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KAMALNAYAN BAJAJ CONFERENCE ROOM

Discussion | Debating the State of Defence Reforms in India

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Debating the State of Defence Reforms in India

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PROCEEDINGS

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Dhruva Jaishankar: Good afternoon everyone, if you could please be seated, we can get our program underway. My name is Dhruva Jaishankar and I know most, many of you around in the room. I am the fellow for foreign policy here at Brookings India. And it's my privilege to invite two good friends and colleagues to speak on the subject of defence reforms in India. This is a very good crowd, a slightly daunting crowd in front of whom to discuss the subject. I count at least 5 or 6 Generals in the room and a few Air Marshalls, Former Vice-Chief as well so this is quite a daunting audience to discuss this topic. So you will notice that a couple of speakers are not here as promised, so we are guilty of some false advertising. Unfortunately Srinath Raghavan could not make it because of bad weather in Mumbai, he was supposed to fly here this morning and he could not make it. So quite unfortunately we can't have him. But we do have Anit Mukherjee, who is currently an Assistant Professor at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore. He is also a non-resident fellow here at Brookings India. Anit is a former Indian army officer, served for 9 years in the army. He then did a Masters and a PhD at the John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and has done fellowships at a number of prestigious think- tanks around the world including IDSA here in India and is now of course based in Singapore. His work largely focuses on civil military relations and other aspects of Indian

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defence reforms. He has published in several peer review journals and he has not one but two forthcoming books coming out in the next couple of years. One, with Oxford University press on civil military relations and one on defence reforms. To my left is Walter Ladwig who is also familiar to many of you who follow these issue. He has written quite prolifically on a range of subjects related to south Asian security. He has a PhD from Oxford and is currently at King's College, London where he is lecturer. He covers issues such as counter-insurgency, inter-state conflict and other aspects of security issues. He has written journal articles and book chapters on subjects including Cold Start and Indian Navy doctrine and naval expansion as well. What we are going is that I will turn it over to Anit, who will give a few remarks and he will have a power-point slide, which I suggest you can will follow that. After which, we'll turn to Walter for some comments and we will open it for discussion involving all of you.

Anit Mukherjee: Thank you Dhruv and it's excellent to be here. When I went to Mao, to the Army academy. Amongst the first things I did was stand and immediately as I stood up, there were two jawans came with this big stand up thing so that I could see properly because I am really short man. But his is a good leg

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turn to be at. It's good to see so many friends, people I have actually interviewed and learnt from. So if there any mistakes in anything I say, it's the fault of people around you. Alright I mean, it's just the interpretation I have. It's an excellent opportunity to be here so a big thank you. o I will start with my own personal interest. I got interested with this topic while doing a paper for a class at John Hopkins about why does India undertake this process of defence reforms. So in 2008 or 2009 I came to India and interviewed a lot of people. I met Arun Singh among others, K. Subramanian and I got interested in the process of defence reforms and since then it's been a rich intellectual journey. Each of my interviews, each of my interactions have been personally and intellectually enriching because I've always learnt something with whom so ever I have spoken to and I spoke to anyone who me their time. I spoke with bureaucrats, I spoke with politicians, I spoke with military officers, anybody I could track down. It was a lot of back breaking work because you basically get stuck in Delhi traffic and try to check the AQI index every hour or so, so you are nit struggling for it. But it was also a personally a very enriching experience. So that informed me to undertake this work at IDSA and IDSA was a fantastic home for this project. I spent two years there, we learnt a lot, we did a few events back then and I think it really triggered the conversation in some ways in my head about

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why does India undertake defence reforms or the process of the way it has undergone. Today I will speak to you in three sequences; one is literally about what is defence reforms, who undertakes it, why is it undertaken, two is statement of the problem or the problems, so as to speak. And again all these are informed on my interpretation of my interview. So I could be completely wrong, so at any stage if you think my interpretation is completely off -base or wrong, feel free to say that's not true. I would learn from that. So the statement of the problem, where I would start conceptually how you make strategy, look at MOD interactions with service headquarters, which I think is a very important topic and it animates officers in the Indian Armed Forces. Third is, we will look at service specific problems and then I will end with some of the recent debates, with the recommendations.

So firstly, what is the process of defence reforms and how does the MOD identify and fix the shortcomings, very simple, straightforward. How do you undertake reforms and how does the MOD find and fix the shortcomings. What are the principles and these are Anit Mukherjee's four principles of defence reforms. No, no I mean there could be n number of principles of defence reforms but I think these are the four important ones. First,

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it's very difficult to expect an organization to reform itself.

In the same way that it is very difficult to expect an individual to reform themselves, it's possible, it's not impossible, usually you will need some external input, inspiration, maybe fear. It's very difficult to expect an organization to reform itself unless you have a war or a crisis. Organizations usually have a life of their own, especially in the armed forces, which by thinking is conservative, they should be so because they are dealing with extremely important issues. They are usually conservative, we all know that. So firstly, it's difficult to expect an organization to reform itself. Second, don't let perfect be the enemy of good, there is no perfect answer but don't aspire for perfection. Don't let perfect be the enemy of good. So there are things like best practices which you can emulate and follow. Third is no reform effort is final, it's not set in stone that we are doing this and this will stay this way. You can undertake an attempt and then there will be unintended consequences. There always are unintended consequences for any reform measure in any organization or institution. You can identify them, address them and then move on. Fourth is it is very important, it is the role of senior officers and officials. This should be easily understood right. People who are driving these reforms, those people who are accepting it, and those people who are

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implementing it play a very significant role. And we need reformist officers at crucial stages in different bureaucracies to carry this forward. Whether it is civilian bureaucracies or in political leadership, among the military elements, we need officers who are thinking ahead. So these are the four stages that I think are important as we attempt to understand this topic. So HDO, inside India, you all are acquainted with it. Organized by the British, it was established by them. Among the two important things were to establish MOD as an institutional actor, MOD as an institutional actor did not really exist as an institutional actor because we had an imperial form of governance. So among the first things after independence was to establish and that was an important role. In some ways India did a fantastic job of establishing MOD as an institutional actor. Among other things, we have not had it cool, which I think is a great achievement of Indian democracy, Indian bureaucracy and Indian military itself which has consistently stayed away from politics because we are apolitical. We are not going to be the other side and we all know the other, who the other side is. And so I think that's a great success of India. The fact that we've not have a military which has intervened in the affairs of the state. Because we know of states which have faced this fate and they are not good states to be in. But if you see states which have established control over the armed forces, they have moved

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onto the next stage which is once you have established control, you start caring about issues like effectiveness. I think India is prime to move to the next stage. There is no longer and I don't think there will never be a threat to Indian democracy. Perhaps post-independence, one could have imagined because you can't rule a crowd. I don't see evidence of it but perhaps one could have imagined it, because it was so common all over the world. Not just Pakistan, Myanmar it was Turkey, South America and Africa, all over the world; India is an exception. One could have imagined this at that point in time, but at this day and age, forget about the people saying that we won't accept it, the army itself won't accept it. There will be people from the army who will stand up and push back and I don't think that will ever happen so I think India is prime to move into the next stage to debate about topics like effectiveness. Effectiveness is a major concern and I would go back to it. In my kind of, archival research I undertook, I saw evidence that even the architect of India's constitution was arguing pretty quickly that we have a dysfunctional system and he was advising us whether in the MOD or in the army or even among elected officials, you have a pretty much dysfunctional MOD. You need to have a joint staff, we need to have a CS, and he was advising us in private and he was advising our Prime Minister, and this is from Nehru to Indira Gandhi to Shashtri, he was advising us time and time and

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time again through his letters that look you need to have a joint staff, you need to have a CDS, you need to have a integration between the MOD and the service headquarters, because I see it as a dysfunctional system. The architect of Indian constitution was undone by practice because by the 60's people were agreeable to the arrangement, but I will get back to it. I won't be going into the history because I think you all are acquainted with it , so you are acquainted about post 62 mid 1980's we had DPS experiment and we have individuals here who were associated with it. It was a really interesting experiment where you tried to create a joint defence planning staff and how it was undone because of opposition from the services among other elements. You had the CDE and I did a RTI on the MOD, asking for the CDE and the MOD basically said that they could not look into this document. Then we had the Kargil war, the KRC, the GOM, the 2012. So we had two more committee reforms, the last two, I have interviewed people who were in it, but I don't have access to the committee report. One of my points is please release there reports. The only way we can have a well-informed debate is only when we have access to these old historical report. Even the KRC report, it has an appendix which is formed by interviews of very important personnel- the Prime Minister, the Army Chief . So even years after the war is over, we should let the appendixes be public, redact it if you will.

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If there is still super important information that you don't want to release in public then don't do it, redact it. There is a process called redaction. But the point is that in the MOD or the service headquarters we don't have any officers whose job is to declassify so it's not of interest to any of the bureaucracies to let these committee reports out because no officer is there so it's a simple rule it's not given to any officer to do it so the job won't be done. That's a significant problem. I would suggest that look if we have to carry this debate forward, release if not all but most of these reports. So what is the statement of the problem? Why am I so agitated not today, I mean I am agitated about the AQI, but that a different element altogether. So what's the statement of the problem here? I would say, look and go back, I don't think a talk by an army officer is complete unless you talk about Clausewitz. So I am going to stop with Clausewitz.

So why do we fight? Fundamentally why do we fight? We don't fight for military reasons, we don't fight because we hate each other, and we fight because of politics. Clausewitz dictum, and if that dictum is true and I am sure all of you would agree with that then every aspect of war should be dictated by political inputs. How do you recruit? What are your operational plans?

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What sort of wars do you want to fight? How do we come back? Is it going to be combat? Casualty heavy wars. These are huge political questions and so strategy is a core and you ask other things like how to make a strategy, strategy should be a core function of military relations. We should be able to get together and talk fundamentally about what sorts of threats you face and what are we going to do to deal with it. Among the other arguments I make is that in India's case it's an absent dialogue. That, there is not enough of a discussion on really fundamentally nuts and bolts issues. So if we see how it's done in India's case. If we look at the '62 war, the major story emerging which I don't think is completely true is that civilian interference led to the defeat. There was interference; there is no doubt about that. It was a broken system at that point of time. There is no doubt about that but it is not true that only the interference led to the defeat. There are other factors also. But as a consequence of that 62 war and that story being told, I've realized I have hardly gestured from entering into those affairs that they considered mainly of the military. So this is your domain and we are not going to interfere your domain. And this is our domain and you are not going to interfere in our domain. That was the agreement that we kept. You will not interfere in the state, you will not overthrow the state. They will have a fair deal of autonomy in their internal

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affairs. And this is true for all of our wars whether it is '65, '71 or insurgency operation except for weapons because I don't think you are allowed to use artillery or aircraft. This was different during Kargil. Where there was a direct order where you will not cross the LOC. They came in very hostilely and had these intrusions but you won't cross the LOC. That was informed by other larger diplomatic goals and the problem with this arrangement is that during war or when a war breaks out, it's too late to think about strategy. When a war breaks out you are firefighting. When a war breaks out, you fight with what you have. And you pay for the neglect you've had from the past several years. So people look at Kargil like it worked wonderfully for two-three weeks, yes it was supposed to work wonderfully for those weeks because it was a crisis. Everybody would come together if there is a crisis. That's not a surprise, but it wasn't working wonderfully for the last 10 years before that and that we can see very clearly. Admiral Bhagwat's instance there was a pretty divided MOD and service headquarters. So I don't think we should look at how war breaks and everything works out well, that's too late because when war breaks out everybody chips in. It's what happens 10 years before the war. Because that's the important ten years because you think about training, you think about mind-sets, you think about capabilities because it takes, years and years and years to

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develop, as you all know. And if we look at the examination of which where do the civilians involve themselves with strategy making exactly, where do the civilians come in? I can't think of another example other than this which is they don't really involve themselves with strategic functions because they aren't best judge on whether a mountain strike is the best and can sustain the Chinese on the borders. You have the NSA, you have the approval for a mountain strike and you are walking back from it. Walking back from me am not the best judge of my stance. You should be saying I was convinced by my advisors that this is the best answer. We still don't know if this is the best answer. It's not such a manpower, its manpower, its pension cost, its care cost. It is financially sustainable in the long run. I mean we have people here in the room, Amitji is here, and he has dealt with financial planning. I don't think it's financially sustainable. I don't think that the world of warfare is going down that road. I think on the contrary you can make an interesting argument on drone warfare or technologies. But this requires some serious thought. I am not surprised that the ex-NSA, he is fantastic person but he kind of ended up saying that I am not sure if this was the best strategy we adopted. Well, you helped and advised people to approve of this, to basically approve this so you basically own it. What does this mean? So structurally I am arguing that in India's case, there is an

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absent dialogue in India's case which means that there is actually a lack of expertise in the civilian bureaucracy and this goes back at the IAS system. Two, is their strong bureaucratic control over financial approval, which has changed over the years but has still has approval from the MOD. I mean if you need to send officers abroad or take training courses or exercises, you still need an MOD approval. This is paradoxical; they have strong control, autonomous military which does not really work together. If we examine issues like education, if we examine that in the military we have a fair degree of autonomy within the military to conduct the PME as the desired effect and that had good consequences and bad consequences. I will not be getting into that because I know I have a time limit but the point that I am getting into is that the model we have in India has an adverse reaction to the military effectiveness of the Indian military. This should be a stop- depress kind of hypothesis. If the model we have has an adverse effect on the effectiveness of the Indian Military, then why are we funding the military that is the argument I have given in my book which should hopefully release around next year.

But now, we talk about statement of the problem, first the management of the military everybody knows about the IAS system. As much as I argue that the IAS system is in part, it creates

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issues with the effectiveness of the Indian military, I have others who have come up and say it's not just the effectiveness of Indian military, it's the effectiveness of every single Indian institution whether it's urban planning, whether it's culture because this in this day and age, it's not applicable. Everybody knows that the IAS officers themselves talk about domain expertise. Perhaps that's a conversation that we should indulge in. I do, we are also aware of the considerable tension that exists between the MOD and service headquarters. There is a narrative that we are under bureaucratic control and not political. This is a very popular term which you will find in uses in many articles so it's not as if we are being controlled by elected representatives but bureaucratic control. Except when I interview former RMs, they tell me that they like this bureaucratic control because they cannot distinguish between good military advice and bad military advice and they get both. They also say when a Chief changes, one Chief would say something and the other Chief would say something else, then how do I distinguish good military advice from bad military advice. They like having MOD as a sounding board. What I would argue is that MOD is important but the MOD needs to have more expertise within it to be an effective sounding board. Then the other argument is that MOD is the least transformed bureaucracy since independence, if you have one JS(PIC) handling international

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cooperation worldwide and the world had opened itself to India and it's wants to deal with India on various levels then it's difficult ;super-competent, super-patriotic, super-capable but it' difficult. You need to have an office of political affairs in the MOD itself. It should have forces from the armed forces, from the MOD, not just diplomatic because it's an important aspect of India's engagement with the world. And we are also aware of the MOD and the service headquarters off tension. It's a constant theme, it's almost kind of a disdain towards the 'babus' so as to speak. So as I got to like the CDA or the Naval College and I speak there, it's an honour to be there because it's fantastic to speak to your seniors, colleagues and friends. Every time I go there, I enjoy the experience but invariably the number one refrain I get it is the problems with the bureaucracy, the problems is with the elected officials. And I am saying yes, there is an element of that. Actually the significant problem is with the military itself but one thing is this disdain towards the bureaucracy. I don't think that's healthy because this attitude will have consequences in the future. If colonels today don't respect the civilian control that we have, 10-15 years those colonels will be generals and that will have consequences about how this interaction will play itself out. It is important to have an understanding. It is extremely important to teach them at these educational

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institutions about the Indian constitution, about the Indian state, how it functions and what is good about it. There is lot that is fantastic about the Indian state. So there is a demand within the military to integrate the MOD with the service headquarters. What does this mean, I can go back to it. Service specific problems, I might just go over time.

So you all are aware about the issue of the CDS or the permanent chairman of Chief of Staff. People have argued about it since the late 80's, in fact even earlier than that we need to have a CDS or a permanent chairman of chief of staff committee. But that should not be seen as a silver bullet; it's not that you appoint a CDS or a permanent chairman and everything would be okay. It should be seen as the first step towards integration. It's not just about appointing the office, it's about what does the office actually entail, the powers of the office. Is this just a ceremonial appointment or a glorified system or not. So if you were to this and say I have done the biggest transformation in the last 60 years and wash your hand off, that would not be helpful. You cannot appoint an office and not give this person the powers and say I have made the biggest transformation in the Indian military. That would be counter-productive. You just can't do 'naam ke vaaste' defence reforms.

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If you really have to do it, it has to be substantive defence reforms. Then there are other issues of Joint command and here I will give a quick example about this. And I kind of analysed this as there are things I am interested in Andaman and Nicobar so I interviewed Arun Singh, so when they appointed a joint command, it was thought of as an experiment, a template for replication, it was thought of as an experiment that it would succeed because it wasn't just one joint command, Arun Singh himself said we didn't think of one joint command, we thought of joint command all over India. But we thought, we would give it a chance. And what we do know is that after 15 years, this experiment was not allowed to succeed. The services did not cooperate with the Andaman & Nicobar joint command he did not have enough institutional powers and it wasn't considered a high profile posting except for the Indian Navy, which gave it a lot of, now it has improved a lot over the years, there has been infrastructural improvement but now there is talk of ANC permanently headed by a naval officer. I have no problem with this but somebody has to tell me that why was this experiment which started there, not succeed. Somebody ought to confidently give me an answer on what was the thinking at that point of time, why did it not succeed and what is the thinking now. What is the Indian model? Fine you say it's the American model because it's a global power, Chinese also but we are not the

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Chinese military, we are not the Russian military, we are not the British military, we are not the American military, we are the Indian military. So what is the Indian military's model of jointness? What are the structures that you want? What are the operational contingencies that you are planning for? How are you ensuring that you will be actually able to integrate the three services, because as far as I know, my understanding of it is integration does not happen through free will, integration will never happen through free will? There will be institutional losers and winners. It requires civilian intervention; it requires civilian and political intervention to say I know you do not like this, I know your institution does not like this but this is my decision, either you accept this or you go home. But we are having this consensus approaching integration; it will never work that way. I accept that we will continue to grow bureaucracies, we will continue to create more appointments, bureaucracies and posts and but that will not work on the ground. And so ANC has said that the experiment did not succeed, why not? What's the Indian model? I've spoken about this, one answer is perhaps it's about expansion of the bureaucracy and because the services prefer the status quo; seven Army Commanders, six Air Force Commanders and five Naval Commanders, why would they give that up? So as I speak to Colonel's and below, they are all for Joint Commands but when you go up to two stars and

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above, it get a little iffy? Which is fine right, I can understand it. But give me a description of the Indian model of jointness, that's what I am asking for. So you've had different perspective on this. Right, I mean we've had institutional opposition from the Air Force over the years , but that's understandable right because they feel threatened right, I mean about their roles, their mission, their tasks ,but there has to be some form of modicum of an understanding of whether we look at other country's templates or not. We are not going to strip you, you are not going to be there in Army, Navy or the Air Force. But there has to some sort of thinking about this by the three service Chief's to come to an understanding about the model of jointness. Because as far as I understood, as far as, I analysed the wars if you look at the Kargil War, we couldn't talk to each other in secrecy, we didn't have the capabilities to speak to each other. We didn't have the capabilities for the army to guide the aircrafts for closer support. These are the stories that ought to come out, fifteen -sixteen years down the line, because we need to fix these problems. It has been a sea change since then to be sure, it has been a sea change since in the Air force's attitude, but I still think that there are a lot of issues that needs to be addressed, that would require some serious outside intervention. I'll end quickly because I know I am little bit over time. This Prime Minister, this government is

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really proactive about pushing the vision of defence reforms. The first time we spoke about it was the first combined commanders conference and it was really good speech, it was a very well informed, far reaching speech. I mean he's talking about our forces and our government needs them to change their beliefs, doctrines, objectives and strategy. I mean this is everything what the military does and the Prime Minister laid down the challenge to senior officials in the MOD and in the Armed forces to say I am challenging you to get your act together. Two years later, he had the same message. He really, this was not in the press because we had elections at that time but as far as I know the PM really wants to make a difference about this and this is interesting because it has animated a series of conversation within the Armed forces today, over the last year there have been lots of conferences, lot of talk about what is our modus bout defence reforms and that is good. But we need it to be better publicly informed, because there is a little fear in the armed forces and that if you don't come out with a solution, the solution will be imposed on you. So let's get our act together and if you don't, somebody else will come up with some other solution and will be imposed on us and we will be lost. Then we don't know how to work. It is a good statement of intent. The problem is will they be able to deliver; the question is that. And on that, the jurist allow.

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Because I think, amongst other things is this pace of change.

There are some who argue for evolution and just appoint a permanent chairman chief of staff and give him 10 years and then we will see about his powers. My interviews with Arun Singh and the others is when an opportunity for a change comes, do not look back. Seize the opportunity because you don't know what will happen 10 years from now. So don't go for this evolutionary change, make a substantial change and if it doesn't work, if something is going wrong then you can still fix it. But don't do this incremental change with this idea experiment, it simply hasn't worked. The Andaman Nicobar command for instance.

Secondly, do the services understand one another? This is a fundamental question. Does the Army have a fair understanding of the Air force and vice-versa? I am not so sure, something will others have to answer.

Another argument to integrate MOD with the service headquarters, I am not really sure what this exactly means. There is lot of talk to integrate. So the talk of to create a joint secretary which would have a Major General on it. That's simple and straightforward. Well it's not that simple or it's not that straightforward because you might have a potential conflict of interest. You have to protect that officer, where that offices

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can take free and fair decisions and then there is the rule of business. I don't think anybody has been able to explain to me what does the integration of MOD with the service headquarters mean. Actually mean and practice substantive issues of files and policies. It's kind of loosely blended upon. I haven't seen perhaps me a well-argued analysis of what really this means in practice. And this also RM's want this, a civilian MOD to advise them, they want them because they don't understand them. They know about elections, they know how to fight and win elections. They don't know about the iniquity about the naval domain or Air Force operations or Army tactics. Why no reforms, then I'll end it quickly, I promise. So three things, one is perhaps it's because of the expertise that the elected officials think that we have this model of norm-model of this non-interference, if we interfere in the affairs of the Armed forces over their head, it will have dangerous consequences, we might lose the elections. So let this issue continue. Towards lack of expertise among both the MOD officials and headquarter officials. Third, an assessment of the system that is the system we have in India is well off the threats that we face. I think in this day and age, I think it's time to change the assessment. Considering the significant threats that India faces and if we were to end badly, I think there will be a significant downgrade in India's international capabilities and ambitions. Two, America is sort

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of , I won't say declining power because others have better American decline and lost, lost and lost but America seems to be withdrawing a little bit. And two, I think it's an important point, frequent crisis in heavy military relations, you see that over OROP, you see that every day on tv screens, there are crisis's which break out and that is case you don't fix the structures then this will only intensify. Third globally, countries all over the world are integrating, have a model of jointness. To explain the integrated model of jointness, I have gone way over my time.

Dhruva Jaishankar: I want to bring Walter Ladwig but first, I thought you know, you touched upon this a little bit in the end but when I go to different around the world whether it's the US, Southeast Asia or Europe or Japan and other places. They look at India and say look here's a country which is the 5th largest military spender, has second largest standing army, nuclear weapons power, blue water navy capability, it had strong civilian controls, professional military and a battle experience. So it's actually a military that fights. It has had of course, we've had our 1962' s, we've had our IPKF interventions but equally we've had 1971's so if you look in a sort of comparative context, while you described in some ways

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you have a made a very persuasive case for need for reforms. Why is this sort of good enough? How would you counter that because in many ways if you look at India's standing, it's not dire as you know one could make a case for evolutionary reforms rather than the revolution?

Anit Mukherjee: That's a great point and a great question. So I don't think that it is only about wars and outcomes, effectiveness is also about processes. So if we look at let's say our counter-insurgency or could have been policy. We have big questions about this and if we get to the granular analysis of let's say bullet proof jackets, ammunition stockings or even as a personal experience myself. I mean as a junior Captain in Kashmir, our radio sets were not as good as the militant's radio sets; very clearly, I mean this was 1999 and so if you look at those issues, if you look at the granular issue, I mean examine how India is doing in its world, sure the big picture is good enough. Problem or the point is that when push comes to shove, the balloon goes up. Is it good enough when faced with a crisis? And I would argue that if we have problems then that could be a potential for us not to do well. I am all for the bravery and the sacrifice of our junior officers and men that it would carry India through. I mean if we examine things like Kargil War

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right, I mean how many people we lost. I don't think we have a fair standing, I mean even my own work. I was looking at the martyr list in the Army headquarters, my accounting of it was nine hundred and thirty one casualties. The government in the parliament said five twenty seven, I think in part because there is a discrepancy between MO branch figures and AG branch figures but when I spoke about this and did an article in the Caravan, within two days later the army headquarters brought down the website. Right, so if we look at the granularity of the wars, I think there is a problem with this effectiveness bit. So I think it is important to address. We might still not do badly in war perhaps we may still win. Perhaps we could save more lives if we get this right.

Dhruva Jaishankar: I want to include Walter in this conversation a little bit, particularly in a comparative context other militaries have undertaken reforms, the US military being one. The former Defence Minister Parrikar, whose well versed in Nicholas Goldwater or a process of reforms, But what lessons can India derive from other countries?

Walter Ladwig: Thanks Dhruva, so what I would do is step back a little from specifics of on its presentation and say a little

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about we know from academic and historical study of defence innovation and defence reform and other kind. As Dhruva suggested, see what we can put forward as perhaps as usable inputs. The first thing is to say of course is that it's going to surprise no one in the room to hear that there is a strong consensus in the literature whether you are working from the perspective of bureaucratic politics or organizational behaviour that as said in his opening remarks military institutions are very, very difficult to change. Like most in changed bureaucracy in fact, there is quite change and there is good reason for this. We establish institutions to provide consistency, to provide routine. They provide good operating procedures; they develop organization cultures and leads to favouring kind of traditional ways of doing things and over necessarily fostering kind of information and new thinking. That being said there are couple of key catalysts that have been identified time and time again of things that can drive change and drive innovation. In the first of these three is failure, any organization that fails has to come to grips or often prompted into grips with the reason why and in a very real sense military institutions which fail to adapt or adjust may disappear. So, to take the American context. Failure was a very important catalyst for the reforms we saw to the context of Goldwater Nicholas. So if you permit me to give you a brief historical digression. The Vietnam War, it's

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really hard to speak about the American war effort in Vietnam without much of a smirk in the sense that there wasn't much of a unified American war effort for much of the war, the three services were largely fighting independent wars. So you had the MACV ground commander, the commander of military assistance and Vietnam who largely oversaw half a billion-ground troops who were supporting and operating with the Army of Republic of Vietnam. Then you two largely disconnected air wars being fought by on the one hand by the Navy, the other by the US Air Force. The Navy command ran back through the Pacific command in Hawaii. The Air Force General sitting in Japan or Washington DC were taking very big decisions, even in the special operations community, long before JSOC was ever created, you know the Army special forces were training Vietnamese regulars, Navy seals were riding small boats up and down in Vietnamese rivers. Nothing essentially was coordinated short of the office of the US President. But of course Lyndon Johnson whatever his other wonderful strengths could not run a war on a daily basis half way around the world. So the failure of inter-service coordination in Vietnam left a lot of scar on the institutions. This was followed by a number of high profile failures subsequent to this so there was an attempted rescue effort using Special Forces to free American citizens who were trapped in Iran following the Iranian revolution that famously failed in

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the desserts. The US intervention in Grenada in 1994 again displayed all of these kinds of problems of the Navy, the Army and the Air Force being able to basically communicate. And this built political pressure in the United States for the reforms that we call the Goldwater-Nicholas Act. And of the key things that this reform did was to really centralize military control. So a lot of authority and a lot of responsibility that used to independently rest with the Service Chiefs were then transferred to the Joint Chief of Staff. The position of the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff, which largely had been a historically weak position had been kind of co-ordinating title was very significantly empowered at the expense of the individual service leaders and I'll come back and I'll say a bit about Goldwater-Nicholas in just a second. So the first catalyst then in big catalyst for change, is failure. The second is the potential opportunity on the flip side for organizational growth like any kind of bureaucratic organization, bureaucracies are keen at times to expand, to grow, to gain more resources and to gain more influence. There are historical episodes where change is sort of induced or driven by the opportunity for the military institutions to move into new areas, to develop new competencies that will raise their prestige and increase their share of resources. And in the final driver of change in military organization is as suggested external intervention. And compare

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it from a historical standpoint, this means specifically civil intervention by civilian political leaders whether it's kind of a President or a Prime Minister, Parliament or perhaps a Minister of Defence. On their own, military organisations are capable of evolutionary innovation but this happens over a very long period of time and does not result by and large in kind of discontinuous breaks in the way things were done in the past. The military historian, Williamson Murray basically argues that for revolutionary change to come to the military institutions, you need top-down leadership. Look, these three categories I've just identified are just any means mutually exclusive. One could easily imagine a scenario in which reform advocates' you know start to create pressure and political support for change by highlighting either past failure or perhaps even missed opportunities that could have been done better if we had been sitting with the status quo. These advocates would work then to look at ways in which resources could be creatively deployed to help overcome resistance in bureaucracies to change and of course I'll have this driven through top leadership. I mean, I just want to say a couple of things about this kind of civilian intervention phenomenon because it is a very common theme and a common trend throughout academic study of innovation. And indeed, a number of scholars of military organizations suggest that real discontinuous change happens when civilian leaders

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intervene into institutions and kind of force a redirection or a reprioritization of their tasks. And as Barry Posen, MIT professor has demonstrated in his canonical work and as Anit has suggested, this process of innovation and transformation is very frequently assisted and facilitated by the presence of so called maverick senior military leaders so people who are within organizations, who understand the institutional structure but also who understand the need for change or some kind of reform. And these officers provide the technical expertise the civilians need, provide the kind of specific bureaucratic that are necessary to bring about change and to implement the ideas these civilian leaders have because of course they are not going to be as detailed as its necessary implement. This certainly suggests as Anit mentioned that reform advocates need to identify and foster partners for reforms within the armed services and within the civilian bureaucracy.

Deborah Avant is a scholar who looks at military innovation and who has taken Posen's ideas and kind of gone to the next level about not only how do you bring about change, but how do you sustain and institutionalize it. And she really focuses on the need to create pathways and incentive structures within organizations. So it's one thing to say that you have a new way

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of doing things but you need to provide incentives to people to do things differently and those incentives really come down to career pathways, so you need to be able to reward people doing your things so again in the context on its presentation, it's not just about making the changes but you've got to make the incentives structure for individuals within the institution to embrace these new ways of doing it. And so returning to Goldwater Nicholas it's one thing to sort of strengthen the Joint Staff with respect to services, one of the career promotion pathway as it was established was if you want to reach a flag rank, you have to do at least one joint tour so you have to do one tour outside your service. If you want to be the head of your service, you should have done two. This transformed , this change in the personnel policy had the effective transforming the joint staff which until that point been a backwater, so this is where you send your second tier dead enders to kind of ride out their time and it suddenly became the place where the hotshots across all the services wanted to be. It's incredibly competitive, it's incredibly high profile so gain one could think if you are serious about creating jointness, then you should institutionalize this .Exploring different ways in which you could build joint requirements, joint service requirements into the career pathway not just for the armed forces. But think about okay, maybe it doesn't line up

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and I am not going to pretend to understand the IAS leadership. But can you build career incentives into this and so some of the things you've talked about your papers about cross posting officers from the MOD to service headquarters and vice versa but can that be a fast track in their own career such that they will have incentives to cooperate. Now one thing I do want to say about the American experience and picking up on its point about not letting perfect being the enemy of good. Any kind of reform, any kind of change involves trade off. It is very rare that you can optimize something along every single dimension so I do want to just taking from the American experience say one or two things about potentially the downside of the jointness, I think you should recognize so within US military these reforms which took place in creating operational and doctrinal jointness have absolutely enhanced the US military effectiveness. In a world today where naval warfare electronic aircraft can actually jam radars on behalf of the Air Force strike craft, Air Force tankers routinely refuel Navy Marine Corps pilots in flight thanks to joint war fighting doctrine we don't have to think twice about the fact that Marine or Army units in close contact with enemy forces can receive real time close air support, you know almost taxed in real time from a variety of different services. All of these things are uniformly positive. I don't think you won't find anyone complaining in this. At the higher

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levels, however jointness has brought about a degree of co-operation and co-ordination in the three armed services in the US. In the way that they attempt to kind of understand and respond to American security challenges. Which on one hand sounds very good and perhaps it pushes out inefficiencies and redundancies but it is not uniformly a positive development. So in the past, before Goldwater Nicholas, we would see in the US context, an open conflict between the armed forces in a bureaucratic sense of course, not actually shooting at each other but open conflict. I mean the Army would be challenging the Air Force's strategy. The Navy would be pointing out that we don't need the two of you services and they would critique each other's plan and budgets and soon and so forth. That was actually very good for civilian control of the armed forces because some of these Anit was talking about in terms of civilian leaders not being equipped to understand and critique and tell good military advice from bad. When one armed forces has dug over the others budget and is pointing out all of these things that they are pointing out that they don't think is necessarily good, that does help. That can help sometime with civilian control. Also there are a number of scholars who suggest that during this period of 50's, 60's and 70's , inter service rivalry was a catalyst for innovation , in terms of innovative thinking, strategy, doctrine and in terms of forced

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development. Some of Navy's early experiment, submarine launch, ballistic missiles came about because of their rivalry with the Air Force and their desire to make themselves relevant in a nuclear environment. What we see in the post Goldwater Nicholas era is that the three services don't do this anymore. Through strong Joint Chief of Staff and Chairman, the services basically usher out their differences behind a close door and present civilian leaders with a unified front, speak to the civilian leadership with a single voice and avoid criticizing in public each other's priorities or their pet projects. So instead of engaging in an open bureaucratic warfare as they did in the past, they basically agree not to rock the boat. While jointness can dramatically increase their effectiveness on the battlefield level. I think there is an argument to be said that too much jointness might hinder civilian oversight and to an extent kind of stifle innovation or creation of new ideas. Now I should say that I am aware or at least I perceive as an external analyst that we are already in a situation in India in which there sort of is tacit disagreement between the three service chiefs to not rock the boat, not to sort of challenge each other's budget. In pointing this out, we already have that situation without the benefits of operational jointness. So it may not necessarily be a problem. But I think it worth pointing out and acknowledging many things in life, it's very difficult

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to optimize across every single dimension so some change will evolve trade-offs.

Dhruva Jaishankar: Thank you so one quick question for both of you and then we can open it up for half an hour for Q & A, but is there danger of military overlearning lessons? I happen to be in Washington for much of the 2005 to 2008 period and it was interesting to observe first hand in some ways, this is the time when the Iraq Insurgency was at its height, the US military was struggling to figure out what to do about it and there you had some small groups of maverick military leaders, led by David Petraeus and by General Matheus, at the time was very influential and a certain master who at that time was a Colonel was also quite influential at that time. And a small group came together and said we need to solve this problem. It lead to the creation of a new field manual which actually led to changes in PME, professional military education and training which actually led to changes in equipment procurement underground which to some degree, again different people give different amounts of credit helped the stem the tide in the Iraq war in 2007-08. At the same time, those lessons applied to Afghanistan and were not met with same level of success, for a number of factors probably it had nothing to do with the regional environment, cross border

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safety issues and so forth. But is there a lesson sometimes, military being this large bureaucracies, when they do learn the right things of actually over learning those lessons that mean that giving India's context of a two front situation where the lesson are actually useful in one context and not useful in another.

Walter Ladwig: So I have a Marine colleague of mine while I was doing my PhD who will always laugh at discussions of lessons learnt, you Army has a set of lessons learnt culture and he will always refer to it as lessons observed rather than lessons learnt. We saw them, we acknowledge them, we write them down but do we actually learn from them is another story. I think there is a fine line, there are innovation in which you know last voice dominates and whatever the insights were that was taken from the last war are routinely looked and applied to another situation. But I would say that, that does not necessarily mean that we are talking about a learning organization because a learning organization learns from its outcomes but also thinks about how to kind of routinely or how to apply or not those to a new adapted situation. I know a lot about the media coverage for example looked at Iraq, look at 2007, saw the combination of the surge plus the awakening in Anbar that led to a massive temping

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down of the violence and say oh now we are having the surge in Afghanistan and the surge will be the thing. I don't know , I was not in the conversation at the highest levels , I don't know that people who were vacating four more troops behind closed doors will tell you at the same template that you know we are just cutting and pasting from one to another, they had ideas, I think they had strategies. They adopted the common language, to sell it politically or make sure their idea had sales. But you know there is always a risk of taking things from one context and importing into an area where it doesn't necessary apply. That being said I would be more likely, or I'd rather accept that than be in an organization that doesn't reflect and doesn't try to learn lessons from its experience.

Anit Mukherjee: That was a really good question Dhruva, I think the Indian Army professionally and operationally, I mean it is ware about its deployments, the LOC with China. It undertakes these assessments internally. It is able to learn the right lessons, but the problem I have is as an outsider now and I have been an outsider for a long time. If I go to let's say to Mau , do I see officers at the Colonel level learning about 2001-02 operation, are they well versed about the core deployments, where were they broken up and what happened in a sequence of events. And if I were to ask my course mates about this, I don't

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think they know the answer to this because there hasn't been a real study about what happened in 2001-02 or if there has been a study, it's kept in the MO branch, it is not communicated to the junior officers. I would perhaps like the Army to emphasize on looking into its own history, 2001-2002 and a part of it comes with intellectual open I mean knowledge that some things didn't work right. But still I am hampered as an outsider analyst again but the fact is that it's nobody's job to do. There are lovely studies lying at CDM or Mao, that have been undertaken by officers who have looked into the history, who have analysed different issues. They are really good studies. These are officers who have really applied their minds. They have spent months or years working on these topics. There is nothing that is super-secretive about them. I think the Indian Army or the military is at a stage that it can open itself up at least for archival research. I went to cause and went to the cause history cell and I was like where are the stored documents and they said we don't store documents, we just publish what the squadron sends us. Just an evidence of the fact that there is no real, so if I were to say I went to Stephens, I didn't go to Stephens I went to NDA, let's say if I went to Stephens and I am interested in studying military history. How will I make a career out of it in this country? A, because I will not be employed by staff or CDM, that's not going to offer job because all the faculty there

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are military officers. Right so why would a young person interested in military make a career or where would that person make a career and I think here there needs to be a push from the institutions, where they create pathways so that people can come and do because your officers don't have the time to do archival research because you are doing operational activities all the time. You are dealing with the border with China, with emerging land, security threats, you don't have time to do, you don't have officers spare to do this, but you have young scholars and I have interacted with a lot of them over the years. You have young scholars, you have the time, interest and capabilities to open up. But that does not answer your overanalyses part.

Thank you very much.
