

The Soldier and the State in India, by Ayesha Ray,
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The Indian armed forces were inherited from the British on attaining Independence. The Indian soldier, who forms a part of the three services, has been involved in combat right from the time the nation was formed. He has always followed Field Marshal Philip Chetwode's motto which states that the honour, safety and welfare of the country comes first always and every time; the honour, safety and welfare of the men you command comes next; and your own comfort comes last always and every time. Whatever be the situation, the soldier has placed service before self, and served the nation, its elected representatives and its people, with humility, courage and fortitude. He has always risen to the occasion, and has enabled the nation to grow into the world's biggest and most vibrant democracy. At the current juncture, the Indian armed forces are professional, and can execute operations with military precision.

In *The Soldier and the State in India*, Ayesha Ray analyses issues pertaining to civil-military relations in the context of the theories of Samuel Huntington, Peter Feaver and other military and academic thinkers, who have classically modelled the relationship of the civilian executive with the military on the basis of a purely theoretical analysis. This, however, would not be pragmatic during the conduct of military operations in which strategy and tactics get influenced by real time intelligence inputs that need tremendous flexibility in application.

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The introductory chapter deals with aspects of civilian control—the theme of the study—and the contrasts between India and the United States. Civilian supremacy is an essential component of any democratic country. The military works under the civilian authority, but is an essential advisor to the former on all military matters. The author refers to Stephen Cohen's book *The Indian Army*, which discusses why India's political establishment has never been challenged by its military while neighbouring countries like Pakistan have been frequently prone to the rise of dictatorships. Cohen attributes this to the higher degree of professionalism in the Indian Army, as also to tight civilian control. There are also references to other authors who have written about civilian interference which led to the military debacle in 1962. The author also discusses the concordance between the civil and military after the 1962 war.

The central arguments of the book pertain to the failure of the political leadership in articulating clear security directives, which has allowed the Indian military to question civilian directives. The absence of a direct institutional interface between civilians and the armed forces in India is also discussed. In addition, it also throws light on the exclusion of the Indian military from the decision to develop nuclear weapons, which has provided the services greater impetus to shape nuclear strategy. The last part of the book is contentious: the author feels that the use of the Indian military for law enforcement functions has led to the erosion of military professionalism and greater politicization of the Indian military. In all fairness, the armed forces are called to enforce law and order only when other agencies have failed, and they have undertaken this task using minimum force in conjunction with performing goodwill missions to win the hearts and minds of the local population. It may be pertinent to note that the Indian armed forces have remained strictly apolitical while performing these sensitive tasks.

The book discusses three themes. The first is borrowed from Samuel Huntington's framework and this pertains to the division of functions between the civil and the military. The second highlights the differing nature of experiences of civil–military relations in India as compared with the United States. The third illustrates the differences in the nature of the Indian and American political systems.

The contrasts in Indian and American historical experience post 1940 have been compared very well. During World War II, the civil and military in the US synergized their functions to attain success. Post World War II,

the Cold War commenced and, despite numerous disagreements between the civil and the military, the relations were transparent and healthy. In contrast, in India, after Independence in 1947, the military continued to inherit the British legacy of keeping itself removed from political decisions on grand strategy. Further, the Cold War saw the development of a great number of nuclear weapons in the US. The US nuclear programme was conceived as a military programme by General Leslie Groves. During the Korean War, under immense pressure from the US military, US President Harry S. Truman placed nine nuclear capsules with the military. Under the Eisenhower Administration in 1953, complete nuclear weapons were handed over to the military. In India, it was quite the contrary: the armed forces were kept out of the loop for four decades, causing concern in Indian military circles. The late General Sundarji was possibly amongst the few who had courage to speak out against this.

Further, the higher defence organization in the US allows the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) direct access to the Secretary of Defence, the Congress, and the President. In India, the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) is accountable to the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The MoD reports to the Cabinet Committee. Thus, the MoD keeps the military away from policy planning by being the only representative in the Cabinet Committee meetings regarding military issues.

The book covers the evolution of India's defence policy in three distinct phases. The first phase covers the period from 1947 to 1962, during which there was the absence of a clear defence policy, leading to the defeat of India by the Chinese in 1962. The second phase was from 1962 to 1998, which witnessed changes in India's institutional structure. These were undertaken by the then Defence Minister Y.B. Chavan. He had frequent meetings with the service chiefs that led to more strategic autonomy being given to the military. This resulted in a victory during the 1965 war, and was accompanied by improved modernization and synergy. This resulted in the convincing defeat of Pakistan in the 1971 war, and the creation of Bangladesh. This continued till the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan in 1998, and the Kargil conflict of 1999. The third phase is the period from 1999 to 2006 which resulted in the creation of new agencies in the context of weaponization. The Government set up an Integrated Defence Staff headed by Chief of Integrated Staff to Chairman COSC.

The book lucidly brings out the need for a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as recommended by the Kargil Review Committee Report. The

author states, rightly, that, despite many changes, the trump cards are held by the MoD who are the sole representatives of the military in the Cabinet Committee meetings on Security (CCS).

The issue of the development of nuclear weapons in the Sub-continent in the absence of a strategic doctrine has also been adequately covered in the book. General Sundarji's writings in 1981, stating the need for nuclear weapons, was the first step towards the military awakening of the Government on the need for development in this critical area. The three services began to introduce the nuclear element in their doctrine, and the Indian Navy began developing their nuclear strategy in the early 1990s. In 1998, India and Pakistan conducted nuclear tests which confirmed their capability to develop nuclear weapons. The Kargil conflict followed, and the Indian military was inducted into various areas. However, they are still kept distant from many aspects of decision-making.

The attack on the Indian Parliament in December 2001 resulted in the deployment of Indian forces against Pakistan, which continued up till 2002. Based on operations to be undertaken with a nuclear overhang, the author discusses the initiation of the quick mobilisation Cold Start doctrine by the Indian armed forces in 2004. However, statements by various authorities in the Government claim no endorsement of such a doctrine. Notwithstanding Government compulsions, the Indian armed forces are seeking an active role in strategic decision-making. In the unconventional warfare in Punjab, Sri Lanka, Jammu and Kashmir, as also Siachen, the military has played an active role in policy-making at the national level.

The concluding chapter is devoted to India's nuclear weapons. While the delivery systems are held with the military, the warheads are with civilian scientists—quite unlike the US case. As India is committed to the No First Use doctrine, the author brings out the difficulties involved in integrating these critical stages. This is a dilemma, as war entails practice in handling weapons during peace time. The book states aptly that this is the first systematic attempt to unravel the relationship between the civil and the military by making a case for the growing importance of a professional military in political decision-making that goes beyond just fighting wars.

The book is well researched and compiled. It is a 'must read' for officials in the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs, strategic analysts, and all serving and retired officers of the armed forces.