

7. Optimising the Special Forces

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Abstract

The world is wracked by a hybrid war that is waged without rules and regulations, and is borderless. The aim is to take advantage of the weaknesses of adversaries while maximising one's own strength, achieving disproportionate effect. The most effective response from a state against the superior operational power of an opponent is crafty diplomacy, wily espionage, terrorism, low intensity conflict, use of weapons of mass destruction, disturbance through non-state actors and a host of other asymmetric approaches employed continuously through multiple plains. The principles are not to use armed forces to compel the enemy to submit to one's will but to use all means, including the armed forces, military and non-military, lethal and non-lethal measures to compel the enemy to do so; exploiting the faultlines of the adversary, instigating weaker / underprivileged sections of the society, propagating to ones advantage the issue of the poor political health of a nation, exploitation of the diversity based on caste, creed, and community plus expressing affinity towards a particular segment of the masses to arouse anti-government sentiments, etc. The Special Forces play a pivotal role in hybrid war; all global players are using proxy forces. India has been combating an increasingly collusive China-Pakistan hybrid war over the past three decades but has failed to establish credible deterrence at the sub-conventional level despite large-sized Special Forces; reacting defensively every time. India lacks a cohesive national security strategy and a policy to employ its Special Forces, in hybrid war settings beyond direct-type actions. China and Pakistan are proactive at the sub-conventional level but India's failure to respond commensurately, has created an adverse strategic asymmetry for it. There is an urgent need for India to bridge this asymmetry.

Introduction

The Special Forces have played an important role throughout the history of warfare, whenever the aim was to achieve disruption rather than more

traditional conventional combat. Ancient Indian history describes many epic battles during the times of great empires like the Magadha, Maurya, Chola and Gupta that extended India's borders to the Hindukush mountains in the west, parts of Tibet in the north, with influence extending to Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia and parts of Sri Lanka to the east and south, but there is little mention of Special Forces, perhaps because Special Forces operations are usually shrouded in half mysteries. When Chanakya said, "Do not be very upright in your dealings for you would see by going to the forest that straight trees are cut down while crooked ones are left standing", he was talking of unconventional methods, where Special Forces and special operations are at centre-stage; his teaching was followed by his disciple kings. Special Forces give governments a variety of low-cost options with little or ambiguous signatures. India, despite combating cross-border terrorism for decades, has been employing its considerable quantum of Special Forces largely within own territory barring the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) operations in Sri Lanka and the odd cross-border raid. Resultantly, adversaries keep targeting us, tiring us and inflicting avoidable casualties on our security forces. We need to optimise our Special Forces' potential proactively for creating effective deterrence.

21st Century Conflict

A major change occurring in the 21st century saw the major powers using irregular forces while earlier it was only a conventionally weak state that did so. This influenced the Great Game between the big powers and increased the value of a country like Pakistan having a bank of proxy forces that could be made available for a price: money, arms, geopolitical gains. The findings of a comprehensive study titled "Global Strategic Trend 2040" relevant to this chapter include: *one*, future conflict will remain unpredictable and violent. While technology will remain important, people are likely to provide the asymmetric edge when responding to both expected and unexpected challenges, if invested in, and empowered through, decentralisation; *two*, differences among the state, state-sponsored and non-state adversaries will blur. Threats will diversify, as technology and innovation opens up novel avenues of attack and adaptive adversaries exploit opportunities; *three*, soft power will increasingly be utilised to facilitate achievement of political goals, using a broader spectrum of actors and agencies, including organised criminal, terrorist and insurgent groups; *four*, the degree of combining hard and soft power as effective statecraft will determine the ability to achieve strategic objectives. It is unlikely that the

military instrument alone will be decisive; *five*, the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) threat from state and non-state actors is likely to increase; *six*; radicalisation, extremism and terrorism will continue to generate threats, and: *seven*, the changing balance of power is likely to deter military intervention by the major powers outside their spheres of influence; when intervention becomes unavoidable, actors will seek to distance themselves by the use of proxy forces, cyber attacks, as well as covert and clandestine methods.

Thus, the above study has the following lessons for India: *one*, war is no longer an exclusive military affair; *two*, war is dirty without any rules and uses total comprehensive national power; *three*, India has been at war all these years even as the political hierarchy perceives conventional conflict as war; *four*, conventional forces and diplomacy are no match for hybrid warfare, and; *five*, there is little chance of military intervention to assist India engaged in a conflict. India has been following a foreign policy based in idealism, while a cross-section believes that idealism has no place in the making of foreign policy. But the costs of following an inward looking policy may be that much higher, which is what India has been following. The most effective foreign policy for any country is one that balances realism and idealism – that, in effect, makes idealism realistic². Successful foreign policy options that are exercised, have of necessity, to reflect domestic opinion and must be based on a principled and judicious mixture of both idealism and realism³.

Employment of Special Forces by Foreign Countries

History is replete with examples of proactive employment of Special Forces not only for direct actions but to serve as the eyes behind the enemy lines, keep areas of strategic interest under surveillance, and create havoc in the enemy's backyard, targeting his centre of gravity: the Germans in the Ardennes during World War II, British Communist guerrillas and Mau-Mau insurgents, rescue of Mussolini, Entebbe Raid, United States Special Forces (USSF) raid to kill Osama bin-Laden. Hybrid wars provide numerous openings for covert and overt employment of Special Forces.

Pakistan: Pakistan has used its Special Service Group (SSG) mixed with regulars and irregulars right from first Indo-Pak War of 1947-48, the 1965 Indo-Pak War and the 1999 Kargil conflict. Since 1989, it has waged a proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and has raised terrorist organisations specific to India, supports insurgencies in India, and is infiltrating terrorists into India. As early as 1992-93, Pakistan's armed modules could be identified

in 10 states pan-India in addition to J&K. The Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) started deputing 'volunteers' to Pakistan for training along with the Mujahideen, Taliban and Al Qaeda cadres. They established linkages with terrorist organisations in Bangladesh for terror-training in facilities under the very noses of the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR)⁴. Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is linked with some 15 regional and international terrorist organisations, including the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), Al Qaeda, Taliban, Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Lashkar-e-Jhanvi (LeJ), Harkatul Mujahideen (HM), Sipah-e-Sahiba, Indian Mujahideen (IM), SIMI, Muslim militant groups in our northeast, Popular Front of India (PFI), etc. Stratfor had warned in 2008 that the ISI was forging an alliance with the Indian Maoists. Asim Umar, Al Qaeda in the Subcontinent (AQIS) chief of South Asia and a Pakistani national, has called on Indian Muslims to undertake 'lone wolf' attacks. The Pakistan Army's bible is the book *The Quranic Concept of War* published in 1979, that justifies terrorism, urging *jihad* as the collective responsibility of the Muslim *ummah*, and as not restricted to soldiers⁵.

China: The Chinese Special Forces (estimated 14,000) are specialised in rapid reaction combat in a limited regional war under high-tech conditions, commando operations, counter-terrorism, and intelligence gathering. An integral part of the Chinese concept of 'Unrestricted Warfare', they are covertly deployed in projects undertaken by China globally; tasked with information support operations, strategic surveillance, training, arming and advising dissident / terrorist / insurgent groups in target countries, perception management and evacuation of the Chinese public in case of an emergency. China is actively abetting insurgencies in India. Chinese intelligence infiltration operations into Nepal and Burma under Mao Zedong led to the rise of Maoist insurgencies, the aim in Nepal being to install a regime that was not friendly to India and the US. The Naga rebels and other northeast insurgents had been travelling to China for training, arms and financial support. When the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and Bodo camps were routed from Bhutan, China provided refuge to their cadres. In 2014, Chinese nationals were apprehended with fake Indian documents, on a mission to meet the Naga rebels. China has been supporting and arming the Indian Maoists; the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of Manipur; and the Kachen rebels in Myanmar. Paresh Barua (ULFA) was provided sanctuary in China. In April 2015, Chinese intelligence established the United Liberation Front of West, South, East Asia

(ULFWSEA) in Myanmar, bringing nine northeast insurgent groups together, including the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) [NSCN (K)] and ULFA⁶. China has established and nurtured the United Wa State Army (UWSA) as a proxy in the Shan province of Myanmar, arming them with machine guns, armoured vehicles, shoulder-fired Air Defence (AD) weapons and missile fitted helicopters⁷. China had developed links with the Taliban even before the US invasion of Afghanistan, and was providing training to them in China. By abetting insurgencies, China keeps its adversaries destabilised, suppressed and forced to look inwards.

USA: According to American historian William Blum (article published in 2014), since 1945, the US has tried to overthrow more than 50 governments, many of them democratically elected; grossly interfered in elections in 30 countries; bombed the civilian populations of 30 countries; used chemical and biological weapons; and attempted to assassinate foreign leaders. In many cases Britain has been a collaborator”⁸. The contribution of the USSF in all this is obvious. There is enough evidence that the rise of the ISIS was a conscious decision of the Obama Administration. The USSF is presently operating in some 150 countries, including India, though it is actively engaged in Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq and Ukraine. The core tasks of the USSF are direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defence, unconventional warfare, counter-terrorism, and counter proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destructions (WMDs), civil affairs operations, psychological operations and information operations. The USSF also undertakes undeclared tasks like conducting proactive, sustained ‘man hunting’ and disruption operations globally, building partner capacity in relevant ground, air and maritime capabilities in scores of countries on a steady-state basis., helping generate persistent ground, air and maritime surveillance and strike coverage over “undergoverned” areas and littoral zones, and employing unconventional warfare against state sponsored terrorism and trans-national terrorist groups globally.

Russia: Russia’s conquest of Crimea highlighted the effective operational demonstration of Russia’s newly created Special Operations Forces (SOF) nicknamed “Little Green Men”, which were deployed with high speed and to great effect albeit Ukraine was without such matching capability. The Russians coordinated all the relevant instruments of state power, including Special Operations Forces, information operations including the media, cyber warfare, deterrence and coercion through staged military exercises and the use of proxy fighters, for the successful achievement

of its objectives⁹. Coercion through means of information warfare is to incline a great power's opponents to act in a pre-simulated way¹⁰. As per the current Russian military operational doctrine, an Information Operation (IO) implies everything that involves information. Therefore, propaganda, disinformation, psychological operations, and even cyber warfare which stays below the bar to invite a retaliation, all fall within this arc. In Ukraine, third-party deniable agents, including pro-Russian loyalists and local paramilitary commanders, as well as gangsters who spotted an opportunity for profit and power, were inserted initially as the vanguard. Russia infiltrates ambiguous military and security personnel into the target country, and activates criminal and other networks to further foment unrest and ignite open conflict before the Russian military engages in a campaign to isolate government positions, seize key terrain, and destroy the defence and security apparatus of the target country. Information operations and perception management continue till the gains are consolidated to achieve the objective, leading to de-escalation.

Indian Scene

India has a volatile neighbourhood with instability in Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Maldives, besides the Af-Pak region. While China's Xinjiang has the Uighur insurgency, Bangladesh is battling terrorism including by the ISIS, and Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar and Bangladesh have been streaming into India. The Maldives is getting radicalised through the ISIS, Al Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Tayyeba (LeT) influence. Internally, India has some 39 banned organisations and the situation in parts of J&K and the Maoist belt remains unstable.

China-Pakistan Collusivity

The China-Pak collusivity is based on common strategic and security concerns. Through the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) of 2003 and the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations in 2005, China reaffirmed the status of Pakistan as a strategic ally, whereas Pakistan restated its One China stance. China had been seeking land access to the Indian Ocean to boost its presence there. Countries which can make this possible are Pakistan and Myanmar – Pakistan being the most successful story. Pakistan has emerged as China's most trusted and crucial partner for its geostrategic designs, which are unfolding through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

(CPEC). China, in the garb of security, will also be able to deploy the People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops on Pakistani soil¹¹. This gives it a strategic edge in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as also against India. PLA troops also provide China traction against endeavours by the Pakistan Army to provide support to the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). Chinese footprints in the Indian Ocean are supported by the CPEC and Gwadar. China has hinted that it could destabilise our northeast if India pressures Pakistan in Kashmir. The China-Pakistan combined objectives vis-à-vis India appear to be: *one*, keep India confined to South Asia through asymmetric and hybrid means, nudging India to accept subordination to China; *two*, expand joint power asymmetry and indirect posturing in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK)-Pakistan to force India to give up designs for capturing POK; *three*, hedge India's economic rise asymmetrically while ensuring availability of Indian markets to China; *four*, shrink India's strategic space in South Asia/Indian Ocean Region (IOR) through the gravitational pull to the smaller states, wean them away from India; *five*, undermine India's role in Afghanistan; *six*, dominate the Arabian Sea, posing an indirect challenge to the Indian Navy and India's Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs); *seven*, perpetuate a two-front collusive hybrid threat dilemma, including destabilising India from within to realise own territorial claims, as far as possible; and, *eight*, reduce India's influence in Iran.

Strategic Culture

Henry Kissinger writes in his book *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, "The *Arthshastra* sets out, with dispassionate clarity, a vision of how to establish and guard a state while neutralising, subverting and (when opportune conditions have been established) conquering its neighbours." It is ironical that while Kissinger derives strategic culture from the *Arthshastra*, we have failed to do so. Our lack of strategic culture is more on account of keeping the military out of the strategic policy formulation and decision-making of matters military. This has led the hierarchy to believe that conventional forces, coupled with nuclear clout, can deter us from irregular threats. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Pakistan, though conventionally inferior, has been successfully playing its 'thousand cuts policy' while India has failed to develop the requisite deterrent. China, which earlier used Pakistan as a proxy to wage irregular war on India, now itself aids and supports insurgencies in India.

Sub-Conventional Asymmetry

The conflict spectrum has four major segments: nuclear; conventional; sub-conventional; and, cyber space. Without doubt, China has achieved full spectrum capability. China is also assisting Pakistan in upgrading its capacity in all segments, including cyber space. Significantly, while both China and Pakistan have advanced sub-conventional capabilities and are employing them proactively, we are lagging behind woefully. This strategic asymmetry is all the more pronounced because the sub-conventional segment and use of irregular forces has become a strategic asset in furthering national interests, over waging conventional war, leave aside nuclear power, which will remain a deterrent. We fail to acknowledge that India has been combating hybrid war for the past several years, and that such war involves involvement, employment, pursuit and blending, at the operational level of kinetic and non-kinetic tactics, regular and irregular combatants, state and non-state actors, physical, psychological, low-tech and high-tech means aimed at generating advantage relative to the adversary with a view to achieve surprise, seize and maintain the initiative, generate deception and ambiguity, maximising deniability, subduing the adversary and advancing own national interests.

Creating Deterrence

National security strategies should aim at the creation of national and international political conditions favourable to extending vital national values against existing and potential adversaries. Ironically, we don't have a cohesive national security strategy but have also not defined how to establish credible deterrence to proxy war. Maloy K Dhar, former Joint Director Intelligence Bureau (IB), in his book *Open Secrets – India's Intelligence Unveiled*, writes, "I continued to advocate for an aggressive and proactive counter and forward intelligence thrust against Pakistan. My voice was rarely heard and mostly ignored. The Pakistani establishment is a geopolitical bully. The best response to blunt such a bully is to take the war inside his home. India has allowed itself to be blackmailed by Pakistan even before it went nuclear. The sabre-rattling of 'coercive diplomacy', which is nothing but sterile military power, cannot convince the Islamist Pakistani Establishment that Indians can take the border skirmishes inside their homes and hit at the very roots of the jaundiced Islamist groups"¹². Why the US has managed to secure itself post 9/11 is not only because of homeland security but because the US Special Forces (USSF) are deployed abroad optimally.

Optimising Special Forces Potential

A major factor that deters us from optimising Special Forces to create deterrence against irregular threats is that the hierarchal understanding is limited to direct attacks, raids and ambushes, which actually are relevant only at the tactical level. The recent 'surgical strikes' into POK comprised a one-time signal that has hardly deterred Pakistan. At the strategic level, such tasks have been replaced by politico-military missions that may not entail a physical attack at all. We also have glaring voids in strategic intelligence even in areas of interest in our immediate neighbourhood. Another reason for failing to establish credible deterrence is that our national intelligence agencies think it is their sole domain and integrating Special Forces with them would encroach upon their turf. As a result, our experiments with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and organisations like Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS) were dismal failures, and the voids in our strategic intelligence persist. We need to follow Chanakya's dictum wherein he said, "As soon as the fear approaches near, attack and destroy it". Even Mahatma Gandhi had told Brigadier (later Lieutenant General) LP Sen, then Commander Designate 191 Infantry Brigade, in 1947, "If one has to choose between cowardice and violence, I will choose violence"¹³. Creating credible deterrence to sub-conventional warfare implies optimising Special Forces' employment wherein our Special Forces operatives must be trained for specific regions and deployed in all areas of our strategic interest. These will have to be politico-military missions directly under the highest politically authority and mostly without reference to the military. Such forces should essentially be small but effective.

Special Forces should be central to our asymmetric response, which does not imply operating in units / sub-units. In fact, such a response through the employment of Special Forces does not automatically imply a physical attack. A physical attack is only the extreme and potentially most dangerous expression of asymmetric warfare. The key lies in achieving strategic objectives through the application of modest resources with the essential psychological component. According to Stephen Cohen, *"The task of Special Forces is the proxy application of force at low and precisely calculated levels, the objective being to achieve some political effect, not a battlefield victory."*¹⁴ In sharp contrast, in India, we have been simply looking at battlefield victory. Special Forces do not create resistance movements but advice, train and assist resistance movements already in existence. They are ideally suited to control the faultlines of adversaries without any signatures or with ambiguous signatures. There is an urgent need

to develop publicised overt capabilities and deniable covert capabilities as deterrence against the irregular war thrust upon us. The only way Pakistan will stop its proxy war is when it becomes apparent that the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), Balochistan, Sindh, Baltistan can also splinter. There are just too many faultlines in Pakistan and China and one can actually pick and choose. Despite numerous faultlines within China, it is deliberately and directly fanning insurgencies in India. It is not without reason that a large chunk of the Chinese defence budget is being spent on internal security and this has been hiked considerably recently.

The basis of optimising our Special Forces' potential should be using them as an extension of our foreign policy to shape the geopolitical environment in India's favour. In doing so, we should adopt the approach of 'deep coalitions', an intrinsic part of China's 'Unrestricted Warfare'. A de-facto deep coalition, instead of being limited to nation-states, as in the Gulf War alliance, might consist, for example, of three nation-states, multiple civil society organisations, a narcotrafficante here or there, a couple of private corporations with their own self-interest at stake, an individual speculator, and who knows what other components¹⁵. The deep coalition involves players at many levels of the system. It is multi-dimensional, with all these groups operating all the time, in a continuous flow – multiplying, fissioning, then fusing into others, and so on. Witness how China uses the Taliban (100 percent Sunni Muslims) straddling the 'Golden Crescent' in Afghanistan, and the United Wa State Army (100 percent Buddhists) straddling the 'Golden Triangle' in Myanmar-Thailand to its advantage. Such a system is based less on 'balance of power' relations among major nations than on the ability to configure the right combination of players at every level. China's unrestricted warfare makes repeated references to the political role played by non-state actors, ranging from credit rating agencies to narco-mafias, and its emphasis on the "civilianisation of war" thesis: "Precisely in the same way that modern technology is changing weapons and the battlefield, it also blurs who the war participants are – non-professional warriors and non-state organisations are posing a greater and greater threat to sovereign nations¹⁶". It is here that the role of the Special Forces becomes even more important as part of multiple deep coalitions, given strategic thought and deliberate planning.

The Naresh Chandra Committee had recommended establishment of a Special Operations Command (SOC). Special Forces missions in most countries are controlled and executed by the political authority, without reference to even

the highest military authority due to their politico-military nature and very high sensitivity. In our case, an SOC like the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM) is unlikely to work out because of our peculiar environment and structure. In India, instead of military control over the military (as it should be), what has been in vogue is bureaucratic-civilian control, and this is unlikely to change.. The merger of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), as envisioned, when establishing the former, has not happened because of this. The higher defence organisations continue to be inadequately represented by the military. As for reorganising the MoD, reports indicate some ‘middle-level’ appointments being identified for manning by military officers. Concurrently, the Cabinet has approved the posts of seven Principal Directors and 36 Directors in the Armed Forces Headquarters (AFHQ) civil services under the MoD. With civilian-defence officers now paid more than military equivalents, there is already a problem at the functional level. The Principal Directors will claim higher status over serving Lieutenant Generals / equivalents of other Services by the same logic. Therefore, the civilian-bureaucratic control over the military will persist. The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), when appointed, will reportedly not have full operational powers, and going by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) Note on which the HQ IDS was raised, will have “equal” voting rights as other Service Chiefs, which dilutes his stature as a “single-point adviser”. The ground reality also is that the national intelligence agencies will only provide selective support to the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) and the military. In Sri Lanka, the Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) was working at cross-purposes to the IPKF, which is not surprising – the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Pentagon too at times undertake operations at tangent.

Special Forces’ missions at the strategic levels, in most countries, are controlled and executed by the political authority *without reference to even the highest military authority due to their politico-military nature and very high sensitivity*. Our Special Forces comprise the Army’s Special Forces battalions, Marine Commandos (MARCOS) of the Navy, Garuds of the Air Force, Special Action Groups of the National Security Guards (NSG) under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Special Groups of the Special Frontier Force (SFF) and the Aviation Research Centre (ARC) under the Cabinet Secretariat. Given our peculiar environment and structures, what India needs is a Special Forces optimisation in two tiers: *one*, employment at the strategic level on politico-military missions to continuously shape the environment in India’s favour;

two, for supporting military operations through the spectrum of conflict. At the higher level, this is happening somewhat, albeit not cohesively, with R&AW using elements of the Special Group of the SFF. *And, because of the reasons discussed above, a common pool of operatives for both tiers is unlikely to be accepted until and unless the military is fully integrated into the higher defence structures* During the recent Unified Commanders' Conference (July 10-11, 2017), the Defence Secretary announced that the Special Operations Division (SOD) will "soon" become a reality. According to the media, the SOD will collate the Special Forces of the Army, Navy and IAF, for supporting offensive and defensive operations. How soon the SOD will fructify is not known but its shape will be important: manning, equipping, support, tasking, employment and command and control. Needless to mention, if the SOD had been appropriately employed, we would not have been surprised by the massive intrusions that Pakistan inflicted on us in Kargil during 1999. From the media reports, it is evident that the SOD will merely put together the Special Forces of the three Services. Unfortunately, the turf wars don't permit India to unite the way it should. Strategic sense should indicate that the SOD should also integrate the NSG and relevant elements of the SFF. But despite all these years, even joint military-SFF exercises have not been possible.

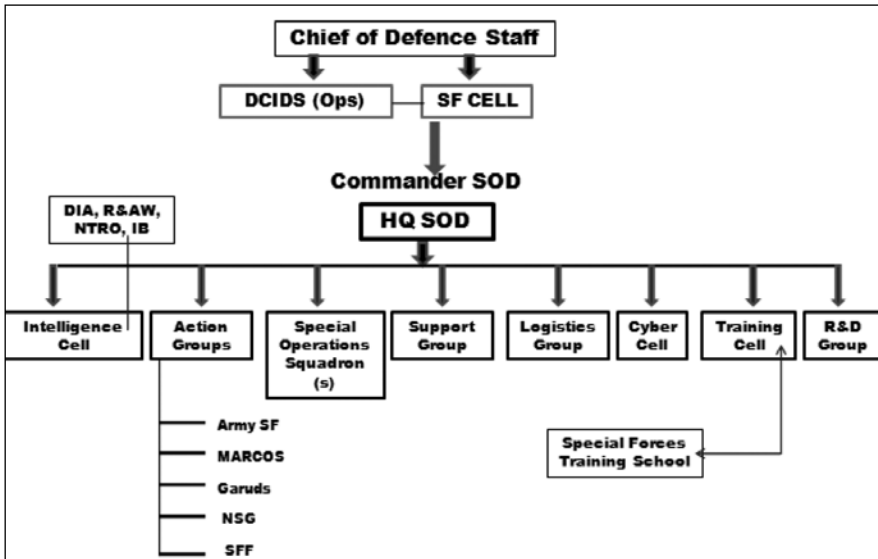
Special Operations Division (SOD)

The Special Operations Division (SOD) should be established under the CDS. The Commander SOD should have commanded a Special Forces unit. In the US Special Operations Command (SOCOM), the Special Forces elements (the teeth) comprise one-third of the overall manpower, the balance two-thirds being support elements, including civilian psychological warfare units. The SOD too, in addition to task-oriented 'Action Groups', will require the Special Operations Squadron (s); Support Group; Logistics Group; Intelligence Cell linked directly with the DIA, R&AW, National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) and IB; Training Cell, linked to the Special Forces Training School (SFTS), with the latter placed under the SOD; Cyber Cell; R&D Group; and the like. It would be prudent to retain the Parachute Brigade as a separate Rapid Reaction Force, being airborne infantry; Airborne Divisions of the US Army are separate from the SOCOM. Special Forces are not meant for internal security. That is why the CCS Note on which the NSG was raised had required the Army to provide manpower on deputation "only" for 10 years, which has not been implemented. It is time that the police take

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on their own responsibilities for internal security more seriously. For internal security requirements, the police forces must raise their own specialists. A suggested organisation of the SOD incorporating NSG and SFF elements is given below, though this is unlikely to be permitted:

Fig 1: Outline Organisation: Special Operations Division (SOD)



The SOD must go for theatre specialisation and may need to have a specific task-based irregular complement, where required. The SOD should have 100 percent manning, complete probation under commanding officers, no curbs on reverting unfit personnel, a separate budget, provision of state-of-the-art 'packaged' equipment, an integrated plan for advanced and joint training, including Information Technology (IT) and cyber, integrated special operations squadron (s), etc. The SOD should have a Cyber Cell, as also an R&D element to customise state-of-the-art weapons and equipment for specific missions. The SF Cell under the CDS, with links to the Deputy Chief Integrated Defence Staff (DCIDS) (Ops) should oversee the manning, equipping, training, employment of the Special Forces, monitoring operations, and coordinate operational and intelligence inputs, inter-agency synergy and future tasking. The SOD should act as a force multiplier to complement tasks performed by the conventional forces for operations at the tactical level, including facilitating strike corps operations. Major tasks would include:

- Reconnaissance, surveillance and target designation.
- Information support covert operations.
- Preemptive / retaliatory trans-border operations.
- Targeting terrorists and their organisations.
- Hostage rescue.
- Facilitating Out of Area Contingencies (OOAC) and the like.

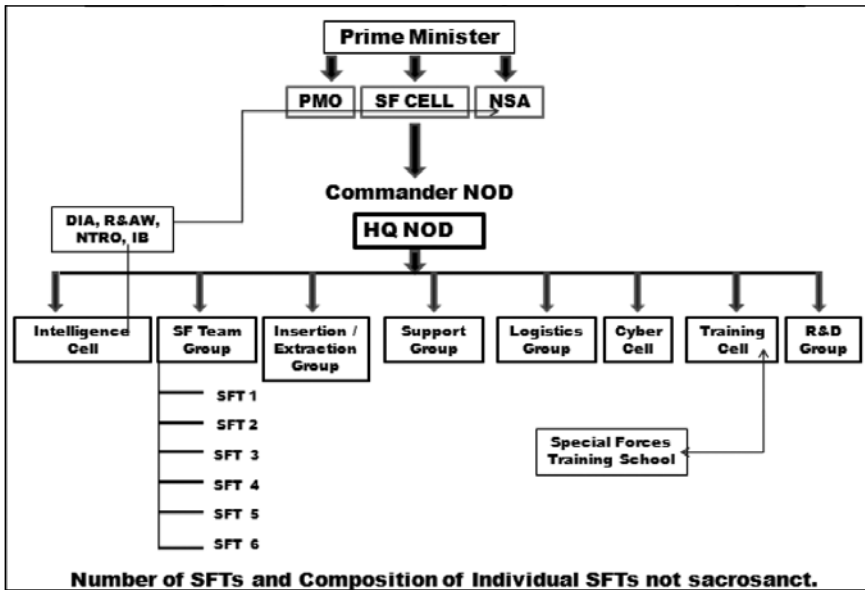
National Operations Division (NOD)

The National Operations Division (NOD) needs to be established under the highest political authority, the Prime Minister (PM), for employing Special Forces on politico-military missions at the strategic level with or without reference to the military. These would include Special Forces forming part of multiple 'deep coalitions' as suggested above. The operatives must be trained for specific regions and deployed in all areas of our strategic interest for strategic surveillance, perception management, intelligence, psychological operations, training and supporting friendly forces, blocking external support to insurgent / terrorists in India, and controlling the faultlines of adversaries.

The organisation of NOD to start with could be about two battalion worth that can be expanded subsequently. The Special Forces Teams (SFTs) may individually comprise anything from 25 to 50 country-region specific operatives, duly prioritised; the size of individual SFTs will depend upon the country-region and its relative importance to national security objectives. The Commander NOD could be on deputation or permanent absorption from the Army Special Forces. Manpower should be drawn from the existing Special Forces plus from other all-India avenues. They must have institutionalised access to integrated intelligence, varied insertion and extraction capability and adequate support elements. The NOD should have a Cyber Cell, as also an R&D element to customise weapons and equipment for specific missions. The PM should have a Special Forces Cell comprising Special Forces and R&AW officers as an adjunct to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and linked to the National Security Advisor (NSA), for evolving a doctrine and for employment of the Special Forces, and to oversee their manning, equipping, training, tasking, intelligence inputs, and inter-agency synergy. This cell should coordinate all source intelligence gathering and automated analysis and assessments (short, medium and long terms) supported by an automated decision support system and real-time dissemination to all concerned. A suggested outline organisation of the NOD is given as under:

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Fig 2: Outline Organisation: National Operations Division (NOD)



Conclusion

The deteriorating situation in our neighbourhood, the increasing asymmetric threats and the national security challenges indicate we will need to continue contending with sub-conventional conflict and hybrid war, actively abetted by our adversaries. The classical concept of the use of Special Forces within the Indian borders will not hold good. Today's hybrid wars are laced with unprecedented treachery, deceit and denial. In this era of hybrid wars, India cannot afford to remain ambivalent. If we do not employ our Special Forces proactively, China and Pakistan will continue to destabilise us, tying us in knots and restricting our economic progress. In October 2014, Arun Jaitley (now Defence Minister) had stated in Parliament, "Our conventional strength is far more than theirs (Pakistan's). If they persist with this (cross-border terrorism), they'll feel the pain of this adventurism." Delivering a talk at the 10th Nani Palkhivala Memorial at the SASTRA University in February 2014, Ajit Doval, before becoming the NSA, had mentioned using the vulnerabilities of Pakistan to India's advantage, saying, "You can do one more Mumbai, you may lose Balochistan." It is time to translate these words into action and the way forward is a hybrid response, including optimising our Special Forces potential.

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