MILITARY SOCIOLOGY: NEW DIVERSION TO THE STUDY OF SOCIETY

Dr. ASHA SOUGAIJAM

Faculty Member, Department of Sociology, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Regional Campus, Manipur

The word Military has aggressive connotations in a society and military is treated in a different footing from other organs of a society. This is despite the fact that military plays a critical role in nation building. Military sociology attempts to bridge this gap be bring about a proper civil military relations in a society.

Contemporary military sociology is primarily a result of the World War II and Cold War eras. Even though these events initiated the systematic study of military sociology, it stands to reason that the relationship between the military and society would predate these events.

The study and research on use of military sociology is one area of neglect in India. The general focus is on military technology as it relates to the services for the society. This work is one way of thinking about Civil-Military Relations. It had two methodological assumptions. First, it assumes that in any society it should be studied as a system composed of interdependent elements. The second was that "objective civilian control" maximizes military security. However, CMR is a much broader and deeper subject. That is on the matter of operational issues and the leading role being played by the services. It is shown that the narrative of civil interference like the one during India's defeat in the 1962 war is a morality pageant showcased by the military. Citing a number of events from current history, how the military has carried the day in having its writ written on operational issues such as no withdrawal from Siachen glacier or revoking the Armed Force Special Powers Act (AFSPA). This new insight thus needs to be further debated. It was felt that the military must no longer be placed in killing fields when there seemed to be no overriding national interest.

Reverting back to the Indian situation, the uniqueness about Siachen glacier is that no civilians have stayed there. A ministerial visit for a few hours by helicopter is taken as a national media event. In such situations, it is the military which provides intelligence, inputs and of course advice. But AFSPA is a clear case of a topic under what scholars call the "war and society" school. Both issues need more debate for sound policy making.

The topic is just not about the military's relations with the civil leadership and bureaucracy. The debate on CMR is yet to mature fully in India. The current discourse is mostly about the role or the absence of such a role for the military in decision making. While that is important, it misses out on many other drivers and currents in CMR. Some other topics which need to be addressed are:

(a) It is important to take note of literature which argues that civil-military relations may be a more powerful explanation of technological proficiency than human capital. The experience of civil-military relations in not having developed any weapon of worth that can be termed backbone equipment like artillery guns or tanks is one. Rather than finger pointing, there is need for a public debate on how to overcome the massive import syndrome.

(b) There is an assumption that society has high respect for the military. Though this may be true for mainland India, it needs to be tested in Jammu and Kashmir, North East, Naxal-dominated areas and elsewhere. What is the public perception given fake encounters as those dramatized in the ketchup colonel episode, or by encounter killings or killings of civilians to get recognition as reported by the media and civil society. How will the military sustain its positive image among citizens is the new challenge?

(c) The role and future mission of the military in patriotic training and nation building through interaction with the youth such as the National Cadet Corps (NCC).

(d) The blurring of differences in media and public perception between the soldier and the police or paramilitary personnel. Even constables of para-military forces are now loosely termed "jawans" - a term which the military was very proud of, as it identifies it with the "Jai Jawan Jai Kisan" slogan coined by Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. Disruptive combat dress and military type accoutrements are now sported by the police and paramilitary, indeed even by private security agencies. What has been the result of this change?

This paper aims toward the systematic study of the military services as a social group rather than as a military organization ,i.e. specialized subfield which examines issues related to service personnel as a distinct group with coerced collective action based on shared interests linked to safeguard, safety and security of mankind in any man-made or natural disasters, with purposes and values that are more defined within its service motto- "Service before self". To study this, one need to understand the grass-root level of Military sociology that concerns more on civil-military relations and interactions between other groups or governmental agencies.

Recently there has been interest in how the modern militaries have constructed their knowledge. Military science in modern armed forces has taken on the aura of a hard science when it is arguably a combination of hard science, sociology ("soft science"), and military history (the humanities). Postmodern deconstructions of the assumptions behind modern military science can be effective in revealing how modern militaries have socially constructed their reality.

It examines issues such as military social organization and the military as welfare. There are few universities that offer courses on military sociology and there are only a handful of academic professionals that conduct research and/or write about military sociology.

In recent years, most of the studies that can be classified as military sociology have been done by private research institutes or in military agencies, such as the Rand Corporation, the Brookings Institute, the Human Resources Research Organization, the Army Research Institute, and the Office of the Secretary of Defence. Furthermore, the research teams that conduct these studies are generally interdisciplinary, with researchers from sociology, psychology, political science, economics, and business. This by no means implies that military sociology is a small field. The military is the largest single government agency in the United States and the issues addressed surrounding it can have important ramifications for both military policy and the development of sociology as a discipline.

Following are some of the issues studied under military sociology:

➢ Voluntary service: This was a huge change and one whose impact at the time was unknown. Sociologists were and still are interested in how this change affected society, who the individuals were who entered the military voluntarily and why, and whether this change affected the representativeness of the military (for example, are there more uneducated minorities who enter voluntarily than were selected in the draft).

➢ Social Representation and Access: Social representation refers to the degree in which the military represents the population from which it has been drawn. Sociologists are interested in who is being represented, why the misrepresentations exist, and how representativeness has changed throughout history. For example, in the Vietnam War era, some civil rights leaders alleged that African Americans were over-represented in the armed forces and therefore accounted for an unfair amount of casualties.

➢ Sociology of Combat: The study of the sociology of combat deals with the social processes involved in combat units. For example, researchers often study unit cohesion and morale, leader-troop relations, and the motivation for combat.

➢ The Military as Welfare: Some people argue that one of the military's roles is to provide opportunity for occupational and educational advancement to the less advantaged in society. Sociologists are interested in looking at this role of the military, which takes advantage of the opportunities, and whether the training and experience of the military offer any advantages compared to civilian experiences.

➢ Social Organization: The organization of the military has changed in many ways over the past several decades – from the draft to voluntary enlistment, from combat-intensive jobs to technical and support jobs, and from leadership to rational management. Some people argue that the military is changing from an

institution legitimized by normative values to an occupation legitimized by a market orientation. Sociologists are interested in studying these organizational changes and how they impact both those in the military and the rest of society.

War reflects culture. Weaponry, tactics, notions of discipline, command, logistics — all such elements of battle arise from the nature of a society's economy, politics, and sociology. This is as true for the military today as it was in ancient and medieval times, and as true for non-Western as for Western civilizations. Paramount has been the role of military technology. Despite the tendency to use military force far more readily than our allies, we still find it difficult to ask for real sacrifices for military action from our populace — a citizenry that has achieved a level of personal security and comfort unprecedented in the history of civilization- comes with the expectation of few casualties and quick success. And our new defence culture takes shape within these twin parameters of personal safety and reliance on high-technology — so that we can inflict many, but not incur any losses, and so that can be with greater precision from ever further away.

Culture and military technology have also shaped our approach to multilateralism, or the desirability of using force only under the auspices of international authorities. In fact, deep-rooted individualism, coupled with our neighbouring nations, has never made us very comfortable with fighting in coalitions. This spirit of military independence has grown with our increasing confidence in the unrivalled capability of the military power, as well as growing a sense of being the force on the world scene capable of ensuring order in the man-made and natural disasters situation. Our long commitment to the divisions reflects this desire to project military power abroad, with minimum reliance on other nations, while keeping the battlefield away from the continental Asia.

The military's primary task is to guard the nation's borders. In matters domestic, the military is supposed to be a second respondent, except in the case of chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidences. Theoretically, the principle is "last to enter and first to leave". However, when theory is matched with practice, this does not seem to be the case. According to the Administrative Reforms Commissions, the military needs to be taken off from the loop of disaster management gradually. While it may sound sensible on paper, it is not really possible in practice. The civil administration is usually not properly geared up for an effective response. It needs to be noted that discipline and efficiency is the first demand in disaster response and relief tasks, which are often dangerous missions and quite naturally the military brings in order in post-disaster operations. Wherever there is danger, the military has a constitutional duty to undertake tasks and missions. The required wherewithal including the command, control and communication, are available with the field formations. Preparing for military operations other than war (MOOTW), of which disaster is the main component will be a critical part of military training.

Though the government is aware of the urgent need for better disaster response mechanism, the overall trend has indicated that the level of preparedness at

both the centre as well as the states is inadequate. The nodal agency for coordination of relief, response and overall natural disaster management is under the Central Ministry of Home Affairs. However, when any disaster breaks, it is the Armed forces under the Ministry of Defence that is called upon to intervene as an 'aid to civil authority'.

The state and the district level are the weak links in disaster management efforts. It appears that the civil administration has "got used to military and central help as a norm". A tendency to over-rely on the military has stunted the initiative, responsibility and accountability of the civil government and officials. The case of Operation Sadbhavana in Jammu and Kashmir is a case in point. It is this vacuum in delivery and governance that the armed forces, due to their 'spirit to deliver' training, have filled. But we need to ask hard questions. In the case of disasters, why should the relief commissioners and civil administration not be held accountable for flouting norms of construction, ignoring drainage congestion and thereby exacerbating conditions leading to man-made disasters? We are aware of large areas of the country that experience floods regularly. Yet the civil administration is found wanting in its prevention and preparedness, which along with response, relief and recovery, are the constitutional duties and responsibilities of the civil administration. The military has no role in regulating the implementation of these principles.

Assuming that a problem exists, many have offered suggestions for narrowing the gap and correcting the problems arising from it. In general, those suggestions are along three lines. The first is that the military must reach out to the civilian world. Given the essentially universal agreement that civilians must control the military, the duty falls upon the military to find ways to talk to civilians, not the other way around. The second is that civilians must articulate a clear vision of what they expect in terms of the military mission. And the final suggestion is that the most practical and effective means of bringing about dialogue and understanding is to be bilateral education, in which both military and civilian elites would jointly attend specialized schools. Such schooling would emphasize military-strategic thinking, history and political philosophy, military ethics, and the proper relationship between civil and military authority.

The result is that various civil sectors began to work exclusively for the state, which in turn desired a stronger military, and which used these sectors to extract more resources and more manpower for exclusive military use. This 'modern' military now was reliant on the state for its very existence, whereas, in pre-modern times, the military could be the tool of various autonomous sectors of society.

REFERENCES:

1. Baker, Anni (2008). Life In the U.S. Armed Forces. Praeger. ISBN 978-0-275-98982-8.

2. Braswell, H; Kushner, H. I. (2012). "Suicide, social integration, and masculinity in the U.S. Military". Social Science & Medicine 74 (4): 530–6. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.07.031. PMID 21036443. edit

3. Caforio, Giuseppe, (ed.), Handbook of the Sociology of the Military, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2006

4. Chris Paparone (2013), The Sociology of Military Science, NY: Bloomsbury.

5. Dupuy, T.N. (1990) Understanding war: History and Theory of combat, Leo Cooper, London, p. 67

6. Ender, Morten; Ryan Kelty and Irving Smith. 2008. "Sociology at West Point." Armed Forces & Society, vol. 35: pp. 49–70.

7. Fasting, Kari and Trond Svela Sand eds., (2010). "Gender and Military Issues - A Categorized Research Bibliography." Moving Soldiers - Soldaten i bevegelse 01/2010. ISSN 1891-8751.

8. Grandstaff, Mark. "Military Sociology" in Charles Messenger, ed. Reader's Guide to Military History (2001) pp 363–64 online; evaluates major books

9. Levy, Yagil. "Controlling the Invisible: The Deficient Political Control of the Modern Military". Center for Studies of Social Change(1995). Columbia International Affairs Online. Pittsburgh University Lib., Pittsburgh, PA. 14 July 2008.

10. MacHenry, Robert (1993). The New Encyclopaedia Britannica. Encyclopaedia Britannica, Incorporated. p. 305.

11. Malesevic, Sinisa. 2010. The Sociology of War and Violence. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

12. Martin, James; Leora Rosen; Linette Sparacino (2000). The Military Family: A Practice Guide for Human Service Providers. Praeger Publishers. ISBN 978-0-275-96540-2.

13. Merriam, Jesse (July 8, 2008). "Organized Religion's Role in the Military". Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life. p. 1. Retrieved 2008-07-22.

14. Obraztov, Igor. 2008. "Teaching Sociology in Military Educational Institutions of Russia." Armed Forces & Society, vol. 35: pp. 162–179.

15. Paparone, Chris. 2013. The Sociology of Military Science. NY: Bloomsbury.

16. Pyman, Mark (March 2013). "Transparency is feasible". dandc.eu.

17. Rosen, David (2005). Armies of the Young. Connecticut: Greenwood Press. ISBN 0-313-22900-7.

18. Sarkesian, Sam C., Williams, John Allen, Bryant, Fred B., Soldiers, Society, and National Security, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1995

19. Sarkesian, Sam C. and Robert E. Connor, Jr. The US Military Profession into the 21st Century. Frank Cass Publishers; Portland, c.1999

20. Segal, David and Morten Ender. 2008. "Sociology in Military Officer Education." Armed Forces & Society, vol. 35: pp. 3–15.

21. Siebold, Guy (2001). "Core Issues and Theory in Military Sociology". Journal of Political and Military Sociology. Retrieved 14 July 2008.

22. Toktas, Sule. Nationalism, Militarism and Gender Politics: Women in the Military. Quarterly Report on Women and the Military, Summer 2002, Iss. 2, pg.29. Gender Watch. Pittsburgh University Lib., Pittsburgh, PA. 20 July 2008.

23. Wardynski, 2. Casey (2000). Military Compensation in the Age of Two-Income Households: Adding Spouses' Earnings to the Compensation Policy Mix. Santa Monica: Rand. p.213

24. Young, Warren (1982). Minorities and the military. Connecticut: Greenwood Press. ISBN 0-313-22900-7.

25. Yoshino, Kenji (2006). Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights. New York: Random House. ISBN 0-375-50820-1.