications being received, especially since a large number of them are frivolous in nature and with malafide intent. Hence, many RTI applications are dismissed at the slightest pretext or answered very briefly.

The Army functions on the basis of Army Orders (AO) which are issued from time to time by the Army Headquarters. AO 7/83 (read as '7 of 83') pertains to the generation of historical reports while AO 8/83 relates to the generation of war diaries. Historical reports are the primary unit of history writing in the Army. As stated in AO 7/83, "Historical reports were introduced with the primary aim of providing a record of motivations (*sic*) of formations and units."²⁰ These reports are required to be submitted by all formations/units only when not committed on actual operations or internal security duties, including counter-insurgency i.e. when war diaries are not being initiated by them vide AO 8/83. The AO clearly highlights that the historical reports should include the following:

- Location of the unit.
- Change in organisation.
- Postings and transfers of officers.
- Exercises carried out.
- Nature of training carried out and lessons learnt.
- Administrative problems and how these were solved.
- Morale of personnel and matters affecting it.
- Weapons and equipment, with some details of their performance in the case of new items.

The report from all units is to reach by January 07, covering the period up to December 31, whereas that of headquarters, formations, Service units and others, on July 07, covering the period up to June 30.

The war diaries are generated under AO 8/83 and only when the unit or formation is employed on actual operations and on internal security, including counter-insurgency operations. War diaries are required to be compiled half yearly, prepared in triplicate and when deployed on internal security, including counter-insurgency operations, sent to the Historical Division and Records Offices by the units, whereas formations are required to send them to the Historical Division only. Where the units and formations are employed on “*actual operations and during mobilisation*”, both copies are required to be sent to the Military Operations Directorate (MO-6) under the Army Headquarters, General Staff Branch.

The History Division²¹

The History Division, Ministry of Defence, is the primary record-keeping agency of the Army. The erstwhile Historical Section had been created after the end of World War II to prepare a detailed official history of World War II, with particular reference to the operations conducted by the Armed Forces of undivided India. The division, besides writing the histories of operations conducted by the Indian armed forces, also undertakes research projects of historical importance. Post partition, it served as the Combined Inter-Services Historical Section (India and Pakistan) 1945, to compile the detailed history of World War II, with particular emphasis on the role of the Indian Armed Forces.

The official history of the Armed Forces of undivided India in World War II (1939-45) was brought out in 25 volumes by the Combined Inter-Services Historical Section (India and Pakistan). On completion of the work, this section was wound up in 1963. In the meanwhile, the Historical Section (India) was established on October 26, 1953, to write and publish the official account of the military operations of the Indian Armed Forces of post-independence India. The history of the operations in Jammu and Kashmir (1947- 48) comprised its first assignment. Till now, it has brought out 20 volumes in total.

The Historical Section was redesignated as the History Division with effect April 01, 1992. Currently, it serves as the military records and reference organisation of the Ministry of Defence as well as the three Services and also provides expert advice to them on matters relating to heraldry and ceremonials. The Heraldry Section of the History Division is a unique cell which is manned by an official who is proficient in Sanskrit and assists the three

Services Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence by suggesting names for new establishments, designing of crests and badges and coining suitable mottoes for units/formations, in keeping with the culture and traditions of the nation.

During the year 2004,²² the History Division assisted the three editorial teams constituted for updating and editing the history of conflict with China of 1962, and the Indo-Pak Wars of 1965 and 1971. Further, a senior officer of the History Division serves as a member of the Battle Honours Committees of the Indian Army and Air Force. The division also maintains the Departmental Library which houses more than 5,000 titles, including some rare books, periodicals and foreign publications of military significance. The library catalogue is being digitised to facilitate easy referencing.

This division also provides two research fellowships for conducting research in military history under the Research Fellowship Scheme of the Ministry of Defence. Till date, 17 research scholars have benefitted from this scheme.

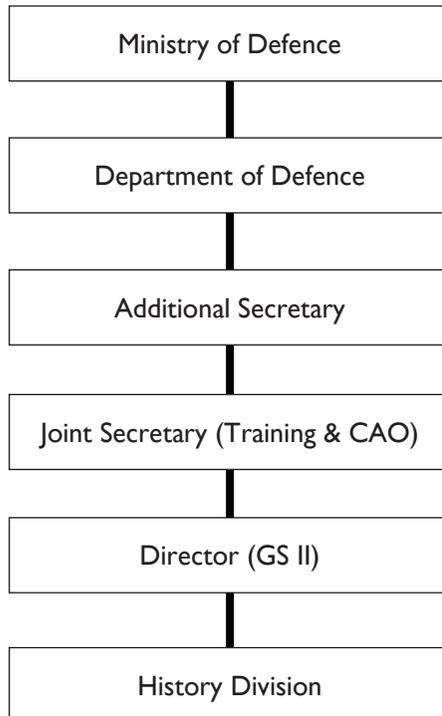
The division has a sanctioned strength of five officers, including the Director and 19 Group 'B', 'C' and 'D' staff. The office is spread over two floors and hold lakhs of records. The storage space for records and the library covers around 7, 500 sq. ft. However, the division does not have any grant of its own and utilises funds from the Central Administrative Officers' Contingent Grant. The division preserves the records of operations conducted by the Indian armed forces, starting from World War II. The records are usually forwarded by the Ministry of Defence, Services Headquarters and the formations and units of the Indian armed forces. These records are indexed and preserved subject-wise and as per the formations and units. These records are reviewed and declassified from time to time by the Services Headquarters.

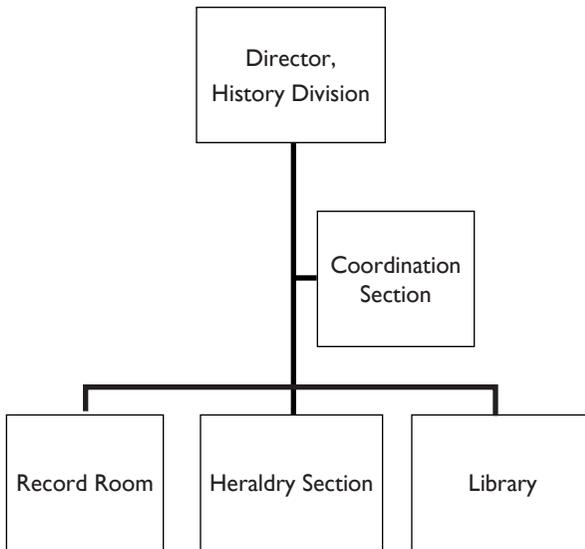
The records of the pre-1960 period have generally been declassified. Further, the records used in writing the histories of the 1965 and 1971 Wars have also been declassified. The division is in the process of digitising the records starting from World War II. The records at the History Division are consulted by the Service officers and also research scholars on military matters, according to the guidelines of this division.²³

The Department of Defence of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), Government of India, enumerates four functions of the History Division as given out in the website:²⁴

- All matters relating to preservation and maintenance of war diaries/ operational records and other military documents received from various formations and units of the Indian Armed Forces.
- To write the history of the wars fought by the Indian Armed Forces. These include the Peace-Keeping Operations (PKOs) conducted by the Indian Armed Forces in various countries from time to time.
- To guide and assist the Army regiments and Air Force squadrons in compiling their histories.
- To assist the Services Headquarters in the battle honours work; to advise the three Services and the Ministry of Defence in all matters relating to military heraldry.

Organisation of the History Division in the MoD²⁵





History Division Staffing Norm

Ser. No.	Appointment	Authorised	Posted
1.	Director	1	1
2.	Deputy Directors	2	1
3.	Assistant Directors	2	2
4.	Research Assistant	4	1
5.	Heraldry Assistant	3	2
6.	Upper Division Clerks	2	2
7.	Lower Division Clerks	2	2
8.	Stenographer	1	1
9.	Personal Assistant	1	1
10.	MTS (Peon)	5	5

Summary of Visitors, Queries and Records Received²⁶

Year	No of Visitors	Queries Received	Operational Records Received
2002 - 03	375	300	4,500
2003 - 04	350	275	4,200
2004 - 05	325	280	4,000
2005 - 06	NA	NA	3,962
2006 - 07	350	260	3,500
2007 - 08	400	NA	3,300
2008 - 09	NA	NA	3,600
2009 - 10	200 - 250 per year as per History Division ²⁷	NA	3,600
2010 - 11		NA	NA
2011 - 12		NA	NA
2012 - 13		NA	NA
2013 - 14		NA	NA

The figures shown above clearly indicate a distinct absence of a culture of military history in the Indian Armed Forces. The decline in submission of official records, the drop in the number of visitors and the drop in the queries actually do not reveal the extent of the malaise. The figures are abysmally low for an organisation which is supposed to receive records from all the Services. The percentage of records reaching the History Division against those that are supposed to reach, lie beyond the scope of this paper and, hence, this is not being attempted to be researched.

Interaction with the History Division over a prolonged period has revealed the following issues which now plague the history keeping mechanism of the Armed Forces.

- As per the Army Orders mentioned earlier, all units, formations, directorates and headquarters of the Indian Army are supposed to forward an annual historical report. However, very few actually forward the same. No record has ever been compiled by the History Division or the Armed Forces about how many such reports are required to be received by the History Division in a year as against how many reports the History Division actually receives.

- Even entities which do forward the reports, often end up doing so nominally because of the following reasons:
 - (a) Many entities forward the reports in an ad hoc and arbitrary manner, with no reference to the actual requirement. Thus, these so-called historical reports have bare minimal historical value and usually comprise mundane routine inanities. Some units/formations simply forward the nominal rolls of officers and some even just send the names of the Commanding Officer and Subedar Major.
 - (b) In extreme cases, units have apparently even resorted to forwarding 'nil' reports under the head of historical reports!
- There is no mechanism to enforce accountability in submission of historical reports. Despite the initiative taken by the History Division to sensitise the environment on the requirement to submit the historical reports, there is no improvement in the submission numbers as there are no checks and balances to ensure that the Commanders responsible for generating the historical reports actually do so. As a Commanding Officer, this author has only once, in a 30-month tenure, received any correspondence/instruction from the higher headquarters regarding the need to generate historical reports. This too was not followed up by any written feedback required to be submitted for ensuring compliance.
- Non-receipt of documents from directorates. The History Division was traditionally in receipt of Army Orders, citations, gazette notifications and new publications, as published by the Publications Division. With the advent of digitisation, several documents are no longer being circulated and instead are simply being put out on the Army Intranet e.g. Army Orders and Gazettes. However, the History Division does not have access to the Army Intranet due to security restrictions. Thus, since the recent past, the History Division has not been getting physical copies of these documents of archival importance. Similarly, the Army Training Command (ARTRAC), Shillong, has commenced publishing several Army documents in place of the Publications Division and many of these do not reach the History Division.
- Under-utilisation of the History Division. That the division is grossly neglected and under-utilised by the Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence is obvious in that, in the 61 years of its existence it has produced only 40 publications. More needs to be done to utilise the facilities of

the division to do justice to the wealth of information locked up in the cupboards of the Records Room.

As will be seen from the list given below, the bulk of the publications (25) produced by the History Division pertain to the pre-independence period while the balance (16) pertain to the post-independence period. In the pre-independence period, major operations pertain primarily to World War II, with no publication covering The Great War. This is especially tragic considering that this period, 2014 to 2018, falls in the centenary period of The Great War (World War I); a war in which over 13 lakh Indian soldiers fought and 55, 000 never returned alive.

These Indian soldiers fought in France, Belgium, Turkey, Greece, Palestine, Egypt, Sudan, Iraq (then Mesopotamia), Iran, Somaliland, the Cameroons, Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya, Kurdistan, Persian Gulf, North China and Aden. The performance of the Indian soldiers led to the creation of India Gate in Delhi, as a memorial for the fallen soldiers of the Empire.

Publications of History Division

S. No	Name of the Book	Year
1	The Retreat from Burma 1941-42	2014
2	The Reconquest of Burma 1942; Vol. I	2014
3	The Reconquest of Burma 1944-45; Vol. II	2014
4	The Arakan Operations 1942-45	2012
5	Campaigns in South-East Asia 1941-42	2012
6	Campaigns in Western Asia	2012
7	The North African Campaigns 1940-43	2012
8	East African Campaign 1940-41	2012
9	The Campaign in Italy 1943-45	2014
10	India and the War	2012
11	Expansion of the Armed Forces and Defence Organisation 1939-45	2012
12	Defence of India: Policy & Plans	1963
13	Post-War Occupation Forces : Japan & South-East Asia	1958
14	Technical Services : Ordnance & IEME	1962
15	The Corps of Engineers 1939-47	1974
16	Indian War Economy, Supply, Industry and Finance	1962
17	The Royal Indian Navy 1939-45	1964
18	History of the Indian Air Force 1933-45	1961
19	Administration (Medical Services)	1953
20	Medical Surgery and Pathology (Medical Services)	1955

21	The Campaigns in the Western Theatre (Medical Services)	1958
22	Campaigns in the Eastern Theatre (Medical Services)	1964
23	Preventive Medicine (Medical Services)	1961
24	Statistics (Medical Services)	1962
25	Medical Stores and Equipment (Medical Services)	1963
26	Operation Polo: The Police Action Against Hyderabad, 1948	1972
27	Operation Vijay: The Liberation of Goa and Other Colonies, 1961	1974
28	The Congo Operation, 1960-63	1976
29	History of the Custodian Force (India) in Korea, 1953-54	1976
30	Operation Shanti: Indian Army on Peace Mission	1990
31	Military Costumes of India	1991
32	Bharatiya Sainik Veshā – Bhusā (Hindi)	1991
33	Stories of Heroism (PVC & MVC Winners)	1995
34	Veerta Ki Kahaniyan (PVC & MVC Vijeta)	1995
35	Terrific Responsibility: The Battle for Peace in Indo- China (1954-75)	1995
36	Dushkar Dayitva - Hind-Chin Mein Shanti Ke Liye Sangharsh (1954-75)	1995
37	Stories of Heroism (AC and KC Winners)	1997
38	Veerta Ki Kahaniyan (AC & KC Vijeta)	1997
39	History of Operations in J & K 1947-48	2005
40	India-Pakistan War of 1965 : A History	2011
41	India-Pakistan War of 1971: A History	2014

The post-independence publications of the History Division also cover the major wars, apart from the 1962 War, ostensibly for political reasons. While the 1965 and 1971 Wars' histories have been recently published, they, for some reason, do not comprise the 'official' history, like that of the 1947 war. Instead, it is claimed that these books have been "sponsored by the Ministry of Defence"...which is almost an euphemism for the same thing. However, what needs to be brought out is that while the war histories have been published with whatever imperfections that there may be, war histories alone do not constitute military history. Military history encompasses the entire journey from 'womb to tomb' of the men, machines and processes which make an Army what it is. Publishing the inter-war history and specialised history of the military adds to the institutional introspection capability of the Army. Thus, for example, a study on the evolution of the force structure of the 15 years from 1947 to 1961 could throw light on what had been attempted by the Army in the past and the mistakes committed if any, which could then be used to analyse the present-day force restructuring attempts. Roughly, the war histories could be understood to correspond to the 'drums and bugle' approach while

the inter-war period accounts would correlate with the 'war and society' approach to military history.

Another significant observation is that none of the major publications of the division have been translated into Hindi or any other regional language, thereby cutting out the huge non-English speaking population of the nation. The four publications that have been translated are all populist in nature i.e. regarding military uniforms; Param Vir Chakra and Maha Vir Chakra awardees; the Indian Peace-Keeping Mission in Korea; and the fourth being a book on Ashoka Chakra and Kirti Chakra awardees. This is an unfortunate mindset and will need to be altered if one is to make the Indian public more aware of issues pertaining to national security.

The notable publications left out by the History Division include the 1962 War, the History of the Indian National Army (INA), the History of the Indian Peacekeeping Force in Sri Lanka and the 1999 Kargil War, that last despite being recommended for publication by the Kargil Review Committee initiated Group of Ministers on National Security in the chapter on "Management of Defence".²⁸

In conclusion, the History Division is the hidden gem in the Ministry of Defence. Even within the existing constraints, much can be done at the level of the History Division itself and the Indian Army to study and research on the available declassified documents to produce major historical works. Inertia, myopia and the pressure of operational tasks collude to prevent this from happening.

The Way Forward

From the previous sections, we can safely conclude that a holistic review of the entire institutional historiographical process within the Indian Army is long overdue. The existing mechanisms of historiography, namely the publication of historical reports, war diaries and Service diaries need to be reviewed. But before that, the overall approach to historiography needs to be laid down in such a manner that it stands the test of time and remains as relevant for the future as it is for the immediate present.

A Recommended Philosophy for the Study of Military History

The study of military history is primarily dependent on the writing of history and, hence, this is where we should commence our recommendations. It stands

to reason that the underlying theme of the recording and study of military history from the Indian Army's perspective is that *the pursuit of military history should be utilitarian*. The utilitarian approach to military history postulates that myth-making and hagiography apart, military history must contribute to the overall institutional introspection process and must, in the end, result in some tangible actionable outcome. It is possible that a historical study or analysis does not result in any action, but this should be the exception and not the rule. This outcome, however, may be in the sense that due to the research, some facts are made available which either highlight a problem or reinforce a positive which would otherwise not have come to light, i.e. provide a better understanding of a situation or a problem. Hence, in the Indian Army, history should not be studied from an exclusively academic standpoint alone—that falls in the domain of the universities and colleges.

The Basic Principles for the Recording and Writing of Military History

The first prerequisite that emerges is that history should be recorded in as objective and true form as possible and from an impartial standpoint. History with an agenda of hagiography or myth-making should be institutionally deplored. Secondly, given the paucity of historical records, there should be greater emphasis on the recording of history in detail, from the maximum number of sources, and in maximum detail. This necessitates that history originate from the lowest levels and be substantiated at all subsequent levels from their respective perspectives. Only then can the recorded history benefit the scholar who can, accordingly, draw the conclusions that can benefit the Army, to complete the cycle. Thirdly, the recorded history must be made available, within the boundaries of confidentiality, to all concerned. What cannot be declassified, must be reviewed for historical content by in-Service historians to serve the same purpose.

Thus, to summarise, the three basic principles for the development of military history are:

- History to be recorded and written in detail from the maximum number of sources. Hence, in the Army, it needs to be recorded and written at all levels, starting from the battalions upwards to the highest headquarters.
- History to be written dispassionately, objectively and honestly, at all levels.

- The historical records to be made available to scholars for research in the fastest timeframe and to the maximum extent possible. Where this is not possible due to reasons of confidentiality, the records must be made available to in-Service historians for analysis.

Recording military history is differentiated from writing military history in that the process of recording essentially involves the preservation of Service documents such as the Army forms, for example, form Nos 3008 and 3009 which record the actual strength of a unit, including all the officers. A battalion generates a plethora of seemingly useless data which is fed upwards to the higher headquarters that are constantly sending reminders to the lower headquarters, asking for the same. This apparently superfluous and repetitive data can actually build a relatively accurate picture of the battalion and its environment to the trained scholar which would help in the writing of history.

As against this, writing of history in the battalion is confined to writing the Service digest or the newsletters and here the impression of the person writing varies with the interest taken, the Service level and the flair for the language. This generally tends to be more hagiographic and contributes to myth-making. In fact, the written history may often conflict with the recorded history, as interpreted from the Service documents. Hence, in a sense, the recorded history serves as a check and balance against the written history.

The present institutional provision for historical records in the Indian Army primarily is the History Division of the Ministry of Defence for receiving historical reports generated by the units and formations and for archival storage of the same. In addition, Line Directorates such as Directorate Generals of Infantry and Artillery, etc. are also free to send, and sometimes do send, their publications to the Ministry of Defence for archival recording. The Publications Division of the Government of India also sends new publications to the History Division. Another major source of input for the History Division is the Military Secretary's Branch which sends copies of unit citations awarded and the Adjutant General's Branch which sends the Gazette Notifications.

The recommendations are structured at two levels. Those that can be implemented at the level of the Army itself and those that need the concurrence of the Ministry of Defence and, hence, enter a completely

different labyrinth of bureaucratic approvals. That such a classification based on implementability is preferred, speaks volumes for the faith that the Indian Army has in the Ministry of Defence, however, this also roughly corresponds to the timelines, the Army level recommendations being the short to mid-term recommendations while the ministry level recommendations are the long-term ones.

Army Level Recommendations (Short to Medium-Term)

Officers of the Army need to be trained to understand the need to record history and the process of recording history. Some of the measures for the same are listed below.

- **Pre-Commission Level:** Introduction of courses in military history at the pre-commission training level at the Indian Military Academy. Presently, only the post-independence wars of India and a study of the principles of war are taught at the academy. What needs to be included is the requirement to study military history and the basic methods of recording history at the unit level. It has to be stressed that this has to be done factually, sans glorification, and with objectivity, to the extent possible.
- **Post-Commission Level:** Post-commission training on military history should now continue with short capsules on writing of military history during the Young Officers (YOs) Course. These should include an exercise wherein the YOs are given a situation based on brief Situation Reports (SITREPs), battle casualty reports and other reports generated during operations — and then asked to write the relevant digest of Service for the concerned operation. These then need to be checked for form, accuracy and objectivity. This exercise will hopefully drive home the requirement to record history meticulously. It needs to be understood that at the battalion level, it will be YOs such as these who will be putting pen to paper to record history. The YOs Course runs for over six months and a two to three-day capsule for training in military history will be well worth the effort.
- **Mid-Level Training:** The YO returns to institutionalised training at the level of the Junior Command (JC) Course. This is at a gap of about five to six years of service after the YOs Course. By now, he has also done a few Service specific courses and matured, and this is another good time to reinforce the culture and sense of military history that he hopefully would have gained from the YOs Course. Hence, at the JC

level, the requirement of a capsule to hone the military history recording and writing skills of the officer stands to reason and would pay dividends to the unit and the Army as a whole.

- **Staff Officer Level Training:** The next mandatory course that the officer does is the year-long Defence Services Staff Course which is based on a very competitive written examination. A week-long capsule on writing of military history will go a long way in sensitising these staff officers in the making in the recording of history at the formation levels. These officers are the backbone of the formations and the actual working hands and would be the officers actually recording and writing history at their respective formations.
- **Command Level Training:** The final course which an officer undergoes before he assumes command of a unit is the Senior Command (SC) Course. This is at approximately 14 to 15 years' service and the course content primarily revolves around the issues relating to command of a unit. This is the last stage at which officers can be sensitised to a culture of military history and trained in recording military history. These future Commanding Officers are the last rung in the forward most echelon of warfare and their interest in recording and writing history will actually translate into history being recorded and written by the subordinate officers. If the Commanding Officers and the subordinate officers are trained or sensitised to the need and art of recording and writing history, the overall quality of military historical records will be much better than what it is today.
- **Specialised Training:** Instituting an Army Historians Short Course for officers of the Army as well for those civilians pursuing military history courses is a concept that needs to be examined and implemented. This two or three month long course is recommended to be run at either the Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research under the United Services Institution or by the History Division under the Ministry of Defence. At least one officer per formation needs to be qualified in it for best results. The primary focus of this course would be an understanding of the military historical concepts and it would also comprise an actual project study wherein actual source documents pertaining to a particular unit would be made available to the student who would then analyse and write the historical aspect of these.
- **History Training for Junior Commissioned Officers and Other Ranks:** Introduction of basic military history concepts at the recruit

training level is also desirable to add depth to the culture of military history in the Army. At this level, it may be confined to the basic study of selected pre-independence and all post-independence battles of the Indian Army and not just those which formed part of that particular regiment. At the Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) level, the individual undergoes major training in the form of the Junior Leaders Course. Continuing focus on basic military history at all levels will ensure that the focus does not remain officer-centric.

- **Research Fellowships and Internships:** There is adequate scope for research fellowships and internships to be awarded to desiring officers for military history. The History Division of the Ministry of Defence is an ideal place for officers of the seniority of Majors and Lieutenant Colonels for doing short-term internships on military historical projects. Similarly, instead of study leave, research fellowships can be awarded to officers of the rank of Colonel and above to research on military history. Since these are all serving officers, there would be no embargo on them having access to classified documents. Also the research material generated by them would be available to the Army alone so at least some institutional introspection based on historical records could be undertaken, which would ordinarily not have been possible.
- **Training in Record-Keeping, Maintenance and Preservation:** The National Archives of India conducts courses in record preservation, keeping and cataloguing as well as maintenance. Every major unit which generates records needs to have trained manpower to catalogue, maintain and preserve these records. This training could be outsourced to the National Archives and vacancies could be allotted to each unit so that the pool of trained record-keepers increases and, hence, the survivability of and accessibility to the records being generated also increases.

Army Order (AO) 7 of 1983 pertains to the generation of historical reports. The opening sentence of AO 7/83 states, “*Historical reports were introduced with the primary aim of providing a record of motives²⁹ (sic) of formations and units.*” The AO lists eight subjects on which material is to be included in the report. These are location of the unit; change in organisation; postings and transfers of officers; exercises carried out; nature of training carried out and lessons learnt; administrative problems and how these

were solved; morale of personnel and matters affecting it; and, lastly, weapons and new equipment, with some details of their performance in the case of new items. It also states that, if required, appropriate security classification may be given but generally SECRET/TOP SECRET material should be avoided. The report is to be submitted by January 07 annually for units and July 07 annually for Formation Headquarters. AO 8/83 is significantly more elaborate keeping in view that this concerns the war diaries. The lacunae in these Army Orders have already been brought out earlier. Listed below are the recommendations for improving the implementation.

- **Revision of Army Orders:** Both the Army Orders need revision to include the recording of more relevant data in an easier and simpler format, using modern technology. Currently, soft copies of the historical reports or war diaries are not provisioned in the AOs, hence, reproducing the same will involve redigitising of already digitised records.
- **Implementation of Army Orders:** Presently, there is no mechanism to check the implementation of Army Orders. A brief interaction with the History Division shows that many units do not send historical reports or war diaries at all. Some who do, do a farcical job of the same, and some simply send “nil reports”. Some send only updated nominal rolls of officers and Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs). There is no accountability for the units or formations to conform to the orders. Hence, it is recommended that the confirmation regarding sending of war diaries and historical reports be linked to the annual administrative inspections and included in the *Administrative Inspection Manual* and in any other form as deemed fit by the Formation Commanders to ensure that units do not gloss over the same.

Ministry Level Recommendations (Medium to Long-Term)

These recommendations perforce would need ministerial oversight and, hence, it is assumed that given the long time required for decision-making, they would rightly come under the medium to long-term heads.

Implementation of the Public Records Act to enable declassification of records is probably one of the biggest impediments to the study of military history in the nation and affects the Army as well as the civilian academic population. The legislation for the declassification already exists but the

implementation mechanism is non-existent. Existing records beyond the last 30 years must be declassified and made available to the public automatically. The records need to be digitised and uploaded to a site so that there is no need to visit the History Division or National Archives to access the records.

An Army of the size of the Indian Army and having a history dating back centuries merits the establishment of a full-fledged Directorate of Military History. Presently, adequate material by way of war diaries, historical reports and other material of archival value is available in the History Division and in the museums of the regimental centres. However, barring an odd research scholar from a university pursuing the academic part of research on a military topic, and one or two officers trying to write a formation history or coffee table book, most of this material lies unused and untouched. A lot of material, therefore, is available for research, however, no procedure is available to civilian scholars and researchers to access it nor does the Army have the in-house manpower or expertise to exploit it. A Directorate of Military History would provide the organisational backbone to be able to steer the pursuit of institutional introspection through the study of military history of the Indian Army, using the available primary sources in the History Division.

This Directorate of Military History should be established under the Adjutant General's Branch or under the Army Training Command (ARTRAC) under a two-star General from the general service. The staffing of the directorate should be a mix of personnel and officers from all Arms and Services and should also include a percentage of civilians qualified in military studies. Inclusion of civilians in the organisation is a must for getting unbiased and objective opinions from a neutral standpoint. It is essential to institutionalise objectivity into the directorate for best institutional introspection. In addition, a panel of eminent civilian military historians should be available to the Director General to advise and assist him on retaining the quality of the outputs of the directorate. Without these civilian pillars, there is a major risk of the organisation degenerating into an official hagiographic machine. There are several ways in which the directorate could be organised; chronologically (decade or two decades-wise), geographically (Theatre Command-wise) or even Arm and Service-wise (with an officer looking at combat arms and another looking at combat support arms, and so on). Which organisation to use is not the subject of this paper and, hence, is not being covered. Suffice to say that there must be at least one officer

per command at the directorate level and some more officers to handle the central agencies like the History Division and the National Archives.

Concurrent with the directorate at the highest level, a corresponding Colonel General Staff (Military History) appointment, with the necessary staff and funds also needs to be created at the command level to push the same agenda through with the Army Commander. He would ensure implementation of the archival policies, and that the historical records are being generated by the subordinate formations as per the Army Orders. He would also be responsible for generating documents related to micro-history and for organising the recording of oral history with respect to his command. A similar organisation would also be required at the Corps Headquarters level with similar tasking. At the Divisional Headquarters level, one of the staff officers would have to be entrusted to ensure similar compliance. The overall burden of officers only of the commands and the Corps Headquarters would amount to over 20 officers and, hence, due to shortage of officers, this function may be clubbed with officers holding other appointments or some appointments could be tenanted by qualified civilian officers.

The function of the directorate would be to ensure that the three basic principles for the development of military history, as enumerated earlier in this paper, are implemented. To this effect, the directorate would ensure that the entire available military historical records pertaining to the Indian Army located anywhere in the world (including at the National Archives of the United Kingdom at Kew which holds a huge amount of material pertaining to the Indian Army) are formally accessed and a record of the same maintained. Thereafter, researchers, both military and otherwise, could be assigned time periods to carry out the literature survey and, finally, topics allocated for the formal research.

What emerges very clearly from the above is that neither the military, nor the nation has the qualified personnel to handle the vast amount of data available for study. Hence, there is a need for capacity building by setting up an academy for the study of military history. The common refrain now would be to affiliate it with the impending Indian National Defence University (INDU). However, another option would be to establish it under the aegis of the Army Welfare Educational Society (AWES). This academy, on the lines of the Army Institute of Technology, would in a sense be the feeder organisation sending qualified personnel for employment with the think-tanks, the government bodies and, of course, the Army. Though the effect of this organisation will

take over a decade, it would be the first mover and the front-runner in turning the tide against this national apathy towards military history. It could also incorporate congruent subjects such international relations.

The popularity of study leave should be exploited and the focus shifted to Research Fellowships on military topics instead of leave for routine subjects like Masters in Business Administration which will have no applicability either for the officer or for the organisation. The directorate would also have to conduct possibly an aptitude test and a short course for researchers since not everyone has the aptitude or interest in research. Further, accountability has to be sought from the researchers to ensure that the effort does not degenerate into another futile exercise with the officers treating it like a two-year-long leave, instead of the serious effort that it is meant to be.

Another good source of research personnel could be the officers' wives, most of them being well educated ladies. Those qualified in military history could be formally employed on an ad hoc basis after due selection and could thereafter be employed on the lines as done in Army schools.

The utility of combat historians i.e., Service officers and even civilians duly trained in historical analysis and recording, to be deployed with formations in the field for the purpose of writing oral history recorded from the participants, and recording of events, including achievements and failures, would go a long way in improving the standard of historiography in the Indian Army. The Indian Army must nurture the concept of using combat historians for historical records. The United States Army follows this concept and, hence, the superior quality of recording and analysis of their history.

The History Division can best be described as an uncut, unpolished and hidden gem in the historical apparatus of the nation. The division, with its '*lakhs of records*', has a wealth of information waiting to be mined by scholars and researchers for the information that these contain. It is from the History Division that the true renaissance of military history in India can take place. However, for that, the History Division will have to be taken seriously by both the Ministry of Defence and the Indian Army. The following actions are recommended to take this institution to its logical conclusion:

- **Audit of Records:** A comprehensive audit of the records held by the History Division needs to be carried out by a Board of Officers comprising officers from both the Ministry of Defence and the Army. The purpose of the audit would be to:

- (a) Quantify the records held by the division and classify them.
 - (b) Identify the gaps in the records being submitted by the units and formations and inform the concerned authorities to get the units to submit the missing records.
 - (c) Assess the infrastructure required for the future when the submission of actual historical records starts to increase.
 - (d) Classify the records into the concerned time periods or regions for ease of analysis.
- **Integrating the Services into the History Division:** The Army needs to plug into the History Division for the best quality of institutional introspection. This involves posting of Service officers to the division with a charter to systematically analyse the available records and also to communicate with the units and formations to seek missing records to fill the gaps. Modalities for functioning will have to be worked out separately and are not being covered in this paper, being a topic unto itself. It is understood that the issue of integrating the armed forces into the Ministry of Defence is a sensitive one and possibly the best place to commence this fragile exercise would be the relatively innocuous History Division.
 - **Enhanced Staffing:** There will be a major requirement of a large number of trained and qualified research scholars who will be required to pour over the thousands of files, and compile and write history. Their work will need to be guided by a fully qualified military historian. The output of this team will then be required to be assessed for introspectional value and sent to the concerned directorate in the Army which can make use of this. Hence, all these research scholars and the military historian will have to be employed by the Ministry of Defence either permanently or on a contractual basis. Even the Indian Army can consider hiring them or even appointing them via the Territorial Army route. These research scholars will be backbone of this newly energised History Division and will do the painstaking task of scouring the archives and extracting history from them.
 - **Digitisation:** While digitisation has already commenced, it will take a few years for completion. However, the digitised data which has already been declassified is recommended to be uploaded onto the world wide web for instant access to the research community at large. This could be done either free of cost or even on a chargeable basis.

- **Linking with the Indian National Defence University (INDU):**²⁹ The INDU is expected to be the panacea of all ills in strategic thinking. However, without any ostensible institute for the study of military history within the present organisation as has been declassified till now, the institute will be lacking in depth. It is proposed that the History Division be linked to a dedicated institute in the INDU so that the expertise, intellectual environment and interest of the staff and students of the INDU can be harnessed to generate the desired level of study of history.
- **Consolidating the Archives – Moving Away from the National Archives:** Presently, the National Archives holds a large amount of records and the balance is held with the History Division. There is lack of clarity with regard to what is held with the National Archives and on what basis the splitting has been done between the two institutions. Ostensibly, the History Division ran out of storage space and, hence, had to offload a large amount of records to the National Archives. There is a requirement to consolidate the holding of archives related to the armed forces and Ministry of Defence at one location for better research and analysis.
- **Infrastructure:** There is a need to establish proper scientific archives for the storage of the records on the lines of modern archives. Ideally, a separate building for the History Division should be established to ensure the records are maintained for perpetuity.
- **Upgradation of the History Division:** The History Division needs to be upgraded from a simple division to the status of full-fledged archives of the Ministry of Defence with dedicated funding to do justice to the records that will be generated in the future by the world's third largest Army, the Indian Army.
- **Establishment of a Collaborative Arrangement with National Archives of the United Kingdom (Kew):** A large amount of records pertaining to the Indian armed forces are archived at the National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom. An institutional effort needs to be launched to get copies of these records back to India for the Indian researchers. Further, the record-keeping system of the National Archives at Kew is legendary for its efficiency and meticulousness. This resource should also be utilised to modernise our own record-keeping systems, and exchange programmes of the staff at both these organisations need to be explored.

- **Resumption of the Research Fellowship Programme of the History Division:** The Annual Reports of the Ministry of Defence have brought out that till date, only 17 scholars have availed of the Research Fellowship Programme. It is imperative to resume this research mechanism to ensure that the records are researched for historical value to whatever extent possible.
- **Researching Beyond the Wars:** Presently, most of the publications of the History Division cover the major wars and Arm or Service specific histories. The generic history of the Army with reference to development of policies and force structures also needs to be recorded and published. The History Division must move beyond the wars and publish periodic reviews of the Army i.e. the inter-war periods as well. Thus, while recording the 'drums and bugle' aspect of military history is important, the 'war and society' approach to military history should also be given its due share, if not more.
- **Taking Military History to the Public:** Only four of the 41 publications of the History Division of the Ministry of Defence are available in Hindi, and none in any other regional language. This smacks of an elitist mindset and deprives a major portion of the Indian public from participating in the national security debate and reading and learning about our wars. This needs to be corrected forthwith.

A peer-reviewed Journal of Indian Military History needs to be founded to provide a platform to the Service military history scholar as well as to the civilian military history scholar. This journal would, therefore, be the major platform for showcasing good quality articles on the Indian military history, researched based on primary sources straight from the archives of the History Division itself. Institutionalising this journal would make it binding on both the History Division and the Army to push adequate researchers into the archives of the division to produce quality papers on the military history of the Indian Army.

A *Gazette of India* order published by the Ministry of Home Affairs on March 31, 2008,³⁰ bans publication of books and articles by officials of intelligence and security agencies based on their in-Service experiences with the penalty of forfeiture of pensions. This is a knee-jerk and short-sighted response of the establishment to gag whistle-blower type books

by officers. As of now, this is not applicable to the officers of the defence forces, however, the Ministry of Home Affairs has apparently asked the Ministry of Defence to publish a similar order for the armed forces. The implication of this order in the context of military history is that it will prevent the publication of books by retired Army officers which is currently the most important source of generating military history literature. Without going into the debate on freedom of speech, such an order will be the final nail in the coffin of military history in the Indian Army, and must be resisted firmly.

Conclusion

Proactive and deeply introspective measures are a must to generate intellectual capability in the officers of the Indian Army. The study of military history beyond the obvious requirements of passing examinations, must be encouraged and made mandatory to be able to groom a crop of officers with the depth and understanding of military matters from the strategic perspective.

Implementation of the recommendations made above will cost the exchequer to some extent. However, this has to be seen as an investment in the intellectual capital of the officers of the Indian Army. While there is no dearth of outstanding officers in the Army, there seems to be a serious shortage of officers who understand the role of the Army through the prism of national security. Thus, for the overall holistic development of the Army, there is a real requirement of raising the intellectual threshold of the officer cadre in the Army. The study of military history beyond the need for passing examinations is an essential step towards this goal.

There is an acute shortage of civilian military analysts who are essential to bring objectivity and the civilian perspective to military matters which can only serve to enrich the quality of decision-making and introspection in the armed forces.

Given the state of civil-military relations, it is understandable that the ministry level recommendations can take time. However, the Army level recommendations need to be pushed through immediately since the bulk of the change will have to be brought about by the Army itself.

Most mature and developed Armies have dedicated strategic think-tanks which are backed by well-established military history departments, both

within the armed forces and in the civilian domain. However, the one thing that emerges clearly from the American misadventure in Iraq is that no matter how much intellectual capacity a nation has, the propensity to make major strategic errors such as the one the US committed in Iraq, remains.

Thus, while the requirement for India to develop the study of military history for the larger aim of intellectually equipping its Army officers is paramount, it must also attempt to ensure that the civilian counterparts remain equal stakeholders in this venture. The current civilian-military disconnect must not be allowed to continue. Military scholars must always realise what military history can do for them. However, even more important is the need for them to understand what military history cannot do.

In conclusion, it is evident that the problems being faced by the Indian Army are not unique, neither are they insurmountable. It is hoped that the essence of the recommendations of this paper is taken to its logical conclusion by the stakeholders i.e. the military, the academic world and the civilian national security leadership of the nation.

Notes

1. VK Singh, "An Elegy for India's Military History", *Journal of the United Service Institution of India*, Vol. CXLI, No. 585, July-September 2011, <http://www.usiofindia.org/Article/Print/?pub=Journal&pubno=585&ano=834>. Accessed on January 05, 2015.
2. As obtained from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/historiography>. Accessed on December 03, 2014.
3. JWE Donaldson, *Military History Applied to Modern Warfare* (London: Hugh Rees, 1907), pp. xiii-xiv.
4. This still classified "Top Secret" report is openly available on the internet., <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/TopSecretdocuments2.pdf>. Accessed on December 03, 2014.
5. The book was published in 1991, hence, the 1999 Kargil War has not been covered.
6. Williamson Murray and Richard Hart Sinnreich, *The Past as Prologue: The Importance of History to the Military Profession* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 79.
7. This statement was made by Shekhar Gupta, Editor, *Indian Express*, in an article entitled "1965 in 2005, National Interest", as quoted by K Subrahmanyam in his article entitled "Guilty Gen of 1965", <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1421414/posts>. Accessed on December 03, 2014.
8. Murray and Sinnreich, n. 6, p.16.
9. Some of his works on the same include, *War, Culture and Society in Early Modern South Asia, 1740-1849 (Asian States and Empires)*, *War and Society in Colonial India* and *War and Society in Afghanistan*.
10. Jeremy Black describes it as literature on the specific aspects of culture that affect military activity and history, especially the strategic culture of individual states and the organisational culture of particular militaries. For a detailed account, see his book *Introduction to Global Military History: 1775 to the Present Day* (Oxon: Routledge), pp. 299-301.

11. Bryan Perret, *British Military History for Dummies* (Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 2007).
12. The Observe-Orient-Decide-Act decision-making cycle, as propounded by Col John Boyd of the US Air Force.
13. http://nationalarchives.nic.in/writereaddata/html_en_files/html/public_records93.html. Accessed on January 04, 2015.
14. Ibid.
15. http://nationalarchives.nic.in/writereaddata/html_en_files/html/Public_Records97.html. Accessed on January 04, 2015.
16. Josy Joseph, "Secretive Nation", *The Times of India*, Online Edition, March 23, 2014.
17. Ibid.
18. PK Gautam, *The Need for a Renaissance of Military History and Modern War Studies in India*, Occasional Paper No 21, November 2011 (New Delhi: Institute of Defence Studies & Analyses), p. 13.
19. <http://rti.gov.in/rti-act.pdf>. Accessed on January 05, 2015.
20. This is probably a misprint since the only meaning of this word in the internet is "the power to cause motion" which does not fit into the context. Possibly what was sought to have been conveyed is the word "motives".
21. The major portion of this section has been compiled from the Annual Reports, Ministry of Defence, for the years 2003 till 2014.
22. Annual Report 2004-2005, Ministry of Defence, History Division, p. 129.
23. These details were forwarded by the History Division in response to a schedule sent to them by the author.
24. <http://www.mod.nic.in/Forms/list.aspx?Lid=1766&Id=61>. Accessed on January 04, 2015.
25. Chart prepared by author.
26. Summarised by the author from the Annual Reports of the Ministry of Defence.
27. As brought out by the History Division in response to an email by the author.
28. Singh, n.l.
29. Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Defence, news release dated May 22, 2013 entitled "Foundation stone of Indian National Defence University will be Laid Tomorrow", <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=96129>. Accessed on January 05, 2015.
30. Singh, n.l.

