CHAPTER 12

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON A SOLDIER
12. EXTERNAL INFLUENCES ON A SOLDIER

12.1 India during the post-independence era has been experiencing a process of change which is a natural phenomenon in the growth of the nation. Change is the essence of life. Changes brought about by the external influencing factors have had a discernible impact on the people as a whole, and the personnel of the Army being part of the mainstream are also affected. The Army due to its peculiar role and organisation cannot strictly be compared with other organisations. Effects of these factors have therefore to be viewed with regard to the role of Army and constraints imposed on them.

12.2 For efficiency and morale of troops it is essential that due cognisance be taken of these factors and remedial action be taken expeditiously.

12.3 Armed Forces operate in a given environment in the country. The environment encompasses factors which are external to and beyond the purview of Armed Forces. Each nations is characterised by different environment and associated factors which would further vary from place to place. Also the environment is not permanent, it changes with time. Since the environment is the sum total of influences of history, geography, culture, sociology, politics and economics affiliation, it is imperative than any study of the Armed Forces is done in totality, and in overall context of the prevailing environment.

12.4 Prevailing environment in the country directly influences development process of ethical behaviour of individuals and the organisations they serve in. Environment in any nation primarily comprises of five components namely, economic, technological, sociocultural and socio-political. Ethics and ethical behaviour of individuals, groups or organisations are affected by these components of environment.

Changes in Macro Environment and its Impact on Ethical Environment of the Army

12.5 The pattern of each component of the environment and its implications on ethical behaviour are enumerated in succeeding paragraphs.

Economic Environment

12.6 Indian economy in the last two decades has seen major structural changes which has

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48 Cheema, Col DS, Ethics and Discipline in Armed Forces, Combat Journal, Apr 1993.
transformed the lives of people and has consequently changed expectations and behavioural patterns. Inflation still continues to be a major sources of concern. The socio-economic pattern in this country is varied and which are directly associated with rising expectations of individuals. Consequently unfulfilled wants lead to deep frustrations. Vast disparity and the ever increasing gulf between the haves and have nots lead to many a socio-economic disorder in the country. Over a period of time the Indian army soldier too is increasingly getting affected by such changes. He is no more insulated from the frustrations of the society which has its discernible influence on the service culture also. His attitude and approach has undergone transformation affecting the service ethos and culture.

**Liberalisation**

12.7 India ushered an era of liberalisation in the nineties entailing a free-market philosophy. Since then, a plethora of avenues of various multinational companies have created employment opportunities to the young buds. The desires of the job aspirants have undergone a metamorphosis and have enabled them to choose between many options. The liberalisation measures and the process of globalisation, made the entry of new enterprises easy. Their aggressive strategy and offer of fat pay packets to attract quality workers saw a sudden change in the paradigm. During this phase, the information technology also took an unprecedented leap. Many new TV channels were launched, and the use of cellular telephone became the part of everyday life. The electronic media became most powerful and the widespread use of computers in all spheres of life made information technology a vital tool for all the trades. This was substantiated by the introduction of internet. The sudden outburst of easy money and hype in the electronic media has made people forget the basic tenet. Everywhere, at every level, careerism and self-interest are predominantly present, and people have become more and more materialistic and greedy in acquiring more and more wealth.

**Technological Environment**

12.8 Technology has revolutionised lives of people. Technological revolution has made lives of people better. However it has brought about greater kill capacity of modern war machines.

12.9 The population of whom the men in uniform are a part are a witness to such rapid technological developments. Information of such developments is available to one and all.
In fact, there is an information overload. This is having a discernible impact on everyone.

12.10 Enhanced quality of technological environment has alongwith brought about quantum jump in aspirations of the people. And when the economic status of individuals are unable to meet such aspirations dissatisfaction and frustrations sets in. The soldiers too are enveloped in the environment of enhanced materialistic wants as rest of the society has. Expectations from the organisation have risen manifold and any shortfall results in frustrations and unless aptly handled could lead to drop of motivation and increased tendencies for unethical practices.

12.11 **Technical Expertise.** The introduction of the modern weapon system has necessitated that the soldier has enhanced levels of pre-intake level of education. Once in service the emphasis is on acquisition of skills commensurate to the needs of the organisation. There is a greater level of participation of men in activities of the units and do not remain blind followers. It is proven fact that management of educated soldier is complex as it requires skills on part of the leadership to keep levels of motivation of soldiers at optimum level at all times. Higher level of education of soldiers in prevailing technological environment is both a boon and bane as at times, unless handled with great care, causes hindrances in attainment of organisational goals and objectives. The advancement in technical expertise has changed the attitude of soldiers which are affecting the work culture within the organisation.

**Socio-Cultural Environment**

12.12 Each individual in the society possess a set of norms and values. Consciously or unconsciously they represent an individuals’ beliefs and perceptions which dictates the quality of inter-personal relationships in society. Ethical standards espoused by individuals’ stem from individual and societal values and norms. The Armed forces too represent a set of values and beliefs percolating down through ages. The Armed Forces have always represented high moral platforms from where individuals propel themselves for the ultimate sacrifice. Obviously motivation for such a sacrifice stems from the *inner call* rather than mere salaries of perks which they receive. Each society in every country represents ethical value systems which incidentally varies from country to country. Ethical standards are known to be high in developed nations as it is directly related to the high social order that pervades their society.
Dramatic changes have been noticed in established social institutions in our country. These established institutions have evolved through pages of history where dominant socio-cultural norms have directly influenced them. Traditional value systems in this country are beginning to crumble greatly influenced by imported culture. These changes are having a discernible impact on the Armed Forces. The awareness and needs of soldiers have increased. A greater number of soldiers now wish to bring family in stations wherever feasible. A greater level of interaction between men and families is seen. As stated earlier a soldier propels himself to the ultimate call of duty as he considers himself a special person in the society. With increasing disregard for the men in uniform in the society except during wars/conflicts, a soldier perceives himself to be at the wrong end of the social spectrum. The response from institutions such as the MES created for his welfare being low adds to his frustrations. On leave he has to be subjected to insinuation from civilian passengers in trains and back home the lackadaisical approach of civil administration further adds to his woes. He finds his financial status in society low wherein extreme helplessness sets in leading to a mental state of isolation and insecurity. This affects behaviour at work place affecting code of conduct and ethical value system. It is extremely unfortunate that there is, in the society, an utter lack of awareness of the job profile and content of the soldier in uniform. That the nature of the job of the soldier is hazardous in content consequently resulting in aggressive modes of behaviour of the soldier is not very well known to the civil population and on the top of it he does not get due recognition and acknowledgement from the society.

**Socio-Political Environment**

As the leadership is much about dealing with human beings, we have to take note of another important facet, i.e., the socio-political environment. Important aspects of this environment are given below:

12.14.1 Progressive changes taking place in the socio-political and socio-economic environment are posing serious challenges to integrity and autonomy of nation States. In a diverse socio-political and multi ethnic configuration of populace, like the one obtaining in India, the leaders have attendant challenges of forging national unity and integrity.

12.14.2 Today's soldier is better educated with far greater awareness of his socio-political and economic environment and is increasingly conscious of his rights and
privileges. He no longer imbibes a blind faith in his leader and is prepared to question the traditional values.

12.14.3 Joint family system prevalent in the Indian Society provided a foundation for natural bonding between the groups having common identity and helped in developing traits like mutual respect, tolerance and co-existence. However, for numerous reasons, this system is gradually giving way to nuclear families. While this change would perhaps make an individual more independent and self reliant but it would tend to dilute the natural bonds, thereby offering new challenges to the leaders in creating cohesive groups, sub-units and units.

12.14.4 Finally, the proliferation of media - print, audio as well as visual has brought about unprecedented transparency making the contemporary leaders directly answerable for all their acts of commission and omission.

Social Disparity

12.15 The wave of globalisation has created a disparity between the pay packages and facilities offered by the government and the scores of multinational companies. It has also generated unrest and inequality among the government employees and the private sector. The thriving multinational companies have successfully made the ‘snob’ effect, which motivate people to maintain an exclusive status, higher than their pocket could afford. The thrust given towards globalisation has ensured that the high-quality products are available but the government does not seem to improve the basic level of social understanding among the masses, by imparting them the required education. This has widened the gap between the have and have-nots. This has led to various unethical practices in the Army.

Political Environment

12.16 In India the political awareness in the society is high. Since Independence the political institutions have seen a sharp decline in content, ethos and culture. Today the public at large has little or no confidence in the polity. Whatever be the ills, democratic nature of this country entails certain privileges such as freedom of speech and other fundamental rights.

12.17 A soldier at work place executes his tasks in a highly disciplined and ethically upright environment. This is at divergence with what exists in the society. Though
apolitical by nature, a soldier finds himself in a confused and bewildered state as he finds himself at the service of certain questionable elected representatives of the people. Disenchantment would obviously set in and the leadership in the Army is indeed concerned about the mental state of men.

12.18 A soldier considers himself to be the embodiment of all that is good in the society wherein he attempts to fill in the role of an ideal citizen. But then he is a human being too. His confidence in the degraded political system is shaken wherein his values and beliefs in ethical norms are constantly under threat. It is to the credit of the soldier that he exercises exemplary restraint. But then some disturbing trends cannot be ignored.

**Degraded Political System**

12.19 The past decade has seen a steady erosion in the values and standards among the rank and file of political dignitaries. The victims of this deep fall in the moral and ethical values have been accountability and transparency in the system. The lack of initiative, enterprise and honesty of purpose is evident in the prevailing political system of the country. And the soldier happens to be an integral part of this system.

**Civil and Military Relations**

12.20 Relations between the politicians/bureaucracy and the military have always been uneasy at best, and are a constant source of irritation for the latter. Over the years, the military is getting increasingly subjugated to the politicians and the bureaucracy. The interference in even the routine administrative functions of the Army is undesirable. The impact of this interference would not have been so disturbing if the politicians were well versed in military affairs. This state of affairs, if carried further can lead one to consequences - the loss of professional ethic of the military or an increased interaction between certain senior officers with politicians and the bureaucracy.

12.21 The loss of professional ethic can happen to the best of Armies. We have a classic example in subjugation of the German Army by Hitler in the late thirties. Hitler systematically reduced the scope of military authority, excluded it from foreign-policy discussions and interfered even in matters purely military. The fundamental character of the officer corps was altered and its values destroyed. *The professional officer corps... was a victim of Nazism and its destruction was one of the calamities of the war... born of
enlightened reform, it had been motivated by the ideal of integrity, service, competence, duty and loyalty... Neither Germany, nor the world is better off for its passing.  

12.22 Service fear of political and bureaucratic incompetence exists, and in extreme cases, can cause the military to interfere in political affairs. Pakistan offers an interesting case study in this regard. Such a situation is not likely in India that has a well developed political system and a long tradition of civilian control. But a more active representation and involvement of the military is a possibility.

III Effects of the Environment

12.23 It is a stark reality that the Indian soldier is evolving very rapidly in the vicious environment in which he operates. With courage, bravery and pride in the heritage as the basic tenets of his personality, he is actively creating new patterns of identity. Inspite of ill effects of the environment the soldier today is still a reliable, simple and pragmatic individual. The situation however, can not be allowed to drift. It is increasingly getting difficult for a soldier to continue to be insulated or isolated from the ground realities of present-day society. The problem will continue to grow and will later attain unmanageable proportions. As technological development keeps shrinking the world, anything important happening in any corner of the world will have a direct or indirect impact on individuals. The undesirable influence of the hostile surroundings within and outside the country will continue to slowly affect the working ethos in the Army.

12.24 The process of liberalisation and the advent of information technology have increased the transparency and accountability at all levels. Due to easy access of information, the society has become more aware about the avenues available to them. A survey conducted among young aspirants, studying at various professional colleges and universities, shows that even though the majority of them think of Armed Forces as the least corrupt, most prestigious and challenging job, only about 15% of them would like to join the Armed Forces. The reasons are very obvious, the glitter offered by the multinational companies and the lack of initiative from the government to instil the sense of service among the people, has made Armed Forces the least desired job. Similarly, the values of the Armed Forces have been challenged by recent socio-psychological transitions. Apart from its recent support during the Kargil conflict and other wars, the Indian society has never

49 Huntington, Samuel P.
50 Cheema, Col DS., Ethics and Discipline in Armed Forces, Combat Journal, Apr 1993.
attempted to honour its soldiers. Over the years, the fundamental values that is, the self-image of the present day military officers have been strained. After 1947-48 war, the service chiefs were made junior to the judges of the Supreme Court, this status was dropped after 1962 war and it became junior to the Cabinet Secretary. The decline continued unabated, and the Service Chiefs were made junior to Attorney General after 1965 war and were put next to Controller and Auditor General after 1971 war. Even today, almost all IAS and IPS officers, with 10 to 15 years of service reach a level, where, after a stiff selection and much longer service, a microscopic minority of defence service officer can dream of reaching high echelons. Due to such numerous external factors, the cadets or YO today often drift to forget the military aspects of the Academy and instead consider themselves as college students in an institution with restrictions. They often tend to identify themselves much better with their college friends or with some glamorous personality. Thus, due to these external factors, the principles of honour, courage and commitment are replaced with societal standards that don’t measure up. The nation is proud about the Armed Forces and the high level of performance displayed by the Armed Forces during wars. The recent Kargil conflict has demonstrated that the external factors have not affected the willingness of the Armed Forces towards safeguarding the national interest at any cost. But it would be naïve to assume that without taking any corrective measures, the cadets and officers, grooming in various military academies and the Army as a whole, would remain unaffected by changes in society. It would be futile to expect that the cadets and YO would remain unexposed even in the strict environment of Academies. This is a cause for great concern and there is a need to have a holistic approach to the problem. The challenge is to produce a realistic and effective system to curb the ill effects of the environment on the rank and file of the Army and also to strengthen the wholehearted support of the Indian society to the Armed Forces.

Factors Affecting the Army

12.25 Breakdown of Joint Family System. The earlier joint family system had its own advantages and disadvantages. Some of the distinct plus points were as follows:

12.25.1 Sharing of responsibilities by earning members, wherein the weaker and disadvantaged were carried by others.

12.25.2 A basic sense of security was provided to all members.
12.25.3 Stability was provided by elders. Collective sharing of joys and sorrows enabled development of resilience especially in difficulties.

12.25.4 System was ideally suited to Army personnel where being away on duty he was assured of the well being of his wife and children.

12.26 The break down of this system coupled with other factors have now exposed the soldier to unusual stresses and strain affecting his morale and performance directly both in peace and war.

12.27 **Caste System.** The post-independence era has seen the old caste system used to differentiate people with regard to their roles slowly losing ground. Today employment is based on their quality and merit. While this is a most desirable change it hasn’t left the Army un-affected. Earlier the requirement of tradesmen such as Mochi, Dhobi, Masalchi, etc. used to be easily met out of the population already following these trades traditionally. The recruiting organisations today are finding it difficult to fill in these vacancies. Even if non-traditional entrants are assigned these trades the procedure available for them to remuster from them or opt out at the first opportunity possible compounds the problem further. Reluctance on part of soldiers to perform such duties is creating non too conducive working environment in a unit.

12.28 **Dowry System.** Though against the law, dowry system continues in the country albeit in a subtle manner. It imposes an unbearable financial strain on the weaker sections of the society which include a fair percentage of Army soldiers. This causes tremendous strain on the minds of the soldiers which affects them while on duty. On one hand he is asked to execute tasks which are designed primarily for other instruments of the State on the other hand the very instruments do not and are unable to protect the dependants of the men in uniform.

12.29 **Increased Mobility.** Vast rural majority of people are moving towards the urban places bringing about greater interaction between different strata of the society. Improved means of mass communication has also increased the level of awareness. It must be understood that with awareness has come a realisation of rights and privileges - albeit without a corresponding realisation of duties and responsibilities. Today the soldier is not the unquestioning type resulting in increased incidents of indiscipline. In the prevailing situation the attitude of questioning authority, orders, rules and regulations is inevitable.
This is causing command problems at unit level.

12.30 **Change of Sense of Values.** Cultural and social values acquired through our cultural heritage are changing rather rapidly especially with the impact of the influence of the western countries with materialistic norms. This has resulted in disorientation of the established and possibly traditionally accepted sense of values. There is a consequent psychological confusion and a loss of sense of direction. Materialistic values are more easily accepted and the value scales are changing. This has had a discernible impact on the rank and file of the Army affecting the ethics at work place. And it is from this society where the value scales are changing (read deteriorating) that the Army draws its resource from.

12.31 **Increasing Pace of Change.** Changes are occurring at a pace faster than the change itself. With wide variation in intellectual levels the assimilation and absorption of these changes is posing problems for individuals. Strangely enough, the resistance to change is mostly from the higher echelons in the Army who are still conservative and wish to cling to tradition. This blanketing off of new thoughts, resistance to change and fossilization of ideas is not conducive to healthy development of service. As far as the lower echelons are concerned the increasingly fast pace of life is bringing in its wake increased stresses and strains with the associated health, morale and man-management problems. The wants and needs of soldier, which have risen, have to be satisfied to get the best out of them and this is increasingly becoming a complex task for the management.

12.32 **Economic Disparity.** In spite of the economic growth in our country the large disparity between the rich and poor remain. Coupled with the aspect of greater awareness this causes resentment amongst soldiers. That its manifestations have not made themselves felt ought not give rise to complacency in the Army.

12.33 **Rising Incomes and Inflation.** There has been a rise in the per capita income levels in the country. Since Independence rising incomes are a primary source of rising expectations and increasing needs which if not met cause dissatisfaction. The existing inflation can only contribute to the worsening of the situation discussed. These are causing pressure and strain on the mind of a soldier which needs to be tension free to be able to concentrate on primary tasks.
Impact of Socio-Economic Factors

12.34 Impact of Concepts. There is undoubtedly good reason to re-examine the role leaders have to play in the Army today. Perhaps keeping in view the socio-economic problems being encountered, the increased stress and strain a soldier is being subjected to, the absence of stabilizing factors at home and the increased level of awareness, there is a need to re-evaluate the requirements of military leadership so as to make it responsive to the socio-economic changes in the society and consequent change in attitude towards work and duty.

12.35 Concept of Welfare and Man-Management. If the soldier is a more enlightened person, if his needs and wants are increasing, if he is being subjected to greater stresses and strain than ever before then it logically follows that the management of this vital resource the ‘man’ needs to be done on a more scientific basis which will take into account these changing realities. The welfare aspects like accommodation, leave, travel concession, protection and assistance to families separated from the head of the family need to be studied critically with regard to adequacy under the prevailing conditions.

12.36 Impact on Motivation. Factors that contribute to increased morale of servicemen under the present situation need to be examined in depth. The subject of what motivates a soldier is vital and dispassionate analysis is called for to enable suitable remedial measures to be adopted at various levels.

12.37 The socio-economic forces at time do play a negative role in bringing about an adverse attitudinal change amongst all ranks towards work and duty. These issues are highlighted below:

12.37.1 Officer Cadre. The officer cadre is no more belonging solely to the elite or to the martial families. He is another middle class man on the lookout for a career. A number of disturbing surveys conducted amongst the youth of this country do not place Army in the top bracket of jobs. This is here to stay, and no dramatic change should be expected in the future. This background does affect the work behaviour and his attitude and commitment towards his work and his responsibilities towards the men whom he will lead in war.
12.37.2 **JCO Cadre.** The materialistic tendencies have crept in this category of officers who are meant to be the vital link between the officers and the men. With the low strength of officer cadre the JCO are being asked to share additional responsibilities though at times with unsatisfactory performance levels. This cadre can assist the officer relieving him to a large extent of the stress and strain. But the level of commitment and motivation are much to be desired resulting in at times, low performance levels.

12.37.3 **OR.** The bulk of the Army comprises of troops. A soldier being recruited today is already affected by the cultural revolution in this country. It imposes additional burden on the officer cadre in moulding his mind so as to correctly prioritise his responsibilities. By the time this is achieved he is on the verge of retirement. The attitude towards work before being positively crystallized for the benefit of the organisation whither away at the fag end of the career of a jawan.