

## **Review Articles**



## China Bloodies Bulletless Borders\*

Col Anil Bhat, VSM (Retd)

### Introduction

While there have been great strides taken as far as economic linkages between India and China are concerned with bilateral trade well over hundred billion dollars with the balance of trade remaining firmly in China's favour, the undefined borders continue to cause severe strains in our relationship. The major issue that needs to be resolved between India and China remains the borders or the 'perimeters' as referred to by Kanti Bajpai, the Indian academic, international affairs analyst, and the former headmaster of The Doon School, Dehradun, India, in his recent book "India Versus China: Why They Are Not Friends". The centrality of this issue continues to remain uppermost in the minds of all those concerned with policy; be it at the political, diplomatic, or military level in addition to analysts and academicians and is the core of 'China Bloodies Bulletless Borders' by Col Anil Bhat.

### The Author

Col Anil Bhat the author of this remarkable book has been part of the Defence Ministry's Directorate of Public Relations and was also posted as the Indian Army's Public Relations Officer. He is also a well-known Defence Analyst and has written numerous books on defence/strategic issues, authored numerous research papers and is presently associated with both the Salute Magazine and South Asia Monitor as the Editorial Consultant.

### The Book

The book is divided into seven chapters each dealing with major landmark events between the nations with the focus on developments at the border during the period and the perceptions of both countries. The author categorically states that post-independence, Prime Minister Nehru conveyed that the nation did

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not need an army, and police forces were sufficient for the security of the country. This may be due to the cultural gap existing as the army had fought as part of the British forces in World War II and was viewed with suspicion by the political class, who before independence viewed the army as the British coerced arm which backed up the police in case the police could not handle the activities related to agitations and acts with an aim of achieving independence.

The then Defence Minister Krishna Menon believed that India's Ordnance Factories were better off producing pressure cookers and coffee percolators. Badly equipped, the Indian Army was insufficiently clad and housed and was poorly tasked. All this while political rhetoric stressed upon fighting to 'the last man and last round'. This is not something that those in higher command should be proud of as it displayed a total lack of planning at the higher levels of command due to the inability to either reinforce or re-supply the troops in contact in a major war.

The author clearly points out the blunder in deciding to go to the UN in 1948. He brings out the folly in 1962, when we did not use our air force for offensive tasks 'for fear of escalating the situation'. While Krishna Menon was removed as the defence minister after the 1962 debacle, the 'pace had been set for India's powerful bureaucracy to keep the armed forces in a stranglehold'.

In 1967, the retaliation by the Indian Army to the Chinese belligerence at both Nathu La and Cho La led to the death of almost 400 hundred PLA soldiers and a large number of bunkers destroyed. This shock resulted in the Chinese pressing for a discussion on all border disputes and asking that no firearms be used against each other. It is a different matter that they often went back to primitive and barbaric means as was evident in Galwan over fifty years later. The role of Brigadier MMS Bakshi, MVC, the then Brigade Commander at Nathu La has been covered in substantial detail. Undoubtedly, he, along with General Sagat Singh, Division Commander, who have both repeatedly lead from the front in conflicts; had a major role to play in the display of India's aggression and seizing the initiative. He had been awarded the *Maha Vir Chakra* for his exemplary determination, courage and leadership while in command of Hodson's Horse in the attack on Phillora in 1965; these qualities stood out once again and he



shared his experiences and insights regarding Nathu La with the author as both belonged to the same Regiment. Fortunately, permission was given by none other than the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to open up own artillery fire and this proved to be a game changer and heralded a new resolve. When Brigadier Bakshi visited Nathu La nearly forty years later in 2005; the wire fencing; the laying of which had sparked of the clash in 1967 was still intact and the Chinese 'wisely refrained from violating it'.

The next landmark incident, that the book covers, took place on 20 October 1975, when the PLA killed four riflemen of 5 Assam Rifles after torturing them. This was the battalion that had escorted the Dalai Lama in 1959. Diplomatic relations were restored with China in 1976 and Mr KR Narayanan was appointed as Ambassador to China and China in turn appointed Zhen Zhao Yuan as the Ambassador to India. Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee visited China in February 1979 but had to cut short his visit as China intervened in Vietnam during his visit. However, he did meet his counterpart and also Vice President Deng Xiaoping. The Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua visited India in June 1981 which broke the ice regarding border negotiations, which then began in December 1981 almost two decades after both countries had stopped talking to each other. However, by 1985, the Chinese started showing signs of rigidity and were even evasive on the nature of the way the LAC was to be demarcated and in July 1986 intrusions took place in Sumdorong Chu in western Arunachal Pradesh.

Unfortunately, over four decades later, there has been no progress with reference to resolving the border issue to include disengagement of troops at friction points in spite of over twenty-two rounds of talks by special representatives and more recently fifteen rounds of military level talks in eastern Ladakh. The 1993 'Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity' paved the way for reduction of troops and both countries agreed to 'resolve the border question through peaceful and friendly consultations'; 'each side was to keep its military forces in the areas along the LAC to a minimum level compatible with the friendly and good neighbourly relations between the two countries'; they were to 'work out effective confidence building measures' and lastly, the two sides were to 'deal with problems through friendly consultations'.

This agreement signed during the visit of the then Prime Minister PV Narshima Rao came about as a result of a milestone visit by Shri Sharad Pawar, the first visit by a defence minister to China in July 1992, when it was agreed to develop academic, scientific, technological, and military exchanges between the two countries and when the Chinese emphasised reduction in troop strength due to the prohibitive costs. It is ironical that nearly thirty years later India is being forced to deploy additional troops due to the Chinese expansionism and belligerence. Having become an economic powerhouse, China is now forcing India into spiralling defence expenditure in order to defend its territorial integrity.

In 1996, an 'Agreement on Confidence Building Measures on the LAC' which included reduction of certain weapon platforms, avoiding large scale exercises, and relating to air intrusions was signed. In 2003, the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China and the joint declaration stated that 'the common interests of the two countries outweigh their differences' and 'the two countries are not a threat to each other'. Yet, despite these diplomatic niceties and even compromises from the Indian side, Chinese coercive tactics have continued. The major achievement during this period was, of course, the opening up of the Nathu La border for trade in 2006, this followed the upward revision of ties following the visit of Premier Wen Jiabao in April 2005 which witnessed growing understanding in defence and strategic aspects. The visit of Shri Pranab Mukherjee, then the defence minister, to China in June 2006 resulted in the signing of a first ever MoU regarding engagements at a military-to-military level and he also visited the Lanzhou Military Command which was a significant step in building bilateral trust.

In May 2007, Shri Kiren Rijju spoke regarding Chinese intrusions in Arunachal Pradesh. Despite this, India still attempted at stopping the ties from deteriorating and the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited China in 2008 and signed a 'Shared Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century'. In 2008, following an earthquake, China accepted India's assistance but yet raised a claim on the northern tip of Sikkim known as 'Finger'. The pattern persisted; cartographic and diplomatic aggressiveness, followed by tactical incursions on ground. In fact, in 2013, the Chinese had intruded in eastern Ladakh at a time when the then External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid visited China in April 2013 and both countries

were discussing a 'Border Defence Cooperative Agreement'. It is quite ironic that later that year, when Prime Minister Li Keqiang visited India, he referred to India as a 'strategic partner' while their nuclear weapons were capable of targeting all corners of India and they were actively providing nuclear technology to Pakistan. The book also examines the standoff at Doklam and the barbaric incident at Galwan which resulted in India taking a firm stand. Unfortunately, these incidents have exposed the fragilities and strains in our relationship. These events have been analysed in detail in the book.

### **Conclusion**

This is a very detailed book covering aspects of very vexed and complicated border question. It gives out an historical context, the contours and evolution of the issues confronting both countries, and also gives a glimpse of the challenges faced by those responsible for maintaining the security and integrity of the lines which are perceived differently by both countries. The book covers the nature of this inhospitable, difficult and barren terrain. In the end, the book brings out that the fact remains that stability in our relations can only manifest itself on the bedrock of settled borders and not trade and commerce. The book is highly recommended for those who wish to understand the military and border dimensions of India-China relations. Unfortunately, the peace and tranquillity on the border which is what India is wanting, and is an imperative for both development and prosperity, has eluded us as mistrust still dominates the narrative between the two countries. Unfortunately, the LAC cannot be resolved without China declaring its claim lines. It seems uninterested in doing so as it obsessed with consolidating military gains by salami slicing, frequent transgressions, and aggressive expansionist behaviour. That said, it is evident that apart from the land, the Chinese larger interests also lie in controlling the waters of the rivers that flow through the area and the minerals that exist in these far frontiers.

*Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd)*

## Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response\*

Maj Gen Amardeep Bhardwaj, PhD

### The Author

A soldier and scholar of international repute, Major General Amardeep Bhardwaj, PhD (Retd) has enjoyed a distinguished military career in the Indian Military. This has encompassed the field of disaster and emergency operations including its planning, policy, and advocacy. He has researched this field for over 10 years, critically investigating how various national militaries have sought to engage in disaster response.

His last military assignment was as a Chief Instructor and Head of Faculty at the Indian Defence Services Staff College, a globally recognised institute of military excellence and one of the world's premier defence training establishments. Having received two distinguished service awards, he has had extensive military operations command and staff experience. General Bhardwaj is a graduate of the Indian Defence Services Staff College and of the Higher Command courses. He has served on the Board of Management of the Centre for Strategic Studies and Simulation at the United Service Institution of India, which is India's pre-eminent strategic think-tank. His memberships have included the International Emergency Management Society, the All India Management Association, the board of examiners for PhD of the University of Madras, and the experts committee of the Indira Gandhi National Open University – INMAS – HQ IDS (Joint Initiative).

General Bhardwaj holds academic credentials including, a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Defence Studies, a Masters of Philosophy degree, a Master of Science degree and a Senior Level Diploma in Management. General Bhardwaj is an experienced public speaker, having lectured extensively at prestigious institutions both, in India and abroad. He has a number

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of published scholarly articles to his credit and has served on the editorial boards of two leading defence journals, the *War College Journal* and *Pinnacle*. General Bhardwaj now has published his work *Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response*.

### **The Book**

The book contains seven chapters and the chapter wise details are given in succeeding paragraphs.

Chapter 1 of the book '*Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response*' is entitled 'Disaster Trends and Future Projections.' It provides an objective global overview of disaster trends as well as predictions for the future. The sources referred to have been specially selected for their authenticity, objectivity, and credibility, and are, therefore, among the most widely respected all over the world.<sup>1</sup> The compilation is essentially factual, based on the latest available data and analyses.

Chapter 2 is entitled 'Why the Military Must Get More Involved,' and it examines a number of reasons commonly cited in making a case for the military to play a more prominent role in disaster response. General Bhardwaj analyses about a dozen different arguments and perspectives, each time coming to the very same conclusion, that there is strong merit in augmenting the role of the armed forces in disaster management.<sup>2</sup> General Bhardwaj concludes that the arguments in-support far outweigh those against. An upscaled and synergised global military disaster response offers perhaps the best option to reduce the current deficit in disaster-coping-capability.<sup>3</sup> Extrapolating to the future, this capability gap grows even wider, therefore incremental approaches to improving existing capabilities will not suffice. Transformational change is needed in disaster management thinking as well as in current response mechanisms.<sup>4</sup> Augmenting, optimising and synergising the world's militaries for higher efficiencies in disaster response implies a bridging of this capability gap.

Chapter 3 is entitled 'Optimising Roles and Tasks,' an argument seeking to bring-in role clarity and define a more practical, as well as pragmatic, role for the armed forces, premised more on their capabilities and competencies than on dogma, theory or academic constructs.<sup>5</sup> It further suggests a three-step process,

based on competency-matching, task-analysis and overview of the traditionally assigned tasks, in order to evolve a better task list for the military in disaster response. In the process, it uncovered many weaknesses and grey areas, which currently exist in defining roles and assigning tasks to the military.<sup>6</sup> General Bhardwaj states that these sometimes constitute the major reasons for sub-optimal performance of the military in such operations. Thus, he suggests that this chapter seeks to offer to policy makers and practitioners, in the field of disaster management, a more efficient and improved alternative to the present system.

The armed forces also need to develop a clearer and more precise role-articulation by government at the apex level, as well as more pointed, competency-linked task-assignments at the tactical level.<sup>7</sup> General Bhardwaj advocates that the key issue is to be at all times cognisant of the intimate relationship between capabilities and competencies of the armed forces vis-à-vis their role definition and task-allocation. While articulating roles and tasks, attention needs to be paid to specificity and clarity as well as the need to optimise the military's task-list for efficient execution.<sup>8</sup>

Chapter 4 is entitled 'Optimising Education and Training' and is based on the author's extensive study of how various militaries engage in disaster management training. In this chapter, General Bhardwaj argued for taking a trans-national view of the subject, with a view to substantially upgrading the military's efficiency in disaster response, using a 15-point skillset.<sup>9</sup> Putting in place an institutionalised system of disaster management education and training for the militaries of the world, while allowing for individual variations and idiosyncrasies, will enhance significantly their effectiveness in disaster management operations.<sup>10</sup>

Chapter 5 is entitled 'Optimising Organisational Structures.' It focusses on the military's organisational optimisation for disaster tasks.<sup>11</sup> General Bhardwaj carefully dwells on a number of structural and functional issues that presently dog the armed forces, often leading to sub-optimal outcomes in such operations. He observes that the armed forces are structured and organised primarily for the fighting of wars, whereas disaster response operations demand somewhat different organisational structures. The chapter considers how to reconcile these diverse requirements, starting with the basic policy choices available and proceeding to analyse various



re-structuring options, with a view to their practicability and ability to be implemented.<sup>12</sup> Finally, in this chapter, General Bhardwaj discusses some structural inadequacies which hamper the military's functioning whenever it engages in such operations. Different militaries are organised differently, however a closer look at their legacy structures shows that congruities may well outweigh differences between them. Adapting these combat-optimised structures for disaster response is not only possible, but it is necessary and can be done with finesse.<sup>13</sup> Only militaries which are sensitive to these issues, and take concrete action to optimise their organisational structures better for disaster response, will show far greater efficiencies in such operations.<sup>14</sup>

Chapter 6 is entitled 'Optimising Equipment, Leveraging Technology.' General Bhardwaj describes equipment as a vital necessity for disaster-relief and is often needed in large numbers. Its quality and quantity directly impact the efficacy and reach of the relief operations. According to General Bhardwaj, as per policy, the military should be provided the required wherewithal for disaster response duties by the civil authorities, but this seldom happens in practice. As a result, the armed forces invariably end up using some of their combat stores and hardware to meet the shortfall of specialised equipment. Often, such equipment cannot be retrieved when the military disengages, or else, it may be rendered unserviceable by that time. Since this dilutes the military's wartime operational efficiency, the military needs to be compensated quickly. Such compensation is usually done only in the account books, through 'paper transactions', with no equipment or funds being physically given to the military units who came to render aid. While such an arrangement may work well in bureaucratic circles, it acts as a disincentive for the military to engage in disaster response operations. This system needs refinement. Many other equipment related issues also need ironing out, since their collective impact is to negate the efficiency of the military in disaster operations. This chapter dwells on such issues and endeavours to show how workable solutions can be found to address these problems. It raises the interesting idea of *Disaster-Relief Bricks*, as practiced by the Indian military, which has several considerable merits.<sup>15</sup> It also touches on a host of other relevant aspects, such as equipment procurement, its management, accountability, usage and serviceability. Equipment cannot be separated from technology,

since a machine, device, or any gadget, is merely the end product of technological innovation.<sup>16</sup> Also, the spinoffs from technology help to improve situational awareness, make cumbersome manual processes quick and efficient, facilitate decision-making and empower agencies to execute operations on the ground with enhanced effectiveness.<sup>17</sup> The latter part of the chapter devotes itself to this technological aspect, linking it with disaster response and offering a number of technology samples for possible adoption by various militaries, with a view to optimising their efficiency.<sup>18</sup> General Bhardwaj cites Tae Yoo, Senior Vice-President, Corporate Affairs and Corporate Social Responsibility, Cisco, who had observed as follows:

“In many cases, technology is the easiest part. The challenge is to create a long-term, digital foundation for humanitarian organisations that enables them to invest in, test and scale technology solutions prior to disasters so they are prepared when they need it the most. While technology cannot replace the vital resources people need in disaster – food, water, shelter, or comfort from loved ones - it is transforming disaster relief efforts and paving the way for an evolving approach to international aid: one that can reach more people, faster, and help communities to develop resilience for when the next disaster strikes.<sup>19</sup> General Bhardwaj advocates for technology preparedness as a priority”.<sup>20</sup>

Chapter 7 is entitled ‘Learning from Each Other and the Experts’. In the field of disaster management, the main issues facing all nations are, to a great extent, the same.<sup>21</sup> What concerns the military the most are aspects like forging civil-military synergies, precise role-definitions, an effective ‘Command and Control’ HQ at the apex level and modalities of inter-agency coordination at the field level.<sup>22</sup> Studying the manner in which various militaries have applied themselves to solve these attendant problems can prove very beneficial and highly instructive to all. In this regard, the chapter clearly brings out the main learning points for all militaries. The United Nations is perhaps the biggest repository of knowledge, expertise and experience in the field of disaster management. This chapter probes the United Nations system to identify its major strengths. The chapter also draws out vital and insightful lessons for world policy makers, to consider for



incorporation into their countries' existing plans, policies, structures and procedures, and in particular, those which concern the military.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

The overall thesis of the book appears to be the worrisome proposition that since all the studies corroborate and reinforce each other<sup>24</sup>, leading to an unequivocal and obvious conclusion that mankind is propelling planet Earth to its early doom<sup>25</sup>, and in this process, endangering its own survival, implying an imperative to involve the military in disaster response. Argument suggests adoption of a three-step process, based on competency-matching, task-analysis and overview of the traditionally assigned tasks, in order to evolve a better task list for the military in disaster response. It advocates for technology preparedness as the very highest priority.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> GW Bush, 'Address to the Nation by President George W Bush from New Orleans', *Washington Post*, 15 September 2005.

<sup>3</sup> H Taylor & P Yadav, 'Dissolving Interagency Silos: The WPS Agenda on the Disaster- Conflict Continuum', *Global Observatory*, 2021.

<sup>4</sup> PK Gautam, *Role of the Indian Military in disasters*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Shangri-La Dialogue*, International Institute of Strategic Studies, London, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> I Prakash, *Disaster management, societal vulnerability to natural calamities and man-made disasters: preparedness and response (Indian Scene)*, Rashtra Prahari Prakashan, India, 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Home Affairs, *India Disaster Resource Network Dashboard*, New Delhi, 2019.

<sup>8</sup> Amardeep Bhardwaj, *Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response*, Partridge, New Delhi, 2019, pp. 193, 194.

<sup>9</sup> Amardeep Bhardwaj, *Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response*, Partridge, New Delhi, 2022, pp. 230-233.

<sup>10</sup> Amardeep Bhardwaj, *Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response*, Partridge, New Delhi, 2019, pp. 235.

<sup>11</sup> P Singh, *Changes required in Army organisation & structures to respond effectively to disasters*, Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> P Singh, *Changes required in Army organisation & structures to respond effectively to disasters*, Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi, 2007.

<sup>13</sup> PK Gautam, *Role of the Indian Military in disasters*, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> Amardeep Bhardwaj, *Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response*, Partridge, New Delhi, 2019, pp. 269, 270.

<sup>15</sup> Amardeep Bhardwaj, *Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response*, Partridge, New Delhi, 2022, p. 301.

<sup>16</sup> J Loeffler, 'Technology used in disaster relief saving more lives every year', *Interesting Engineering*, 2019.

<sup>17</sup> T Nace, 'How technology is advancing emergency response and survival during natural disasters', *Forbes*, 2021.

<sup>18</sup> N Torres, 'Three emerging technologies to improve emergency management', *Data-Smart City Solutions*, 2018.

<sup>19</sup> T Yoo, '4 ways technology can play a critical role in disaster response', World Economic Forum, 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Amardeep Bhardwaj, *Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response*, Partridge, New Delhi, 2019, p. 348, pp. 352-354.

<sup>21</sup> C Sutton, *State and local disaster management within the US and US – PACOM plan for foreign disaster relief*, Seminar Report, International Seminar on Disaster Management, New Delhi, 2005; Y Tian, *Chinese Army's participation in emergency rescue and disaster relief*, Seminar Report, International Seminar on Disaster Management, New Delhi, 2005; YBM Daud, *National structure and the role of the Malaysian Armed forces*, Seminar Report, International Seminar on Disaster Management, New Delhi, 2005; R Ando, *Japanese structure for regional response in disaster management*, Seminar Report, International Seminar on Disaster Management, New Delhi, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> I Nordstrom-Ho, *Humanitarian military coordination structure in the UN. OCHA, Geneva. Seminar Report*, International Seminar on Disaster Management, New Delhi, 2005.

<sup>23</sup> Amardeep Bhardwaj, *Disaster Management: Optimising the Global Military Response*, Partridge, New Delhi, 2022, pp. 432, 433

<sup>24</sup> Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change, United Nations, Sixth Assessment Report, Geneva, 2022.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.