



Centre for Air Power Studies

Report on CAPSTONE Seminar on India's Strategic Culture and Imperatives for Contemporary National Security

The Capstone Seminar was conducted on June 25, 2024, by the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) and College of Air Warfare (CAW) on *India's Strategic Culture and Imperatives for Contemporary National Security*. The Warfare and Aerospace Strategy Programme (WASP) course is an Indian Air Force (IAF) initiative to cultivate the growth of strategic thinkers within the Armed Forces and academia by cultivating an analytical mindset. The current iteration was the third in the series that began in 2022. It included twenty-nine weeks of learning, with fourteen weeks of distance learning and fifteen weeks of contact learning program.

Welcome Remarks by Air Vice Marshal Anil Golani

Air Vice Marshal Anil Golani, DG CAPS, delivered the welcome remarks. He mentioned that this course has been designed to cultivate critical thinking and equip men in uniform and otherwise with a curious yet analytical mindset. The entire program is based on the pedagogy of extensive reading, engaging in seminar discussions, and brainstorming on the subject. The entire course was divided into five modules covering civil-military relations, airpower, foundations of military strategy, contemporary warfare, space, information warfare, and technology. Furthermore, he went on to acknowledge the personal involvement of the current Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal VR Chaudhari, in choosing the theme, selecting books and appointing the faculty for the course.

The second part of his address laid stress on the role of successful strategic leadership in transforming a disadvantaged situation for the better. He supported this by citing the example of how a successful leader of the Indian Cricket team managed to pull off victory from the jaws of defeat at the recently concluded T20 World Cup. He emphasised the quintessential steps to be a successful leader: quickly grasping the overall strategic situation, crafting the appropriate strategic approach to get the big picture right, effectively communicating these ideas to all the stakeholders, and resolutely implementing the big ideas with determination while adapting and augmenting the strategy as needed. He concluded by stressing the importance of a laser-like focus on the habit of reading, stating that extensive reading leads to knowledge, and with knowledge comes wisdom, which would empower all of us. Thus, reading is a never-ending exercise. He quoted Alfred Teresa: "Knowledge is like a horizon. The closer you get to it, the further it recedes." To this end, he also quoted Field Marshal Alexander, who stated, "People do not decide their future; their habits decide their future." Therefore, it is never too late to get into the habit of reading.



Centre for Air Power Studies

Keynote Address by Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari

The Air Chief Marshal delivered the Keynote Address at the Capstone Seminar. He highlighted the programme's significance in developing operational art and strategy, refining the definition of scholar warriors.

He emphasised that modern warfare requires a blend of combat skills and intellectual acumen due to rapid technological advancements and asymmetric threats. He quoted Thucydides: "The society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards, and fighting done by fools."

Reflecting on the past three years, the Air Chief Marshal noted the growth of the programme. The feedback from previous courses refined the current structure of the WASP, conducted parallelly at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) and College of Air Warfare (CAW). He thanked faculty, guest speakers, and subject matter experts for their guidance. He stated that the theme for the capstone seminar was '**India's Strategic Culture and Imperatives for Contemporary National Security.**'

The Air Chief Marshal discussed India's strategic culture, emphasising strategic autonomy, caution, and territorial integrity. He highlighted the need for modernisation, strategic partnerships, indigenous defence production, and an integrated security approach.

Tracing strategic thought back to ancient texts like the Arthashastra, he noted India's emphasis on realpolitik and strategic pragmatism. He mentioned the '*Aatmanirbhar Bharat*' and 'Make in India' initiatives as extensions of this culture.

Addressing the debate on India's grand strategy, the Air Chief Marshal highlighted India's ancient practice of statecraft and strategic thought, evident in the Ramayana and Mahabharata. He argued that India's tradition of realistic strategic thought is one of the oldest and has significantly influenced contemporary geopolitics. He cited Dr S. Jaishankar's book "Why Bharat Matters" and appreciated his interaction with participants, offering a novel approach to complex international problems through the lens of the Ramayana.

In conclusion, he thanked CAPS for facilitating the programme and CAW and RRU for awarding diplomas to the participants. He expressed appreciation for all involved in WASP and urged the participants to maintain their creative and critical thinking, quoting Albert Einstein: "Creativity is seeing what everyone sees but thinking what no one else has thought."

Session I- Topic 1- Examining International Relations through India's Strategic Culture

Chair: Dr Arvind Gupta

The panel attempted to justify and correlate India's foreign policy since independence with the various concepts of India's strategic culture found in history.

The theme of the first session was *Examining International Relations through India's Strategic Culture*, and it was chaired by Dr Arvind Gupta, former Deputy National Security Advisor and current Director of the Vivekananda International Foundation. To set the stage for further discussion, he raised questions such as: What is Indian Strategic Culture? How is it relevant to contemporary positions? What are the various elements of Indian Strategic



Centre for Air Power Studies

Culture? He also emphasised that the time has come for us to view and acknowledge India as a civilisational state. By doing this, we will remove many of the contradictions and will come to justify the Indian mindset.

Gp Capt Mahendra Singh

The first speaker, Gp Capt Mahendra Singh, explored the roots of India's strategic culture in ancient texts like Mahabharata, Ramayana, and Arthashastra. He began by delving into the origins of the concept of strategic culture. According to him, the concept was coined by an American named Jack Snyder in 1977 during the Cold War while he was examining Soviet behaviour in a scenario of a limited nuclear war, opining that the Soviet response would be shaped by what he termed as strategic culture.

In Bharat, strategic culture is nurtured and shaped by its geography, which encompasses the Himalayas in the North, the Indian Ocean in the South, the Arakans in the East, and the Hindu Kush in the West. He quoted Rodney Jones, who opined that India's strategic culture is not monolithic; rather, it is like a mosaic, and this composite mosaic is more distinct and coherent than that of most contemporary nation-states. This is due to its substantial continuity with a symbolism of the pre-modern Indian state system. The continuity of values was battered and overlaid but never severed or completely submerged, either by the Mughal invasion or the French and Portuguese missionaries and the British Empire. He further observed that Indian culture is assimilative and has shaped India's behaviour since its independence in 1947.

Enduring features of Indian Strategic Culture include high moral ground, fighting on the side of the righteous, and ensuring the security, welfare, and prosperity of the citizens. The strategic culture was passed both in the form of oral Shrutis and written Smritis. This includes texts like Nitisara by Kamandaki, Thirukkural by Thiruvalluvar, Mahabharata, Ramayana, and many others that focus on concepts like comprehensive national power, balance of power, and foreign policy. The danger of anarchy (*Matsya Nyaya*) was well understood. Strategy formulation and implementation were found in *Kishkinda Kand* of Ramayana, where the entire monkey force was sent in four different directions to look for Sita, using sequential landmarks and celestial references. In modern times, this can be likened to an Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance (ISR) campaign on a global scale. The concept of strategy can be understood from Mahabharata, which includes the concept of **Saptang**, the seven limbs (king, ministers, treasury, armed forces, allies, people and provinces, and capital city), **Shadgunya**, six strategies to manage the opponents that are used even today (making peace, frontal attack, mobilisation, opportunity, seeking shelter and dual policy), **Trivarg**, three broad categories of outcomes (decrease, increase and status Quo of power and prosperity of the state). These concepts are crucial not only for guiding the state itself but also for enhancing ties between states.

The speaker also threw light on Chanakya's Arthashastra and concepts like *Yogakshema*, which means acquisition, protection, and sustenance. Other concepts like **Saptang** (Swami, Amatya, Janpad, Durg, Kosh, Danda, Mitra), **Shadgunya** (Sandhi, Vighraha, Asana, Yana, Samsraya, Dvaidhi Bhaav), and **the four Upayas** (Conciliation, offering gifts, division and use of force as a means of politics) were also discussed. One of the significant contributions of Chanakya was the *Rajamandala* theory, which means the management of relations among the circle of friendly and enemy states. The tactics used by later leaders like Maharana Pratap



Centre for Air Power Studies

and Shivaji, like guerilla warfare and grey zone warfare, were also discussed, apart from other tactics like the tribute system, vassal state, and protectorate state that continued during the Mughals and British.

He concluded by highlighting the British inversion of strategic culture, which was seen as an impediment to their rule and led to systematic and institutional subversion.

Gp Capt Amit Mahajan

The second speaker, Gp Capt Amit Mahajan, threw light on some important theories of international relations before applying them to India's foreign policy post-1947. The first to be discussed was Idealism, which was built up on the idea that Man is good by nature. It focuses on multinational cooperation and collective security mechanisms and promotes democratic values, all of which can reduce conflicts. On the contrary, Realism believes that nations are working to increase their power. States that can accumulate power most efficiently will thrive. The nation's interest should be self-preservation and gaining power in an anarchic world. The last theory to be discussed was neo-realism, also known as structural realism, which focuses on the structure of the international system rather than individual states. It believes that states are rational actors, and they focus on maximising power till the balance is achieved.

There are definite parallels between the International Relations theories and the explanation of strategic culture in Indian foreign policy. In the 77 years of post-colonial rule, India's foreign policy can be broadly divided into three eras, namely 1947-1964, 1965-1990, and 1991 till present. The era from 1947 to 1964 was largely under the leadership of Pandit Nehru, and the underlying principles were *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah* and *Sarve Santu Niramaya*. India's lack of experience and improper institutional framework led to personality-centric foreign policy. Economically, too, the country was fragile, and foreign policy was tailored to provide a moral standing against alliances in an environment of peace and stability while providing humanitarian aid and cooperation in the field of industrial development and education. Further, India chose the path of non-alignment due to historical experiences under colonial rule and the state of international order. Pandit Nehru's belief in pan-Asianism that unites India and China led to an embarrassing defeat in the 1962 war with China. The defeat reflected the negligence of the enemy's strategy. This led to a shift towards an Indo-centric approach and strengthening military engagement and modernisation, which is also one of the important pillars of *Saptang*. India turned towards the UK, USSR, and France for military modernisation that helped it defeat Pakistan in 1965 and win the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971. The implementation of the *Shadgunya* principle was seen in the signing of the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty to increase the manoeuvring space when Pakistan became a member of CENTO, and US-China Détente was signed in 1971, despite India's stand of non-alignment.

India also adopted a very nuanced approach towards changing geopolitical scenarios in the Indian subcontinent to manage the policy on Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, peacekeeping operations in Sri Lanka, and military response to the coup in Maldives. Due to the changing global landscape from 1991 onwards, New Delhi once again reviewed its *Rajamandala* theory due to both internal developments like the economic crisis due to an increase in oil prices affected by the Gulf War and changes in the external geopolitical environment due to the dissolution of the USSR. Political relations in West Asia were



Centre for Air Power Studies

reviewed. India established diplomatic relations with Israel and also declared itself as a nuclear state after Operation Shakti. The principle of *Yogakshema* is reflected in India's current international engagements, strategic partnerships, multilateral groupings, Neighbourhood First policy, and engagement with the diaspora. As India engages with diverse groupings like ASEAN, G-20, BRICS, and SCO, it underlines the principle of how India treats the world as *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*.

Wg Cdr Dennis Joy

Wg Cdr Dennis Joy raised the question of whether Indian strategic culture can also be applied to future engagements. According to him, it would include sampling through various periods, establishing continuity in time and space, consistency with modern observations, and evaluating historical scenarios through Strategic culture. The DNA of the Indian Strategic Culture would include an integrated model combining statecraft and productive ways of life, peaceful co-existence and harmony, exhaustive pieces of literature, a scientific approach to political discourses, and enduring lessons on statecraft and foreign policies. To this end, a manifestation of strategic culture and transforming ancient wisdom in contemporary times, like assessing relative *saptanga* before developing a strategy, would be helpful. As India rises and embraces its role, there is an increasing demand for alternative supply lines, military partnerships, and collaborative security. To summarise, the panel believed in the strength of India's own culture, the ongoing exploration of Indian strategic culture, and the generation of better situational awareness.

Question-Answer Session

The presentations by the four panellists were followed by a Question and Answer session. The first of the many questions was about the gap that the panel might have come across during their discourse and whether there was any indication of long-term planning that could be related to our ancient wisdom. The response that followed included how, in the *Rajamandala* theory, the central element is *Vijigishu*, which means the ruler who is aspirational. An aspirational ruler will also be an expansionist, and when there is any expansion, there is bound to be competition, and it will require that he must have an edge over others to strive and survive. Thereby automatically giving a long-term perspective. Another pertinent query was about the quest for status Vs the quest for power post-1947. Though such a competition is indeed seen, when we talk about India's quest for status, it means Indian statehood goes back to ancient times, and it is not something new. However, power is a Western concept, and it must not be restricted to only hard power but also expanded to include economic power.

One of the most significant comments on the presentation was to address the misnomer that India has never been expansionist. This is not true. An eminent academician in the audience voiced that Cholas and Pallavas were expansionist kingdoms and reached Southeast Asia. Even Marathas under Shivaji reached the doors of Delhi. Thereby emphasising that history is a testimony to the fact that empires have always contracted and expanded. Additionally, a limitation was also highlighted while talking about ancient India. We must not lose track of the history of the past 1000 years, which includes the medieval period and the history of British India, which have had a deep influence on India's strategic culture. Another query



Centre for Air Power Studies

raised was if our ancient texts talk about how to control internal strife and how to relate Centre-state relationships.

The Chair concluded the question-answer session by highlighting that history is generally written in a one-sided manner; it is incomplete, and we have limited information. Second, most of the IR theories are heavily influenced by the West. They need significant amendments in the multipolar world. Last but not least, he recommended studying the battles of the past in greater depth.

Session I- Topic 2- Military Outlook through Strategic Partnerships

Chair: *Rear Admiral Monty Khanna*

Rear Admiral Monty Khanna began by extending his compliments to the Air Force for the impressive Warfare and Aerospace Strategy Programme (WASP), highlighting the rigorous demands of reading 250 to 300 pages daily for one and a half to two months. He mentioned his participation as a guide, having covered two books: 'Mahan, Corbett, and the Foundations of Naval Strategic Thought' by Kevin McCraney and Liddell Hart's 'Strategy: The Indirect Approach.'

The session's focus was on the military outlook through strategic partnerships. Rear Admiral Khanna posed the fundamental purpose of nationhood and governance, which he defined as providing citizens the opportunity to live their lives to their full potential. He emphasised that security, both internal and external, is a key enabler for this objective. He noted that maintaining cordial relations and tranquil borders is essential to avoid the opportunity costs associated with conflicts.

He outlined two instruments of security:

1. **Statecraft:** He described statecraft as the principal for ensuring cordial relations and managing conflicting interests without escalating to conflict.
2. **Deterrence:** He explained that effective deterrence provides time and space for statecraft to function, preventing situations from escalating into conflict.

He also highlighted the importance of building military deterrence through internal capacities for greater freedom of use. However, he acknowledged the challenges due to limitations in resources, industrial capacity, and finances, necessitating external balancing.

He described two broad methods of external balancing:

1. **Alliances:** A structured, formalised approach that comes with both benefits and the baggage of being involved in the conflicts of alliance partners.
2. **Strategic Partnerships:** A flexible, issue-based approach focusing on convergences and collaborative opportunities without the constraints of formal alliances.



Centre for Air Power Studies

Gp Capt Amiya Kant Patnaik: Military Outlook through Strategic Partnerships

Gp Capt Amiya began by highlighting India's emergence as a significant global power, driven by enhanced economic prowess and strategic foreign policy. Central to India's approach is the concept of Strategic Autonomy and issue-based strategic partnerships. Amaya referenced Dr S. Jaishankar's perspective, highlighting the importance of this moment for India to engage with America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, and bring Japan into play.

He stated that India's grand strategy focuses on comprehensive national development by creating a secure external and internal environment. This involves maintaining sovereignty, security, economic well-being, and fostering global cooperation. Amaya discussed the roots of India's strategic culture in Kautilyan statecraft, emphasising self-reliance and strategic partnerships over alliances. These partnerships are flexible, issue-based collaborations that maintain strategic autonomy and are pivotal in modern international relations.

India has established over 30 strategic partnerships, focusing on diverse areas, including security, trade, and technology. Key policies like Act East, Think West, Neighbourhood First, Connect Central Asia, and SAGAR guide India's regional and global engagements. Defence relationships enhance India's role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean and promote mutual trust and regional presence.

Amaya concluded by stressing the importance of strategic partnerships in enhancing India's military capabilities and defence engagements, aligning with India's ancient values of inclusivity and welfare.

Wg Cdr Achu Kuzhiyeth: Framework for Military Outlook through Strategic Partnerships

The speaker outlined India's comprehensive military strategy to address both current challenges and future security imperatives. Central to this strategy is the promotion of indigenous defence manufacturing to achieve strategic autonomy and bolster national prosperity. Collaboration with foreign partners for technology transfer and large-scale defence production capabilities is seen as crucial in this endeavour. Additionally, significant investment in research and development for advanced military technologies underscores India's commitment to modernising its Armed Forces. India aims to develop space and cyber capabilities through international partnerships, improve military efficiency via joint exercises, and lead in HADR operations. Shared logistics and diplomatic efforts bolster India's global security posture and resilience against threats. The speaker emphasised that strategic partnerships enhance India's military capabilities and ensure national security.

Wg Cdr Arunima J Vidhate: Challenges to Strategic Partnerships

Wg Cdr Arunima explored the challenges and opportunities presented by strategic partnerships for India's military outlook. These partnerships aim to enhance capabilities while navigating complexities inherent in international relations.

Challenges: A significant challenge is the divergence in objectives and expectations among partners, where differences in diplomatic and military aims can hinder effective cooperation. Additionally, major powers may influence these partnerships, impacting India's strategic autonomy and complicating diplomatic efforts.



Centre for Air Power Studies

During crises, partners may expect India to take sides, straining diplomatic relations and strategic coherence. Maintaining neutrality while preserving interests requires diplomatic skills. Instability and policy changes in partner nations can jeopardise defence ties, posing challenges to sustained partnerships.

Economic crises or policy shifts in partner countries can delay or affect defence cooperation, impacting India's military modernisation efforts. Dependence on foreign technologies presents risks related to supply chain vulnerabilities and technological denial, affecting strategic flexibility. Lastly, integrating diverse military platforms is challenging. Managing equipment from various origins complicates sustainment efforts and requires meticulous logistical planning.

Opportunities: Strategic partnerships present significant opportunities for India across various domains. Firstly, they enhance India's military capabilities and global presence through joint exercises and technology collaborations, thereby bolstering operational effectiveness. Secondly, aligning military cooperation with diplomatic goals promotes strategic coherence and amplifies India's influence on the global stage. Thirdly, collaboration on space and cyber technologies with partners enhances national defence capabilities and reinforces India's technological prowess and security. Additionally, emphasising maritime security through joint operations and domain awareness in the Indian Ocean contributes to regional stability and strengthens India's role as a security provider. Lastly, partnerships in defence manufacturing, including joint ventures and technology transfers, support self-reliance efforts, foster economic growth, and accelerate indigenous capability development. These opportunities underscore the strategic benefits and multifaceted advantages of India's defence partnerships.

The speaker concluded that by addressing challenges through strategic planning and diplomatic finesse, India can optimise these partnerships to achieve its national security and diplomatic objectives effectively.

Question-Answer Session

A question was asked on the concept of comparing strategic restraint with strategic autonomy. The Panel explained that strategic restraint stems from the Cold War era and the non-aligned movement. However, today, we have moved to issue-based alignment, where we converge on specific interests without taking sides. This shift is from unnecessary entanglement to essential involvement. India must recognise its influence and power in the region, involving partners based on mutual interests while maintaining strategic autonomy.

Another question focused on how India navigates the interests of major powers like the US in shaping its own strategic autonomy. The Panel highlighted that from 2008 to the present, the nature of the US engagement with India has evolved, especially concerning China. Today, India leverages its geostrategic position and growing power projection to negotiate and set boundaries. For instance, while the US seeks interoperability for joint warfare, India seeks the same to enhance its own capacities for self-defence.

An audience member posed a question about why India does not have a 'National Security Strategy', to which the Panel noted that while written national security strategies, like the white papers from China and the USA, serve as declarations of intent, India faces unique



Centre for Air Power Studies

challenges. India must balance various alignments and rivalries that might conflict with each other. A formal, written policy could limit flexibility and reveal strategic intentions prematurely. Therefore, India's approach is to convey its interests internally without publicly declaring its entire strategy, thereby keeping its options open and maintaining strategic autonomy.

Conclusion by the Chair

Rear Admiral Monty Khanna concluded with a detailed overview of the negotiations behind foundational agreements, highlighting their fairness despite initial mistrust. He addressed challenges in technology transfer, noting the role of multi-domain agencies like iCET in aligning stakeholders. While DRDO officers are present in several embassies, he emphasised that detailed technology transfer requires direct country-to-country engagement.

He discussed the complexities of Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) in classified domains and stressed the need for separate engagements with different countries. He highlighted the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean and India's role in its immediate neighbourhood, including Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, and Seychelles.

Khanna acknowledged the mainstream acceptance of the term 'Net Security Provider' and India's commitment to this role.

Session II: Topic 1- Evolution of Civil-Military Relations (CMR) in India

Chair: Nitin Gokhale

Nitin Gokhale, in his opening remarks, stated that India had come a long way in the last 3-4 years, from isolating the military from national decision-making structures to the creation of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and the posts of Chief of Defence Staff and Secretary DMA. These are baby steps in bringing some balance in India's civil-military relations. He emphasised that civilian control of the military in a democracy is desirable, but in India, it has turned into bureaucratic control of the military, resulting in inefficient functioning and unnecessary delays.

Group Captain SK Yadav: Historical Evolution of CMR with Theoretical Frameworks

The speaker started by defining national security as complex, dynamic, critical, and multifaceted, with a fusion of geopolitics, geo-economy, geo-strategy and technology. He then defined military security as a set of activities undertaken by a nation-state's institutions to prevent a war or end it quickly and favourably if it occurs. The speaker highlighted the dual nature of war, which can be both autonomous and subordinate. To offer a better perspective, he quoted General Carl Von Clausewitz's understanding of the nature of war: "The subordination of the political point of view to the military would be unreasonable, for policy has created the war; policy is the intelligent faculty, war only the instrument, and not the reverse. The subordination of the military point of view to the political is, therefore, the only thing which is possible". He described national interests as the end state, national power as the means to achieve them and national security as providing the necessary conditions to achieve the end state.



Centre for Air Power Studies

The speaker extensively used Samuel Huntington's views to explain civil-military relations. According to Huntington, politics is beyond the scope of military professionalism; the role of military professionals in a democracy is representative, advisory and execution-oriented, and achieving a balance between civil and military spheres is key to safeguarding national security. He cited several theories to illustrate the different degrees of balance between civilian and military control: Samuel Huntington's concept of 'Objective Control', Morris Janowitz's 'Subjective Control', Michael E Desch's 'Diluted Objective Control', Peter D Feaver's 'Assertive Control' and Rebecca L. Schiff's 'Concordance Theory'.

The speaker concluded by outlining the characteristics of civil-military relations in a democratic society, noting that it is defined by civilian control, which entails the primacy of political decisions, the supremacy of the political authority, and the presence of an institutionalised mechanism for civilian oversight.

Wing Commander Prashant Sharma: Global Scan of CMR

The speaker analysed CMR in the major world powers that existed in the post-World War II period. He began with the case of the United States, where, despite the presence of sophisticated CMR structures, major discrepancies between the civilian and the military leadership existed in the post-Cold War era, and gave a few examples to substantiate this. He added that European states have strong democratic credentials and highly evolved civil-military institutional structures, with the primacy of civilians at the apex level and freedom accorded to the military at the implementation level. The speaker stressed that in Russia, even after the USSR's disintegration, there is strong political overreach and meddling in military matters, which is visible in the Ukraine war. He further highlighted that in recent times, Private Military Companies, which owe their loyalty not to the State but to the highest bidder, have compounded the complex civil-military dynamics in Russia.

In the case of Israel, the speaker noted that its national security has been under continuous threat. Despite Israel having a strong military, there is strong civilian oversight, and the current Israel-Hamas conflict will be judged from the CMR perspective, he added. Regarding China, the speaker highlighted the Chinese Communist Party's grip over military matters in China and Xi Jinping's various military reforms, which have enhanced military professionalism. Within the South Asian region, the failed civilian control in Pakistan, Bangladesh's mixed-bag scenario, and political control over crucial military matters in Nepal were highlighted.

Colonel G Sunil Kumar: Evolution of CMR: Ancient Bharat to 1947

The speaker began by underlining how India's strategic culture is a product of complex interactions between a unique set of cultural factors, value systems, ethos, and ethics. He shed light on the first major civilisation in the Indian subcontinent, i.e., the Indus-Saraswati Civilisation, where historical evidence of large-scale military or wars is absent, and armies



Centre for Air Power Studies

were raised only on a need basis. This was followed by the Vedic period, where military security and administration matters were conducted by one person who derived his right to rule from the divine. The speaker then discussed the Mahajanpada period, during which the dynastic king controlled military and administrative matters, and standing armies adequately trained and organised for warfighting were created, and military specialisation became important; here, CMR was assertive, strong and stable. Meanwhile, in the Mauryan and Gupta empires, it was subjective, strong, and stable. The speaker highlighted CMR in the Mughal period as assertive and stable for the most part due to evolved statecraft, as well as centralised and effective military administration. Lastly, the speaker noted CMR in the British period to be mostly stable with bouts of instability, especially from 1895 to 1921.

Group Captain SK Yadav: CMR in Independent India

The speaker emphasised CMR in the post-independence period. During this time, the horrors of partition were fresh, India faced a hostile neighbourhood, the senior military leadership was relatively inexperienced, and there was political will to maintain civilian control of the military to ensure a coup-proofing system.

Later, the speaker highlighted some important policy decisions undertaken to bring some balance to India's CMR: Abolition of the post of C-in-C India (1946); Service Headquarters as attached offices (1952); Service chiefs as chief of staffs (1955), Kargil Review Committee (1999); Task force on management of defence (2000); Creation of IDS (2001), and the posts of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and DMA (2019), among others.

The speaker further discussed CMR during times of crisis, highlighting strong civilian interference in military matters in 1962, effective cooperation in 1965, and complete operational freedom in 1971. He emphasised that India's unique CMR is due to its strategic culture, which was shaped by a civilisational continuity of almost 5000 years, and praised the creation of CDS and DMA as the most progressive reforms. The speaker then suggested that since civil-military 'relation' indicates a transactional affair between two entities, we should progress toward civil-military 'fusion', where both are equal stakeholders in national security. He concluded that the next couple of decades would be a watershed as the CMR will operate within an ever-changing, complex geo-strategic space.

Question-Answer Session

During the Q&A session, several pertinent questions were broached, and insightful discussions ensued. To begin with, the Panel's Chair, Nitin Gokhale, pointed out the glaring omission of Chattrapati Shivaji Maharaj's empire from the evolution of CMR in ancient Bharat. The Chair then raised two questions on whether the ideal mix of CMR has been achieved in India following the creation of CDS and DMA and if the Indian military has adequate autonomy to implement policies.



Centre for Air Power Studies

Concerns were raised regarding an unclear conceptualisation of CMR, questioning whether it should be looked at from the lens of dharma, economic superpower status or other frameworks. Some argued that an ideal civil-military equation is unattainable due to the inherent political tendency to interfere and the military's duty as servants of the government to follow its directives. The Panel suggested that military leaders should advocate and seek stronger alternatives to make civilian leaders reconsider their orders when they do not dovetail with the nation's security interests, citing examples to support this view.

Session II: Topic 2- Imperatives of Evolving Security Environment on Future Contours of Civil-Military Fusion (CMF)

Chair: Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria (Retd)

Topic II of the Second Session was 'Imperatives of Evolving Security Environment on Future Contours of Civil-Military Fusion (CMF)', and it was chaired by Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria (Retd). He welcomed the WASP Participants and emphasised the imperatives of the evolving security environment on future contours of Civil-Military Fusion.

Gp Capt Ashish Thapa: Roadmap for CMF

Gp Capt Ashish Thapa spoke about the Chinese indigenous semiconductor chips and the Sino-Pak strategy to further threaten India's security. He emphasised several emerging threats surrounding the security environment. Geopolitical threats are emerging, such as the multipolar global order and nationalism. Internal threats such as insurgency and information warfare are prevalent, along with technological threats such as the emergence of cyber and space domains. Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain and Robotics are some of the prevalent technological threats.

Ms. Amoha Basrur: Global Architecture of CMF

Ms. Amoha Basrur, Research Assistant at Observer Research Foundation (ORF), emphasised that the CMF is a critical strategic move in the global competition. Countries are finding innovative ways to blend civilian expertise and military advancements. China and the US offer innovative models from which India can draw inspiration. China's CMF model is centralised and a neutralised effort under the Central Military Commission and emphasises space and cyber domain. She remarked that the USA has a decentralised approach under the military-industrial complex. On the other hand, India's approach to CMF is still evolving. India has established the Defence Innovation Organisation to foster collaboration between the military, the private sector and the academia. She also emphasised the specific way to analyse the CMF under three categories: Structures, Capacity-building and Warfighting. In CMF, there should be coordination between political and military leadership. Ms Basrur remarked that there is a requirement for specialists in MoD to enhance CMF Coordination, and an Indian Defence Service should be created. There should be an increased level of training and interactive capsules between civilians and military officers of all three Services. Furthermore, there should be an increased collaboration between the military and academia.



Centre for Air Power Studies

Wg Cdr Sagar Bhardwaj: Future Contours of the Cyber Domain in the CMF

Wg Cdr Sagar Bhardwaj spoke about the future contours of the cyber domain in the CMF and emphasised that cyber is a new form of hybrid war characterised by formlessness and plausible deniability. Cyber has also changed the character of warfare, and therefore, a potent cyber strategy is required, and CMF is the way ahead. He also remarked that the joint operations cyber cell should be constituted as a multiple-agency cell. He also focused on the CMF in the space domain. Wg Cdr Bhardwaj mentioned that the National Space Policy 2023 talks about developing capabilities for commercial interests and has no mention of security capabilities. Civil-military interaction in the space domain has become complex. CMF in infrastructure and logistics should focus on the integration of civil-military resources in infrastructure and logistics. Furthermore, India should adopt a neighbourhood CMF approach, which involves developing civilian assets like satellites and airfields. To fully address CMF, India should identify gaps through PM Gati Shakti.

Gp Capt Ashish Thapa: Roadmap for CMF

Gp Capt Ashish Thapa spoke about the roadmap for CMF, which states that the conduct of modern warfare is complex. The nation should develop comprehensive CMF Policy formulation and keep in mind security threats. There are short, medium and long-term approaches to a roadmap. The CMF implementation should be carried out by the top echelon, and it should focus on expanding the role of the Defence Attaches in defence diplomacy. He remarked that think tanks should have a better understanding of the geopolitical realities and work towards military-academia fusion. Under the mid-term roadmap scheme, CDS should be in the apex decision-making body and focus on creating Indian Defence Services. He also focused on the boost to the Indian semiconductor mission and the inclusion of MoD in a comprehensive logistical action plan. In the long term, Defence Space Command must be seriously considered.

The Chair, RKS Bhadauria, remarked that there is a need for integrated defence and space for an enhanced CMF. A lot of what needs to be changed is within the DMA. Thinking far ahead about technology and structures is crucial. Indian Defence Services need to be worked on seriously. DRDO needs to give freedom to the private sector to step in and focus on *atmanirbharta*. Moreover, Defence Space Command and aerospace should evolve further.

Question-Answer Session

A question was asked about whether Air Defence is Adequate and whether India should move to Aerospace Defence. The panel explained that Aerospace defence has to work in close liaison with the military. The Space segment has to work closely with the military and space industry, which is a critical requirement. The 2023 Space policy mentioned the ASAT Test. It is important to get into CMF with a space component.

CDS General Anil Chauhan mentioned that we are doing CMF to optimise resources and bring in efficiency. There should be a fusion within the military, that is, within the Army, Navy, and the Air Force. The three Services should work together.



Centre for Air Power Studies

Closing Address by AVM PS Wadodkar

The event ended with the closing address by AVM PS Wadodkar, Comdt CAW. He thanked everyone, spoke about the evolution of the WASP, and expressed his gratitude to all the participants and chairs of all the sessions. He further thanked the External Affairs Minister, Dr S. Jaishankar, for sparing his valuable time to address the course participants.

