

India and Landmine Ban Treaty

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Anti personnel mines are munitions designed to explode from the contact, presence or proximity of a person. They are indiscriminate weapons capable of inflicting grave injuries. They do not distinguish between civilian and military targets. Landmines have been labelled as silent killers. Public activists have raised voice against their use calling them as silent killers. It has been highlighted that they cannot differentiate between a friend and foe. Injuries caused by them have disastrous long term consequences.

Mine Ban Treaty¹ commonly known as Ottawa process calls for a total ban on use of anti personnel landmines. States who are signatory to the process are bound to stop their use, declare their existing stock pile and to destroy their total holdings within ten years of their joining the process. Each state party that becomes a signatory to the treaty is obliged to ensure all its stockpiles are destroyed within four years of its joining the convention. All anti personnel landmines already laid are to be destroyed as soon as possible but not later than ten years of their signing the instrument. The treaty does not include anti tank mines, cluster bombs or claymore type mines.

Ten years of coming into force of landmine treaty has seen public activists stepping up demand for India to join the anti personnel landmine ban. Worldwide 158 countries have signed the mine ban so far. The treaty bans the use, production, stockpile and trade of landmines. The group of 39 countries, including India, have not signed the treaty. India has participated in the discussions and meetings leading upto the Ottawa Treaty. However, it has remained a non-signatory to the mine ban process. It abstained from voting on every pro-ban UN General Assembly resolution since 1997. Explaining its abstention, India tersely pointed out, “availability of military effective alternative technologies that can perform cost effectively the legitimate defensive role of anti personnel landmines” specially along with land borders would enable it to facilitate the goal of complete elimination of anti personnel mines. However, no detailed justification was brought in public domain to indicate Indian view point.

Use of the mines is deprecated by the activists on the ground of grievous injuries caused to the victims who are mostly civilians. Men in uniform are also exposed to its enormous damage. There is no data available to bring out injuries exclusively by the anti personnel land mines. According to the information submitted in the Parliament, Army’s demining forces suffered 1776 casualties due to mines, unexploded remnants of war and IEDs between Dec 2001 and Apr 2005. Landmine Report 2008 has brought out that out of 170 casualties identified in 2007, 81 were military and 89 civilians. It is also pleaded that the population is rendered incapable to utilise the land assets for fear of stepping on landmines which have been planted in the areas that carry no danger markings prohibiting entry.

India remains one of the few countries still producing anti personnel mines. Its stockpile is estimated to be between four and five million, the fifth largest in the world. Five of the Mine Ban Treaty Party states have reported Indian made mines in their stockpiles. The countries are Bangladesh, Bhutan, Mauritius, Sudan and Tanzania. On the other hand, India states that no transfer of landmines to these countries took place.

There are many reasons due to which India may not be inclined to sign the Treaty at this stage or in its present form. This treaty as a legal instrument permits no reservations or deviations.² It has no limitation clause and thus allows no scope for any concession. It is this rigid policy of ‘take it or leave’ which appears problematic. The security needs coupled with domestic compulsions of a state party may require it a longer period to fall in line with the regime by destruction of their landmine arsenal. Or a state sharing borders with many countries may be, due to security considerations, willing to dismantle mines on certain borders but not in all. However, non derogatory stance of the landmine treaty does not permit such a deviation. Suppose India were to indicate that it would ratify the instrument but requires minefields to stay on its western borders for a few years more. The treaty would not allow it. Or if India wants, due to practical reasons, to take more than 10 years to demine the existing minefields, it would also go beyond the text of landmine treaty. A provision catering for a request for time extension for such a purpose beyond the laid down time frame of ten years is to traverse a complex route. It is to be decided by a meeting of the state parties or by the review conference whose decision shall be final.³ Such lack of flexibility and tolerance is clearly an inhibiting factor in its total acceptance. Thus, absence of a reservation or a limitation option may leave little option with such countries but to keep away.

Anti personnel landmine constitute a crucial component of military arsenal required to promote the defence warfare. No substitute has been found so far. It is a weapon designed to delay the advancing opposing forces and give early warning of their approach. It is an essential plan of the defence perimeter in any sector or theatre of military operations. It is used to create tactical barrier and to act as area denial weapon. It is also employed as a practical weapon to deceive the enemy to divert him to the killing ground and as a surprise ploy. Thus, infiltration of Kashmiri militants is the main rationale for mines laid along the line of control between Pakistani and Indian administered regions of Kashmir as well as along the international border. Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) or the corporate sector have not come up either with an alternate substitute or a mine system technology having a definite shelf life. In this view of the matter, continued reliance on landmines, is a military imperative.

Acquisition of landmines in the Army’s arsenal is relatively inexpensive. No reliable estimates are available to indicate budgetary load anticipated in shifting to alternate weapon system and discard use of land mines. Further, huge financial implications impede and discourage development and adoption of a substitute weapon system.

It is also felt that the worldwide campaign to decry use of land mines was mainly led and joined by European countries and others who in any case have no unsettled borders. They were not using land mines in any significant numbers. Therefore, they did not face any risk in discarding their mine stocks. On the other side are United States, Russia, China, Israel, Pakistan, Bangladesh, both Koreas and a few other South Asian States who have not joined the mine ban treaty so far. While the reasons for others to keep away from the treaty may differ in each case, India has actual issues of security concern which appear overriding. Certain portion of its borders have remained unsettled. Last 50 years have seen India dragged into a number of border wars. There is evidence that other states in the sub continent continue to deploy land mines. As such, there is little hope that security considerations in India would easily allow discarding of land mines as a weapon system. In this manner, political compulsions do not favour adoption of the Treaty at the present juncture.

Public society in India is yet to generate adequate pressure in its campaign to discard landmines. Indian Parliament has had no occasion to deal with this matter. There have been no discussions, debates, calling up motions or questions in the Parliament on the issue of land mine ban. There is no evidence of a public agitation or movement to induce the authorities to scout for other options. Media, too, has remained indifferent in this direction.

Indian Armed Forces have an elaborate and well planned drill for laying and marking of land mines. Troops are extensively taught and trained in Mine Warfare. Detailed plans of the minefields laid in their areas of responsibility are kept by the military units and formations to facilitate subsequent demining. All minefields are clearly marked. Placing minefields without marking and recording them for later removal is illegal under international conventions. Resultantly, the cases of minefield accidents are relatively uncommon. The injuries sustained by the mine victims are generally non-fatal in nature. Figures pertaining to accidental injuries caused due to land mines do not show any cause for unusual alarm. In fact, there are many other areas calling for greater concern in adoption of safety and security norms. To illustrate, India accounts for six per cent of the world's total road accidents and 10 per cent of the world's road deaths. Around 300,000 road accidents take place every year resulting in 90,000 deaths.⁴ It is nobody's case to discourage use of roads or vehicles. Take another example, according to one study in Northern India of 11,196 burn patients admitted to a tertiary burn centre over an eight year period, 29 per cent were due to malfunctioning kerosene stoves. Would that justify a ban on use of stoves? Moving to another item, each year, fire fighters battle thousands of fire across India during Deepawali festival to douse flames caused by fire crackers. Is there any move to totally eradicate fire crackers? The figures relating to accidental deaths due to fire arms, train accidents, air mishaps or boats drowning are a matter of public record. There is no agitation to put a total stop to their use. As such, the casualties from anti personnel landmines have to be appropriately viewed in the context of mines being integral part of military weapon system. There is therefore, hardly any cause for haste on the part of the Government to move towards acceptance of mine ban treaty in its present form.

According to its declared stance, India does use mines for counter insurgency or counter terrorist operations or for internal security situations. Thus, use of anti personnel is justified as being limited to military use for the sole purpose of defence. Yet another reason for the government not to seriously consider adoption of landmine ban is the tight control on their production, storage, and use. India claims that all production is vested with government agencies. Three different types of landmines (AP NM-14, AP NM-16 and APER 1B) are manufactured by the Ordnance Factories under the strict control of Ministry of Defence. No other agency is authorised to produce, stock or issue landmines. As such, the landmine stocks and their use are easily not open to misuse.

Above factors have contributed to absence of any pressure on the Government to seriously think of alternatives. There are different agencies like military operations staff and the officials of the Infantry Directorate, Corps of Engineers, Ordnance Corps, Army Medical Corps and the Judge Advocate General Department who are all concerned with different aspects of mine warfare. DRDO and Ordnance Factories have a significant role to play in the design, development and production of land mines. All these segments are under the control of Ministry of Defence. Apart from them, the matter comes within the domain of Border Security Force, Indo-Tibetan Border Police, Central Reserve Police Force and Coast Guard etc. who have their own areas of responsibility and needs of mine use. There is thus no single agency to articulate Indian security stance. A wholesome view on shifting to an alternate weapon system or mechanism would require consultation with all the stake holders.

Landmines are not the only instrument relating to international humanitarian law which have found dissenters in South Asia. There are other treaties like Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions and International Criminal Court etc. which have not been ratified by China, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh etc. India is also not a signatory to the convention on Cluster Munitions and had abstained from voting in favour of UNGA Resolution for an Arms Trade Treaty.

What then is to be done? Regional or bilateral process between the states could be initiated on a dialogue to do away with landmines in certain areas. Such an approach may gradually and eventually culminate in discarding use of landmines. A proposal for a joint moratorium by India and Pakistan could be brought on a fast track. The two countries produce 11 million landmines for use on their common border. The ban has been discussed as part of their confidence building measures. Defence scientists should be nudged to develop a time bound programme to produce a proto-type of landmines with a definite life span or a category of self destructive mines.

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Lieutenant General Sinha Remembers*

The Army's contribution to India's Independence and its role during the Partition of the Sub-Continent, have not received much attention. As one who served in the Army before and after Independence, and also witnessed the Partition holocaust, I would like to place on record my recollections of that period. My views on these two aspects of our Nation's history are based on my personal experience and not on any erudite research.

I joined the British Indian Army during the Second World War (The Jat Regiment) and continued serving in the Army of Independent India. Having served in Burma (now Myanmar) and Netherlands East Indies (now Indonesia), I returned home to India and landed in Calcutta (now Kolkata). I was in an army transit camp on 16 August 1946 when Jinnah launched his Direct Action Day. The Muslim League Premier of Bengal, Suhrawardy faithfully carried out the genocide in which thousands got killed in Kolkata, followed by killings and abductions in Noakhali. The calling out of the Army in Kolkata was deliberately delayed by Suhrawardy to allow the hoodlums to carry out their mayhem. I witnessed the streets of Kolkata strewn with mutilated dead bodies. Violence in the city abated after the Army was deployed to restore order.

A couple of weeks later, I was posted to the Military Operations Directorate of General Headquarters (now Army Headquarters) at Delhi. This Directorate had hitherto been an exclusive British preserve. All the officers and clerks were British. I joined the Directorate in September 1946 alongwith two other Indian officers, Lieutenant Colonel (later Field Marshal) Manekshaw and Major Yahya Khan, later President of Pakistan. We were allocated to three different sections of the Directorate, Manekshaw to Planning, Yahya to Frontier Defence and I to Internal Security (IS). At that time as part of IS duties, the Army was fully preoccupied in combating unprecedented communal violence. Never had the Army been used so extensively in this role. From my perch at Delhi I got a grandstand view of the cycle of communal violence taking place in the country. Kolkata - Noakhali killings were followed by mass killings of Muslims in Bihar and Garhmukteshwar.

The Unionist Ministry then in power in Punjab and the Congress Ministry in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) had managed to keep their provinces free of large scale communal violence. In March 1947 a Muslim League Ministry came to power in Punjab and a little later also in NWFP. The floodgates of communal violence of the worst type now raged all over North India from Delhi and beyond. Muslims and non-Muslims (Sikhs and Hindus) were matched evenly in Punjab. Both sides perpetrated the worst type of savagery. The entire population of the region appeared to have gone berserk. Towards the end of July, it was decided to have a Punjab Boundary Force of 50,000 soldiers comprising equal number of units earmarked for India and Pakistan. Major General TW Pete Rees took over as the Commander of this Force. Two Indian Brigadiers, one Hindu remaining in India and the other Muslim going to Pakistan, were appointed his deputies. This experiment did not succeed. Within a month, the Punjab Boundary Force had to be disbanded. The two Dominions took over responsibility for maintaining order in their respective territories.

On our side, a new skeleton Command Headquarters, called Delhi and East Punjab Command, was set up with Lieutenant General Sir Dudley Russell as the Army Commander. There were some twelve officers on his staff, all of them British except me. I was then a Major dealing with operations. There were three subordinate formations under the Command - Delhi Area under Major General Rajendra Sinhji who later became Army Chief, East Punjab Area under Major General KS Thimayya who also later became Army Chief and Military Evacuation Organisation at Lahore under Major General SBS Chimni. No passenger or goods train was running anywhere in Punjab. All the railway rolling stock had been mobilised for carrying refugees. Lakhs of muslims from all over the country had concentrated in Delhi at three major locations, Purana Qila, Nizamuddin and the open space around the Red Fort. They were being evacuated in refugee trains, escorted by the Army, to Pakistan. Hindu and Sikh refugees coming from Pakistan were initially accommodated in a tented refugee camp at Kurukshetra, before being dispersed to other locations. At one time this camp held 5 lakh refugees. There were also long refugee foot columns, several miles long, moving from either side. It was impossible to provide adequate protection to these columns, extending several miles. Air drops of food packages were organised for these columns. The civil administration had collapsed in Punjab and our Command was assigned the duty of restoring order and evacuation of refugees. Mountbatten had made the luxurious Viceroy's train available to our Command. Russell established his mobile headquarters in that train. We were completely self-contained in the corridor train with accommodation for officers, clerical staff, security personnel, and our offices. Our messes and kitchen functioned in the train. We had line and wireless communications on the train as also our motor transport. I operated from this train for nearly two months travelling between Delhi and Lahore. I have in all humility recorded all these details so that some credence may be given to my views on the events of that time based on my personal experience.

To assess the Army's contribution towards the Independence of India, one has to go back to the Great Uprising of 1857. The British call it the Sepoy Mutiny or the Great Mutiny and the Indian nationalists refer to it as the First War of Indian Independence. Call it what one may, it was primarily an uprising of the Indian soldier against foreign rule. It lit the spark of nationalism in the Country and was a source of great inspiration for succeeding generations during our freedom struggle. The gallantry of the Indian soldier in battles, during the First World War won world wide acclaim. This was a source of national pride for the Indian people giving them increased self confidence. The emergence of the Indian National Army under Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose during the Second World War, added a new dimension to our freedom struggle. The INA comprised soldiers of the Indian Army taken prisoners by the Japanese in Malaya. The INA trials generated a patriotic surge all over the Country and was a big shot in the arm for our freedom struggle. This was followed by the Naval Mutiny in Mumbai and Karachi, Army mutiny in Jabalpur and Air Force mutiny in Karachi. This violently shook the foundations of the British Empire in India.

It was at this stage and soon after the Great Kolkata killings that I had joined the Military Operations Directorate in Delhi. There were three things that I found both interesting and revealing. First, a plan for the evacuation of all British civilians in India to the UK called Plan Gondola. Second, the operational map that I was required to maintain in the Operations Room. Third, a paper on the reliability of the Indian Army prepared by the Director of Military Intelligence.

The British feared an uprising on the lines of what had happened in 1857. Many British civilians were scattered in different parts of the Country. Plan Gondola catered for their initial evacuation to temporary camps in the provinces, at provincial capitals and some selected convenient locations. These were called 'Keeps'. Armed protection with necessary logistic support was to be provided at the Keeps. In the subsequent phase, they were to be evacuated to 'Safes' near the port towns of Kolkata, Vishakapatnam, Chennai, Cochin, Mumbai and Karachi, awaiting repatriation to the UK. The troops guarding the Safes and Keeps were to be a mix of British and Indian soldiers. In the event, as communal violence escalated there was no need to implement Plan Gondola. There was now much bitterness and violence between Hindus and Muslims and none against the British. It was a great irony that at the height of the communal carnage in Punjab, British officers could move around unarmed in Delhi and Punjab while Indian officers, whether Muslims or non-Muslims, had to carry arms and in remote areas move with an escort.

I had to maintain a large map of India with pins of different colours showing locations of all combat units in the Country. Red was for British units, Green for Gorkha units and Brown for Indian units. A distinction was made between Indian and Gorkha units. At that time the Gorkhas were officered exclusively by the British with no Indian officers in those units. The Indian units had a mix of British and Indian officers with Commanding Officers and senior officers mostly British. The "mutiny syndrome" prevailed among the British. It was ensured that no location had only brown pins without some red and green pins in situation. Field Marshal Auchinleck, the then Commander-in-Chief frequently visited the Operations Room and would study the map maintained by me.

The paper written by the Director Military Intelligence had a novel security classification - 'Top Secret, Not For Indian Eyes'. My predecessor a British officer in a hurry to go back home to the UK on demobilisation, had handed over the key of the almirah containing classified documents to me without checking the documents. This paper was written in the wake of the INA trials. It stated that the Indian officers of the Army could be divided into three categories - those commissioned before 1933 from Sandhurst, the pre-war officers commissioned between 1933 and 1939, and the wartime Emergency Commissioned Officers (ECO's). The Sandhurst officers were considered more reliable. They were now middle aged with family commitments and did not nurture much grievance as they had been treated well. They were very few, their total number being about thirty. The Pre-War, 1933 to 1939 officers had a grievance because their emoluments were not at par with their British counterparts. This disparity was removed during the War but its memory and of some other discriminations still rankled with them. The War time officers numbering about 12,000 against a total of 500 of the two previous categories, were considered most unreliable. While in their schools and colleges, they had been exposed to subversive political influence culminating in the Quit India movement. They faced an uncertain future because they were all emergency commissioned officers and only very few were likely to be accommodated in the permanent post-war cadre of the Army. They were working at the company and platoon level interacting directly with the soldiers.

As for the soldiers, the position regarding them had also changed radically. Prior to the War, strength of the Army was 1.37 lakh and recruitment was confined to the martial classes. A large number of soldiers came from traditional military families. During the war, floodgates had been opened for recruitment. The Army had been expanded from 1.37 lakh to 2.2 million. The INA had created a psychological impact on the officers and men of the Army.

Further, the bulk of the Army overseas had served in South East Asia, where they had seen how the prestige of the colonial powers had suffered at the hands of the Japanese in the early years of the war. Towards the end of the war, national movements for freedom had erupted in Asian countries ruled by colonial powers like the British, the French, the Dutch and the Portugese. The paper also took into account that an economically exhausted Britain after a long drawn out war, was not in a position to maintain a strong British military presence in India. In the circumstance, the paper recommended early British withdrawal from India. I was much impressed by this very analytical study.

The fact that the Indian Army had an impact on our movement for Independence and hastened the dawn of freedom is indisputable. Earl Atlee the British Prime Minister, who had presided over the liquidation of the British Empire in 1947, confirmed this during his visit to India in 1956. He told Mr Chakravarty, the then Governor of Bengal, that the decision to quit quickly in 1947 had been taken because the British could no longer rely on the loyalty of the Indian Army.

The role of the Army during Partition has not so far been factored into discussions about Partition. The fact that the Army also affected the decision on Partition needs to be taken into account. After their experience with Cromwell's military dictatorship, the British ardently nurtured the concept of an apolitical army. It suited them to transplant that concept in the Indian Army that they raised. While this concept continues to hold good in India, it got thrown overboard in Pakistan for reasons which we may not discuss here. After 1857, the British decided not to have 'one class regiments' except for Gorkhas and Garhwalis. All other combat units of the Indian Army had the composition of 50 per cent Muslims and 50 per cent non-Muslims (Hindus and Sikhs). This was in line with their policy of 'Divide and Rule'. Different communities living together in war and peace and encouraged to remain apolitical, developed a regimental ethos which held them together. I was commissioned in the Jat Regiment which had two companies of Jat Hindus and two companies of Muslims. I served with a Punjabi Muslim company. I found that the regimental spirit among the men was strong and there was no communal divide. This

continued in the Army as a whole till the end of 1946 but started cracking in 1947, reaching a breaking point by August 1947. Yet I saw that when the Muslim companies of the Jat Regiment were going to Pakistan, tears were shed on both sides. This happened in other regiments as well.

In keeping with the Army's apolitical traditions, Indian officers during the British days, hardly ever discussed political matters among themselves. I recall that in Rangoon soon after the end of the war, one junior British officer referred to the INA as traitors and also used vulgar epithets for it. There was no senior officer present in the Mess. This led to a heated discussion between the British and Indian officers, both Hindus and Muslims. Although politics in India had got much communalised in the Forties, Netaji promoted complete communal harmony in the Azad Hind Government and the Indian National Army. Vande Mataram as an Anthem had been a source of discord between the two communities in India. Netaji had coined the slogan Jai Hind which could not raise any communal hackles.

The Indian Army got involved in a strange war in Indonesia. It had been sent to that country primarily to take the surrender of the Japanese. The Dutch had been driven out from those islands. They accompanied the Indian Army to re-establish their colonial rule. The Indonesians had declared their Independence and had raised an army of their own. The Indian Army got involved in fighting the Indonesians. It was a strange situation for us. The Indonesians would tell us that we were ourselves not free and yet we were fighting against their becoming Independent. During my service in Indonesia, I used to feel very embarrassed on this account. However, what surprised me was that when the Indonesians raised the banner of Islam in their appeal to Indian soldiers, a number of soldiers of the Indian Army deserted and joined them. I was told that about a thousand or more of our soldiers had deserted. They got left behind when we came out from Indonesia. I am mentioning this because this was for the first time that I saw the communal virus affecting the Army.

Notwithstanding the early signs in Indonesia, it is remarkable that during the outbreak of unprecedented communal violence in August 1946 and till well after 1947 had set in, the Indian soldier, both Hindu and Muslim, showed remarkable impartiality when called upon to deal with communal violence. This was so in Kolkata in August 1946, in Bihar in October 1946 and in Garhmukteshwar (United Provinces) in November 1946. Two or three battalions of the Bihar Regiment which had Hindus and Muslims in equal number, had operated in Bihar during the communal riots and had remained completely impartial. The Bihar riots were horrendous. For the first time communal riots had spread so extensively to rural areas. Hitherto communal riots had remained an urban phenomenon. Several thousand Muslims got massacred in Bihar as a revenge for thousands of Hindus killed in Kolkata and Noakhali. At the time of Bihar riots, I was in Delhi getting daily reports of what was happening in my home province.

Colonel Naser Ali Khan, who later went to Pakistan Army, and I were serving at General Headquarters and were living in the officers mess on Wellesley Road (now Zakir Hussain Road). He was many years senior to me and was always very kind to me. One morning at breakfast after having read of a news report about Bihar riots in the newspaper, he told me excitedly that his blood boiled when he remembered that I was a Bihari. I told him that I condemned what was happening in Bihar more than him. He was not the only Muslim officer I interacted with in Delhi who felt so worked up over the most unfortunate happenings in Bihar.

I am mentioning these incidents to bring out how circumstances were forcing communal virus to spread in the Army. Till March 1947 things appeared to be well under control. Local communal riots were taking place in different places and the Army deployed to maintain order remained very disciplined and impartial. Wavell during his farewell address on 21 March 1947 said, "I believe that the stability of the Indian Army may perhaps be the deciding factor in the future of India." Pakistan had not emerged as a sovereign State till then and hardly anyone could imagine that it would become a reality in the next four months.

With Muslim League Ministries coming to power both in Punjab and NWFP, communal passions were sought to be aroused in a planned manner. Pictures of atrocities on Muslims in Bihar and Garhmukteshwar started being shown in mosques alongwith fiery speeches by Muslim clerics on Fridays. Widespread communal riots erupted in Peshawar and Rawalpindi. Soon the whole of North India was on fire. The strain on the soldiers started showing. Most of the soldiers, both Muslims and non-Muslims, were from the North. Their homeland was getting ravaged and in several cases their families had been victims of communal frenzy. It was becoming increasingly difficult for the soldiers to retain their impartiality. The downslide in this regard became more perceptible after Partition was announced. The day after that announcement I met two officers in their uniforms in Delhi wearing strange shoulder titles - RPE (Royal Pakistan Engineers) and RPASC (Royal Pakistan ASC). In those days officers from Engineers and Army Service Corps wore shoulder titles, RIE for Royal Indian Engineers and RIASC for Royal Indian Army Service Corps. Some officers had begun to wear Pakistan shoulder titles within hours of the Partition announcement and much before Pakistan came into being. There were reports of senior Muslim officers going to meet Jinnah who then lived in his house, 10 Aurangzeb Road. On the morrow of Independence in August 1947, the Gilgit Scouts staged a coup arresting Brigadier Ghansara Singh of the Kashmir Army who had been sent there as Governor by the Maharaja.

As mentioned earlier, the Punjab Boundary Force comprising in equal measure, units earmarked for Indian and Pakistan Army, was set up under a British Commander in late July 1947. It was hoped that it would help in maintaining order on both sides of the border, at a time when communal violence and migration was reaching a crescendo. However, the experiment had failed. Large scale violence again erupted in Kolkata and Mahatma Gandhi had gone there to restore sanity among the people. He undertook a fast which had a dramatic effect. It was then that Mountbatten made his famous remark that a one man boundary force had succeeded in Kolkata while the 50,000 strong Punjab Boundary Force had failed in the North. The Punjab Boundary Force was disbanded within a month of its raising and the two Dominions assumed responsibility for maintaining order on their side of the border. As a tailpiece, I may add that after a couple of months, Indian and Pakistan Armies were locked in fighting a war against each other in Kashmir.

The Indian Army made a significant contribution towards ushering the Independence of India. Its role during the Partition holocaust was also of great significance. I conclude with a quote from Stephen Cohen's book on the Indian Army. "India has virtually ignored the military as a factor in Nation building. This is surprising, for the Military had a profound impact on the course of nationalist politics and also upon policies after 1947."

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