Implications and Suggestions for Recruitment Policies of Armed Forces

7.1 Context: The recruitment policies of Indian Armed Forces were inherited from the British Indian Army, Navy and Air Force at the time of independence. It has been kept updated with the socio-economic development of Indian society, technological development of weaponry and the art of warfare. The advent of tank technology in the wake of first world war (1914-1918), enmasse employment of transport aircraft for achieving strategic mobility from one theatre of war to another necessitated change in tactical doctrines and recruitment policies. Similarly, evolution of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical warfare (NBC warfare), Missile technology, Laser Guidance, Automated Data Processing System required soldiers of the yore to upgrade their skills, attitude and behaviour to keep pace with demands of time. Improvement in Quality of work life (QWL), physical comforts and per capita income of Indian citizens in an era of globalization, liberalization and privatization of Indian economy have caused a paradigm shift in the motivational levels of youth for a career in the Defence Services. Progressive and capable Indian youth are fascinated by 'Opportunity to Earn a Lot', 'Job Security', 'Security of Self and Family', Prestige in Society', 'Power and Authority', 'Challenging Work' and host of other motivational factors in the choice of their career. Earlier factors like 'Opportunity to Serve the Nation', 'Adventurous Life Style', 'Glamour of Uniform', ' Honour and Gallantry Awards', 'Feeling of Togetherness Among Fellow Workers or Camaraderie' fascinated youth. They thus opted for a career in Defence Services. Now, these factors no longer fascinate youth, posing a grave challenge to Indian Defence recruiters. The
persisting shortfall of about 30% Armed Forces Officers has continued
despite a number of ad hoc measures instituted by the Ministry of
Defence. It has affected operational effectiveness of forward units.
Now, soldiering appears more stressful and less adventurous to
applicants.

Till independence, both in India and UK, the officers of the
Armed Forces came from an exclusive class of the society. Through
legacy, Indian Army is patterned on lines of the British Army. In India,
scions of noble families provided leadership for the Defence Services.
The social and economic renaissance of the country has radically
changed the recruitment pattern in the Indian Armed Forces. The
recruitment is no longer the preserve of socially exclusive classes. The
concept of martial races is also no longer that significant. Earlier, a
career in the Armed Forces was more a matter of tradition. Now, this
is just another means of earning a livelihood. The youngsters of today
are more materialistic in their outlook. Earlier it was a taboo to discuss
emoluments. Today the young officer is better informed, and has no
inhibition in discussing service conditions. This new consciousness
necessarily leads to comparison of Career in Armed Forces vis-à-vis
other services in terms of emolument, perquisites, living conditions,
promotion prospects and status in society. The attraction of capable
youth into the Armed Forces is a national requirement. General Omar
Bradley has rightly said, “Inferior inducement brings second rate men;
second rate men bring second rate security. In war there is no prize for
the runner up.”

7.2 Recruitment Policies during Pre and Post Independence Era and
Upto 70s

Indians were admitted to the officers’ class, only from 1923 as King
Commissioned Indian Officers (KCIOs) and then from 1932 as Indian
Commissioned Officers. They were commissioned from the highest
and affluent Indian families and those professionals who were committed to the British Indian Empire. These officers were then insulated and fully anglicized to turn out Brindians.

The ethos of these officers was to obey, to be just in exercising their own command and to be concerned about the welfare of their troops. There was an obsession with games. Officer Like Qualities included sociability, holding one’s drink, attachment to regiment, camaraderie etc. It was an axiom that a mystique was created around the officer class.

The Britishers unified Army through a complicated admixture of class pride, religious symbolism, unit traditions (the fetish about uniforms, ceremonies, mess drills), ideals of duty and loyalty, liberal pays and post retirement pensions/ government land. The special features that the Indian Army inherited from the British was its non-political nature and tradition of subservience to civil.

After independence, recruitment to all ranks in the Army was thrown open to men of all religions, races, castes and regions of India. Restrictions on men from UP, Bihar, Madras and Bombay regions enlisting in the Army were removed. At the time of independence the military officer class was of the same stock as the civilian bureaucracy.

Gradually, but more speedily after 1962 and 1972 the changed socio-economic class composition of the officer cadre had become noticeable in the Defence Services. The factors responsible for the state of affairs was widening of alternative employment opportunities in IAS, IFS, in business houses, agriculture, private entrepreneurial enterprises etc leading to sons of higher classes turning to more prestigious and remunerative jobs. The Armed Forces Officer’s profile dropped to lower middle class and middle class of the society.
Army Officer's career has lost attractiveness is obvious. This has led to an acute situation of under-subscription to the officer cadre. Factors responsible are not only more remunerative and prestigious alternative employment opportunities and inherent professional hazards but also some inbuilt disadvantages of military service itself such as lack of long term career opportunities and disturbed family living conditions which are inadequately compensated for. The key problem is early retirement with scant regard to retiring and retired personnel.

'Catch them Young' was the main motto of recruitment planners at the time of independence. Keeping this in view, Joint Services Wing (JSW) was established at Dehra Dun during 1949. Late Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India envisioned that capable, young, impressionable and mouldable Schoolboys of the age group 15-17 1/2 years were more receptive, motivated and suited for transformation into junior military leaders. The Joint Services Wing was later rechristened as National Defence Academy, (NDA) and shifted to Khadakvasla in Pune during 1954, on completion of its new campus at its permanent location. It was to act as Cradle of Leadership. The training at this Academy is planned on the lines of the British Military Academy at Sandhurst and US Military Academy in West Point.

The educational qualification for applicants was a mere matriculation or High School. Union Public Service Commission conducted the written test in Mathematics, English and General Knowledge. Those who qualified in the written tests were put through rigorous Services Selection Board Tests. Later, the minimum qualification required was raised to Higher Secondary (Class XI) from Matriculation during 70s
to keep pace with demands of time and new technology. The age limit was raised from 15-17\(\frac{1}{2}\) years to 16-18\(\frac{1}{2}\) years. During 80s, the minimum qualification was again raised to class XII and age limit enhanced to 16\(\frac{1}{2}\)-19 years. After three years of training at NDA, the cadets are being awarded Bachelor degree in Science and Social Science by JNU, New Delhi since 1975 onwards. Similarly, for Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehra Dun, Flying college, Jodhpur and Naval Academy, Cochin, minimum educational qualification required was Intermediate (Class XII) at the time of independence and upto 1974. The age limit prescribed was 18-21 years. After 1974, the minimum educational qualification was raised to graduation in Science or Humanities depending upon the branch of these services opted for. The age limit was raised to 19-23 years.

Similarly, the age limit and educational standards for Short Service Commission in Defence Services were also raised. Earlier, the written test for Short Service Commission was dispensed with. Services Selection Boards screened eligible candidates for their suitability. During 1960s 'Sainik Schools' were started to provide public school education with military bias to future military leaders. These schools, almost one in each state, under supervision of Sainik School Society of Ministry of Defence (MoD) were to act as feeder institutions to National Defence Academy. Earlier to that, Rashtriya Indian Military College (RIMC), Dehra Dun was established in 1924 (Then called Prince of Wales Indian Military College ) to act as a feeder institution to Military Academy, Sandhurst (UK) and IMA.

_The recruitment policy of Indian Armed Forces has remained secular after independence._ There are no reservations for any category unlike Civil Services and Paramilitary Forces recruitment.
The debacle of 1962 Indo-China War saw introduction of Emergency Commission. It was aimed to recruit youth en masse into the officer's cadre of Army with relaxed Standards. After rendering five years of service, many of these officers were discharged without proper rehabilitation. Men up to 35-40 years of age were recruited to make up the shortfall of Officers manpower. During 70s, introduction of Combined Defence Services Examination (CDSE) modified the practice of conducting separate written tests for IMA, Flying College and Naval Academy.

7.3 The Present Recruitment Policies and Motivation of Indian Youth

During 70s educational standards and age limit of recruitment into the Officers cadre was raised. This was done to achieve uniformity with other Civil Services and to meet the demands of modernization of weaponry and technological development in the country. The secular ethos of recruitment has remained unchanged despite political pressure on several occasions.

Noting the shortfall, to the tune of 30%, in the Officers Cadre, Armed Forces resorted to a change in recruitment policies. Recruitment of Unmarried/Divorced and issueless women was started during 1992 on trial basis, for a short term of five years initially. Later on, the term of selected girls was extended to ten years on voluntary basis. These lady officers were employed on softer jobs like Intelligence, Education, Engineers and Telecommunications and as Law Officers. But their present number is minuscule as compared to their male counterparts.

Another change in the Recruitment Policy is engagement of top advertising agency 'Hindustan Thomson Associates (HTA) for both
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print and electronic media blitz. This is to attract capable youngsters. The campaign 'Do you have it in you?' has had lack-luster effects on the motivational levels of youth, being targeted at urban youth i.e. Engineers, MBAs etc.

Other measures instituted by the Armed Forces to overcome shortfall of officers like re-employing retired officers, marginal improvement in promotion prospects of officers, introduction of Special Commission Officers (SCOs) to encourage Personnel Below Officer Ranks (PBOR) for greater responsibilities, stipend of Rs 8000/- for trainees at pre-commission Academies, Embodiment of Territorial Army Officers for longer duration, increasing intake of Short Service Commissioned Officers (SSCOs), lowering standards of recruitment at Services Selection Boards have been found to be between 'Least Effective' and 'Somewhat Effective' by the investigator. Being adhoc in nature, these are mere knee-jerk reactions by the Government of India and do not address the actual problem.

The student respondents accorded the highest priority to motivators like 'Opportunity to Earn a Lot', 'Power and Authority', 'Prestige in Society', 'Job Close to Home Town' and 'Job in a Large Metro'. The motivators which made Armed Forces as an attractive career option in days of yore like 'Opportunity to Serve the Nation', 'Adventurous Life Style', 'Feeling of Togetherness among Fellow Workers' and 'Glamour of Uniform' were ranked lower in the order of preference by the youth respondents. This indicates a paradigm shift in the perception of youth. Possibly, the materialistic and consumerist culture of the globalized era, are responsible for the present state of affairs.

The reasons for shortfall of officers in the Armed Forces identified by the Defence Respondents help us understand the key
deterrents for modern day youth while opting for a career in Defence Services. These factors demotivate them. *Professional hazards like greater vulnerability to martyrdom in times of war and on Line-of-Control (LOC)/International Border (IB)/Counter Insurgency (CI) Operations, poor promotion prospects, subjectivity in performance appraisal, inadequate Compensation vis-à-vis risks involved, declining status of Armed Forces Officers in the warrant of precedence, prolonged separation from families, poor growth prospects, autocratic style of functioning of military leaders are important demotivators, spelt out by the defence respondents.*

### 7.4 General Implications

Some of the obvious repercussions of changing motivation of youth, have been enumerated below:

#### 7.41. The importance of leadership in the army hardly needs any elaboration. *It is also needless to say that the quality of performance by men shall depend upon the quality of leadership provided to them. That is why it is necessary that every officer must perform tasks that demand organizational and manipulative skills and tasks that demand heroic or personnel leadership. To perform leadership roles, an officer must be ‘the right type’ as the British call him. He must possess moral character, leadership ability and personal courage. With the current changes in the recruitment ideology and thereby lowering the standards of selection, there is a danger that leadership quality in the service may get adversely affected. We may have more and more service personnel who are not ‘the right type’ and hence the professional efficiency would stand impaired.*
7.42 The present trends, as observed in the economy, are making it difficult to get enough number of qualified people willing to join the Services. Most of the available hands in the market are opting for the Corporate Sector. It has been observed that many technical hands, particularly engineers, were not even interested in the military as a career. But being unable to find jobs in the civil sector they turned to military career. For them military career is a good service, though arduous one, but definitely not a faith. This trend can have an adverse effect as far as quality of technical expertise is concerned because:

7.421 In the absence of non-availability of suitable technical hands, the new entrants may not be professionally sound, if taken in by lowering the standard; and

7.422 The replacements may have to be made by promoting from Personnel Below Officers Ranks (PBOR) who have worked as foremen or mechanics etc. These replacements certainly would be inferior to the appropriately qualified hands. All these hurdles definitely may lead to lowering the technical standards in the services. With modernization and increasing sophistication of war technology, the second grade technical experts will definitely affect the professional efficiency of the soldier, with far reaching consequences.

7.42.1.1 There is a danger that the rejects from the other professions may dominate the composition of the army. Those who would fail to find an avenue outside and are the left over or the 'inferior type' in the strict sense. Hence, the army profession would be left to be manned by mediocre only, or by those who would be attempting to rise higher in the socio-economic ladder. Thus, a new and derogatory image of the
military profession may emerge, whereby it shall be considered a profession, which is ready to sell cheaply. During the tenure of former Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General V P S Malik, Services Selection Centres in the country were directed to compulsorily recruit a minimum number of candidates from each batch, despite their inferior performance in the tests. This desperate step was taken to overcome shortfall of Defence Officers. The media reported it on a number of occasions. This will demotivate the handful of dedicated, idealist or elite, who would be willing to join the services for the love of it.

7.43 An allied phenomenon observed, as an offshoot of the above situation, is the heavy drain on the trained manpower that is being caused as a result of increasing number of officers seeking premature retirement. A vast majority of them wish to quit the service, after completing minimum pensionable service, and seek an opportunity in the civil sector and start a second career at the earliest possible. At that matured age, when they have already attained some status, financial standing and experience, they do not find the Armed Forces financially lucrative, satisfying and challenging enough to induce them to continue further. Thus, on one hand the nation loses skilled manpower, having been trained at a very high cost, and on the other, it is forced to induct newer hands, which are inferior to their predecessors as highlighted earlier. These officers, quitting at a premature stage, also tend to serve as a reference group for the younger generation not to opt for the Services.

7.44 From the foregoing, it can be said that the changes brought upon in the recruitment ideology for the Indian Defence soon after independence, with the intention of broadening the base for bringing about equality and national interaction have/had
their obvious derogatory effect on the professional standards of the Armed Forces. The situation got further accentuated as a result of the need for sudden expansion consequent to wars with China and Pakistan, and the changing socio-economic level of the country, which has made civil sector more lucrative. There is an obvious necessity to initiate deliberate steps to improve the terms and conditions of the Defence Services to ensure induction of the 'right type' and their continued retention. Hence the impact of changes in recruitment ideology can aptly be summarized in the following words:

“There may not be shortage of volunteers for the Defence Services because of the staggering unemployment in our country. But in terms of quality, however, there is no doubt that the Defence Services are lagging behind in drawing the more promising boys from our Schools, Colleges and Universities.” And “if we fail to ensure that our Armed Forces get the pick of nation’s youth, we may have to pay serious penalties for this lapse.”

This phenomenon is equally applicable to and is being experienced by all newer nations, who are traversing a similar path of industrialization and economic development. Thus, there is an obvious necessity to take effective steps to rectify the situation.

7.5 Implications for the Recruitment Policies of the Armed Forces Based on Research Findings
7.51 This study indicates that mother is most highly involved in the choice of career of student respondents. This means that media campaign should target parents, especially mother, to increase their awareness level about the Armed Forces. This will enable parents to motivate their children for exercising career option for Defence Services. Besides, the role of other individuals likes Brother/Sister, Friends, Grand parents and relatives in shaping the choice for a career needs to be underlined. Suitable advertisements needs to be planned for both print and electronic media targeting all possible individuals especially parents of youth, urging/appealing them to motivate their children to opt for the Armed Forces by increasing their Defence Services awareness levels.

7.52 Defence Services have received a rather low ranking among student respondents. There is a need of enhancing the rating of Defence Services as a career option. This may be done by incorporating the higher-ranking motivators of modern day youth in the recruitment policy of Defence Services. There is need to benchmark the service conditions of Armed Forces vis-à-vis other Services. This will enable recruitment planners to know exact ground realities and take timely remedial measures to attract capable youth into the folds of Defence Services.

7.53 The ranking of various motivational factors while choosing a career by student respondents indicate that 'power and pelf' is the single most dominant factor. The motivators for youth for joining the Defence Services like 'Adventurous Life', 'Opportunity to Serve the Nation', 'Camaraderie' and 'Glamour of Uniform' are less appealing as compared to 'Opportunity to Earn a Lot', 'Power and Prestige in Society', 'Job close to Home and in a Large Metro'. This indicates that
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service conditions in the Armed Forces in terms of families' accommodation for personnel, pay and allowances and need for higher status to Service Officers in the warrant of precedence require review by recruitment planners.

7.54 The social environment of the country needs to be factored in the recruitment policy to attract competitive youth into the Armed Forces. Emerging single child norm is also responsible for deterring capable volunteers from venturing into the Defence Services. Such parents with only son/daughter need to be targeted by the media, quoting example of legendary 'Panna the Governess/Nurse from Rajasathan who sacrificed her only son in order to save the life of future king of Mewar, toddler Rana Sanga, the young heir to the throne. Since motivators are subject to change with time and circumstances especially in the globalized, privatized and liberalized Indian economy, Indian recruitment planners can ill afford to ignore these vital aspects.

7.55 The reasons of shortfall of officers given out at question No. 1 of Defence Respondents indicate shortcomings of Indian Defence Recruitment Policies. These demotivators, like inequitable pay and allowances, poor promotion prospects, prolonged separation from families due to inadequate married accommodation, subjectivity in performance appraisal, autocratic leadership and declining status in warrant of precedence et al which deter youth from joining the Defence Services, need to be removed through constant improvement in service conditions. These conditions available to officers of Defence Services of developed countries may be studied for their applicability in Indian scenario. The necessary changes may be incorporated in our Recruitment Policies for greater acceptance of Armed Forces as a career option.
7.56 'Somewhat Effectiveness' of various adhoc recruitment policies like recruitment of short service commissioned lady officers, re-employing retired Officers, introduction of special commission officers (SCO), marginal improvement in promotion prospects of service officers indicate the need for formulating concrete recruitment policies (Refer Analysis of question No 2 of Questionnaire for Defence Personnel in Chapter 6). The present media campaign; ‘Do you have it in you?’ needs to be made more appealing to wider cross-section of Indian youth including rural youth. The main focus on urban youth requires modification. The continuous and regular survey on the effectiveness of changes in Defence Services Recruitment Policies needs to be undertaken. This will ensure greater effectiveness of recruitment policy makers through correct identification of shortcomings and timely remedial measures.

7.57 The measures suggested by Defence Respondents as answer to open-ended question No. 3 may be categorized as measures for implementation within the Armed Forces and outside the Armed Forces. The measures for execution within the Services include substantial improvement in promotion prospects at par with Civil Services, Objectivity in Performance Appraisal, development of Family Accommodation in Forward Areas, improvement in Pay and Allowances in consonance with hardships and risks of Services. These imply poor satisfaction levels of the Defence Services Officers. It calls for constitution of a separate Pay Commission for the Armed Forces personnel keeping in view their peculiar service conditions vis-à-vis civilian counterparts. The measures suggested for implementation outside Armed Forces include conscription (as done in USA), effective Media Campaign, facilitating visits of
youngsters to Defence Establishments for enhancing their awareness, compulsory NCC Training, rationalizing the Warrant of Precedence of Armed Forces officers vis-à-vis Civilian Counterparts, introducing Quiz on Indian Armed Forces, establishment of a Defence University and Defence Services Bank for personnel.

7.6 Suggestions

Based on findings the various suggestions given out by students and Defence respondents for improving the attractiveness of the Defence Services are tabulated below:

Table No. 7.6

Suggestions for Improving Attractiveness of the Defence Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ser No.</th>
<th>Specific Findings</th>
<th>Proposed Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Father is the most highly involved in the choice of career of student respondents.</td>
<td>Advertising Campaign may exhort fathers to motivate their siblings to opt for the Armed Forces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Defence Services is ranked 7th in the order of preference for a career.</td>
<td>Pay, Allowances, and Promotion Prospects need to be brought at par with IAS/IPS, which are ranked as No.1 profession in popularity rating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>'Opportunity to Earn a Lot' is the single most conspicuous motivator for majority student respondents.</td>
<td>The Compensation offered to the Armed Forces personnel should be made remunerative enough keeping in view hardships and hazards of the profession. It should be on the lines of foreign Armies. However, more emphasis should be on intrinsic motivators than materialistic comforts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Provide Compulsory Military Training in all schools and colleges.</td>
<td>Make NCC compulsory in all schools and colleges as it was done after 1962 Indo-China war after advertising the positive aspects through media campaign.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ser No.</td>
<td>Specific Findings</td>
<td>Proposed Measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Pyramidal Hierarchy and Poor Promotion Prospects.</td>
<td>Restructure Armed Forces to create move vacancies for better promotion prospects of personnel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Unrealistic Pay and Allowances.</td>
<td>Constitute Separate Pay Commission for the Armed Forces. It should take into account the harsh and risky working conditions while formulating the package.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Early Retirement Age.</td>
<td>Lateral induction of Armed Forces officers into Civil Services to ensure job security upto 60 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Frequent Separation of Soldiers from their Families.</td>
<td>Construct 100% Family Accommodation in all Cantonments and Forward Areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Autocratic Style of Leadership in the Armed Forces.</td>
<td>Encourage participative Style of Leadership by instituting suitable Rewards by practitioners of the new style.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Frequent Unscheduled Move of Personnel for Internal Security/ Counter Insurgency tasks.</td>
<td>Deployment of troops on Internal Security Duties and Counter Insurgency tasks should be minimised. It should be assigned to Central Police organisations (CPOs) and Paramilitary Forces (PMFs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Poor Growth and Development of Children of Defence Personnel.</td>
<td>Cohabitation of Defence personnel with their families in forward areas and reservation of seats in educational institutions for children will overcome this malaise.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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7.7 Summary of Motivational factors of Indian Youth - based Implications for Recruitment Policies of Armed Forces

The changes introduced in the recruitment ideology for the Indian Armed Forces after Independence had deleterious effect upon the professional standards and operational effectiveness. However, these changes were necessary for meeting goals of equality, national integration and secularism enshrined in the Indian Constitution. An effective recruitment policy should stimulate capable, committed and motivated youth for enrolment into the officer cadre of the Defence Forces. 'Opportunity to Earn a lot' and 'Power and Prestige in society' have replaced erstwhile aspirations of youth like 'Opportunity to Serve the Nation', Glamour of Uniform' and 'Adventurous Life Style'. This has nurtured consumerist, materialistic and individualistic attitudes in today's youth and thereby causing shortfall of officers in Defence Services. There may not be shortage of volunteers for the Defence Services because of rampant unemployment in the country. But the quality of optees for Defence Service Officers cadre leaves much to be desired. Crème de la Crème from Indian Schools and Colleges prefer softer jobs in software MNCs, Civil Services and other independent professions. The shift in motivational factors of Indian youth has caused a shortfall of 30% in its officer's cadre. While civil services rank as No. 1 profession in the order of preference in the study, the student respondents have rated the Defence Services as No. 8. The main reasons for shortfall of officers have been cited as poor promotion prospects, prolonged separation from families, professional hazards, subjective performance appraisal and inadequate compensation vis-à-vis hardships and risks involved. The adhoc recruitment policies like commissioning of ladies for short service of five years, re-employing retired officers, encouraging Personnel Below Officer Rank (PBOR) to take up special commission, marginal
improvement in promotion prospects and unimaginative media campaign et al have been found to be only 'somewhat effective'. The measures suggested by student and defence respondents to improve effectiveness of the Armed Forces as a career option need deliberation by both Defence Recruitment Policy Makers and the Government of India. A constant and continuous survey of the motivators of youth is the need of the hour. This will ensure evolution of concrete recruitment policies based on international and Indian environment conditions.