

The Booming Defence Sector

GLOBAL MILITARY
SPENDING:
RECORD HIGHS

INDIA:
Rs 7.8L Cr



Uttar
Pradesh



Tamil
Nadu

65%+
LOCAL
PRODUCTION

TARGET
EXPORTS:
Rs 50,000 cr
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MESSAGE

from the
EDITOR



Iqbal Singh

Dear Readers

We are witnessing an unprecedented transformation in India's strategic landscape. Total domestic defence production has hit an all-time high of ₹1.78 lakh crore, and exports have surged past ₹38,000 crore. Driven by the relentless momentum of Atmanirbhar Bharat and the newly proposed Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP-2026), the private sector is no longer just a vendor—it is a primary engine of national security. For the corporate veteran, this explosive growth is not merely a market trend. It is a natural destination where you possess an undeniable, structural "right to play."

The corporate world often demands complex, cross-domain adaptations. However, the soaring aerospace, indigenous shipbuilding, and complex electronics sectors require something far more fundamental: mission-critical leadership, absolute operational integrity, and an innate understanding of the end-user's reality. This is where your military DNA becomes an unmatched strategic asset.

THE CORRIDORS OF OPPORTUNITY

[Physical & Tech Security]

- Threat Vulnerability Testing
- Critical Asset Protection

[Procurement & Supply Chain]

- Vendor Indigenisation (SRIJAN)
- Complex Lifecycle Management

[Project Management & Operations]

- Industry 4.0 Defense Corridors
- Multi-tier Milestone Execution

The opportunities span a massive tactical spectrum:

- **Program Management & Infrastructure:** The operationalization of massive Defence Industrial Corridors requires leaders who can manage multi-tier execution under tight timelines.
- **Supply Chain & Procurement:** Evolving indigenisation frameworks demand managers who can bridge the gap between corporate production lines and stringent military standards.
- **Physical Security & Risk Mitigation:** As hyperscalers and advanced manufacturing hubs secure critical

infrastructure, the demand for sophisticated, threat-resilient security leadership has never been higher.

You do not need to be a deep-tech programmer to dominate this space. The private sector is flooded with capital and engineering talent, but it faces a critical deficit in operational leadership that understands the defence ecosystem. Corporate execution needs strategic direction.

This is your home turf. The language of risk, compliance, security, and tactical pivots is your native tongue. As the defence sector undergoes its great churning, step forward into these corporate boardrooms and manufacturing hubs not as outsiders trying to adapt, but as the rightful architects of India's strategic self-reliance.

Regards
Iqbal Singh
Editor
ForceNet E-Zine



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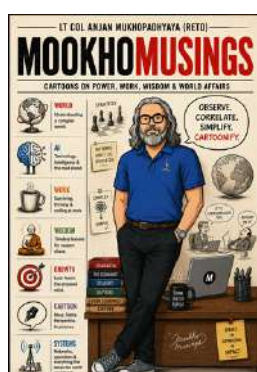
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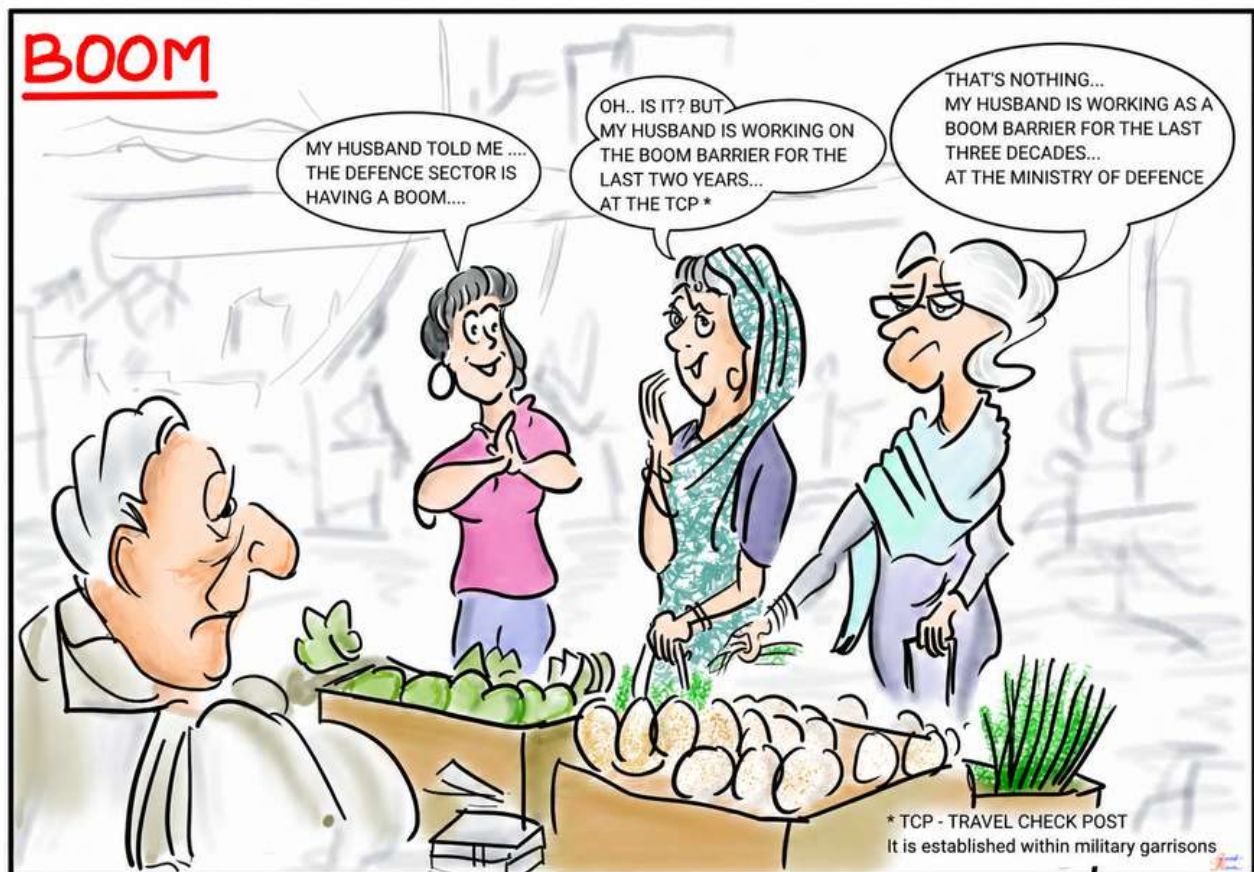


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THEME - **BOOMING** DEFENCE SECTOR



Theme Section

The Booming Defence Sector: Innovating Today, Securing Tomorrow

By
Lt Col Mrinal Kanti Nath



The Booming Defence Sector Has Been Invigorated by the Recent Global Events

A high-velocity shift is redefining defence—driven by strategic competition, emerging technologies, and a renewed focus on readiness and resilience. The future of defence is agile, connected, and unstoppable.

Walk onto any major Defence Expo floor today and you will feel it immediately: a sector once defined by long timelines, legacy primes, and predictable platforms is in the middle of a high-velocity shift. Budgets are up in many regions, timelines are compressing, digital tools are moving from buzzwords to battlegrounds, and defence is drawing in talent, capital, and ideas from far beyond its traditional borders.

For veterans who understand both the gravity of national security and the gritty realities of operations, this boom presents both opportunities and responsibilities. This article surveys the drivers behind the expansion, the technologies reshaping force design, how acquisition is evolving, where the workforce is headed, and what it all means for those who have worn the uniform.

A Confluence of Catalysts

Several forces are pushing defence into a sustained upcycle:

- **Strategic competition is back:** Renewed great-power rivalry, contested maritime and aerospace domains, and volatile grey-zone activity have driven governments to prioritise deterrence and resilience. That translates to multi-year investment plans, stockpile replenishment, and new capability development across air, sea, land, space, and cyber.

Lessons from recent conflicts: The widespread use of uncrewed systems, electronic warfare, commercial satellite imagery, and long-range precision fires has compressed observe–orient–decide–act (OODA) loops. Militaries are translating these lessons into procurement priorities—attributable air systems, counter-UAS, resilient communications, and rapid



A Convergence of Defence and Commercial Technology

munitions production top the list.

- **Industrial base revitalisation:** Nations are re-examining supply chains for critical components—propellants, semiconductors, energetics, guidance kits—and investing in surge capacity. Public-private partnerships and multi-year procurement are becoming more common to give suppliers commercial certainty.
- **The dual-use surge:** Venture-backed companies in autonomy, AI, space, and cybersecurity now court defence customers intentionally. Conversely, primes are setting up venture arms, incubators, and rapid prototyping cells to capture commercial speed.
- **Policy tailwinds:** Export controls are being recalibrated alongside alliance initiatives that enable co-development and co-production. Security assistance frameworks and multinational projects are widening the addressable market for interoperable systems.

From Platforms to Kill-Webs: Technology Themes That Matter

The boom isn't just about more of the same; it is about something fundamentally different. Five technology arcs stand out:

1. Intelligent Autonomy and the "Many and Cheap" Thesis

Small, uncrewed, and increasingly autonomous systems—across air, surface, subsurface, and ground domains—are proliferating. Swarming tactics, low-cost attritable designs, and modular payloads are changing force-mix mathematics. Instead of a few exquisite platforms doing everything, commanders are leaning on networks of specialised, disposable assets to sense, strike, spoof, and soak up enemy attention.

Key Implications:

- Command and control becomes the centre of gravity; deconfliction, tasking, and rules of engagement must scale from a single UAS to hundreds acting in concert.

- Electronic protection and spectrum agility matter as much as airframes; autonomy must degrade gracefully under jamming.
- Logistics shifts from traditional hangars and depots to distributed launch-and-recover sites with rapid repair and cannibalisation to keep swarms in the fight.

2. Software-Defined Warfare

- Across sensors, radios, radars, and EW suites, capability is increasingly delivered via software. Open architectures, containerised apps, and continuous integration pipelines mean fielded hardware can gain new capabilities over the span of a single deployment. The differentiation is moving rapidly from metal to code.

Key Implications:

- Authority to Operate (ATO) timelines and cyber-worthiness become critical schedule drivers. The units that master DevSecOps and on-platform updates will outpace adversaries.
- Test and training instrumentation must capture software effects, not just kinematics. Data realism is the new range time.
- Modular standards reduce vendor lock-in but demand disciplined interface governance. A sloppy open system is simply a fragile one.

3. Precision, Reach, and Magazine Depth

Long-range precision strike isn't new, but the economics are shifting. Guidance kits for unguided munitions, improved seekers, and better targeting data extend the useful life of existing inventories. At the high end, hypersonic research spurs counter-sensing architectures, command decisions at machine speed, and layered defence.

Key Implications:

- Magazine depth is now a core design requirement. Launch platform survivability, reload speed, and resupply resilience define staying power.
- Kill-chains become kill-webs featuring

multiple sensors, multiple shooters, and redundant paths.

- Interoperability across services and allies turns into real combat power, not just paperwork.

4. Space as the Scaffolding

Commercial space firms are blanketing orbit with communications, ISR, and weather constellations. Militaries are tapping these for persistence, redundancy, and cost savings, while investing in protected links and counter-space defences. The line between military and commercial space is now a negotiated seam.

Key Implications:

- Resilience trumps single-point performance. Proliferated LEO and multi-orbit architectures beat exquisite but fragile assets.
- Space domain awareness and custody over time—knowing what is where and who it belongs to—undergird both offence and defence.
- Ground segment security is as critical as the satellites themselves; many compromises start at the modem, not in orbit.

5. Cyber and Electromagnetic Convergence

Cyber, EW, and information operations are increasingly integrated. Jamming and deception pair with cyber intrusion to create windows of tactical advantage. Defenders need continuous monitoring, zero-trust architectures, and trained operators who understand both packets and physics.

Key Implications:

- Training shifts from isolated specialities to cross-domain teams. The best EW planners speak cyber, and the best cyber operators respect spectrum realities.
- Mission assurance requires red-teaming by default, rather than as an annual checkbox exercise.

Acquisition is Changing: Slowly, Then All at Once

Defence procurement has a reputation for complexity and inertia, yet under pressure, it is evolving.

• **Rapid pathways and middle tiers:**

Accelerated acquisition frameworks are shortening the distance from prototype to fielded capability, especially for software and uncrewed systems. Field experimentation is folding directly into requirements, giving warfighters an early voice.

- **Outcome-based buys:** Some customers now procure "ISR as a service" or "Satcom as a service," paying for effects rather than hardware. This aligns incentives and keeps pace with commercial refresh cycles.

- **Multi-year and block buys:** For munitions and spares, longer-horizon contracts encourage capital investment in factories, workforce, and tooling, reducing unit costs and smoothing the supply chain.

- **Open systems mandates:** Interface control documents and modular standards are regularly showing up in RFPs, forcing vendors to cooperate. Non-compliant offerings are increasingly uncompetitive.

- **Security by design:** Cyber survivability and supply-chain assurance are major source-selection discriminators. Software Bills of Materials (SBOMs), tamper-resistant hardware, and provenance checks are now table stakes.

Industry Structure: Primes, Tier-Ones, and New Entrants

The booming sector isn't just bigger; it is significantly broader.

- Primes remain essential for complex integration, certification, and sustainment at scale. Their edge lies in program management, compliance, and delivery under intense scrutiny.

- Tier-ones and specialty suppliers of sensors, propulsion, energetics, and composites are capacity-constrained in

- critical niches. Governments are funding second sources and onshoring to de-risk production.
- Dual-use startups are rewiring the ecosystem. They bring speed, software talent, and a product-focused mindset. The ones that succeed learn to navigate classification, security clearances, and mission assurance without losing agility.
- Venture capital is selective but serious. Defence-focused funds look for teams that can cross the "valley of death"—bridging the gap from small development contracts to formal programs of record by targeting urgent gaps and demonstrating with users in the loop.

Sustainment: The Quiet Giant

Every veteran knows the mission doesn't end after fielding. In a software-defined, autonomy-heavy force, sustainment is being completely reimaged.

- Predictive maintenance leverages sensor data to reduce downtime and parts waste—but only if data rights and interfaces are negotiated up front.
- Digital twins support fleet-wide configuration control and faster troubleshooting. The payback is real when technical data is accurate and accessible.
- Training and simulation now integrate live, virtual, and constructive environments. AI-driven adversaries and EW effects models sharpen skills without burning flight hours or exposing tactical signatures.
- Additive manufacturing shows promise for low-volume, high-mix spares in austere locations, provided certification and quality assurance are properly codified.

Talent: The Decisive Edge

Hardware can be bought; talent must be built. The booming sector faces an acute need for

people who understand missions, code, systems, and ethics.

- **The Veteran Advantage:** Veterans bring doctrinal fluency, operational context, risk triage, and the ability to make decisions with incomplete information—traits highly prized in fast-moving defence programmes. Translating operational experience into product roles (such as operations, test, field engineering, or project management) is often the key unlock.
- **Cross-skilling:** The best teams pair former operators with software engineers, data scientists, RF specialists, and safety engineers. Micro-credentials and on-the-job pipelines frequently beat lengthy degree detours.
- **Clearance Bottlenecks:** Streamlined adjudication and reciprocity initiatives help, but companies still need unclassified development paths to onboard talent quickly and protect development velocity.
- **Ethical Grounding:** Autonomy, data utilisation, and cyber operations raise hard questions. Clear command responsibility, rigorous test regimes, and human-on-the-loop designs are not optional extras; they are essential to legitimacy and control.

Alliances and Interoperability: Force Multipliers

In a boom, it is tempting for nations to go it alone, yet the most durable gains are collective.

- Common standards and shared data models allow allied sensors and shooters to connect with minimal friction. Interoperability shouldn't be a post-award integration tax; it must be an upfront design choice.
- Co-development and co-production spread costs, speed up delivery, and build political resilience. They also demand exportable designs and early alignment on technology release.



FORCES NETWORK
CONNECT • COLLABORATE • GROW

TALENT: THE DECISIVE EDGE

BUILDING A DEFENCE ECOSYSTEM WHERE PEOPLE, TECHNOLOGY AND PURPOSE CONVERGE

 AI & AUTONOMY

 CYBERSECURITY

 SPACE SYSTEMS

 DIGITAL TWIN

 ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

 SECURE CLOUD INFRASTRUCTURE

BUY



HARDWARE
CAPITAL | PLATFORMS | SYSTEMS



**HARDWARE CAN BE BOUGHT.
TALENT MUST BE BUILT.**

BUILD



TALENT
PEOPLE | SKILLS | CULTURE

1 VETERAN ADVANTAGE
EXPERIENCE. DISCIPLINE. ADAPTABILITY.



-  DOCTRINAL FLUENCY
-  OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE
-  DECISION-MAKING UNDER UNCERTAINTY
-  FIELD ENGINEERING
-  TESTING & EVALUATION
-  OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT
-  PROJECT MANAGEMENT

2 CROSS-SKILLING
DIVERSE MINDS, SHARED MISSION.



VETERAN OPERATOR

SOFTWARE ENGINEER

DATA SCIENTIST

RF SPECIALIST

SAFETY ENGINEER

MICRO-CREDENTIALS

DOMAIN AGNOSTIC LEARNING

COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

RAPID ADAPTATION

3 CLEARANCE BOTTLENECKS
ACCESS FASTER. BUILD SOONER.



-  STREAMLINED ONBOARDING
-  ACCELERATED CLEARANCES
-  TIERED ACCESS FRAMEWORK
-  UNCLASSIFIED DEVELOPMENT PATHS
-  TRUSTED TALENT NETWORKS

4 ETHICAL GROUNDING
INNOVATE RESPONSIBLY. WIN TRUST.



 HUMAN OVERSIGHT

 COMMAND RESPONSIBILITY

 AUTONOMY GOVERNANCE

 CYBER ETHICS

 TESTING & VALIDATION

 ACCOUNTABILITY BY DESIGN

{ < PURPOSE DRIVEN INNOVATION
TRUSTED. TRANSPARENT. ACCOUNTABLE /> }

TALENT IS THE ULTIMATE FORCE MULTIPLIER

ATTRACT • DEVELOP • EMPOWER • RETAIN • LEAD

 STRONGER CAPABILITIES

 RESILIENT SUPPLY CHAINS

 ATMANIRBHAR BHARAT

 GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

 NATIONAL SECURITY

PEOPLE BUILD SYSTEMS. SYSTEMS DEFEND NATIONS.

- Joint training, especially in the information and electromagnetic domains, builds deep trust in each other's systems and tactics. Exercises that stress networks and logistics—not just kinematics—pay massive dividends.

Risks to Manage

Booms can breed overreach. Leaders should keep a close eye on:

- **Hype cycles:** Not every demonstrator scales, and not every AI model survives contact with an electronically denied environment. Insist on measures of effectiveness tied to operational outcomes, not marketing sizzle.
- **Supply-chain fragility:** Single-source components, rare-earth dependencies, and legacy fabrication facilities can stall programmes. Dual sourcing and strategic reserves are insurance policies, not luxuries.
- **Cyber debt:** Rushing software to the field without secure development and patching pipelines invites compromise. Threats don't wait for formal milestones.
- **Budget whiplash:** Election cycles and macroeconomics can rapidly swing priorities. Structuring programmes with graceful degradation paths and preserving options protects against shock.
- **Workforce burnout:** High tempo without mission clarity erodes retention. Clear purpose, flexible career pathways, and leadership that listens matter just as much in industry as they do in uniform.

What This Means for Veterans?

If you have served, the booming defence sector needs you—not as a token military liaison, but as a core builder of credible capability.

- **Map your experience to outcomes:** Did you keep a communications net alive under pressure? That is reliability engineering and incident response. Did you plan logistics for dispersed

operations? That is supply optimisation under real-world constraints. Frame your stories around problems solved and effects delivered.

- Learn just enough tech to be dangerous (in a good way): A certificate in cloud fundamentals, basic Python, RF basics, or systems thinking can bridge conversations with engineers and shorten development cycles.
- Aim for roles at the mission edge: Field engineering, test and evaluation, deployment success, and product management for operator-facing tools all richly reward your operational intuition.
- Guardrails matter: Bring your voice to discussions about autonomy limits, data governance, and safe employment. Credibility in the room often comes from those who understand the consequences firsthand.
- Network across the stack: Primes, suppliers, and startups each see different pieces of the puzzle. The veterans who can translate across these distinct cultures will amplify their impact.

Conclusion: The Next Era of Deterrence

The defence sector's boom is not a passing blip; it is a structural response to a more contested world and to technologies that are collapsing the distance between sensing and action. Money and mandate alone won't win the future fight.

The future demands systems that are resilient by design, software that can evolve in contact, supply chains that can surge, alliances that can truly interoperate, and people—many of them veterans—who can weld mission truth to technical possibility.

For those leaving the service or long since transitioned, this is a rare window to shape the next era of deterrence and defence. The work is demanding and the stakes are high, but the opportunity is profound: to build tools that keep faith with those still on the line, and to ensure that in the decisive moments, our forces

are faster, clearer-eyed, and better supported than any adversary they face.

About the Author

Lt Col Mrinal Kanti Nath was commissioned into the ASSAM Regiment in June 1988. Following a long and enriching career in the corporate world both in India and abroad, he is a seasoned business leader and security professional with over three decades of experience spanning administration, corporate security, risk management, compliance, and strategic operations across diverse industries. Throughout his career, he has successfully led large-scale functions within manufacturing, infrastructure, telecommunications, and multinational environments—consistently delivering operational excellence while safeguarding organizational assets and reputation.



**Those who fear appearing
foolish rarely discover
anything new. The genius of
tomorrow often looks like an
idiot today.**

Defence Industry – The Next Frontier for Veterans

By
Brig Krishna Raj Nambiar

"The only source of knowledge is experience."
— Albert Einstein

This article is an in-depth strategic analysis and career transition guide for military veterans, ex-servicemen, Short Service Commission officers, and retiring defence personnel aged 25–45 planning their corporate journey into the defence sector.

1. The Crucible of Transition: Bridging Two Worlds

For many military professionals, the day they hang up the uniform is met with a mixture of quiet pride and profound uncertainty. Transitioning from the highly structured, mission-driven environment of the armed forces into the civilian corporate world—typically between the ages of 25 and 45—is less of a career move and more of a cultural migration. Young veterans, particularly Short Service Commission (SSC) officers and retiring defence personnel, frequently find themselves grappling with a sudden loss of identity, a mismatch in corporate terminology, and the daunting challenge of translating battle-procedure oriented leadership into Corporate ambiguity



Your next Sortie is not too far away...

The civilian corporate landscape can initially feel transactional, fragmented, sparsely ambiguous and lacking the singular, unyielding focus that defines military life. In the military, objectives are clear, command structures are absolute, and the sense of purpose is existential. In contrast, corporate environments often feature multi-dimensional matrix structures, shifting quarter-to-quarter financial priorities, and an emphasis on soft influence over direct execution. This gap often leads to the 'transition trap'—where highly capable officers settle for entry-level security or administrative roles that underutilize their true potential. However, a massive shift is underway. As India's industrial and technological landscape evolves, there is one sector that perfectly bridges this

cultural and professional chasm: the modern, rapidly expanding defence and aerospace industry.

2. The Unseen Arsenal: Transferable Veteran Capabilities

What makes a young veteran uniquely suited for high-stakes corporate roles in the modern economy? The answer lies in their foundational training and lived experience. While civilian professionals spend years studying management theories in business schools, veterans have lived and executed those theories in the most unforgiving, high-stress crucibles. Several core competencies make veterans an invaluable asset to the corporate world:

- **Crisis Management & High-Pressure Decision Making:** Military officers are trained to operate in VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous) environments. When a corporate supply chain collapses, a cyber breach occurs, or a market pivot is required, veterans bring a calm, analytical approach to crisis management that prevents panic and drives structured problem-solving.
- **Operational Planning & Logistics:** The military is, at its core, a massive logistics and execution machine. Planning a multi-

regiment deployment, managing extensive equipment supply lines, and coordinating complex inter-service manoeuvres require exceptional program management skills. These skills translate directly to running large-scale corporate operations, factory floors, and global supply networks.

- **Mission-Focused Leadership and Team Alignment:** In the corporate world, alignment is often a challenge. Veterans excel at building highly cohesive, trust-based teams. They understand the 'Commander's Intent'—empowering subordinates to make decisions that align with the ultimate mission goal even when conditions change. This decentralization of execution paired with centralization of purpose is a game-changer for high-growth tech firms and manufacturing units.
- **Unwavering Discipline & Ethical Standards:** Corporate governance, compliance, and risk management require a high degree of personal integrity and institutional discipline. Veterans bring an ingrained sense of duty and zero-tolerance for ethical compromises, which is highly prized in highly regulated industries like defence manufacturing, aerospace, and finance.



The Veteran Advantage

3. The Indian Defence Renaissance: An Unprecedented Opportunity

For decades, India's defence sector was dominated by heavy imports and state-owned enterprises. Today, the nation is witnessing a historic paradigm shift, catalysed by the government's visionary policies: Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India) and Make in India. With a rising national focus on self-reliance, the domestic private sector has transitioned from being mere sub-contractors to becoming primary system integrators. This revolution is creating a gold rush of employment opportunities tailored specifically for those who understand both the military requirements and industrial execution.

Government mandates such as positive indigenisation lists (which ban the import of hundreds of military items), increased foreign direct investment (FDI) limits, and dedicated defence procurement categories for domestic design and manufacturing (IDDM) have forced private conglomerates and global OEMs to set up extensive local operations. Furthermore, the establishment of the Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridors is centralizing state-of-the-art manufacturing hubs.

For Instance, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, Agra, Aligarh and Chitrakoot are designated for specific hubs. Private aerospace giants, conglomerates, and deep-tech startups are scaling up their infrastructure at an explosive rate. To run these complex facilities, manage government relations, design tactical solutions, and execute complex international supply chains, the industry needs a workforce that speaks both corporate and military languages. This is where young veterans come in as the ultimate strategic bridge.

4. Frontline Verticals: Where the Opportunities Lie

For transitioning officers looking to build a high-impact second career, the defence industry is not a monolith. It spans several highly dynamic, technologically advanced verticals:

- **Aerospace and Advanced Manufacturing:** From tactical fighter jet components to advanced helicopter assemblies, Indian private enterprises are partnering with global aerospace giants (like Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and Airbus) to build state-of-the-art facilities. Specific parts of Chinook for eg Crown



The Veteran Advantage

and Tail sections are being made in India in Adibatla, Hyderabad by TASL a TATA venture. Veterans with technical, engineering, or aviation maintenance backgrounds are highly sought-after to form part of these factories, manage rigorous quality control systems, and manage more.

- **Drones and Unmanned Systems:** The tactical utility of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and autonomous systems has exploded. A vibrant ecosystem of drone startups and mature companies is designing next-generation tactical, surveillance, and heavy-payload cargo drones. Veterans who have operated these systems in active duty, understood operational bottlenecks, or managed communications networks are uniquely equipped to steer product management, field testing, and business development in this space, Take for example Vayumandal, Johnette and Zen tech.
- **iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence)** is the flagship initiative of the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, launched in 2018 to foster technology development and innovation in the defence

and aerospace sectors. It engages startups, MSMEs, and individual innovators to solve technological challenges faced by the Indian Armed Forces.

- **Defence Technology & Deep-Tech Startups:** Supported by the government's iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) scheme, hundreds of deep-tech startups are developing software-defined radios, advanced materials, and AI-enabled battle management systems. These companies need operationally experienced leaders who can articulate military pain points to software developers and design intuitive products for active-duty personnel.
- **Cybersecurity and AI Systems:** Modern warfare is fought as much in the digital realm as on the physical battlefield. Corporations building cyber defence mechanisms, secure satellite communications, and tactical AI-enabled command software actively recruit veterans from the Signals, Intelligence, and Technical corps to lead cyber response units and design robust corporate defence architectures.

• • Examples of Indian Corporations and Veteran Roles

Corporation	Defence/Cyber Domain	Typical Roles for Veterans
Tata Advanced Systems Limited	Defence electronics, UAVs, military communications	Cyber security managers, programme managers, systems integration
Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)	Radars, secure communications, electronic warfare	Technical consultants, network security specialists, project leaders
Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)	Avionics, aerospace systems, secure data networks	Systems engineers, cybersecurity coordinators, quality assurance heads
Larsen & Toubro Defence	Naval systems, command-and-control systems	Defence project managers, systems architects
Adani Defence & Aerospace	UAVs, surveillance systems, border security technology	Intelligence analysts, operations managers, cyber-security advisors

- **Logistics, MRO, and Procurement:** Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) for complex land, naval, and air platforms is a multi-billion dollar market. Veterans who have managed large ordnance depots, field workshops, and shipyards can seamlessly transition into corporate roles managing large-scale operations, supply chains, and international strategic partnerships.

- **Examples of Defence MRO Companies Recruiting Veterans**

Company/Organisation	MRO Domain	Suitable Veteran Background
Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)	Aircraft overhaul, engine maintenance, avionics upgrades	Air Force technical officers, EME officers, aviation maintenance personnel
Air Works	Aircraft maintenance and repair	Air Force engineering branches, naval aviation technicians
Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)	Radar, communication and weapon system maintenance	Signals Corps, Air Defence, Electronics specialists
Larsen & Toubro Defence	Naval platforms, submarine systems, weapons integration	Naval engineers, EME officers, dockyard managers
Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Limited	Warship and submarine refits	Naval architects, marine engineers, dockyard veterans
Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers	Naval vessel maintenance and lifecycle support	Naval engineering officers, logistics managers
Cochin Shipyard Limited	Ship repair, naval vessel overhaul	Naval dockyard personnel, marine engineers
Tata Advanced Systems Limited	Aerospace systems support and lifecycle maintenance	Aviation technicians, logistics and maintenance officers
Ashok Leyland Defence	Military vehicle support and fleet maintenance	Army Service Corps, EME, workshop commanders
BEML Limited	Armoured and tactical vehicle maintenance	EME officers, ordnance specialists

5. Strategic Corporate Roles Suited for Veterans

Veterans do not need to settle for secondary, low-impact roles. The modern corporate ecosystem values their leadership at the highest levels. Here are the prominent functional areas where veterans thrive:

- **Program & Project Managers:** Defence contracts involve multi-year timelines, complex engineering tolerances, and extensive compliance tracking. A veteran's capability to orchestrate large, multi-disciplinary teams toward a singular objective makes them ideal for directing multi-million dollar capital expenditure projects.
- Not surprisingly - one would find people like the dashing Col Arvind Mulimani Retd, ex AD College Instructor, now Vice President at Zen Technologies, speaking on 'Aaj Tak' at an exhibition on Zen anti drone technology at Prayagraj recently.
- **Heads of Operations & Plant Directors:** Leading a manufacturing plant involves resource optimization, workflow scheduling, labour relations, and safety protocols—tasks that are remarkably

similar to commanding a military unit or base. Veterans manage these demanding environments with natural authority and operational efficiency.

- **Strategic Alliances & Government Sales:** Navigating military procurement pipelines, offset obligations, and bureaucratic approval channels is highly complex. Veterans understand the procedural intricacies of the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces, making them highly effective business development and alliance leaders for domestic and international defence firms.
- **Enterprise Risk and Supply Chain Security:** Modern corporate operations are highly vulnerable to geopolitical disruptions and cyber threats. Veterans bring structural thinking to global risk mapping, supply chain continuity planning, and strategic intelligence, protecting the business from unforeseen tail-end risks.

6. Bridging the Gap: Skills Conversion & Certifications

The key to a successful transition lies in translating military experience into civilian c



Col Arvind P Mulimani, VP Projects at Prayagraj exhibition for Zen Tech.

corporate currency. This process requires deliberate strategic planning:

- **Acquire Corporate Certifications:** Earning a Project Management Professional (PMP) or Agile Scrum Master certification instantly translates military planning into a universally recognized corporate lexicon. For tech-focused roles, certifications in AWS/Azure Cloud Architecture, CISSP (Cybersecurity), or Six Sigma Black Belt are highly valued.
- **Leverage Executive Education:** Enrolling in specialized post-graduate programs for transitioning officers at premium business schools (like the Indian Institutes of Management - IIMs or the Indian School of Business - ISB) provides an essential foundation in corporate finance, microeconomics, corporate law, and business strategy.
- **Don't Translate Your Resume Verbatim:** Never use military jargon on a civilian resume. Replace 'Commanded a company of 150 soldiers with heavy artillery' with 'Led and developed a high-performing operations department of 150 specialists, managing over \$20M in strategic capital assets under dynamic and stressful operating environments.'
- **AI Angle in HR -** As of now there are ATS compatible AI acceptable resumes with Key words and Standard Layouts that can get you across the HR Bot Rubicon to Success!
- **Active Networking and Mentorship:** Build a highly optimized professional profile on LinkedIn. Reach out to the military-to-corporate alumni network. Transitioning veterans are remarkably supportive of their own—mentorship from those who have walked the path is the single most valuable resource for understanding corporate culture.

8. Conclusion: Welcome to the "Veteran Advantage Era"

The next decade is hopefully set to be India's 'Veteran Advantage Era'—a historic window of opportunity where military experience is no longer viewed merely as public service, but as a strategic national asset capable of shaping the country's technological and industrial sovereignty. The transition into the corporate world will undoubtedly present initial friction. Navigating a boardroom requires different conversational nuances than commanding a regiment, but the core values remain completely unchanged. Integrity, operational excellence, rapid adaptability, and a commitment to the collective mission are the ultimate currencies of success in both worlds.

If you are planning your transition, do not view it as leaving the mission behind. View it as continuing the mission under a different uniform. The defence industry is calling for your leadership, your expertise, and your strategic vision. Beyond the uniform lies a vast, highly rewarding industrial frontier. Step forward with confidence, map your transition strategy, and take command of your corporate destiny.

About the Author

Commissioned in 1987 into the Artillery, he was awarded the 'Silver Gun' in the Young Officers course. As an Aviator he had extensive operational tenures in the Arunachal, Nagaland and Ladakh including Siachen Glacier. With 1500 hours of operational flying, he took part in OP MEGDOOT and OP Vijay in Kargil. He has been an instructor in the SC wing at Army war college. In the senior ranks, in the military, he commanded two operational Brigades. After early release from service, he has been in the corporate sector for past eight years. The range of experience includes Real estate, Shipping and Textile industry as a Vice president. He is a speaker at international seminars on ESG and Geopolitics. A Law graduate from Osmania University, he has recently qualified on ESG and Environmental sciences course from JNU. As a PhD in Political Science Dr Krishna raj Nambiar has taken up writing on a wide range of contemporary and Geopolitical issues. Recently, under the Corporate Affairs, he is a certified "Independent director" in the IICA databank. He is presently enhancing the excellence amongst the young generation with mentorship at a Coaching institution in Hyderabad.



*Brig (Dr.) Krishna Raj Nambiar (Retd), Ph D,
LLB. PGDHR*

**The loudest signals come
from the emptiest sources.
Those who truly possess
something rarely need to
announce it.**

Same War. Different Uniform.

By
Col N Selva Kumar

India's defence sector is not just growing — it is calling for the one resource private industry cannot manufacture: operational domain knowledge. The question is no longer whether the opportunity exists. It is whether you will seize it.



Most veterans, on retirement, face a familiar fork in the road: a security role that pays adequately but rarely rewards the full depth of their training, or a corporate role built on the fiction that a Commission or service record translates directly into a business function. Neither is unworthy. But there is now a third road — one that did not exist a decade ago, and one that fits the military professional far more naturally than the other two.

India's defence exports stood at ₹686 crore in FY2013–14. By FY2025–26, they crossed ₹38,424 crore — a more-than-50-fold rise. Domestic production reached ₹1,54,000 crore in FY2024–25. The Union Budget 2026–27 allocated a record ₹7.85 lakh crore to defence, with ₹1.39 lakh crore — approximately 75% of the capital acquisition budget — reserved for domestic industry. Operation Sindoor in May 2025 validated indigenous platforms in live conditions, converting global scepticism into export inquiries from over 80 countries.

The sector is structurally transforming — and it has a critical gap that money and policy alone cannot fill.

Section I · The Gap That Veterans Must Fill

India Has the Policy. It Needs the People.

Private industry has entered the defence space in force — but it is still learning to think defence. Three structural gaps persist across companies, MSMEs, and start-ups now entering the sector:

Operational Context: Engineering teams understand technology. They rarely understand how it behaves when operated by

a fatigued soldier at altitude, a sailor on a pitching deck, or a pilot under G-load. Soldier-proofing, ruggedisation, electromagnetic vulnerability, and tactical ergonomics are the difference between a product that passes trials and one that gets returned from the field.

—Process and Standards: GSQR formulation, qualification regimes, user trial conduct, and interaction with line directorates and test agencies are opaque to civilian entrants. Without guidance, companies lose years and crores navigating procedures that a veteran can decode in days.

—Problem Formulation: The most common failure in defence innovation is technology-push — building solutions to problems the user has already solved. Veterans who have drafted staff requirements or participated in ORBAT planning can prevent this before a single rupee is spent on prototyping.

"India has engineering talent and policy support. What it lacks is people who think in terms of missions, doctrines, and theatre realities. That is the language veterans live and breathe."

Section II · Where Veterans Fit — Precisely

Four Roles. One Common Thread: Irreplaceable Domain Knowledge.

1. Mentor and Technical Advisor — The most immediate entry. Veterans embedded in defence-tech start-ups can refine iDEX challenge interpretations into operational scenarios, guide design trade-offs, and prevent costly course corrections. No capital outlay. Monetises your experience from day one.

2. Core Team Member — A principal with accountability — not a consultant on the side. Veterans leading product development, quality assurance, user trials, or supply chain operations bring institutional literacy that no MBA can simulate: what a line directorate evaluates, what a Trial User Board looks for, and what causes a system to fail acceptance before the company discovers it the expensive way.

3. Procurement and Compliance Specialist — The DPM 2025, effective November 2025, governs approximately ₹1 lakh crore in annual revenue procurement — spares, repairs, MRO, and operational readiness needs of the Armed Forces. Veterans can guide MSMEs through revenue procurement processes, vendor qualification, and DPSU registration under DPM 2025 — and separately, through capital acquisition categories and offset obligations under the DAP — creating a high-value consulting practice from what you already know.

4. iDEX Entrepreneur — Veterans know where the gaps are because they operated with them and found workarounds. iDEX challenges are formulated around precisely these pain points. Veterans who co-found start-ups to address them begin from operational truth, not a market survey — and engage user agencies with credibility no corporate presentation can replicate.

Section III · The Funding Ecosystem: Know Your Arsenal

Real Money. Genuine Access. Four Entry Points.

iDEX — Innovations for Defence Excellence (ddpmod.gov.in/idx)

SPARK grant: up to ₹1.5 crore. iDEX Prime: up to ₹10 crore. ADITI scheme (2024): up to ₹25 crore for 30 critical technologies — AI, quantum, anti-drone, adaptive camouflage. Budget: ₹498.78 crore (FY2021–26). Nearly 300 innovators supported. Over 1,000 defence start-ups now active in India's ecosystem.

TDF — Technology Development Fund (tdf.drdo.gov.in)

MoD programme executed by DRDO. Grant-in-aid up to ₹50 crore per project — covering up to 90% of project cost. Targets MSMEs, start-ups, and academic institutions. 80+ projects worth ~₹335 crore sanctioned. 18 technologies successfully transferred to users. Areas: aerospace, AI, robotics, photonics, high-power lasers, naval technologies.

Srijan Portal — Indigenisation Market place (srijandefence.gov.in)

MoD's dedicated indigenisation marketplace, launched 2020. DPSUs and Service HQs list items they need industry to manufacture domestically. Over 36,000 items offered to date; items on Positive Indigenisation Lists carry an import embargo once indigenised — assured procurement by design. Also functions as vendor registration platform linking directly to HAL, BEL, BDL, BEML, and other DPSUs. The most concrete starting point for veteran-led MSMEs.

Make Procedure under Draft DAP 2026

Make-I: up to 70% government-funded for high-risk critical technologies (capped at ₹400 crore per Development Agency). Make-II and Make-III: industry-funded for new development and import substitution. DAP 2026 gives iDEX and TDF-developed technologies a separate, dedicated acquisition chapter — explicitly linking innovation outcomes to procurement pathways.

Note: DAP 2026 was released as a draft in February 2026 and is pending final notification.

"You are not an applicant. You are the subject-matter expert these schemes are looking for."

Section IV · A Realistic Call to Action

Stop Transitioning. Start Commanding.

The security industry will always offer positions. Corporate India will always have roles for disciplined professionals. But the defence sector offers something neither can match: a mission continuous with the one you spent your career executing. You are not changing industries. You are changing your position in the same fight.

—**Map your experience:** Match your service background — weapons, logistics, signals, aviation, EME, or intelligence — against iDEX challenge statements, TDF project requirements, and the Positive Indigenisation

Lists on Srijan.

—**Register on Srijan:** Browse over 36,000 items listed for indigenisation. Identify what your domain knowledge can help develop. Contact the relevant DPSU or Service HQ directly — this is an active marketplace, not a notice board.

—**Engage the ecosystem:** Attend SIDM events and DefExpo. Connect with iDEX alumni and TDF-funded start-ups. Talk to private defence companies — not about a job, but about a problem they cannot solve.

—**Follow the three-phase sequence:** Enter as advisor (terrain reconnaissance). Deepen into a core role or consulting engagement (establishing contact). Then commit — full-time leadership, co-founder, or your own iDEX/TDF venture (seizing the objective).

"This is not a transition out of defence. It is a redeployment — to the industrial front where India's next generation of military capability will be built, or lost."



Stop Transitioning and Start Commanding

The Positive Indigenisation Lists, DPM 2025, iDEX, TDF, and the Srijan portal have created the most favourable structural conditions in independent India's history for veteran-led participation in defence manufacturing. The question is not whether the sector needs you. The question is: in which role — mentor, core team member, procurement specialist, Srijan MSME partner, TDF applicant, or iDEX entrepreneur — are you willing to step into the arena?

The objective is in sight. Move forward.

Disclaimer: Sources & Data Notes

Union Budget 2026–27 (PIB, Feb 2026); MoD Annual Reports; DPM 2025 (MoD, effective 1 Nov 2025); Draft DAP 2026 (MoD, released Feb 2026, pending final notification); iDEX/ADITI/SPARK documentation (ddpmod.gov.in); TDF Scheme (tdf.drdo.gov.in); Positive Indigenisation List notifications (PIB); Srijan portal public dashboard (srijandefence.gov.in). All figures from published government sources; none extrapolated.

About the Author

Colonel N Selva Kumar (Retd), M.Tech, MBA, Six Sigma Black Belt, was commissioned into the Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) in December 1988 and served for over three decades in technically demanding roles spanning every phase of the defence equipment lifecycle — user, maintainer, designer, tester, trial-and-acceptance authority, obsolescence manager, indigenisation lead, and quality assurance oversight within DGQA. He has taught Core Engineering, Quality Management Systems, Project Management, and Six Sigma at the institutional level. Since retirement, he has headed a defence manufacturing company and currently serves as Chief Executive Officer of a pan-India defence enabling firm, providing strategic advisory across defence acquisition, indigenisation, quality assurance, and programme management. His career has not merely observed India's defence industrial transformation — it has contributed to it at every stage.



Col N Selva Kumar

Discipline is cheaper than regret.

From Operator to Innovator

By
Sandeep Kaul

Why your experience is not the problem



The Meeting Nobody Prepared Him For

The meeting had been running for forty minutes. Sprint review. A product team of eight, mostly engineers in their late twenties, walking through a two-week development cycle for a sensor integration module going into a border surveillance system.

In that room sits an officer with thirty years of defence experience who has overseen sensor deployment across forward operating areas. Field calibration. Maintenance cycles. Operator training for equipment worth several hundred crore. He sits through the meeting without saying a word.

Not because he has nothing to contribute. Because he cannot find the entry point.

Nobody asks a question he recognises. The meeting ends. Two action items are assigned. Neither is to him.

The Sector is Real. The Friction Is Real Too.

Since 2020, categories of defence manufacturing previously closed to private players have opened. The sector is not waiting for officers to arrive. The question is whether officers will arrive ready.

Every retiring officer walking into this sector carries relevant experience. The problem is that it is in a format the civilian world is not trained to interpret.

The Legibility Problem

A startup's hiring manager, often a civilian engineer or a Founder who has built systems but never operated them outside a lab, reads a service record and sees two things: something impressive and something opaque. The impressive part is legible enough.

Rank, scale, responsibility. The opaque part is harder to crack. What did you decide? What failed under your watch? What did you change mid-operation, and how do you know it worked?



A Sprint Review Meeting in Progress

These are product management questions. The officer has answered all of them, thousands of times, under conditions no product manager has faced.

The hiring manager is not being dismissive. He does not have the interpretive framework. A service record is not a CV in any format he was trained to evaluate. He cannot map a brigade logistics command onto a supply chain role without help. He cannot see that an officer who has run field communications under operational stress has done more stakeholder management under pressure than most programme managers will do in a career. Closing that gap is the officer's problem to solve. The hiring manager will not solve it for him.

Where The Translation Pays Off

Product management suits officers who have written operation orders, coordinated across multiple stakeholders with competing priorities, and been accountable for outcomes they did not fully control. The vocabulary is

learnable. User stories, sprint cycles, acceptance criteria. The underlying discipline takes years to build. Thinking clearly under ambiguity. Closing the loop without a chain of command doing it for you. Most product managers are still working on this. An officer who has executed a joint operation across three service arms, on a compressed timeline, with incomplete information, has run a product cycle. He has simply never called it that.

Testing and validation suits officers who have run equipment trials, overseen field evaluation, or managed acceptance testing for new platforms. Defence-tech startups prototype fast and break things early. They need people who can pressure-test systems against operational reality, not just bench specifications. That comes from having been the person who finds out, in the field, what the spec got wrong. An officer who has taken delivery of a new weapons platform, identified its failure modes under operational conditions, and fed that back into a procurement process has done exactly what a



Where the Translation Pays Off

validation lead does. The job title is new. The job is not.

Operational leadership for deployment and supply is where logistics and ordnance experience lands most directly. A private defence contractor scaling from prototype to production needs people who understand supply chains where the schedule is not negotiable and the consequences of slipping are not a boardroom conversation. An officer who has sustained a forward operating base, managed inventory across dispersed locations, and kept a supply chain intact under hostile conditions has already done the hardest version of this work. The officer who has run that environment for thirty years is not being hired into something adjacent to his experience. He is being hired into the centre of it.

The Work That Has to Be Done First

None of this is automatic.

The officer who walks into a defence-tech startup expecting his record to speak for itself will wait a long time. The vocabulary gap is real. Sprint reviews and product backlogs will stay opaque until someone does the work of mapping them onto the operational thinking already in place.

That mapping is not complicated. Spend time with product management fundamentals, not to get certified, but to acquire the vocabulary. Understand how civilian teams structure accountability, measure progress, and talk about failure. Read how startups think about their users, their constraints, and their timelines. The officer has done this kind of preparation before, walking into a new command with unfamiliar terrain, unfamiliar equipment, unfamiliar people. This is the same task in a different context.

Once the vocabulary is in place, the experience becomes readable. And when the experience is readable, the conversation changes entirely.



From Orders to Outcomes

About the Author

Sandeep Kaul has spent forty-plus years in advertising, branding, and marketing communications. He is a Fauji Kid and is based at New Delhi. He has a lot of Faujis around him in his immediate family. He runs Ideawize Communication Design. Nobody taught him most of what he knows. He considers this an advantage.

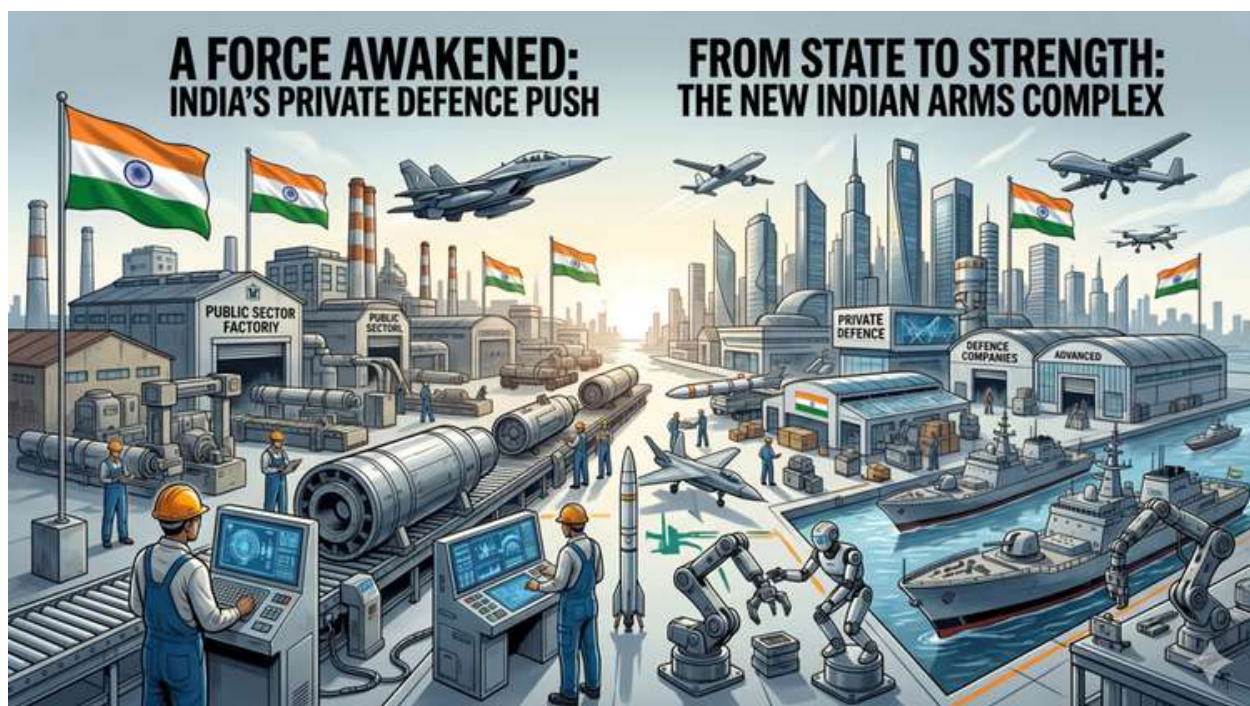


Sandeep Kaul

"Sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together."

Privatisation of the Indian Defence Industry

By
Cdr Rupak Berry(Retd)



The Evolution of the Indian Defence Sector

Introduction: The Evolution of India's Defence Sector

For decades, India's defence ecosystem was bound by a paradox: while our frontline soldiers faced highly volatile borders, the bureaucratic machinery driving their weaponry remained slow, rigid, and deeply risk-averse. Born out of an era defined by massive hardware imports from the erstwhile Soviet Union, the nation's strategic posture was anchored tightly within state-controlled silos. A formidable, impenetrable trinity—comprising the DRDO, Defence PSUs, and the Ministry of Defence—held an absolute monopoly over military research and production. For an ambitious private sector, breaking into this ecosystem was nearly impossible. Early pioneers who dared to invest in defence infrastructure or build world-class artillery prototypes found themselves ensnared in a labyrinth of ultra-conservative security protocols, rigid Qualitative Requirements (QRs), and heartbreaking institutional resistance.

Yet, beneath this stagnant surface, a massive tectonic shift was brewing. The turning point arrived when visionary leadership began to question the status quo, realizing that true strategic autonomy could never be achieved on imported tracks or slow-moving bureaucratic timelines. This set off a quiet revolution—a transition from a closed, state-dominated monopoly to an agile, vibrant, and decentralized ecosystem. Today, India stands on the cusp of a bold new era.

Driven by high-octane initiatives like the iDEX - Innovations for Defence Excellence scheme, the old barriers have been completely shattered. The traditional middleman model has been replaced by a radical new paradigm: direct, unhindered collaboration between our battle-ready Armed Forces and the brightest minds in private enterprise, MSMEs, and tech startups. This is the story of how India broke the shackles of a legacy procurement system, unleashed its domestic intellectual capital, and permanently re-engineered its trajectory toward true Atmanirbharta—transforming from a premier global importer into a powerhouse of indigenous military innovation.

The Evolution of the Sector

The Struggle for privatisation of the defence industry. The 1980s and 1990s had seen a massive import of military hardware from the erstwhile Soviet Union. At the same time, DRDO was pursuing major programs such as IGMDP – Integrated Guided Missile Development Program,

Kaveri engine and Rajendra radar along with few PSUs like BEL, BDL, etc. There were very few private players at that time, the major one being L & T defence which was a GOCO (Government Owned & Company Operated) company with 51 % stake of the govt. Hence, it fitted the conservative description of security protocols required to fit into the QRs for defence manufacturing licenses. When Dr. Kalam became the President of India, few people expected that he would break into the strong DRDO-PSU-MOD lobby to privatise the defence sector and convince them to issue the mandatory defence manufacturing licenses. However, this happened at a very slow pace till 2016 when the current govt decided to launch the iDEX scheme similar to the like in Israel and USA. This scheme works on the belief that true R & D is possible only in start-ups since the compact structure allows to focus on a limited area of research. Bigger organisations should only be integrators of technologies provided by start-ups.



Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS / Amogh): Developed jointly by Bharat Forge along with the DRDO and Tata Advanced Systems

Source: DRDO

- The pre- IDEX era. Several attempts were made in the 1990s and from 2000-2014 before the BJP govt came to power to allow private participation in the defence manufacturing sector. Small projects were being executed by L & T defence such as production of the WM 18 Rocket launcher for Indian Navy, installation activities in ships, manufacturing of mechanical and hydraulic assemblies for radars, etc. L & T Defence set up major facilities at Talegaon, Coimbatore and the Katupally shipyard at Chennai. However, most of the shipbuilding orders still went to the PSUs. In addition, Indian Navy still acquired few ships from Korean shipyards thus making Indian shipyards redundant. Meanwhile, Mr. Baba Kalyani from Bharat
- Forge decided to invest in defence R&D irrespective of any orders from Indian Armed Forces. They started developing a heavy duty gun which

could be used by the Indian Army's artillery. Sadly, when the gun was ready for trials, the Indian Army refused to allow the trials on its ranges. Notwithstanding, BFL went to arrange the trials in the USA and completed the same within 2 months. Subsequently, they started manufacturing for export orders and it was not before discussions at high level defence meetings in India that these issues started getting noticed. BFL is now getting orders for guns from the Indian Army.

- The MRSAM program. A classic example of a missed opportunity for privatisation was the MRSAM program which was launched as a joint venture between DRDO and IAI, Israel for the development of the Next generation Barak missile system in 2005. The first contract was for the delivery of 3 systems to Indian Navy over a period of 6 years at a contract value of Rs 2600 crores. As per the offset contract at that time, 30 % of the system was supposed to be produced in

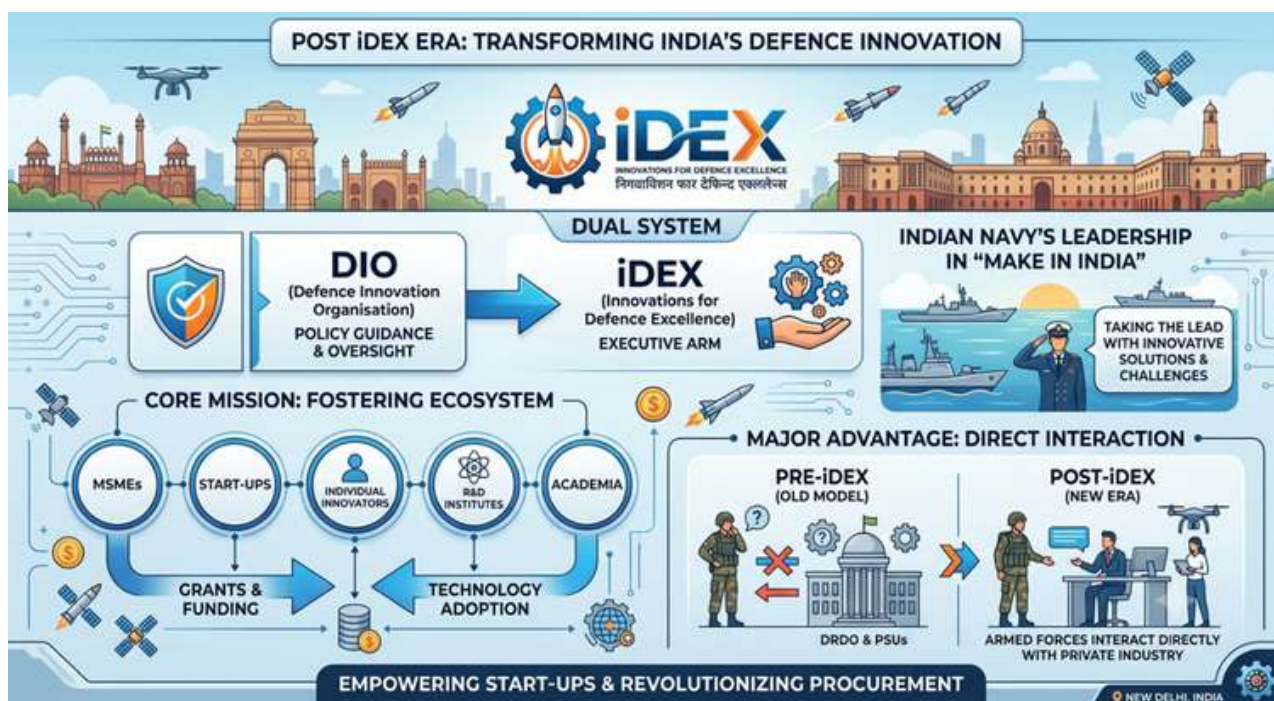


The MRSAM (Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile) System

- India by Indian companies. Accordingly, Tata Advanced Systems was identified as the Lead Integrator which would execute the offset contract for a value of 800 crores. A team was formed with personnel from Indian Navy, Indian Army, BEL and other organisations in 2008 to execute the offset contract. However, after 2-3 years, the same team was disbanded due to failure to obtain defence manufacturing licenses from the government apparently due to objections by DRDO-PSU and MOD. As a result, even after 20 years since the JV was launched, most of the critical components for the project such as the MFSTAR radar, seeker, proximity fuse, etc are still coming from Israel. It is pertinent to mention that a team of 30 DRDO scientist and 10 Naval officers were sent on a permanent deputation to Israel for 3 years as part of the JV in 2006 at a huge cost to the government. The intention was to use them in

indigenising the system after coming back. However, no attempt was made to use the expertise of these personnel and no nodal agency was assigned to take up this task. Hence, as of today, most of these personnel have been assigned to other programs or they have left leaving much of the dependency still on IAI, Israel. Meanwhile, the program was adopted by IAF in 2010 and by Army in 2016 making it one of the biggest programs in the armed forces. The present contract value of the program can be estimated to more than 50,000 crores today. Thus, the program has failed to create the much needed jobs for veterans who could have used their expertise provided an Indian consortium could have been formed with members from private industry, BDL, BEL, DRDL and other players.

- Post IDEX era.** The DIO i.e. Defence Innovation Organisation was created in 2018 along with iDEX i.e. Innovations under Defence Excellence which would function as the executive arm of DIO.



iDEX has Helped Transform the Innovation in the Defence Sector

The Indian Navy has taken a lead as always over the sister services viz. the Army and Air Force in going ahead in a big way over the Make in India initiative. A quick look at the iDEX scheme challenges on their website would be a testimony to this statement. iDEX aims at creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Aerospace and Defence by engaging Industries including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes & academia. It provides them grants/funding and other support to carry out R&D which has good potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs. The main advantage of this scheme was that it allowed Armed forces to interact directly with the private industry unlike earlier when they had to go through only DRDO and PSUs.

- **Present Defence Boom.** Currently, the defence ecosystem in India is booming with many startups emerging in different disciplines. Many opportunities have been created mainly with a funding of 1-2 crores as part of iDEX challenges. These challenges provide an opportunity for startups to start with small projects and then use the Intellectual Property IP created to adapt in other projects both in India and abroad. These projects can be scaled up with bigger funding available up to rupees 50 crores from TDF of DRDO. However, few issues are being faced in terms of interaction with the Nodal officers assigned from the Armed forces. Since the armed forces have an experience related mainly to operate, repair and maintain culture, they find it difficult to appreciate issues related to design and development of the equipment. For this, one solution is

indigenising the system after coming back. However, no attempt was made to use the expertise of these personnel and no nodal agency was assigned to take up this task. Hence, as of today, most of these personnel have been assigned to other programs or they have left leaving much of the dependency still on IAI, Israel. Meanwhile, the program was adopted by IAF in 2010 and by Army in 2016 making it one of the biggest programs in the armed forces. The present contract value of the program can be estimated to more than 50,000 crores today. Thus, the program has failed to create the much needed jobs for veterans who could have used their expertise provided an Indian consortium could have been formed with members from private industry, BDL, BEL, DRDL and other players.

- **Post iDEX era.** The DIO i.e. Defence Innovation Organisation was created in 2018 along with iDEX i.e. Innovations under Defence Excellence which would function as the executive arm of DIO. Accordingly, iDEX carries out all the required activities while DIO provides the high level policy guidance to iDEX. The Indian Navy has taken a lead as always over the sister services viz. the Army and Air Force in going ahead in a big way over the Make in India initiative. A quick look at the iDEX scheme challenges on their website would be a testimony to this statement. iDEX aims at creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Aerospace and Defence by engaging Industries including MSMEs, start-ups, individual innovators, R&D institutes & academia. It provides them grants/funding and other support to carry out R&D which has good potential for

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services for indigenisation.

Conclusion: Charting a New Paradigm in Defence Indigenisation

The historical trajectory of India's defence ecosystem underscores a profound truth: systemic transformation requires more than just industrial capability—it demands visionary leadership and a fundamental rewrite of policy architecture. For decades, the nation's reliance on state-controlled monopolies and foreign imports confined private players to the periphery, stifling the competitive spirit and agility necessary for rapid technological breakthroughs. Early private pioneers routinely navigated a complex labyrinth of rigid security protocols, risk-averse procurement pipelines, and institutional resistance, often hitting bureaucratic dead ends despite developing world-class infrastructure and prototypes.

However, the transition from this restrictive pre-iDEX era to a vibrant, startup-driven landscape marks a watershed moment in India's strategic autonomy. By systematically dismantling legacy bottlenecks and fostering direct interaction between the Armed Forces and private innovators, the current framework has unlocked unprecedented creative equity. The paradigm has successfully shifted from capital-intensive, slow-moving development cycles to an agile, localized incubation model where MSMEs and technology startups drive core R&D, and larger entities step in as vital integrators. Additionally, we also need to elevate the quality of our work culture in terms of discipline and professional work to achieve better results.

Ultimately, this evolution is not merely an administrative overhaul; it is a vital catalyst for true Atmanirbharta (self-reliance). The private sector defence ecosystem in India is now offering solutions for many of the imported technologies. Additionally, many technologies are now being exported. However, we still have a lot of dependency on imported components such as laser gyros, accelerometers etc. For this, the big companies need take up the development of critical components in their R & D centres.

As India continues to navigate increasingly complex global geopolitical dynamics, this decentralized, high-tech innovation model ensures that the Indian Armed Forces remain equipped with cutting-edge, secure, and indigenously designed solutions, firmly securing the nation's sovereignty for the decades to come.

About The Author

Commander Berry was commissioned as an electrical engineer in the Indian Navy on 01 Jan 1989. He is a graduate of the National Defence Academy. Subsequently, he has done his Electrical Engineering from the Naval College of Engineering and ME (E & TC) with specialisation in Naval Weapons from DIAT/ Pune University. He is also a French Interpreter. Cdr Berry has served on board Indian warships and shore establishments mainly in the field of design, development and maintenance of Missiles, Radars and other electronic equipment. He is presently working as the Program manager for Guardinger Technologies, a defence startup at Pune.



Cdr Rupak Berry

"Books are a uniquely portable magic."
- Stephen King

Entering the Defence Sector : Lessons From The Journey of Colonelz SharpShooterz

By
Lt Col Jasdeep Singh Nagpal



Our Government Sector Clients

This is a story of a venture that has been setting up Sports Infrastructure and supplying Sports Goods to the Defence Services since 2017. Not typically your 'Defence Sector' setup as it is commonly understood, but the nuances remain the same. And wait - the fortress of the 'Defence Sector' as just mentioned, has been breached as well - so happy reading!

Today, I am going to talk about the journey of **Colonelz SharpShooterz**, which was set up in **2014**. It started as a simple shooting range and **later morphed into a sports infrastructure company in 2017**, when we first began supplying to the Armed Forces.

Come 2026, and we are an **ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 certified company**, fairly well established and supplying to the armed forces across India. We have set up about 70 Shooting Ranges **PAN - INDIA** for Armed Forces Cantts, Army Public Schools, Sainik and Military Schools, as well as civil private institutions, colleges, and universities.

Besides, we are providing air weapons and accessories pan India as well, both to institutions and individual clients.

We have also secured a project for a combat shooting range of the **National Security Guard (NSG) in Delhi**, beating the **No1 vendor in the country in the tender process!**



Some Of the Shooting Ranges Set up

Additionally, we had the opportunity to build a barrel testing shooting range for **Adani Defence (PLR)** for their Small Arms factory near **Gwalior**. This was a very special project for us. We executed the entire range using Israeli technology, without physically meeting the experts. Everything was coordinated through video conferencing with the Israeli Weapon Industries (IWI), and we successfully delivered the rigorous precision standards of the project.

Experience in the Defence Sector -

We have been actively participating in defence projects, through the e-procurement route, including:

- Sports infrastructure
- Equipment supply
- Defence sector projects

Lessons Drawn for Veterans in this Field

So let us go on and understand, as to how and where we can get into the most challenging defence sector. I will not talk about any particular segment but will restrict my words to actions that will be common for all kinds of defence sector acquisitions.

Advantage of Being an Ex-Serviceman

I do not advocate using the position we once held to gain access to sensitive information, which is what most civilian agencies would



Passion Is a Side Effect of Mastery

expect ESMs to do. There is however, a good opportunity of positively using the knowledge gained over years of experience in service.

One of the **biggest advantages of being an ex-serviceman** is our understanding of the procurement process. This is a place where most of us in the Forces Network have a major edge over civilians bidding in the same segment.

- We understand paperwork and procedures.
- We can guide newcomers effectively.
- We help avoid confusion regarding products and specifications.

Many people, especially youngsters, lack awareness about procurement systems. As veterans, we can guide them from the beginning—helping them choose the right product, complete documentation, and move in the right direction. Many a times they would get stuck in objections raised by the IFA, or technical questions to which they do not have direct answers. Guidance from an experienced hand can come in very handy to resolve these issues. Being in business, you now have the experience of seeing the matter at hand from the vendor's end also, so use that well.

Key Insight: Building strong relationships is the first step toward securing contracts. This means building trust and credibility—not seeking favours.

Core Principle: Give Back to the Army

“The Army has given us so much — we must give it back.” This mindset became the foundation of our journey in Colonelz SharpShooterz. When I noticed civilian contractors charging higher prices, I offered

the same equipment at better and fair rates, without compromising on quality.

Mantra of Success

- Focus on quality
- Stick to the right product
- Provide honest guidance
- Maintain reputation
- Understanding the Real Problem

When dealing with the armed forces, quality consciousness is non-negotiable. Your background earns you respect—but it is your responsibility to live up to that trust.

Our Certifications, and How They Help Us

- **ISO 9001 & ISO 14001 certifications:** Establishes trust in the processes being followed by the company.
- **MSME/Udyam Udyog Registration:** Gives major advantage in saving bidding costs. Also, government regulations require tendering authorities to give MSMEs priority in procurement.
- **GeM (Government e-Marketplace) Registration:** Earlier e-procure, and now GeM, have been made compulsory for all procurement.
- **Ongoing DPIIT Certification Process:** Essential for Defence Manufacturing companies
- All Regulatory certifications like GST, IT returns, Bank Mandates, Shop & Establishment Act etc are always kept up to date. These are an essential part of any technical bid and establishes your position as a serious player.
- **Proper Record and Documentation of Completed Projects:** Helps establish your experience in the field you are working in.
- **Make in India:** Preference for Make in India is mandatory in all Defence Sector procurements. A self-certificate generally

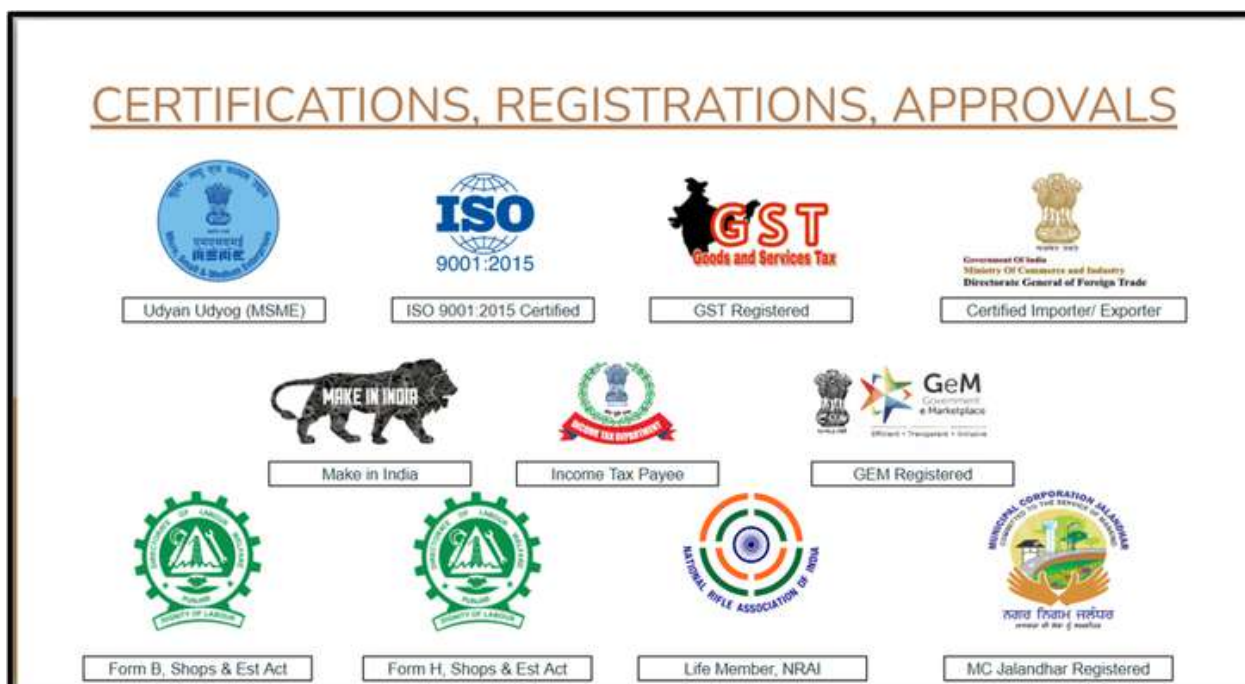
suffices, as to the percentage of the Indigenisation achieved. However, do bear in mind that you would have to achieve the same as well.

Key Advice

Get all required certifications and keep your financials in place to avoid rejection during approvals. Prepare yourself with the right certifications, maintain quality, and focus on solving real problems.

Closing Thoughts - To Everyone Reading This

All the best to all people who are reading this article! Let us, as a veterans' community, contribute positively to the "Make in India" initiative and to the Defence Services we are so proudly a part of.



List of Our Certifications, Registrations and Approvals

About The Author

Lt Col Jasdeep Singh Nagpal, having served in Kargil War, UNMIS, and a former weapons instructor, is an ex 18 JAT officer. Since taking PMR in 2017, the veteran is based in Chandigarh has successfully set up multiple lines of business in the fields of Shooting, Clothing Retail, Real Estate, Education, Farming etc.



Lt Col Jasdeep Singh Nagpal

From Policy to Practice: Navigating India's Defence Procurement System and Enabling MSME Integration

By
Col Guru Saday Batabyal (Retd)



Defence Sector an Opportunity for MSMEs and Others

Introduction

India's defence procurement system has evolved from a largely import-dependent model to one that actively promotes domestic capability and industrial participation. This transition reflects a broader strategic intent: to build indigenous capacity while reducing external vulnerabilities. The Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 stands at the centre of this shift, prioritizing procurement categories that emphasize Indian design, development, and manufacturing.

For civilian Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), this policy shift presents both opportunity and complexity. While access to defence markets has improved, the underlying procurement architecture remains highly structured, compliance-driven, and time-intensive. The challenge for MSMEs, therefore, lies not only in accessing the system but in understanding its cadence: the long timelines, layered approvals, and demanding compliance architectures that define defence acquisition. Understanding how policy translates into practice is therefore critical. As defence analysts have often observed, procurement systems are not merely administrative frameworks but instruments through which states balance efficiency, accountability, and strategic autonomy.

Architecture of Defence Procurement

India's defence procurement system follows a structured decision-making process. At the top is the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), which sets priorities and approves major defence purchases. Below this, the Defence Acquisition Procedure 2020 (DAP 2020) provides the rules and systems for procurement, with a clear focus on promoting equipment made within India.

The main procurement categories—Buy (Indian–Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured [IDDM]), Buy (Indian), and Buy and Make (Indian)—are arranged to prioritise domestic production over imports. This approach reflects a key idea often highlighted in policy discussions: defence strength should not depend only on manufacturing, but also on having control over design and technology.

For Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), participation in this system is mostly indirect. Most MSMEs work as Tier-2 or Tier-3 suppliers within supply chains led by Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) or large private companies. Although they may not have direct contracts with the Ministry of Defence (MoD), this system allows them to develop skills and gradually integrate into the defence sector.

Procurement Lifecycle and Timeframes

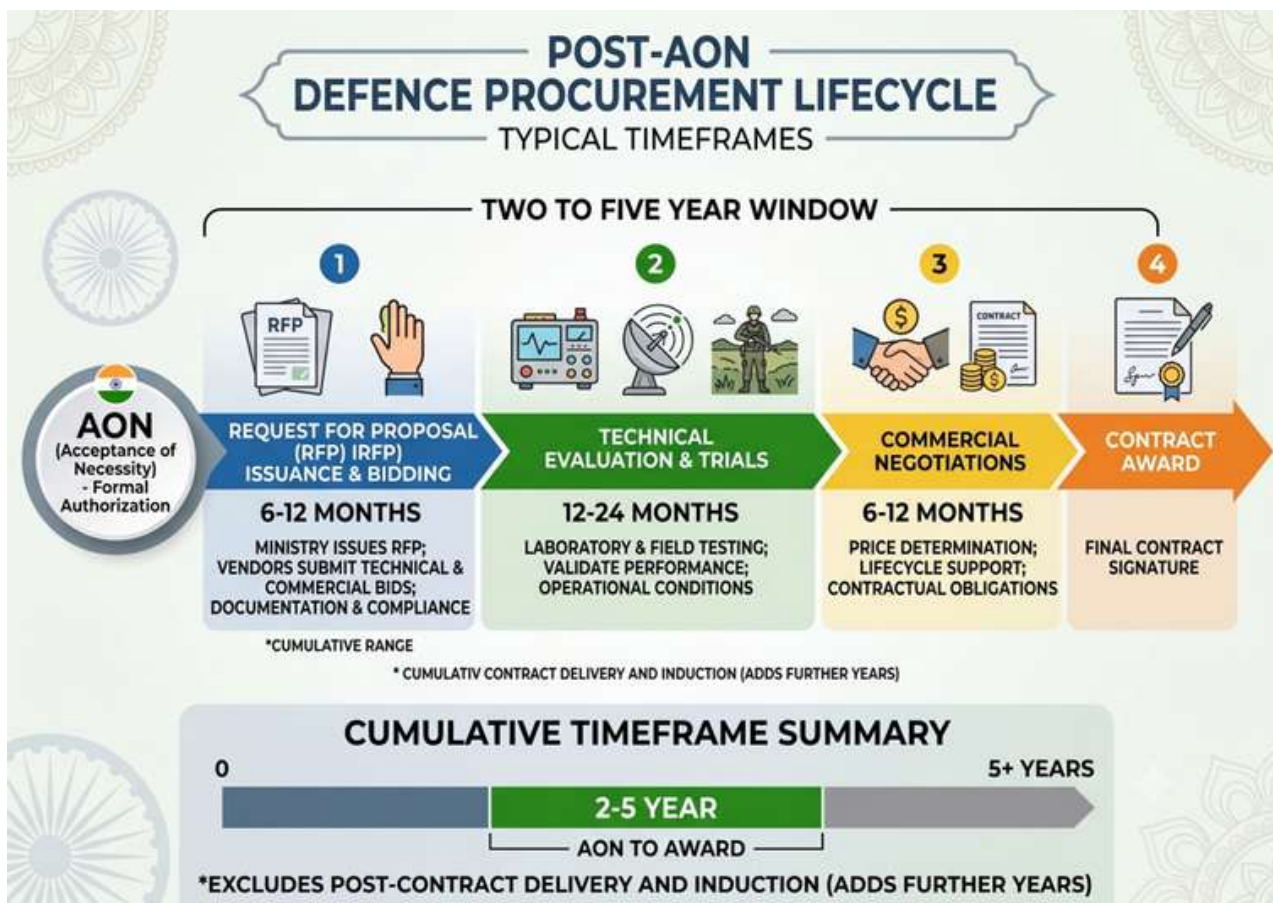
A defining feature of India's defence procurement system is the extended timeline over which contracts evolve. The procurement cycle is not a single decision but a sequence of interdependent stages, each governed by procedural rigour and technical validation. The process begins with the identification of capability gaps and

culminates in the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN), which formally authorises procurement. This initial phase, involving consultations across services and alignment with budgetary priorities, typically spans six to eighteen months.

Once the AoN is granted, the Ministry issues a Request for Proposal (RFP). Vendors are required to submit detailed technical and commercial bids, a process that can take six to twelve months, particularly when documentation and compliance matrices are extensive. The most time-consuming phase is technical evaluation and trials, where equipment is subjected to laboratory and field testing to validate performance under operational conditions. Even with efforts to rationalise trial procedures, this stage often extends over twelve to twenty-four months.

Following successful trials, commercial negotiations determine pricing, lifecycle support, and contractual obligations. This stage typically adds another six to twelve months before a contract is finalised. Taken together, the cumulative time required for a capital acquisition contract to move from AoN to award usually falls within a two to five-year window, and in some cases extends beyond it. This timeframe does not include post-contract delivery and induction, which adds further years depending on system complexity.

For example, in a complex naval platform acquisition, subsystem components supplied by MSMEs—such as electronics or mechanical assemblies—must first pass integrator-level testing before being included in system-wide trials. Even if the MSME component itself is ready, the overall contract timeline is governed by the system-level validation process, stretching participation



Typical Defence Procurement Lifecycle

over multiple years. In contrast, smaller procurements governed by streamlined procedures show signs of reform. Certain revenue procurement processes now operate within indicative timelines of 18 to 24 weeks, reflecting a policy push toward greater efficiency. However, such timelines remain the exception rather than the norm in defence acquisition.

Compliance Regime and Institutional Barriers

If time defines the pace of procurement, compliance defines its entry threshold. Defence procurement operates within an exacting compliance regime that encompasses quality assurance, testing certification, and security protocols. Products must meet stringent quality standards verified through institutional mechanisms, often requiring detailed documentation, traceability, and repeatable manufacturing processes. For MSMEs entering from civilian sectors, this represents a significant shift—not only in production standards but also in

organisational culture.

The importance of compliance has been repeatedly underscored in policy discourse. Defence acquisition frameworks emphasise transparency, fairness, and accountability, ensuring that procurement decisions withstand both operational scrutiny and public oversight. Security considerations further complicate participation. Firms must adhere to confidentiality requirements, data protection protocols, and restrictions related to sensitive technologies. These requirements, though essential, create additional barriers for firms unfamiliar with defence contracting environments.

It may be noted, an MSME producing unmanned systems for commercial use may need to redesign its platforms to meet defence-grade requirements such as secure communication links, environmental resilience, and interoperability with military systems. This transition is often more demanding than the initial product development itself.

Policy Enablers and Innovation Pathways

Recognising these barriers, the government has introduced policy instruments aimed at expanding MSME participation. The Public Procurement Policy mandates that a substantial share of government purchases be sourced from micro and small enterprises, creating a predictable demand base. DAP 2020 reinforces this approach by incorporating provisions that reserve segments of procurement for MSMEs and promote their integration into defence supply chains.

Equally significant is the emergence of innovation-led pathways such as the Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) initiative. By providing financial support and incubation, iDEX enables MSMEs to develop prototypes with a potential pathway to procurement. This mechanism reflects a broader shift in procurement philosophy—from reliance on established vendors to the inclusion of innovation-driven entrants. It also addresses a long-standing concern in defence acquisition: the difficulty of incorporating new technologies within rigid procurement frameworks.

Startups working on artificial intelligence or drone technologies have leveraged iDEX support to develop solutions that are subsequently evaluated for defence use. These firms often enter the ecosystem through niche capabilities rather than competing across entire platforms. Offsets policy further supports MSME integration by mandating local sourcing in large foreign procurement contracts. In doing so, it connects domestic firms to global supply chains and facilitates technology transfer and capability building.

MSME Strategies for Effective Participation

For MSMEs, entry into defence procurement is less a transactional process and more a strategic transition. Firms that succeed in this space typically align themselves with three core imperatives: compliance, collaboration, and specialisation.

First, a compliance-first orientation is essential. Investment in quality systems, certification processes, and documentation capabilities enables firms to meet the rigorous standards required in defence contracts.

Second, collaboration with established players—including DPSUs, private integrators, and foreign original equipment manufacturers—provides access to markets, technologies, and certification ecosystems that would otherwise be difficult to achieve independently.

Third, specialisation in niche domains allows MSMEs to differentiate themselves. Areas such as electronics, materials engineering, and software systems offer opportunities for high-value contributions within larger defence programs.

Over time, these strategies enable MSMEs to move beyond low-value manufacturing roles toward participation in design and technology development, aligning with national objectives of reducing import dependence.

Conclusion

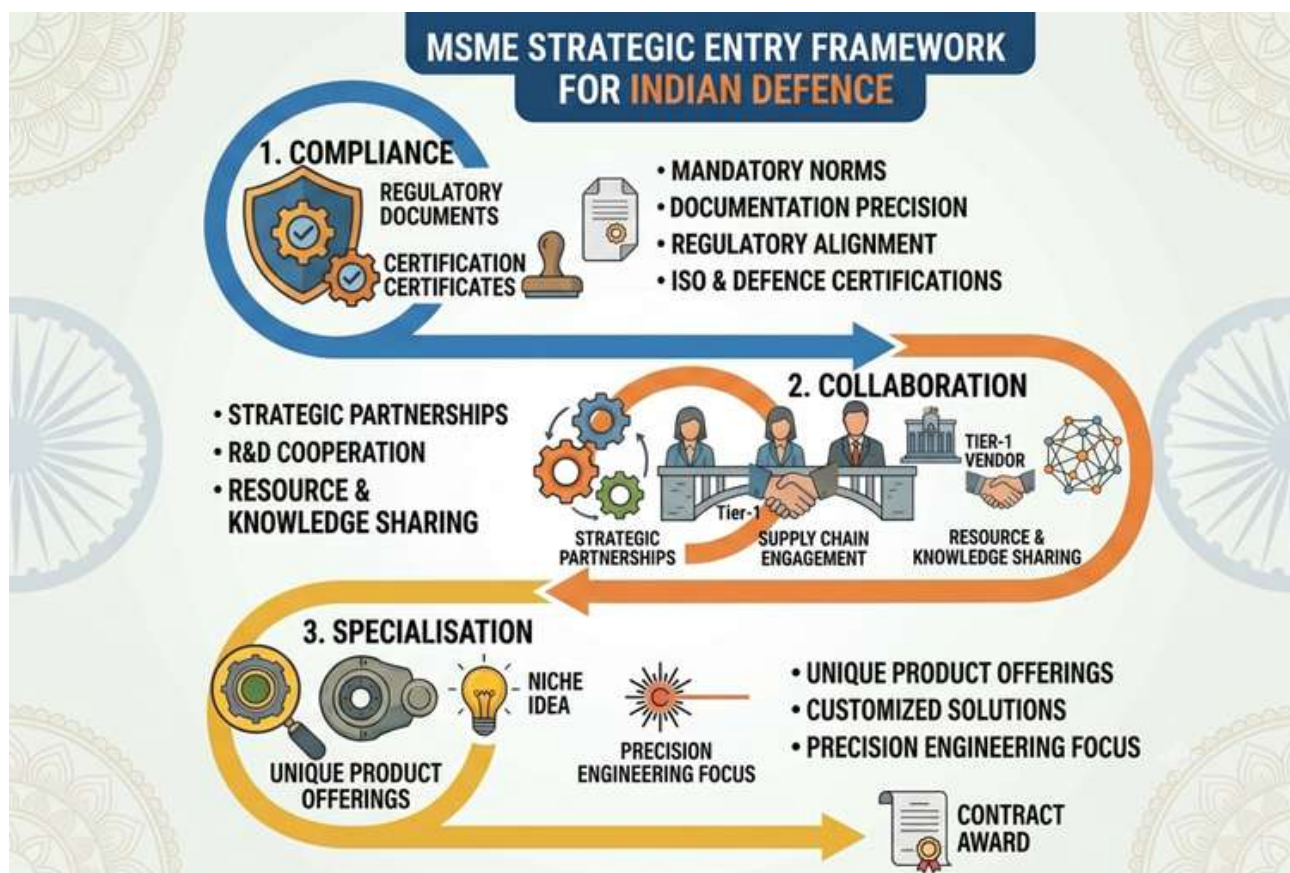
India's defence procurement system is neither opaque nor inaccessible; it is structured, deliberate, and exacting. The reforms introduced under DAP 2020 and

associated policy initiatives have created a more inclusive environment, opening pathways for MSMEs to participate in defence production.

However, participation is shaped by two defining realities: the time-intensive nature of procurement cycles and the rigour of compliance requirements. Contracts typically take two to five years to materialise from initiation to award, with additional time required for execution and induction. For MSMEs, this demands long-term commitment, financial resilience, and strategic planning.

At the same time, emerging innovation pathways and procurement mandates indicate a system in transition—one that increasingly values agility, technological innovation, and domestic capability. MSMEs are central to this transformation, not as peripheral suppliers but as integral components of a broader defence industrial ecosystem.

The challenge ahead lies in bridging the gap between policy intent and practical access. Firms that invest in compliance readiness, cultivate partnerships, and align with evolving procurement priorities will be best positioned to navigate this complex but expanding landscape. In doing so, they contribute not only to industrial growth but to the larger objective of strengthening India's strategic autonomy in defence.



Strategic Entry Framework for an MSME

About The Author

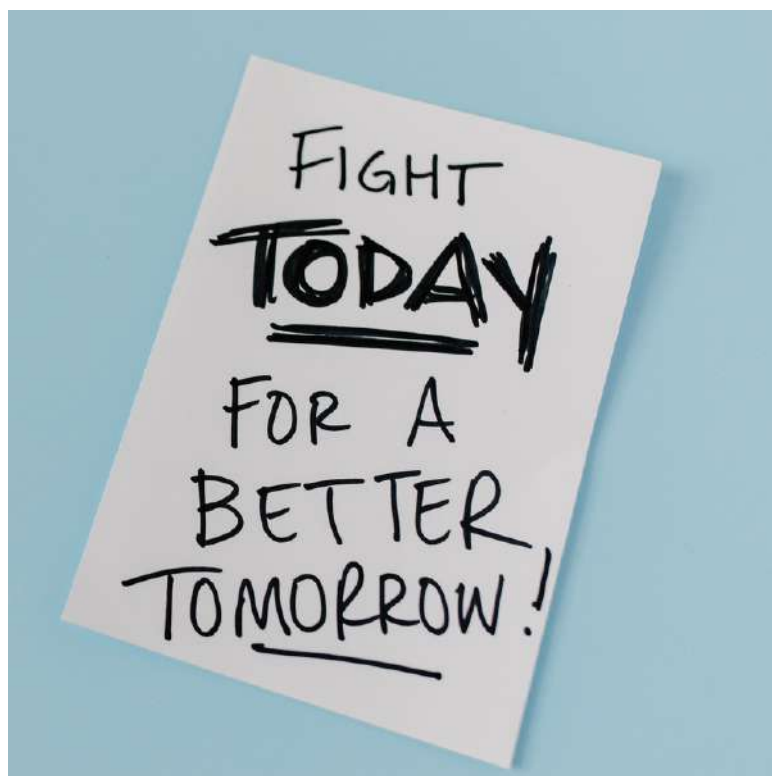
Col Guru Saday Batabyal (Retd), PhD, FRHistS, FRAS, brings five decades of distinguished service across the Indian Army, United Nations, corporate leadership, and academia. Commissioned into the 4th Gorkha Rifles, and a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, he led India's first UN Peacekeeping contingent in Lebanon (UNIFIL, 1998–99), and in 2003 represented India in the UN–USA-led conflict resolution initiative “End State–Exit Strategy” in Manila.



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Post-military, he held senior executive roles including CEO of Birla Group's IT venture, CEO

of Data Core Systems, and Executive Director of DCPL Group. He advised the Prime Minister and Government of Fiji on IT and e-governance (2009–10), and served on the Executive Council of CII. In academia, he taught Theory of Strategy & International Relations at North Bengal University, and has lectured at institutions including Presidency University, Dhaka University, Biswa Bangla University, and the University of Washington. He is the author of a book, has written extensively in journals and newspapers, and is a prolific contributor to edited volumes. In recognition of his scholarly contributions, he has been elected Fellow of both the Royal Historical Society (UK) and the Royal Asiatic Society (GB & Ireland)—a rare dual honour.



From Service to Strategy: Why Veterans Are the Missing Link in India's Defence Boom

By
Alankrita Kumar

Every year, India builds beyond a soldier - it builds an arsenal that can change the landscape of multiple industries at record speed. India's most combat-proven asset is standing in the reserve, and it carries an edge no business school can manufacture.

National security has a strange quality, because when it works it leaves no trace - no headlines, no sirens, no receipt for the catastrophe that never came. What gets recorded and commented upon are the failures and breaches, thereby keeping the extraordinary mechanism of one of the World's largest armies uncredited; the mechanism that allows for the failure to success ratio at a whopping 1:10000.

This piece took shape not in a policy seminar or subjective opinions of the author, but in conversations - dialogues that the author deliberately chose to have with veterans and the families who learned patience and resilience like no other, and it all circled one theme: Service rewires how a person reads the country. While India celebrates the transformation of converting from being amongst the world's biggest arms buyers to now building and selling at scale. The missing link is the very people most equipped and trained to shoot the shots (pun intended). As the revenue and market scope grows, engineers, technicians and managers crowd the same opening, while the veteran sits in a ceremonial corner and sees the strategic core handed over to outsiders to the weaponry. The overlooked edge is real, and perishable if unpressed.

Defence exports hit a record ₹38,424 crore (about \$4.15 billion) in 2025-26, growing

more than 62 percent in a single year, with Indian-made kits reaching over eighty countries. Annual production has crossed ₹1.5 lakh crore while the targets set cross an amazing number: ₹3 lakh crore in production and ₹50,000 crore in exports by 2029. On the bedrock of these numbers sits Atmanirbhar Bharat wherein five Positive Indigenisation Lists fence off more than 5,500 items that must be built at home, meanwhile through iDEX hundreds of startups are building cutting-edge equipment ranging from drones to surveillance AI to night vision tools. Private firms now supply close to half of all exports, and the state increasingly builds alongside them rather than merely being a consumer. Yet a factory is only as useful as someone's grasp of what it is for, and in that gap a genuine asset sits idle. If these staggering numbers are merged with said asset, one can only imagine the potential of India's defence sector.

What the Spec Sheet Never Learns

A soldier does not understand a weapon the way an engineer does. The engineer holds the specification; the soldier knows what becomes of it at four in the morning, when grit has worked into every moving part and the harshness of the cold shivers even the steadiest hands. This is to say that a dormant bomb is as good as any other spherical shape until it's in the right hands of someone who knows how to hold it, how to remove the pin and when to use it. The bomb's utility then rests not on its composition, rather the vigour (jigra, if I may) to use it, and a unique reflexive system built on months of training.

What's more are the intangible strengths

embedded into the minds of soldiers: discipline and leadership, too easily dismissed as clichéd skills. The foundation of these strengths allow for natural instincts to shine through when decisions with minimal information need to be taken, when owning judgements becomes inevitable, when real lives are at stake. The skill to break intention into sequence, logistics and contingencies is unique to soldiers. Strip away the terminological camouflage, and it is strategic project management with raised stakes.

that his companion on the war field would not quit when quitting becomes unforgivable. Ponder upon the advancement of India's planning and strategy if the same soldier was asked to enter the design review room. Through him, the same risky weapon can become airtight, it can be learnt why the feature that dazzles on a slide will get cursed on the field - reality will finally meet vision. That is the bridge the story turns on, the one between those who design these systems and those who know what it feels like when one's



Error 404: Wins the Trials, Loses the War

One observation that repeatedly surfaced in the research for this article was the deadly but most common error found in defence manufacturing is product building hyper focussed on trials leads to risking lives - everything that shines is not gold! In an interview with a veteran, the reality of this crack was quantified: A country whose operating conditions run from complete humidity to 50°C heat to minus forty, ranging from sea level to 18,000 feet cannot rely on a weapon made for just one of those conditions. A kit that clears one weather test fails the next - it becomes too bulky, too fragile, or too clever, while the soldier's trust of his weapon relies on four simple requirements: reliability, simplicity, swift repairability, and the certainty

life depends on them.

Crossing the Wire

Roughly 60,000 service personnel retire from the forces every year, many still in their working prime. The crossing is harder than it looks though adaptability is not the primary issue. It is known to the forces community that training actually begins beyond the Antim Pag (Last Step). It is the lived realities of the sophisticated system, the exposure and enforced adaptability to the entire climate spectrum, the consistent learning of new technology and equipment that makes a soldier combat ready - whether that combat is on the field or in the strategic decision making headquarters.

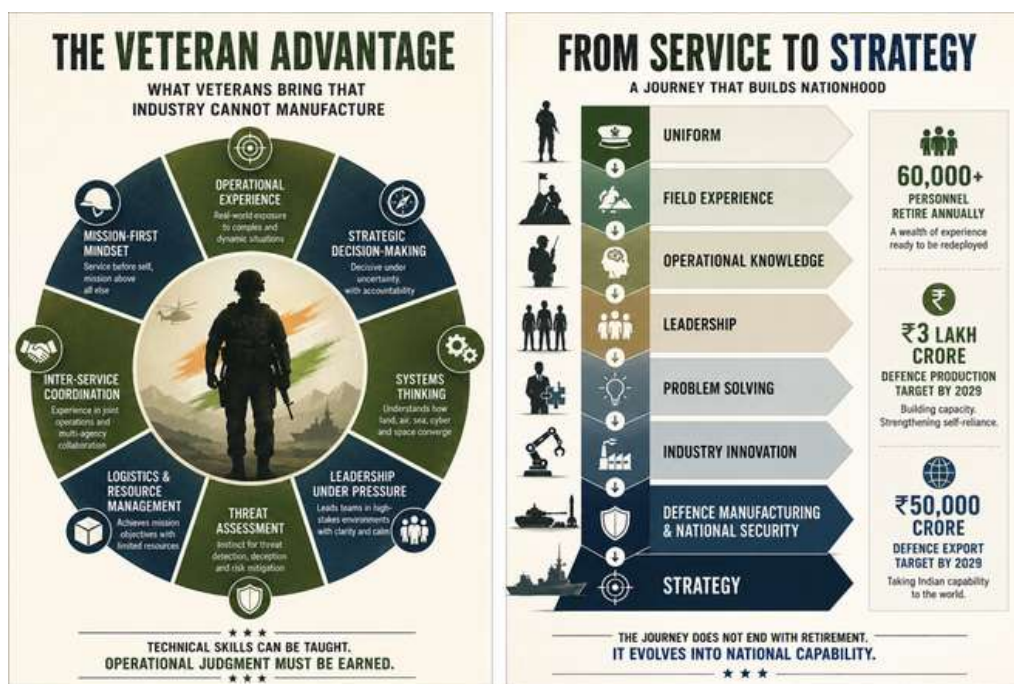
During their transition to the civil world, there sets an unfamiliarity that is more difficult to navigate than one might think. The new structure doesn't follow the same hierarchies - they seem to sag where they once held upright; authority is suddenly in need to be argued for rather than simply worn on a sleeve. Furthermore, there exists a two-way translation problem that unintentionally draws a lakshman rekha between the recruiters who cannot read a military CV, and veterans who underrate how cleanly their instincts can be transferred into an official role (I argue for the one laden with and in desperate need of realistic, strategic leadership). It is here where the reskilling and placement schemes run by the Directorate General of Resettlement limits to impressive theoretical initiatives, ensuring the risk of mismatched role occupancy - parking a knowledge reservoir in a generic or ceremonial seat where their first-hand experience and know-how manifest into heroic but mere stories for their children. The answer hence is not to compete on the civilian's terms, but to strike a match in the dark on the ground only a veteran holds. Experiential knowledge always transcends theoretical knowledge. Ask yourself: is the lack of opportunity holding me back or a lack of self-efficacy? If one is aware of the self's strengths, tapping into the right parts and integrating them into an effective presenting whole is all the eureka you need.

Where the Edge Cuts Deepest

The ripe ground to observe maps onto the fastest-growing sectors in the current economy. In manufacturing, an instinct for ruggedisation and field-maintainability feeds directly into a better product. In aerospace, former aircrew bring airworthiness judgment no datasheet can inform. Drones may be the sharpest fit of all: those who have flown unmanned platforms grasp their limits, from endurance to link reliability, better than any team reasoning from first principles. The cybersecurity sector especially rewards veterans from signals and electronic-warfare backgrounds who already think in threat and deception. Defence consulting turns procurement memory into a billable asset; training and simulation is self-evidently theirs. In every case the veteran brings not generic competence but the one ingredient the market cannot synthesise.

The Credential No One Can Counterfeit

Operational credibility cannot be bought, fast-tracked or faked, and in the defence sector which is finally learning to prize durability and performance over theory, that moat is widening quickly. This transition reads better as a redeployment than a retreat, and three moves make it cleaner:



The Veteran Advantage

Translate: Render the service records in a language that industries can read. “Commanded a company” means little; “ran a 120-person unit, owning the logistics and risk for a zero-failure mission in brutal terrain” lands.

Target: Aim where experience is the differentiator, not a footnote. A sector chasing ₹3 lakh crore is not short of seats, only of people who know what the seats are for.

Transform: Learn what you don’t know. With years in service, there is often a merging of the role with your identity. Having to open yourself to more knowledge doesn't strip away your expertise, it makes you unbeatable.

Not an Exit, an Extension.

The people who keep the country safe are used to working without applause. There is a quiet injustice in treating the day the uniform comes off as the day the usefulness ends. The move is less of a departure than it looks: a veteran who joins a defence startup or advises a manufacturer has not walked away from the mission but carried it somewhere new - into better equipment, sharper strategy, sturdier institutions. The uniform is what gets left behind. Its integrated fabrics to your ‘self’ does not wither away. So the path from service to strategy is not where service ends, it is where the next mission begins. The orders this time are unwritten and the posting is yours to choose, while a country building faster than it can think is waiting for them to report for duty.

About the Author

Alankrita Kumar is a practising psychologist, and the Founding Director of Sulhaa Healthcare LLP, a woman-led, Indian mental health company. She has extensive experience in working with a variety of populations including the Indian Army, NGOs, schools, and corporates with a single focus of bringing psychological concepts into everyday life in the form of buildable

skills. She believes psychology is beyond an academic subject - it's a lifestyle full of life skills that helps you live a more fulfilling, complete, driven life. Through her work, she aims to create engaging and interactive learning experiences that make mental health concepts accessible and applicable to everyone, to meet people exactly where they are.



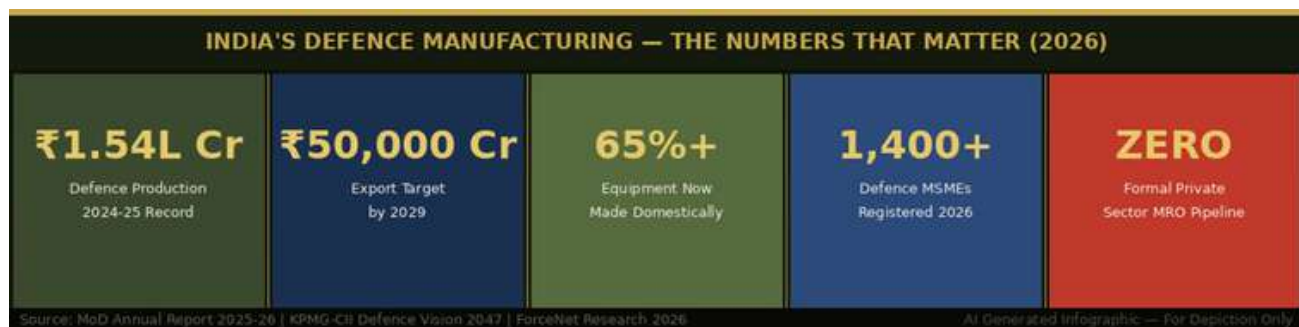
Make in India, Maintain in India

The Forgotten Half of Atmanirbhar Bharat — and Why Veterans Are the Answer

By
Col PK Shrivastava



T-90 Bhishma MRO overhaul at 505 Army Base Workshop — turret removed, V-92S2 engine on trolley, ATE diagnostics, EME technicians. AI Generated Image — For Depiction Only



[Infographic: India's Defence Manufacturing — The Numbers That Matter 2026 | AI Generated — For Depiction Only]

Part One — The Blind Spot

India Is Building the Tank. Nobody Is Planning to Maintain It

India's defence manufacturing story in 2026 is genuinely extraordinary. Defence production reached a record ₹1.54 lakh crore in 2025. Exports grew 12% to ₹24,000 crore. More than 65% of India's defence equipment is now produced domestically. The factories are running, the contracts are being signed, and the world is watching. It is, by any measure, a national achievement.

Now ask a different question. India operates approximately 1,700 T-72 Ajeya and over 1,000 T-90 Bhishma main battle tanks — the backbone of its armoured formations from the Thar Desert to the Ladakh plateau. In January 2026, Vehicle Factory Jabalpur completed the pilot overhaul of its first T-72 under a programme formally approved only in April 2025. The 505 Army Base Workshop in Delhi Cantonment — operated by the EME — successfully overhauled its first T-90 Bhishma in 2024, stripping it down to over 200 assemblies and sub-assemblies, rebuilding each one, and testing with Automated Test Equipment before returning it to service. These are landmarks. They are also, bluntly, the beginning of a programme that should have been institutionalised a decade ago.

Who builds the indigenous spares pipeline so that a T-90 does not sit unserviceable for months waiting for a V-92S2 engine component from Russia? Who trains the next generation of civilian technicians to diagnose a fire control fault that no OEM manual fully documents? Who designs the depot-level overhaul infrastructure for the Arjun MBT, the BMP-2 Sarath, and the platforms now being built under Atmanirbhar Bharat? This is the question that India's defence policy has not yet answered in full — and the people who can answer it are currently in uniform, or recently retired.

The Union Budget 2026-27 announced customs duty waivers on MRO inputs — primarily for aviation. MKU Limited became the first Indian private company to secure IAF MRO contracts in April 2026. These are important first steps. But they are almost entirely focused on aviation.

The Army's land systems — armoured vehicles, self-propelled artillery, missile systems, engineer equipment — remain almost entirely dependent on a military maintenance structure never designed to support a fully privatised manufacturing ecosystem.

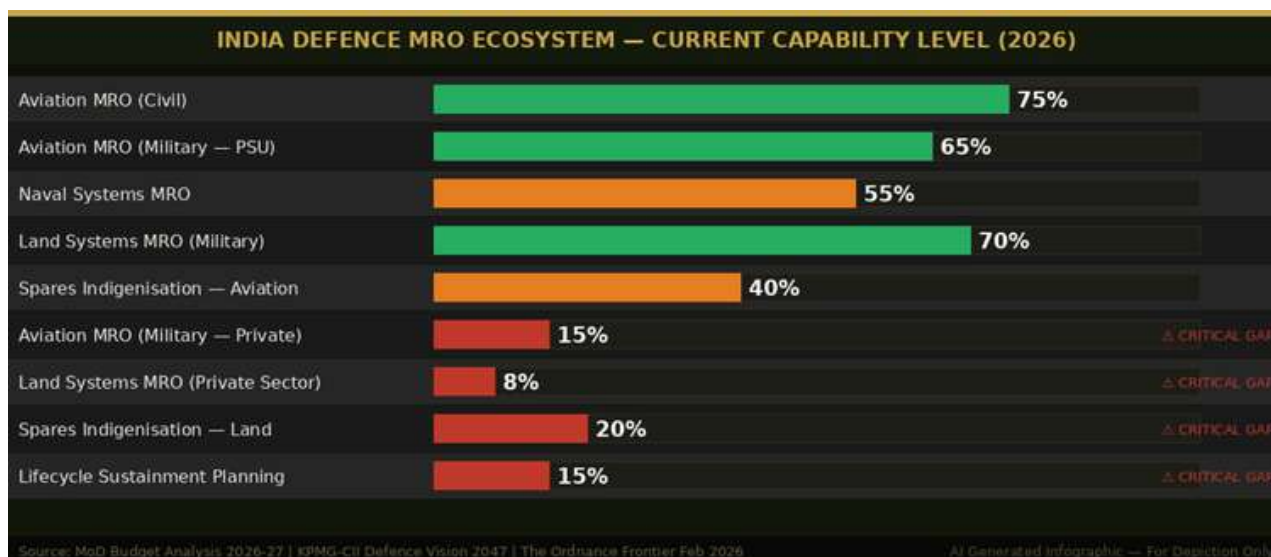
"Without long-term maintenance contracts, predictable spares pipelines, and adequate overhaul capacity, additional platforms simply add to the maintenance backlog. Capital expenditure without sustainment investment is a strategic liability." — The Ordnance Frontier, February 2026

Part Two — The Ecosystem Gap

What Atmanirbhar Bharat Has Built — And What It Has Not

Manufacturing a weapon is only the beginning of a thirty-year lifecycle commitment. The T-72 Ajeya was inducted in the late 1970s — it is still in frontline service nearly fifty years later. The T-90 Bhishma, inducted in 2003, will serve until at least 2040. Every tank in India's fleet needs depot-level overhaul every five to seven years. VFJ's pilot programme targets 70–100 T-72 overhauls annually — against a fleet of 1,700. The mathematics of sustainment are stark.

The three critical gaps — private sector land systems MRO, spares indigenisation for armoured platforms, and lifecycle sustainment planning — represent the structural blind spot that could undermine India's entire Atmanirbhar programme.. India can manufacture a T-72 engine at HVF Avadi. But can it guarantee supply of that engine to a tank regiment in Ladakh within



[Infographic: India Defence MRO Ecosystem — Current Capability Level 2026 | AI Generated — For Depiction Only]

the operational window required? Not yet. Not systematically. The people who understand exactly why — and how to fix it — are in uniform right now, or recently retired.

Part Three — What Tank Overhaul Teaches

The T-90 at 505 Army Base Workshop — A Lesson in Institutional Knowledge

The 505 Army Base Workshop in Delhi Cantonment is one of eight base workshops operated by the Indian Army's Corps of Electronics and Mechanical Engineers. When it overhauled its first T-90 Bhishma in 2024, the process involved stripping the 47-tonne tank down to over 200 assemblies and sub-assemblies — rebuilding each one with precision, and testing the integrated system before return to service. The overhaul took

approximately six months, required over 1,200 skilled technicians, and used a combination of Russian-supplied test equipment and indigenously sourced components. It succeeded because the EME had spent over twenty years building operational knowledge about this platform that no training manual fully captures.

That knowledge — the kind that tells a technician that a T-90 V-92S2 engine symptom in sub-zero temperatures in Ladakh behaves differently from the same symptom at sea level in Rajasthan — lives entirely in the heads of experienced EME officers and NCOs. It is transferred from veteran to apprentice over years of working alongside each other in base workshops and field conditions. And it is leaving service every day, at sixty thousand retirements a year.

THE LESSON

India's private defence sector is acquiring systems of extraordinary complexity that it does not yet know how to maintain at scale. VFJ targets 70–100 T-72 overhauls annually against a fleet of 1,700. That gap cannot be closed by engineering graduates alone. The fastest way to close it is to hire the EME veterans who have already solved it — and to do so before their knowledge walks out of the door permanently.

Part Four — The Veteran Opportunity

The Pipeline That Already Exists — It Just Has Not Been Connected

India's defence MRO problem has a solution that requires no new training programme, no new institution, and no new budget line. It requires connecting the private defence sector to the single most valuable technical knowledge base in the country — the veteran EME and Ordnance Corps community.

Consider what a retiring EME officer brings to a private armoured vehicle MRO facility. They have spent fifteen to thirty years maintaining and overhauling the T-72, the T-90, the Arjun, and the BMP-2 Sarath in every terrain India's army operates in. They understand failure modes not in any OEM manual. They have built indigenous repair solutions for components never designed to be repaired locally. They have maintained equipment availability targets in Ladakh and the Thar Desert simultaneously, under operational urgency that civilian engineers have never faced. This is directly, precisely applicable expertise for which the private sector currently has no equivalent.

The demand is already forming. Vehicle Factory Jabalpur, AVNL, Heavy Vehicles Factory Avadi, and private players entering the armoured vehicle space — L&T Defence, Tata Advanced Systems, Bharat Forge — are all building MRO capabilities. Lieutenant General Amardeep Singh Aujla, at the T-72 pilot overhaul flag-off, described the project as "challenging" and expressed confidence that VFJ is ready for larger contracts. That challenge is precisely the gap that veterans fill — they have already met it, repeatedly, in uniform.

"Indigenous overhaul capability reduces dependence on foreign vendors for spares, refurbishment expertise, and lifecycle support. It strengthens logistical resilience during periods of heightened military tension, when rapid repair and return of armoured vehicles to service becomes critical." — AVNL, January 2026

Part Five — The Policy Argument

What Must Happen Now — A Three-Point Agenda

This article is not a career guide. It is a policy argument. The Atmanirbhar Bharat

VETERAN SKILLS → DEFENCE MRO ROLES — TRANSLATION MATRIX (2026)				
MILITARY SPECIALISATION	MRO ROLE (PRIVATE SECTOR)	ARM/SERVICE	CTC RANGE	DEMAND
Base Repair & Overhaul Command	Head of MRO Operations	EME, AOC	₹60-90L	IMMEDIATE
Armament Systems Specialist	Product Sustenance Lead	EME (Armament)	₹55-80L	IMMEDIATE
Logistics & Spares Management	Head of Defence SCM	Ordnance Corps, ASC	₹50-75L	IMMEDIATE
Quality Assurance & Inspection	Chief Inspector / QA Director	EME, QA&I	₹50-70L	IMMEDIATE
Fleet Availability Management	Director — Operational Readiness	All Arms & Services	₹55-80L	GROWING
Technical Documentation	Head of Knowledge Management	EME, DEME	₹40-60L	GROWING

Source: TeamLease Defence 2024 | Korn Ferry India 2025 | ForceNet Editorial Research May 2026

AI Generated Infographic — For Depiction Only

[Infographic: Veteran Skills → Defence MRO Roles Translation Matrix 2026 | AI Generated — For Depiction Only]

programme will not achieve its strategic objectives in land systems sustainment unless three things happen simultaneously:

platforms must become a declared national security priority. Veterans who spent careers building workarounds for unavailable foreign spares —



[Infographic: The Three-Point Policy Agenda for India's Defence MRO Ecosystem | AI Generated — For Depiction Only]

MRO must be treated as a strategic capability, not a logistics function. Every new platform contract — the FRCV, the WhAP, the Zorawar light tank — must come with a parallel MRO contract signed on the same day. The lifecycle cost of a weapons system is not its purchase price. It is purchase price plus thirty years of maintenance. That full cost must be planned from procurement, not discovered post-induction.

A formal Veterans-to-MRO pathway must be institutionalised. The Ministry of Defence, in partnership with AVNL, CII, and private defence manufacturers, should establish a structured programme connecting retiring EME and AOC officers directly to civilian MRO facilities. This is a national capability transfer — veterans bring irreplaceable knowledge; companies gain expertise no fresh engineering hire can provide.

Spares indigenisation for armoured

improvising, substituting, manufacturing components at base workshop level — are the most qualified people in the country to lead this transition. They should be in the room where this policy is made.

India is building extraordinary weapons. The T-90 Bhishma, the Arjun MBT, the Zorawar light tank, the WhAP armoured platform — the list grows every year and the pride is entirely justified. But a tank that cannot be overhauled on schedule is not a capability. It is a statistic waiting to become a headline.

The knowledge required to sustain India's armoured fleet through three decades of operational service — in Ladakh, in the desert, in the riverine plains of the northeast — lives in the EME veterans who built it through years of working inside these machines under the most demanding conditions on earth. It is leaving service every day. It is not

India has the factories. It has the contracts. It has the ambition. What it needs now is the institutional memory to sustain what it has built. That memory wears a uniform — and it is waiting to be called.

About The Author

Col Pranav Kumar Shrivastava (Retd) is a former Indian Army EME officer from the 65 Technical Course, commissioned in June 1988. A gun-qualified officer, he earned his ME (Mechanical) from IAT Girinagar, standing first in order of merit at Pune University in October 1998.

Post-retirement, he worked in Supply Chain Management at Apollo Tyres Ltd and now works as an Independent Consultant and Wellness Coach.

He is an avid photographer and writes on defence, leadership, and veteran transition.



*Col Pranav Kumar
Shrivastava (Rtd)*

“
**Life is what
happens to us
while we are
making other
plans.**

— ALLEN SAUNDERS

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— INTERNATIONAL —

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— LT COL ANJAN MUKHOPADHYAYA (RETD) —

MOOKHOMUSINGS

CARTOONS ON POWER, WORK, WISDOM & WORLD AFFAIRS



WORLD

Understanding a complex world.



AI

Technology, intelligence & the road ahead.



WORK

Surviving, thriving & smiling at work.



WISDOM

Timeless lessons for modern chaos.



GROWTH

Luck favors the prepared mind.



CARTOON

Ideas. Satire. Perspective. In pictures.



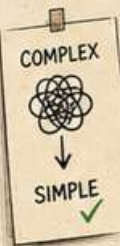
SYSTEMS

Networks, operations & everything that keeps the world connected.



STRATEGY

PATTERNS DON'T LIE. PEOPLE DO.



COMPLEX
↓
SIMPLE ✓



Mookho Musings

MOOKHOMUSINGS: VIRAAT MINDSET FOR MIL-2-CORPORATE TRANSITION

Transitioning from a distinguished military career to the corporate world is a monumental shift.

For many veterans, the challenge lies not in the lack of capability, but in the necessity of a psychological recalibration.

As we hang up our uniforms, we must embrace a philosophy of continuous evolution—a lesson beautifully illustrated by Virat Kohli's recent performance in the Tata IPL 2026.

Virat Kohli's ability to remain at the pinnacle of his sport at 37 is not an accident; it is the result of a deliberate, iterative mindset.

I had to change my mindset, not my game so much.

37

AND STILL AT THE TOP!

His recent comments highlight exactly how veterans can successfully navigate their own "second innings".

LESSONS IN RE-INVENTION: THE KOHLI BLUEPRINT

1 COMMIT TO PEAK PERFORMANCE

Kohli's success is rooted in his "investment in peak fitness and physical conditioning."

In the corporate world, this means maintaining mental agility and staying physically sharp to handle the high-paced demands of a new industry.

2 EMBRACE TACTICAL AGGRESSION

Kohli proved that success often requires a "new aggressive approach," seen in his record-breaking performance in the IPL finals.

Veterans must be willing to abandon legacy methods when they no longer serve the objective, adopting fresh, outcome-oriented strategies.

3 THE POWER OF MINDSET

The core of Kohli's transformation was his realization: "I had to change my mindset, not my game so much".

For a veteran, this means unlearning the command-and-control structures of military service and relearning how to influence, mentor, and lead in a flatter, more collaborative corporate hierarchy.

THE GROWTH MINDSET: A LIFELONG PURSUIT

- Invest in our own mental and physical fitness.
- Re-skill ourselves as required.
- Embrace the belief that our capabilities can be developed through effort, learning, and patience.

Regardless of our age or past achievements, growth is the bridge to our next chapter.

Your military service provided the foundation of character and discipline.

By adopting this spirit of constant refinement, you ensure that your corporate career is not just a job, but a continuation of your life's mission.

Mookho Musings



1. WHAT DOES A PRODUCT MANAGER DO?

PMs sit at the intersection of business, technology, and customer needs.

- Understand user problems
- Translate problems into product solutions
- Work with cross-functional teams to build and launch
- Manage priorities, roadmaps, and timelines

In short, PMs are mission owners.



2. WHY VETERANS EXCEL AS PMs

- Lead without authority**
You know how to lead by influence.
- Operational thinking**
You manage complexity, resources, and risk.
- Clear communication**
You brief, align, and inspire diverse teams.
- Adaptability**
You stay calm and decide in uncertain situations.
- Strategic with execution**
You see the big picture and get it done.

The military trains you. Tech needs you.



3. A VETERAN PM CAREER PATH

- 1 Start in Program or Project Manager Role**
Show you can manage delivery, stakeholders & timelines.
- 2 Learn Product Thinking**
Upskill with courses. Learn MVPs, roadmaps, and customer-centric thinking.
- 3 Apply for Associate PM or Product Ops Roles**
Entry roles focused on execution, analytics & coordination.
- 4 Move Into Full Product Management**
Lead roadmaps, own outcomes, and drive impact.



4. REAL VETERAN PMs MAKING AN IMPACT

- From Project Coordinator to Associate PM in 1 year, then owned roadmaps, led sprints, and bridged engineering and customer success.
- Transitioned via DGR Programs + part-time bootcamp into a PM role at an IT, SaaS, Telco company, using operations & logistics expertise to drive complex product launches.

You're not starting over.
You're starting ahead.



5. HOW TO BREAK INTO PM

- Learn the Product Mindset**
Understand user needs, MVPs, roadmaps, frameworks, and agile.
- Build a PM Resume**
Translate military experience into civilian impact.
- Gain Relevant Experience**
Use internships, DGR Programs, side projects to build credibility.
- Network with PMs**
Learn from veterans already in product. Get feedback and referrals.
- Keep Learning & Iterating**
Stay curious. Tech evolves fast, and so should you.



6. WHERE VETERANS WORK AS PMs

Veteran PMs are driving impact at leading companies and startups.

amazon

Google

Palantir

salesforce

And they're just getting started.

7. YOUR MISSION ISN'T OVER. IT'S EVOLVING.

Tech needs leaders who can think, communicate, and deliver.





MookhoMusings:

Tata Chairman's Thoughts on Future of Indian IT

"AI will help IT experts do more, on a bigger scale and across a wider canvas, than ever before."
— N Chandrasekaran

Let's decode what **TATA** Chairman means for the future of Indian IT.



1. AI IS AN OPPORTUNITY, NOT A THREAT

AI can write code. It can test. It can automate. But it also expands what organisations can achieve.



Technology doesn't just automate work. It creates new work.

2. ENTERPRISE AI SPENDING WILL DOUBLE

The real story isn't AI replacing IT spending. It's AI expanding IT spending.

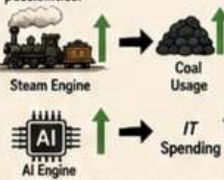
Global enterprise IT spending

Year	Spending
2025	~\$1.6T
2035	~\$3T+

Before intelligence, they must fix the foundations. That's where IT services lead the way.

3. STEAM ENGINE MOMENT

Steam engines didn't reduce coal consumption. They increased it—because they unlocked new possibilities.



AI will unlock more ideas, more use cases and more value.

4. A MASSIVE NEW INVESTMENT CYCLE

Enterprises want AI. But most aren't ready.

- Legacy systems
- Poor data
- Weak security
- Fragmented apps
- Outdated infrastructure

First wave of AI spend will be on rebuilding the digital plumbing.

5. FIVE BIG OPPORTUNITIES FOR IT SERVICES

1 MODERNIZING LEGACY SYSTEMS

Old infrastructure, siloed apps, poor data and weak security block AI.



Fix the plumbing before installing the intelligence.

2 REIMAGINING BUSINESS PROCESSES

AI isn't just about models. It's about rethinking how work gets done.



From supply chains to customer journeys—AI forces a redesign of how enterprises operate.

3 MANAGING AI AGENTS

Soon, enterprises will employ many AI agents.



- ✓ Train them
- ✓ Monitor them
- ✓ Govern them
- ✓ Coordinate them
- ✓ Ensure compliance

AI agents will be members of the delivery workforce.

4 AI SOVEREIGNTY & GOVERNMENT AI

Nations want control over their data, cloud and AI infrastructure.



Compliance | Security | Governance

Trusted IT partners will help governments build sovereign, secure and compliant AI ecosystems.

5 PHYSICAL AI – AI IN THE REAL WORLD

AI is moving out of screens into the real world—factories, grids, vehicles, networks and more.



IT + OT + AI = the next frontier. Software will increasingly run and optimize the physical world.

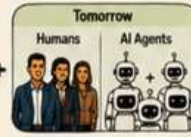
6. HUMAN + AGENT WORKFORCE WILL BE THE NEW NORMAL

The future workforce isn't Human vs AI. It's Human + AI.

Today Humans



Tomorrow Humans + AI Agents



The number of AI agents in an enterprise may one day rival the number of human employees.

7. DOMAIN EXPERTISE WILL BE THE DIFFERENTIATOR

Technology is everywhere. Understanding your business isn't.

</>



Tech Expert

🏭



Industry Expert

🎯



Enterprise AI Leader

The future belongs to people who can combine technology, domain knowledge and business context to solve real problems.

8. TRUST IS THE REAL COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

The AI talent gap can be closed. But the trust gap cannot.

Startups / New Entrants

- Great AI talent
- Speed
- Innovation

Trust is hard to copy.

Established IT Firms

- Trust
- Relationships
- Regulatory credibility
- Compliance
- Scale
- Delivery at enterprise level

Talent can be hired. Trust must be earned.

9. IT + OT CONVERGENCE: THE NEXT BIG WAVE

AI will orchestrate both digital systems and physical operations.



Factories



Warehouses



Power Grids



Telecom Networks



Transportation



Supply Chains

Sensors • Devices • Networks • Cloud • Data • AI

Those who understand complex real-world systems and can orchestrate them with AI will create massive value.

10. WHY INDIA IS WELL POSITIONED TO WIN

Indian IT succeeded by being adaptable, scalable and trusted.

Trusted



We earned trust by delivering at scale for decades.

Adaptable



We evolved with technology shifts again and again.

Scalable



Our delivery models and talent engines are built for scale.

These strengths matter even more in the AI era. Winners won't be those with the best models. They will be those who can transform themselves into AI-powered, networked, and agile.

AI isn't the end of IT services. It's the beginning of our biggest chapter yet.

Think. Evolve. Lead. That's the Indian IT way.



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ForceNetPreneur



About the Forces Network Feature: ForceNetPreneur

Very few veterans take up entrepreneurship in their post military careers. We at the Forces Network wish to change that by showcasing veteran entrepreneurs who have gone to achieve success in their ventures. The aim of this series is not just to celebrate our successes from the veteran community, which unfortunately we do not do enough, but also to inspire others. The ultimate goal is to set up a virtuous self-sustaining cycle of inspiration leading to more veterans taking up entrepreneurship and become job givers rather than job seekers.

About the ForceNetPreneur

Colonel Amardeep Singh, SM (Retd), an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and a 1993 batch Infantry Officer, served the Indian Army with distinction for 25 years, including tenures in Jammu & Kashmir, Siachen Glacier, Manipur, and the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Awarded the Sena Medal for Distinguished Service, he also held prestigious instructional appointments at the Indian Military Academy, Army War College, and Infantry School. A TEDx speaker, author, columnist, and defence analyst, he is the Founder-Director of The Winning Edge, mentoring aspirants for Sainik Schools, NDA, CDS, and SSB interviews across India. He is based at Dehradun.



Col Amardeep Singh, SM

Q Please tell us something about your background prior to joining the NDA and the Army, and your subsequent Army career.

I joined the National Defence Academy in July 1989 after completing my Class XII education at Kendriya Vidyalaya, Dehradun. Like many students of that era, my school years were largely focussed on academics rather than structured career planning. However, growing up in Dehradun meant being constantly surrounded by the ethos of the Armed Forces. The city itself had the character of a large cantonment, with military establishments such as the Gorkha Training Centre, Birpur, Ghanghora, Anarwala, and Clement Town forming an integral part of its identity. Above all, the presence of the Indian Military Academy inspired generations of young men and women, including me, to

aspire to a life in uniform.

Following my training at the NDA and subsequently the Indian Military Academy, I was commissioned into the Maratha Light Infantry in June 1993. One of the proudest milestones of my military career was the opportunity to command my battalion from 2009 to 2011, a privilege that remains amongst my most cherished memories.

Today, Dehradun continues to be home. My parents, brother, and younger sister—who is married to an Infantry officer—are all settled here, and the city remains deeply connected to both my personal roots and professional journey.

Q Share with us your career in the Army. The tenures, the highs and the lows. What is it that you learnt from the Army that helped you in your civilian career?



Camp Torna, NDA 1992



International Soldier, UNMEE 2001

From 1993 to 2018, when I opted for early retirement, it has been a memorable journey with its usual ups and downs.

Peace Tenures : in Punjab (1993-95), Dehradun (1997-1999), Jamnagar (2004-2005), Kanpur (2011-12) and Jaipur (2017-18).

Operational Tenures: (J&K) Kupwara; 1995-97), UNMEE (2001-02), J&K (SSH; 2002-2004), Manipur (Imphal; 2008-2011), J&K (2012-2014)

Instructional : The Infantry School Mhow (MMG & AGL Gp; 1007-99), IMA (Dograi Company Commander; 2005-2008), Army War College Mhow (Col DS (IW), SC Wing; 2014-17).

The values and competencies I developed in the Army continue to shape the way I lead and grow my business today. Calculated risk-taking, team building, financial prudence, innovative problem-solving, and meticulous planning are all lessons ingrained through my

years in one of the world's finest organizations.

My tenure at Army War College provided invaluable insights into audience analysis, strategic thinking, and product positioning—skills that have proven instrumental in understanding customer needs and designing solutions that resonate with them. Equally, the instructional expertise refined during my assignments at three Category 'A' training establishments has played a significant role in building the quality, credibility, and popularity of our educational content on YouTube.

Beyond skills and knowledge, the Army instilled a mindset of discipline, leadership, resilience, and excellence. In many ways, the confidence, credibility, and sense of purpose that come with wearing the uniform have been the defining factors behind my professional journey and entrepreneurial

success.

Q You wanted to be a corporate employee. But you ended up starting your own business. Can you share the exact journey? Did Forces Network play any role in that ?

When I applied for premature retirement from the Army in 2017 while serving at the Army War College, I had little clarity about what lay ahead. I knew only one thing with certainty—I wanted to create an impact beyond the uniform, perhaps as a life coach or motivational speaker. Beyond that, I had no defined roadmap and very few people to guide me through the transition.

At this crucial juncture, a junior officer who had left the Army years earlier introduced me to the Forces Network. His advice was simple yet profound: "This is a community where

people take their second careers seriously, and where officers genuinely help one another navigate life beyond the services."

He was absolutely right.

From the moment I joined, I witnessed a vibrant ecosystem of professionals sharing opportunities, insights, experiences, and guidance. Every day brought discussions on career options, industry trends, and job openings. More importantly, it brought reassurance that none of us had to navigate this journey alone.

Like many transitioning officers, I attended a few job interviews during this period. However, despite receiving opportunities, I chose not to take the conventional route because I was still searching for a path that aligned with my aspirations and values.



A defining moment came in December 2018 when I attended a Forces Network seminar on entrepreneurship and start-ups. The ideas discussed during that event resonated deeply with me. They challenged me to think differently—not as a job seeker, but as a creator of opportunities.

That spark eventually led to the birth of The Winning Edge in September 2019.

Today, as I look back on this journey, I can say with conviction that the Forces Network played a significant role in shaping my transition from military service to entrepreneurship. It provided not only information and opportunities, but also a sense of community, confidence, and direction at a time when I needed it the most.

The Forces Network is far more than a professional forum—it is a fraternity that continues to empower officers long after they hang up the uniform. It truly is a Network that works.

Q How did you prepare yourself for the Military to Corporate transition?

I must admit that, like many NDA graduates and Infantry officers who have spent over two decades in uniform, I carried several misconceptions about life after the Army. The responsibility weighed heavily on me. I had a family of four to support, ageing parents who depended on me, and financial security limited to my pension and retirement corpus. For the first time in my adult life, the path ahead was uncertain.

Looking back, my transition was largely a process of on-the-job learning and self-

discovery. There was no ready-made playbook. The Forces Network fraternity was always generous with its guidance, insights, and encouragement. In my case, however, I joined the ecosystem a little later than I should have.

I explored multiple possibilities and eventually, found my calling in preparing young aspirants for a career in the Armed Forces and established a coaching institute dedicated to that mission. Interestingly, while the products, platforms, and methods have evolved significantly over time, the domain remains the same

Q When you started your business Covid hit. It must have been tough Tell us how did you tide over that difficult period? What were the lessons learnt?

Just as The Winning Edge was beginning to find its footing, the world came to a standstill.

By the time the COVID-19 pandemic struck, a significant portion of our initial investment had already been committed to building the business. Salaries had to be paid, office rent had to be met, and operational expenses continued unabated. Giving up, however, was never an option.

The crisis forced us to reinvent ourselves. We began by conducting online SSB training batches, webinars on careers in the United Nations, and free coaching initiatives for Sainik School aspirants. Simultaneously, our entire team had to be trained to operate in an environment that was completely different from anything we had experienced before. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook became our primary tools for outreach and lead generation.

Nearly eighteen months into this journey, we launched our YouTube channel. Like most first-time creators, we expected rapid growth and thousands of subscribers within months. Reality, however, had other plans. It took us an entire year to reach our first 10,000 subscribers.

We invested in a professional studio, committed ourselves to consistently creating high-quality content, and continued to upload videos regardless of immediate results. Supported by a dedicated team comprising three tele-callers and a coordinator-cum-accountant, we gradually built systems that converted engagement into enrolments and viewers into long-term stakeholders.

Slowly but surely, the channel gained traction. Traffic increased, brand visibility improved, and trust began to compound. What started with barely a hundred students in 2021 has today evolved into an organisation that trains more than 2,000 students every year.

Looking back, the pandemic years were not merely a test of survival; they were a masterclass in resilience. They reinforced three enduring lessons that continue to guide us even today: perseverance in the face of adversity, patience in the pursuit of long-term goals, and the relentless need to learn, adapt, and upgrade oneself in a rapidly changing world.

Q While there are several kinds of coaching businesses in the market today like IIT JEE, NEET, etc. Tell us why did you choose this line of coaching?

For a Defence Officer with three instructional tenures behind him, entering the education and coaching sector was a natural choice.

Teaching, mentoring, curriculum design, and training had been integral parts of my military career. More importantly, it was a domain where I could leverage decades of experience and credibility rather than starting from scratch.

I had explored the possibility of acquiring a franchise from a well-established education brand. During discussions, I was informed that the only available option was in the Civil Services preparation segment. At first, the opportunity seemed attractive. However, after spending nearly two weeks evaluating the proposition, I arrived at a simple but important conclusion—I had neither the expertise nor the passion required to add meaningful value in that domain. That decision became one of the most important lessons of my entrepreneurial journey.

In the years that followed, we received several opportunities to expand into highly lucrative segments such as NEET and JEE coaching. While the commercial potential was undeniable, I consciously chose not to diversify into areas where our competence was limited. Growth for the sake of growth can be tempting, but sustainable success is built on expertise, credibility, and trust.

For me, the defence ecosystem was that niche. I knew the terminology, the culture, the selection processes, and the realities behind the glamour. More importantly, I understood what young candidates and their parents were truly looking for—not just information, but guidance from someone who had walked the path.

By staying within a domain where we possessed genuine expertise, we were able to create products, content, and training

programmes that carried authenticity and credibility. Over time, that specialization became one of our greatest competitive advantages.

If there is one piece of advice I would offer to anyone contemplating a start-up, it is this: stay close to your strengths. The temptation to diversify will always exist, but the greatest opportunities often lie in going deeper rather than wider. In business, as in the military, success is rarely about doing everything—it is about doing a few things exceptionally well.

Q What are the opportunities in the Education/ coaching space? What are the roles / business ideas that you would suggest that the veterans can take up?

The education sector remains one of the most resilient and opportunity-rich industries in India. As long as competitive examinations continue to shape academic and professional aspirations, there will be a sustained demand for quality guidance, training, mentorship, and innovative learning solutions.

At the same time, the rapid advancement of Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies is disrupting traditional business models and employment structures across industries. Continuous learning, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace change have become essential for survival and growth. With one of the world's largest youth populations and an ever-growing demand for quality education, significant gaps still exist despite remarkable advances in technology and connectivity.

One of the most exciting aspects of the digital era is that it has levelled the playing field. Today, a well-conceived idea, supported by

expertise and consistent execution, can compete effectively against organisations with far greater financial resources. Innovation, authenticity, and customer trust often outweigh the advantages of scale and capital.

Entrepreneurship also demands a degree of calculated risk-taking. This is perhaps one area where many veterans hesitate, having spent their careers in structured environments with clearly defined pathways. Across the country, former officers are building successful ventures in diverse fields ranging from financial advisory and consulting to agriculture, manufacturing, technology, healthcare, and education. Their journeys demonstrate that there is no single formula for success after the Armed Forces. What matters is the willingness to begin.

Every entrepreneurial journey starts with uncertainty. The business plan may evolve, the market may change, and setbacks are inevitable. Yet, the most significant barrier is often taking the first step. Once that step is taken with conviction, learning, adaptation, and growth naturally follow.

Q Is there a mindset shift required while moving from being an employee to a Business Owner? Can you share the details?

Absolutely. In my experience, the biggest challenge in moving from being an employee—or even a senior military leader—to becoming a business owner is not acquiring new skills; it is changing the way you think.

In the Armed Forces, and in most professional careers, we operate within a well-defined ecosystem. There is a clear

organisational structure, established processes, dedicated support systems, and a predictable flow of resources. Success is measured by how effectively we execute assigned responsibilities and deliver results within that framework.

Entrepreneurship is fundamentally different.

As a business owner, there is no predefined roadmap. You are responsible not only for execution but also for creating the mission, building the team, generating revenue, managing finances, solving unforeseen problems, and ensuring the organisation survives long enough to grow. The shift is from being accountable for a function to being accountable for the entire enterprise.

One of the most significant mindset changes is learning to embrace uncertainty. In service life, stability is often taken for granted. In business, uncertainty is the norm. There are months when revenue is unpredictable, plans fail, customers do not respond as expected, and assumptions prove wrong. Instead of avoiding uncertainty, entrepreneurs learn to operate within it.

The second shift is from seeking perfection to pursuing progress. Military professionals are trained to prepare thoroughly before execution. In business, waiting for the perfect plan often means missing the opportunity. I learnt that it is better to launch, learn, adapt, and improve than to spend months chasing perfection.

The third shift is understanding risk. Most veterans are excellent risk managers but are often conservative when it comes to personal financial decisions. Entrepreneurship requires calculated risk-taking. Not reckless decisions,

but the willingness to step into the unknown with conviction while maintaining contingency plans.

Another important change is moving from a leadership mindset to a customer mindset. In uniform, our focus is mission accomplishment. In business, the customer ultimately decides whether the mission succeeds. Understanding customer needs, preferences, and expectations becomes as important as operational excellence.

Perhaps the most humbling lesson is that rank, experience, and past achievements do not automatically translate into business success. The market is indifferent to what you did yesterday. It rewards only the value you create today. This realisation requires humility, continuous learning, and the willingness to start again as a beginner.

For me, the transition was not about leaving behind the qualities developed in the Army. On the contrary, leadership, discipline, resilience, integrity, planning, and the ability to perform under pressure became my greatest strengths as an entrepreneur. The real change was learning to apply those strengths in an environment where there were no standard operating procedures and no guaranteed outcomes.

The mindset shift, therefore, is from seeking certainty to creating opportunity, from managing resources to generating resources, and from executing a mission assigned by others to building a mission of your own.

Once that shift happens, entrepreneurship becomes less about business and more about continuous growth, learning, and creating impact.



Q How important is it to understand your own passion and expertise and then decide to venture in that space? What are your views on this? How does one identify one's passion?

I believe passion alone is somewhat overrated; passion combined with expertise is where meaningful and sustainable opportunities are created. My journey with The Winning Edge has only strengthened this belief.

Even today, there are days when I work 16 to 18 hours without feeling exhausted. My schedule can range from creating content and recording videos to chairing strategy meetings, travelling for business, interacting with team members, and speaking with 10 to 15 parents every day. We are also running Project Samvedna, an initiative dedicated to mentoring underprivileged children. Despite the demands, I rarely view it as work because I genuinely enjoy what I do. In many ways, I feel I have finally found the vocation I was always meant to pursue.

This sense of purpose has also shaped our organisational culture. From the very beginning, we have remained focussed on quality, outcomes, and genuine value



creation. As a result, The Winning Edge has grown primarily through trust, referrals, and reputation. In fact, we are proud to be a company that has never relied on cold calling to acquire customers.

What began as a mission to guide defence aspirants has gradually expanded into other areas of student mentoring, including Law and University entrance examinations. Along the way, we have also established a publishing vertical that has produced 16 original titles in just two years.

In my view, passion is not something you discover overnight; it emerges from activities that energise you, where people consistently seek your advice, and where your experience creates measurable impact. If you can identify the intersection of what you enjoy doing, what you are good at, and what the market needs, you have probably found your passion—and a viable business opportunity.

Q To be a successful large-scale entrepreneur what typical traits from the military must we give up and what must we retain?

Military leadership provides an outstanding foundation for entrepreneurship. The qualities

that should always be retained are integrity, discipline, resilience, leadership, accountability, and the ability to perform under pressure. These attributes build credibility and help entrepreneurs navigate difficult situations.

However, some military traits require recalibration when transitioning to business. The most important is rigidity in thought and process. The Armed Forces operate through structured systems, defined hierarchies, and established procedures for good reason. In business, however, markets change rapidly, customer preferences evolve, and competitors constantly innovate. Success often depends on flexibility rather than adherence to a predetermined plan.

We must also develop a greater appetite for calculated risk. Unlike military operations, where risks are carefully controlled, business growth often requires decisions based on incomplete information and uncertain outcomes.

Another critical skill is the art of selling. Whether it is a product, a service, an idea, or a vision, a business owner is constantly persuading customers, employees, partners, and investors. Many veterans underestimate the importance of this capability.

Finally, innovation must replace dependence on systems. While military organisations excel through process-driven execution, entrepreneurial success often comes from questioning assumptions, experimenting with new ideas, and finding unconventional solutions.

Q What message would you like to give to transitioning military officers who wish to

make a career in entrepreneurship?

My message to transitioning military officers is simple: treat entrepreneurship as a marathon, not a sprint.

Every successful venture takes time to grow, mature, and become sustainable. Avoid the temptation of chasing quick profits or "get-rich-quick" opportunities. A business is much like a child—it needs constant nurturing, patience, attention, and care before it can stand on its own feet.

One piece of advice from an instructor at the Senior Command Wing has stayed with me throughout my entrepreneurial journey: "Observe the game, understand the rules of the game, and then play the game." Before committing your capital, spend time understanding the industry, customers, competitors, and business model. There is no substitute for preparation.

I would also advise veterans to build on their strengths. Venture into domains where you possess knowledge, experience, or genuine interest. Expertise creates confidence, credibility, and a much higher probability of success. The market is an expensive place to learn lessons that could have been learnt beforehand.

Financial discipline is equally important. Understand cash flow, define your stop-loss limits, have an exit strategy, and avoid becoming overly dependent on external funding. Growth funded by strong fundamentals is often more sustainable than growth funded by borrowed money. Likewise, choose business partners carefully; alignment of values and vision is often more important than complementary skills.

Most importantly, plan for setbacks. Every entrepreneur faces failures, disappointments, and periods of uncertainty. The difference between success and failure is rarely talent; it is perseverance. Veterans already possess resilience, discipline, leadership, and the ability to operate under pressure—qualities that are invaluable in entrepreneurship.

I would strongly recommend reading the chapter "Enough" from *The Psychology of Money*. It offers a powerful reminder that success is not merely about accumulating wealth but about defining what is sufficient for your goals and living within those boundaries.

Finally, once you have done your homework and made the decision to start, commit wholeheartedly. There will never be a perfect time, a perfect plan, or complete certainty. Entrepreneurship rewards those who prepare well, remain patient, adapt continuously, and pursue their vision with conviction.

After all, every mission begins with a single step into the unknown.

Q Tell us about your family including your parents. How did they shape your value system. Also share the role played by your family including spouse in your successful Transition?

When you decide to hang up the uniform at the age of 48 and step into an uncertain future with limited financial security and no clear roadmap, you often focus entirely on your own fears and aspirations. What you tend to overlook are the anxieties, sacrifices, and silent concerns of the family that walks that journey alongside you.

When I opted for premature retirement, my son was in Class XII and my daughter in Class VI. My parents were advancing in age, and my financial cushion was modest. While the pension provided a degree of security, it was nowhere near enough to sustain the lifestyle we had built over the years or support the higher education aspirations of our children. For the first time in my life, I found myself without a clearly defined path ahead.

If there is one reason I was able to navigate that uncertainty, it is my family.

My parents have been the strongest influence on my outlook towards life. My mother, a double cancer survivor, possesses the courage, resilience, and fighting spirit of a Special Forces soldier. Every challenge she overcame reminded me that adversity is not something to be feared but something to be confronted.



The Winning Edge is Born, 17 Sep 2019



Blessings are all you need, with family at Dehradun 2022

My father, meanwhile, has been the pillar of strength around which our family revolves. Even at the age of 84, he insists on maintaining his independence and doing his own errands, teaching us every day that dignity comes from self-reliance and purpose.

My wife and children bore the brunt of my transition. They witnessed the uncertainty, the setbacks, the financial pressures, and the endless experimentation that comes with building a business from the ground up. There were periods of losses, moments of self-doubt, and times when success seemed distant. Yet not once did they question the vision. Instead, they adapted, encouraged, and stood beside me through every phase of the journey.

Today, what began as a personal dream has become a family mission. Both my wife and my son play active roles in managing the operations of the business, and their contribution is as significant as my own. The Winning Edge may carry my name as its founder, but its success has been built on the faith, sacrifices, and unwavering support of my family.

Looking back, I realise that entrepreneurship is rarely an individual achievement. While one person may take the decision to start a venture, it is often the family that absorbs the risks, shares the burdens, and provides the emotional strength required to keep moving forward. If I have learnt one lesson from this journey, it is that dreams may belong to individuals, but success is almost always a collective effort.

Q What are your future plans for your business ?

The journey is only just beginning.

Over the next few months, we will be launching our own national-level Learning Management System (LMS), a platform designed to provide aspirants across the country with seamless access to high-quality mentoring, learning resources, assessments, and guidance. Simultaneously, we are in the final stages of expanding nationally through a combination of franchise partnerships and strategic corporate tie-ups, taking The Winning Edge model to a much larger audience.

Our publishing arm, WEDA Books, is steadily carving out a niche in the defence education ecosystem. By 2028, we aim to offer a comprehensive suite of books, study material, assessment tools, and digital resources, creating a one-stop solution for defence aspirants across India.

Equally exciting is our upcoming venture, Bench Ready, which seeks to redefine career preparation through innovative programmes such as Aadharshila, an initiative designed to nurture leadership, communication, and aptitude from an early age, ultimately preparing students for competitive careers, including the Civil Services.

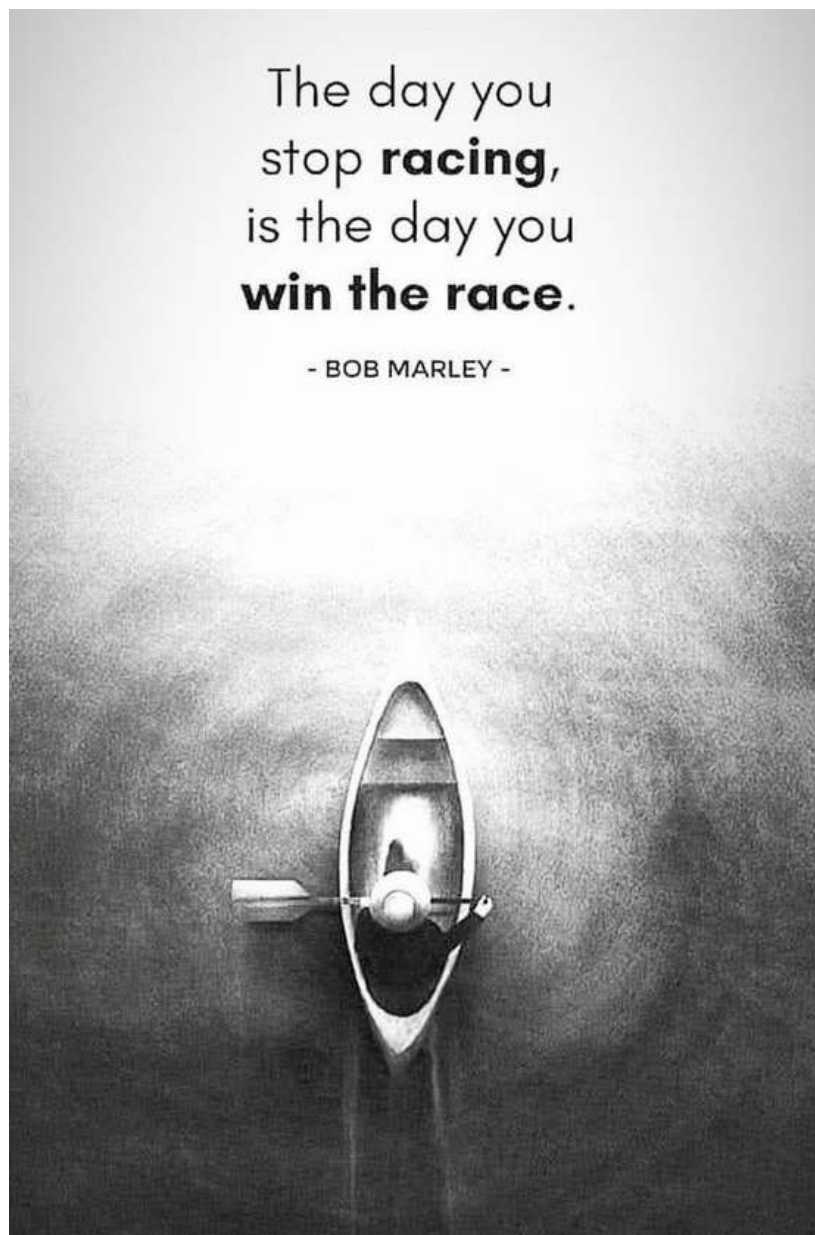
Through Samvad, we have already expanded our footprint beyond defence coaching to deliver interview preparation and personality development programmes ranging from Sainik School admissions to corporate hiring processes. The next phase of growth will see these offerings becoming increasingly digital, data-driven, and AI-enabled, allowing us to scale impact while maintaining quality.

When I look back, it is remarkable to see how far the journey has come. What started with uncertainty, self-doubt, and an initial loss of nearly ₹30 lakh has evolved into a growing ecosystem of education, mentoring, publishing, and technology-driven learning solutions.

The losses taught us resilience. The setbacks taught us patience. The challenges taught us innovation.

Today, the vision is much larger than building a successful company. It is about creating an institution that empowers young people to realise their potential. If the first chapter was about survival, the next chapter is about scale, impact, and transformation.

And who knows—what began as a modest start-up may well become the "Shark Tank" for the next generation of entrepreneurs, innovators, and leaders who dare to dream beyond conventional boundaries.





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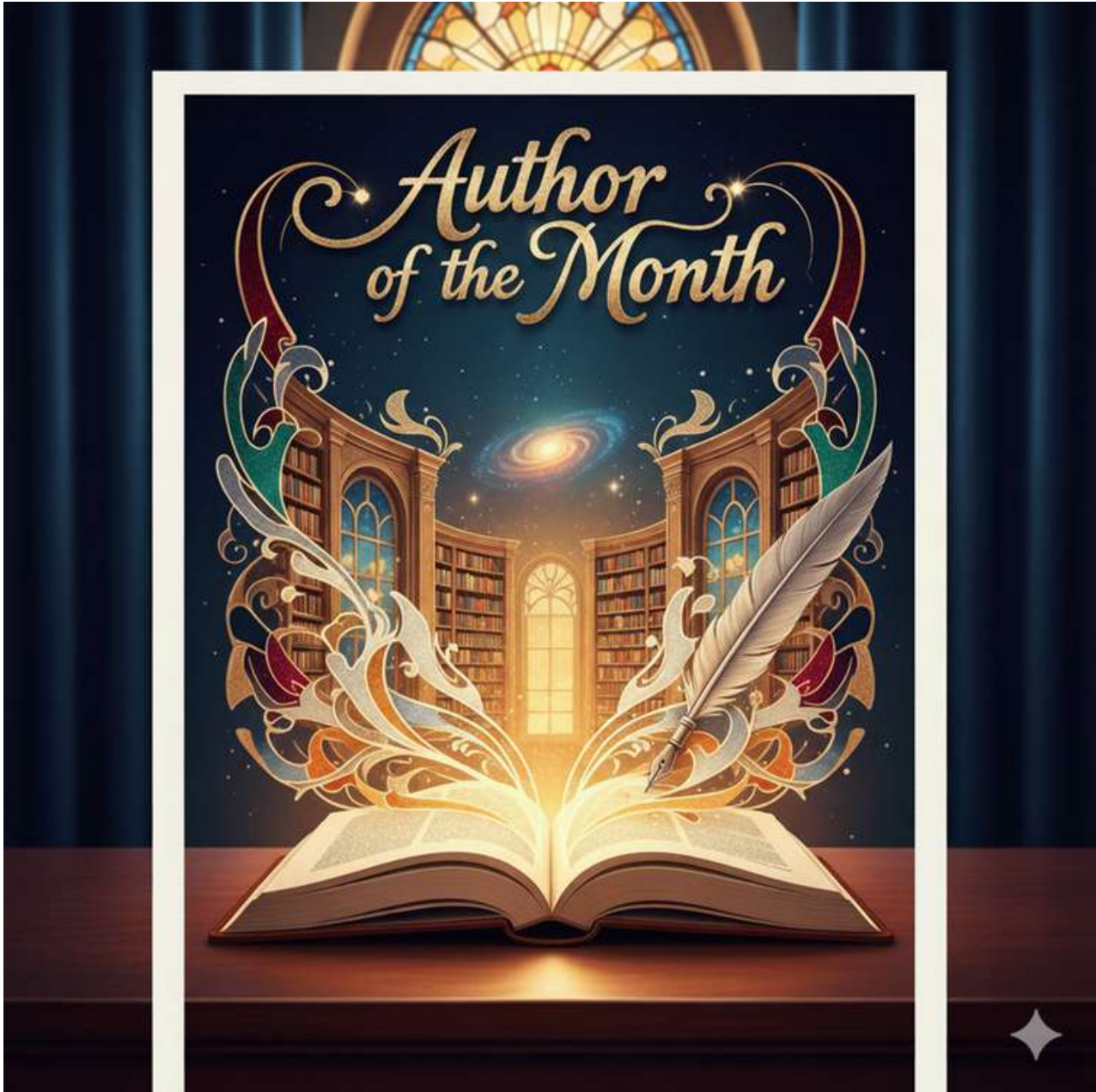
Contact: Col P R S Sirohi, Retd

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Email: pavsirohi73@gmail.com

Author of the Month

Commander Satish Kumar Yadav (Retd)



We are delighted to feature Commander Satish Kumar Yadav (Retd) the author of *Humour Beyond Borders: Military Anecdotes & Life Lessons*. The book is not just a collection of stories from life in uniform; it is a rare window into the human side of leadership forged under pressure. Through vivid, often hilarious real-life incidents from the Indian Navy and beyond, the book reveals how humour quietly coexists with discipline, danger, and decision-making at the highest levels. Each anecdote carries a deeper insight—on leadership, accountability, adaptability, and the art of staying composed when everything around you is not.

About the Author

Cdr Satish is an ex-Commander of the Indian Navy with over two decades of service in diverse operational roles including navigation, deep sea diving, security, and leadership appointments. His naval journey culminated in handling Security & Fire Services at one of India's largest defence establishments, Naval Dockyard Mumbai. After taking premature retirement, he transitioned into the corporate world and presently heads Security, Safety & Vigilance functions for Aparna Enterprises Limited across multiple manufacturing and infrastructure verticals in South India.



Cdr Satish Kumar Yadav

Over the years, he developed a strong interest in leadership, human behaviour, operational excellence, safety culture, and the lighter side of life in uniform. What began as humorous reflections and anecdotes shared on LinkedIn gradually evolved into my first book, *Humour Beyond Borders – Military Anecdotes & Life Lessons*, which attempts to present the deeply human side of military and corporate life through humour, nostalgia, and lived experiences.

Q Please tell us a little introduction about yourself. Your early childhood, schooling and subsequent naval career. Was writing a hobby in school ?

I come from a rural upbringing where discipline, humour and resilience were part of everyday life. My father, a Sergeant in the IAF had a clear vision of making me an Armed Forces officer and planned the journey backwards from that goal. He prepared me to compete for Sainik School, from where I eventually joined the National Defence Academy and was later commissioned into the Indian Navy in July 1991. Over the next two decades, I served in diverse operational, diving, security and leadership roles, many of which later became the foundation for stories in *Humour Beyond Borders*.

Interestingly, writing was never really a hobby for me in school or even during my service years. I never imagined that one day I

would write a book. However, I always enjoyed narrating incidents and stories during family gatherings and informal interactions with friends and colleagues. Often those narrations would be met with laughter, teasing and occasional mockery, but somewhere along the way I realised that storytelling itself was my real passion. The ability to relive moments, observe the humour hidden inside serious situations, and connect people through stories probably existed long before I ever picked up a pen seriously.

Q How did you get into writing? Is writing is a mission for you or a passion or a hobby or a release?

Interestingly, I never consciously “got into writing” in the traditional sense. In fact, for a long time I did not even consider myself a writer. I had started becoming somewhat disillusioned with certain social media groups where discussions had turned increasingly

toxic and, at times, even friends behaved more like critics or bullies than genuine well-wishers.

LinkedIn unexpectedly gave me a fresh and more meaningful platform to express my perspectives on life, leadership, human behaviour and experiences from uniform and corporate life. One day, almost casually, I wrote down one of the many humorous stories that I had been narrating for years to family and friends — stories for which I was regularly teased and mocked in informal gatherings.

To my surprise, that post went viral and connected with a very wide audience. That gave me confidence to share more such stories, one after another. Eventually, 31 of those anecdotes and reflections came together to form *Humour Beyond Borders*.

So for me, writing today is probably a blend of passion, expression and emotional release. More than literary ambition, it is storytelling that gives me satisfaction — the ability to make people smile, relate and perhaps reflect a little on life through shared human experiences.

Q Many congratulations on the publishing of your book “Humour Beyond Borders: Military Anecdotes & Life Lessons”. Every great book begins with a single spark; what was the specific “Eureka” moment that convinced you that your experiences needed to be codified into a book?

Thank you very much.

Honestly, there was no dramatic “Eureka” moment where I suddenly decided to become

an author. The transition happened quite organically. After a few of my stories on LinkedIn began receiving unexpectedly strong responses from both veterans and civilians, people repeatedly started telling me, “These stories should be preserved somewhere,” or “You should compile these into a book.”

What truly made me pause and think seriously was the realisation that many incidents we considered routine in uniform were completely unknown, fascinating, and often deeply relatable to civilian readers. At the same time, veterans connected emotionally because they had lived similar moments themselves.

Somewhere along the way, I realised that these were not merely funny incidents. Hidden inside them were lessons on leadership, resilience, human behaviour, pressure, friendship, ego, discipline and survival — all wrapped naturally in humour. That was probably the point where the thought emerged that these stories deserved to live beyond social media posts and fleeting conversations.

Q You’ve mentioned that you never originally set out to be a writer. At what point during your online storytelling did you start identifying as an author?

Honestly, online storytelling never made me suddenly feel like an “author.” In fact, it created a different kind of pressure — the pressure of revisiting and retrieving more stories from my past experiences. Once people started responding positively, I found myself consciously observing memories differently, almost like an author searching for moments hidden inside ordinary incidents.

There were days when during lunch breaks I would quietly lock myself in a room, recall some funny or unusual incident from Naval life, write it down quickly, and later shape it into a LinkedIn post. Gradually, storytelling became a disciplined habit rather than an occasional impulse.

The real shift happened because of the LinkedIn community itself. Many readers consistently encouraged me not to let these stories disappear into social media timelines. They urged me to archive and preserve them in a book so that they could reach a wider audience and remain as a small legacy of life in uniform. That encouragement probably made me slowly start accepting the identity of an author.

Q The armed forces are traditionally viewed through a rigid lens of discipline, hierarchy, and absolute gravity. Why did

you choose to spotlight humour rather than the conventional tales of raw combat or strategic operations?

Frankly speaking, I was never fortunate enough to witness direct combat in the traditional sense. Many officers of my generation, despite serving in highly specialised operational roles like combat diving, bomb disposal and saturation diving, spent most of their careers preparing for situations that thankfully never escalated into full-scale action.

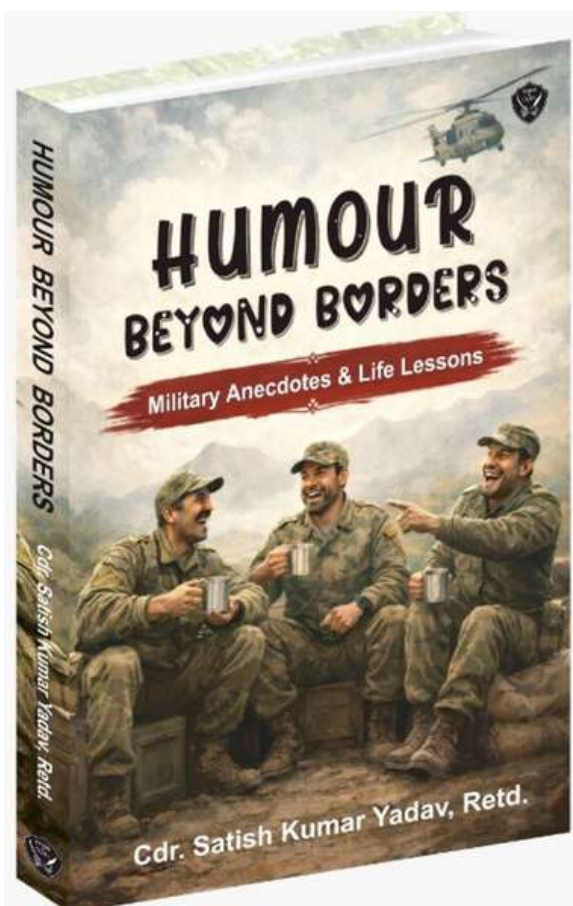
Perhaps the closest I personally came to a real operational crisis was during 26/11, when I was responsible for safeguarding my area of responsibility as Chief of Security at Naval Dockyard Mumbai, located very close to the Taj Mahal Hotel during the attacks. Even that extremely tense period finds a place in the book — but narrated through a human and humorous lens.



Author briefing DSC Armed Sentries at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai during 26/11 Mumbai Taj Attack, when he was Chief of Security

While writing *Humour Beyond Borders*, I realised something very interesting: almost every situation in life, no matter how serious, has a hidden humorous side if viewed from the right perspective. In fact, humour often becomes the mind's way of coping with stress, uncertainty and danger. Many of the stories in the book involve genuinely risky, uncomfortable or even life-endangering situations, yet when looked back upon with hindsight, they carry an unmistakable element of humour.

That is really what I tried to capture throughout the book — not to trivialise serious events, but to reveal the deeply human side that exists behind discipline, pressure and uniform.



Q In the book, you emphasize that humour is not a distraction from seriousness, but what sustains it. Can you talk about a time in your naval career where a well-timed slice of wit actually saved a high-pressure situation from escalating?

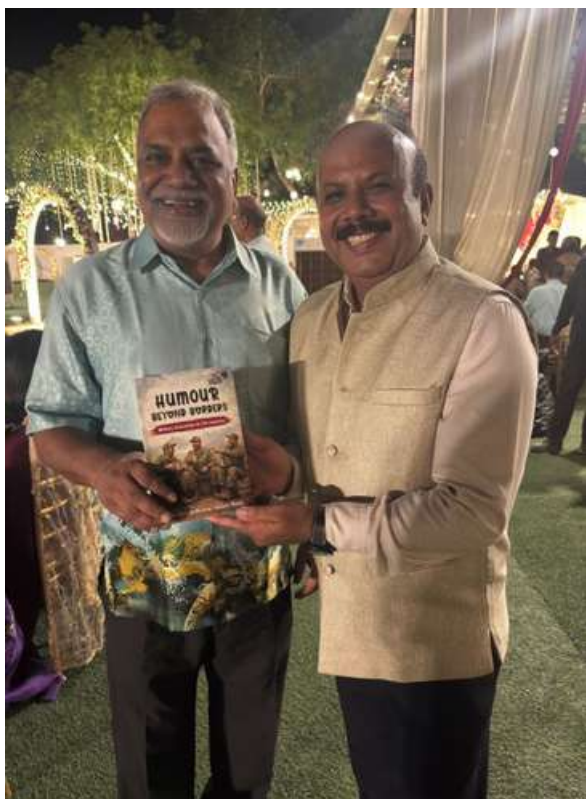
One thing people outside the Armed Forces often misunderstand is that humour in uniform is not a distraction from seriousness — very often, it is what prevents tension from overwhelming the team.

A good example from my book is the “No Bubbles Please” story from my combat diving days. In combat diving, bubbles are not just bubbles; they can reveal the diver’s position in enemy territory, compromise the mission, and potentially get the entire team trapped or killed. So naturally, bubble discipline was treated with extreme seriousness during training and operations.

During one such intense briefing and inspection, a diver was being repeatedly warned against any leakage because even the smallest stream of bubbles could become dangerous. The atmosphere had become extremely tense and technical. Suddenly, the diver innocently but perfectly timed his remark saying, “Sir, mouth is not the only source of leakages.”

For a few seconds, the entire seriousness of the situation collapsed into uncontrollable laughter. Even the instructor struggled to maintain composure. But interestingly, after that laughter, the team became calmer, more natural and mentally sharper again.

That incident stayed with me because it perfectly captured an important truth about



Author (right) presenting Copies at a Book Signing function

military life — humour does not dilute danger or professionalism. Sometimes, it is humour itself that helps people carry the weight of danger without mentally freezing under pressure.

Q You describe Humour Beyond Borders as an invitation to pause amidst intensity. In today's incredibly fast-paced corporate and social world, why do you feel professionals need this specific invitation right now?

Everybody today appears to be constantly competing, reacting, proving, posting, networking or chasing something. In that process, people are slowly losing the ability to pause, laugh at themselves and view life with perspective.

One thing I learnt both in the Navy and later in corporate life is that pressure itself does not

break people as much as the inability to emotionally process pressure. Humour plays a very important role there. It humanises situations, reduces emotional overload and reminds us that behind designations, uniforms and LinkedIn profiles, we are still fundamentally human beings navigating confusion, ego, fear, ambition and relationships.

That is really why I describe Humour Beyond Borders as an invitation to pause amidst intensity. The book is not merely about making people laugh. It is about helping readers momentarily step away from the seriousness of life and rediscover the humour, absurdity and humanity hidden inside everyday experiences.

Q One of the most beautiful lines in your summary states that beneath the ranks and protocols are individuals who err, adapt, and laugh. What is the biggest misconception civilians hold about military personnel that you hope this book shatters?

One of the biggest misconceptions civilians often hold about military personnel is that people in uniform are perpetually stern, rigid and emotionally distant — almost machine-like in their discipline and conduct. In reality, beneath the ranks, medals and protocols are very normal human beings constantly navigating confusion, humour, embarrassment, fear and absurd situations just like everyone else.

I remember one particular incident described in the book involving a ceremonial sword. During a formal occasion, a young officer, with complete sincerity and professional seriousness, treated the ceremonial sword almost like an operational weapon denying a



Author addressing a Sports Meet during his Navy days

senior Naval Officer's entry into Passing Out Parade area. Technically, he was not entirely wrong because training conditions the mind to think in terms of security and procedure. However, the situation gradually became unintentionally humorous because the ceremonial context and operational mind-set collided.

What stayed with me was the response of that Naval officer denied entry. Instead of reacting rigidly or embarrassing the officer publicly, he handled the entire situation lightly, calmly and with humour while still maintaining protocol. That small moment beautifully demonstrated maturity in uniform — the ability to balance discipline with humanity.

I think Humour Beyond Borders repeatedly tries to show exactly this side of military life: that people in uniform are not emotionless superheroes. They are ordinary individuals handling extraordinary responsibilities, often surviving the pressure through humour,

adaptability and camaraderie

Q Your table of contents lists delightfully intriguing titles like "The Egg That Nearly Ended My Diving Career" and "No Bubbles Please!". Without giving too much away, how does an ordinary, domestic object or routine interaction disrupt a high-stakes naval operation?

That is actually the beauty of life in uniform — sometimes the most ordinary things create the most extraordinary complications.

In "The Egg That Nearly Ended My Diving Career," something as harmless and domestic as an egg unexpectedly finds its way into a situation involving discipline, hierarchy and the terrifying possibility of a young officer being judged prematurely. Similarly, "*No Bubbles Please!*" revolves around an operationally serious combat diving concept where even tiny bubbles can compromise a mission, yet human behaviour introduces

humour in the middle of extreme seriousness. I think these stories work because military life is not made only of missiles, operations and heroics. Very often, it is everyday human moments, misunderstandings, innocent remarks and small domestic absurdities colliding with highly disciplined systems that create unforgettable memories.

Q Chapters like "How a Submarine Rescue Drill Nearly Sank My Shaadi" highlight the domestic side of military life. Why was it important for you to include personal milestones and family dynamics alongside operational naval incidents?

Because military life is never lived by the individual alone; it is quietly shared, absorbed and endured by families as well.

Very often, when people think of the Armed Forces, they imagine operations, uniforms, ships, weapons and discipline. But behind every officer or sailor there is also a family adjusting constantly to uncertainty, sudden movements, operational commitments, missed occasions and the unpredictable rhythm of service life.

Stories like "How a Submarine Rescue Drill Nearly Sank My Shaadi" allowed me to capture the collision between highly demanding professional responsibilities and deeply personal moments. In uniform, operational priorities do not pause for weddings, anniversaries or family expectations, and that sometimes creates situations that are stressful in the moment but humorous in hindsight.

I felt it was important to include these stories because they humanise military life. They show that beneath the operations and

protocols are ordinary people trying to balance duty, relationships and life itself — often with humour becoming the bridge that keeps everything together.

Q Since you used real situations while ensuring names and specifics were appropriately restrained, how did you maintain the genuine, high-stakes atmosphere of a naval ship without compromising operational security?

That was probably one of the biggest responsibilities while writing the book. Having spent years in sensitive operational, diving and security-related appointments, I was always conscious that humour should never come at the cost of professionalism or operational security.

So while the incidents themselves are very real in spirit, I deliberately avoided revealing sensitive operational details, classified procedures, tactical specifics, locations, timings or identities that could compromise security or institutional integrity. In many cases, names, contexts and identifying details were either softened, blended or restrained without disturbing the essence of the story.

Interestingly, the authenticity of military atmosphere does not really come only from technical details. It comes from human behaviour under pressure — the tension, discipline, hierarchy, fear of seniors, camaraderie, improvisation and humour that exist inside those environments. Those emotional realities are what I tried to preserve faithfully.

In a way, the book attempts to open a small window into life in uniform while still respecting the invisible lines that every



Author 3rd from left during Diving Course

serviceman instinctively understands should never be crossed.

Q Sifting through more than twenty years of naval memories to curate just over thirty stories must have been daunting. What was your metric for deciding which real-life incidents made the cut and which ones remained unwritten?

You are absolutely right — condensing more than two decades of life in uniform into just over thirty stories was not easy at all. In fact, the book has almost completely ignored a very significant phase of my life from Sainik School and NDA days. There is probably not even a single dedicated story from that period, despite those years shaping one's personality profoundly. Perhaps that itself may eventually become Part 2 someday.

Interestingly, there was no rigid selection matrix while choosing stories. Most of the incidents included in the book were simply the ones that naturally resurfaced in my mind once I had written and published the first couple of stories on LinkedIn. One memory triggered another, then another, and gradually a pattern emerged.



Author (left) who led the expedition, escorting the Chief Guest felicitating the Cycle Expedition

I think the stories that finally made the cut were those that carried three things together — a strong human element, humour, and some subtle insight about life, leadership or behaviour. Many other operational incidents may have been technically more significant, but not all of them carried that relatable emotional texture which I wanted the book to preserve.

Q Your book dedication goes out to family and friends who "mocked your storytelling just enough" to help you realize it was your passion. How did having a critical, close-knit home audience shape you into a more polished communicator?

Honestly, I think the teasing helped more than appreciation would have. In most Indian families and close friend circles, if you narrate stories dramatically or too often, people immediately pull your leg, interrupt you, exaggerate your exaggeration further, or accuse you of adding "masala." That constant leg-pulling unknowingly became a very useful training ground.

Over time, I realised that if I wanted people to continue listening, I had to improve the



The Author with his family

timing, shorten unnecessary details, observe reactions carefully and make the storytelling more relatable and natural. In many ways, that informal audience became my first editing team long before I ever wrote publicly.

More importantly, the humour and criticism kept me grounded. It prevented storytelling from becoming self-glorification. Instead of trying to sound heroic, I learnt to laugh at myself, my mistakes and the absurdity of situations. I think that is what eventually gave Humour Beyond Borders its human and conversational tone.

Q What does your typical writing day look like when you are writing a book?

I do not really have a conventional “writer’s routine” with fixed hours, coffee mugs and perfect silence. Most of my ideas actually come while doing completely unrelated activities — driving alone without music or podcasts playing, during long-distance

cycling, or while taking walks. I think movement and silence somehow help memories and stories surface naturally.

Once an idea strikes, I usually make mental notes and later try to draft it quickly, often during lunch breaks at the cost of my afternoon siesta. Many stories in Humour Beyond Borders were initially written in those short Lunch breaks.

The actual polishing and fair writing usually happens later during quieter “me-time” moments at home, particularly when nobody else is around. I realised I write best when there is emotional silence around me because storytelling requires reliving the scene internally before putting it on paper.

Q How can our readers keen to pick up a copy of your book do so ?

Readers interested in Humour Beyond Borders – Military Anecdotes & Life Lessons can currently pick up a copy through Amazon. The link follows- <https://amzn.in/d/080xR6nO>

The book is also gradually finding its way into select bookstores and reader communities through direct outreach and word of mouth.

Q Who in your immediate family was your designated 'first reader' or sounding board when you began compiling the manuscript, and what was their honest verdict?

Interestingly, I did not really have a single designated “first reader” within the family while compiling the manuscript. Since many of these stories had already been shared publicly on LinkedIn, they were in a way informally vetted over time by serving



Author (right) with his Tri-services family (Father & younger brother)

personnel, veterans, friends, family members and corporate leaders alike. In fact, it was the consistent encouragement from that wider community which ultimately pushed me towards compiling them into a book.

However, emotionally speaking, the most important moment for me was sending the very first author-signed copy to my father — the hero of Chapter One, and in many ways, the hero and original architect of my entire career journey. It felt only appropriate that the first copy should reach the man whose vision had once set me on the path towards uniform long before I understood where that journey would lead.

Q Now that Humour Beyond Borders is reaching both veterans and civilians worldwide, has the writing bug permanently caught on? Can your readers expect a sequel, perhaps diving deeper into the irony and humour of navigating the civilian corporate landscape?

I think the writing bug has certainly caught on now, perhaps a little more seriously than I had

originally intended. There will definitely be a sequel to the humour series because life in uniform has no shortage of stories, absurdities and unforgettable human moments. In fact, entire phases like Sainik School and NDA life still remain almost untouched in the current book.

However, before returning to humour, I am presently working on a more serious leadership-oriented project based on lessons gathered over more than two decades in uniform and over twelve years in the corporate sector. Over time, I became deeply fascinated by the striking contrasts between military and corporate leadership styles, decision-making approaches, accountability structures and organisational cultures.

Interestingly, the seed for this work was planted after I wrote a reflective piece on completing ten years in corporate life after the Navy. The response from veterans and professionals was overwhelming, with many encouraging me to expand those observations for a wider audience. Since then, I have been doing extensive research and the work is



Author (centre) with his current company team mates

currently in progress under the working title: Leadership Contrasts Across Two Worlds – Military to Corporate.

Q Any advice to fellow veterans who wish to become professional authors ?

Ans: My advice to fellow veterans would be very simple — if you are observant, reflective, and feel there is something inside you waiting to be expressed, then you must write. Many veterans underestimate how rich their lived experiences actually are because they consider them “normal” after years in uniform.

I genuinely believe writing becomes much easier when it comes from the heart rather than from an attempt to sound intellectual or literary. Readers connect most deeply with authenticity, honesty and human experiences.

Also, write about domains you are genuinely passionate about. It could be humour, leadership, operations, family life in uniform, transition to civilian life, or even small everyday observations. One does not need to be a trained writer to become a meaningful storyteller. Very often, life itself has already done the writing — we simply need the courage to put it into words.



Author (centre in cap) planting a sapling on ‘World Environment Day’ in company factory premises



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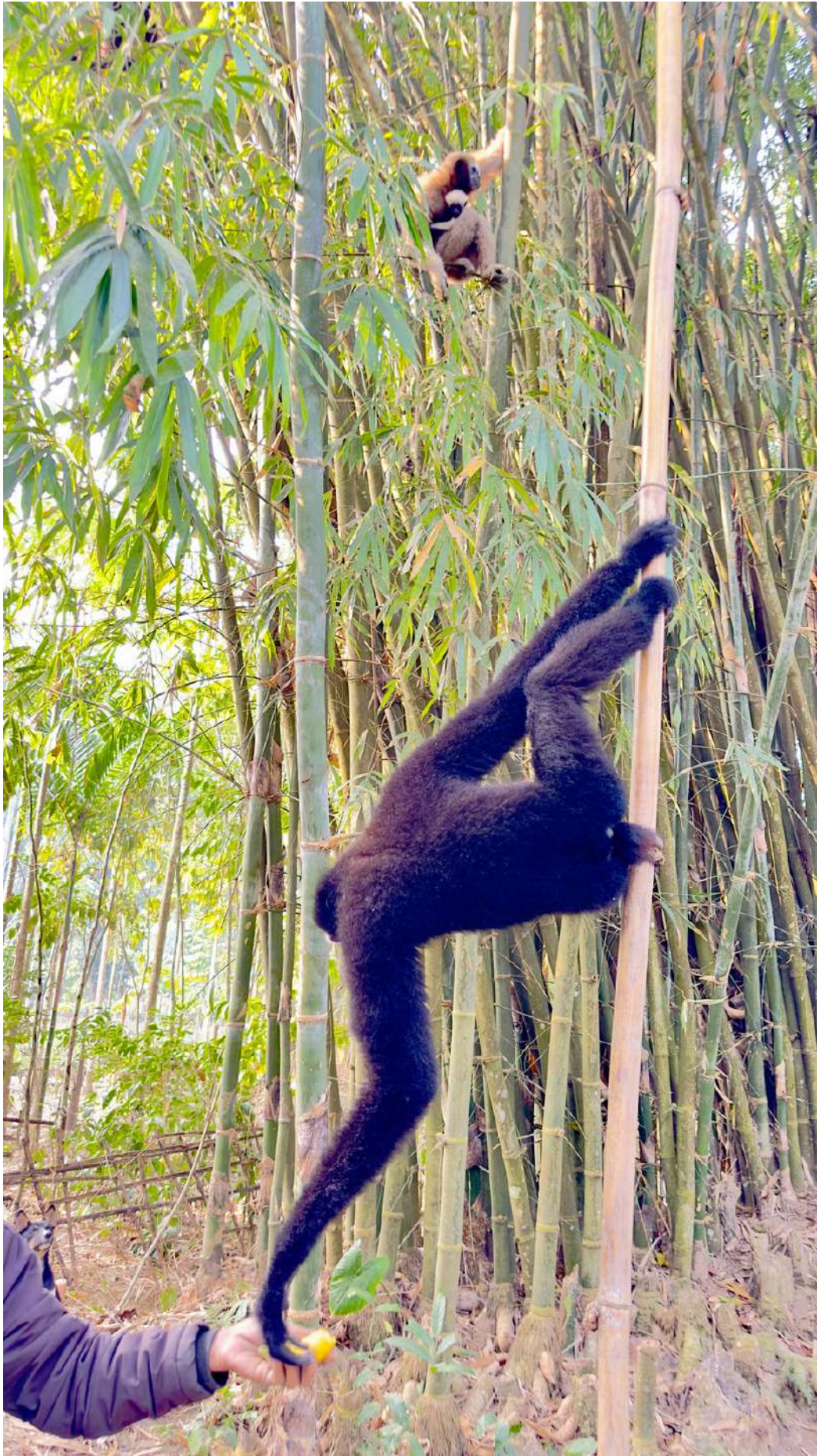
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LT
COL



NOEL
ELLIS

We welcome Col Noel to the folds of
the Forces Network .

We have decided to devote a Section
to his writing every month in the
ForceNet E-Zine .

Mr Kingfisher at Home

By Lt Col Noel Ellis



Kingfisher at my Home

Having got out from the afternoon siesta, my wife and I walked into the drawing room. It was time to enjoy a hot cup of tea in this torrid heat. Actually, I overslept after eating a heavy lunch of Pindi Chikkar-Chole and Ajwain Wali Puri accompanied by a big bowl of curd, sprinkled with kacchi kairi-pudinay ki chutney and kuttra hua pyaz. Yum! Isn't it?

As my wife walked in with chai and biscuits. Something caught her attention which she brought to my notice. An unusual activity

was happening at our bird grain feeder. There was this unmistakable bird, size of a dove sitting on the feeder's ledge.

It was none other than Mr Malya the Kingfisher. This naughty boy is very fond of my girls swimming in the water. He has been fishing them away. Instead of getting them to model, he has been eating them sitting on the tree in our front yard. Yes, my beauties are my guppies and mollies. He dives, splashes the water, picks them up and devours them.

We have been a little watchful lately. Though the fish cost a fortune, we let him have his pick. Poor guy needs to feed too. We consider it our privilege that this beautiful white throated kingfisher makes a personal visit often to our home where he gets a variety of snacks to feed on.

Fish is one, but what I observed today is that he was after Mr TikTok the Chameleon. Mr Malya loves variety in his diet. He eats frogs, mice, lizards, dragonflies, beetles, crickets, snails, grasshoppers especially locusts etc. With the riverfront close by, I am sure he would be finding many other things to eat.

The arrival of Mr Malya cannot go undetected. Firstly, his bright colours are a dead giveaway. His long beak and shiny coat stand out straight away. Then, he has a habit of crooning. His rattle is distinct and extremely shrill and can be heard from quite a distance. Moment, he sits on a perch, he announces his arrival as if the King of Jojri

River has arrived.

That is when all the other birds come into action. Initially, there is silence. All the birds go quiet. But then they are not comfortable with his presence. They all start to chirp collectively. There is a sense of fear, chaos, irritation, anxiety, distress, confusion, annoyance, frustration, unease, nervousness, concern, worry, restlessness, disquiet, distress, discomfort and even death, all combined.

Their distinct chatter, tweets and calls can tell you what kind of predator or intruder is there. The cat is called out differently and Mr Malya was called out in a very different manner.

They hopped around, dashed from branch to branch alerting every bird. There is TomCat, who sits under my Bike. It was resting under it, possibly with its stomach full or else, this



was a great opportunity for it to try its luck on the birds which were nervous and focused on a different shikari.

I picked up my camera and clicked Mr Malya from our drawing room window. I opened the main door to get a better view as the windows are covered with a black film. But Mr Malya got alerted with the click of the door handle. The moment he saw me, Mr Kingfisher took to the air and coasted to the nearest tree, still keeping a close watch on his area of operation.

As usual he called, “catch me if you can” and I caught him in my camera. The light was not as bright to take a good photo but still, the moment could not be missed. As he sang the Kingfisher song, I captured all of it with my lens.

He looked at me, probably annoyed as I disrupted his shikar. But I am damn sure that he had alternate plans like Mr Malya flew to London, he took flight across the boundary wall, screeching at top of his voice.

<https://youtu.be/nlwVi4eNXHY>

It was time to move in and pen my thoughts which were fresh. Let me assure Mr Malya that he was welcome, but the price he has to pay is to let me capture the real Kingfisher in my Kingfisher calendar. Will he oblige? I wonder!!!!!!

JAI HIND

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About the Author



Lt Col Noel Ellis (retd)

Lt Col Noel Ellis (retd) is an ex-NDA officer from 66th NDA course. He was commissioned in June 1985 into the Mechanised Infantry. Col Noel is a very vibrant writer. His articles relate to his deep experiences which he had as an Army officer. During his service he has interacted with numerous types of people, be it his colleagues, his seniors or his subordinates and each of his articles portrays that how vivid human nature is and how different their reactions to situations are. He is heavily into reading and leaves no opportunities to pen down his opinion about what is going on in the country.

You can read his Blog here: [Blog](#)



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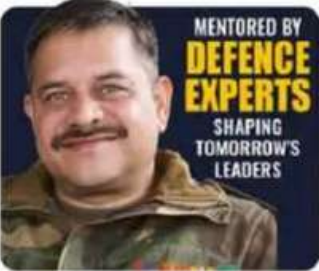
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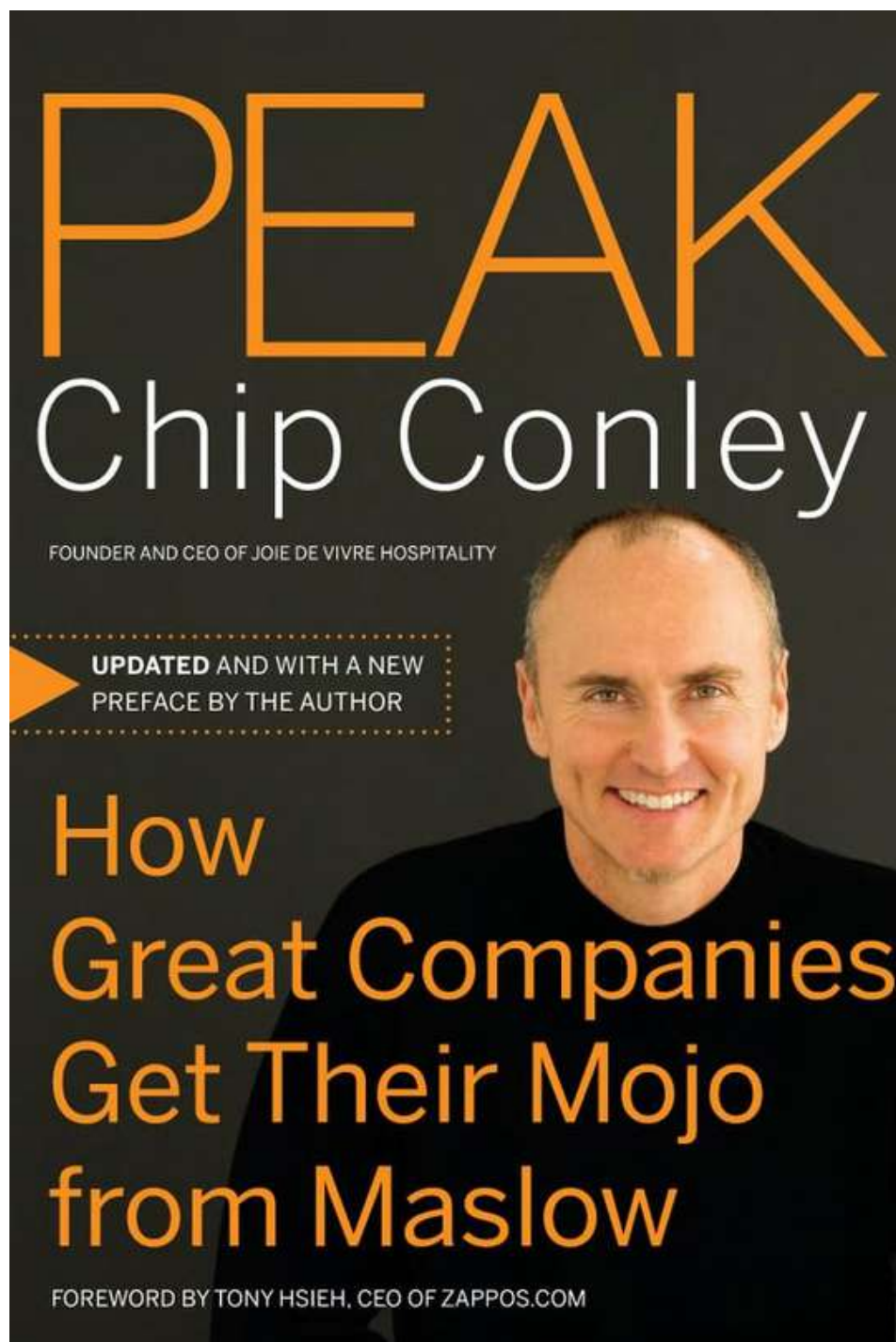
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Book Review

Peak: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo from Maslow

By
The ForceNet E-Zine Editorial Team



Introduction

In the saturated arena of organizational management literature, many texts struggle to bridge the divide between theoretical human psychology and the cutthroat realities of corporate capitalism. Chip Conley's revised and updated edition of *Peak: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo from Maslow* functions as an essential, humanistic blueprint for corporate sustainability. As a highly successful hospitality entrepreneur and corporate disruptor—notably founding Joie de Vivre Hospitality and later serving as the Head of Global Hospitality and Strategy at Airbnb—Conley utilizes his unique real-world laboratory to validate a profound thesis: business performance is optimized when an enterprise transitions from a transactional structure to a transformational framework focused on human self-actualization.

Core Thesis and Structural Framework

The conceptual anchor of *Peak* is Abraham Maslow's iconic 1954 Hierarchy of Needs. Conley masterfully transposes Maslow's individual progression—from basic physiological survival to self-actualization—into a macro-organizational design tool called the Transformation Pyramid, which defines three universal tiers: Survive, Succeed, and Transform. Conley applies this paradigm to an organization's three most vital stakeholders via what he terms the Relationship Truths:

1. The Employee Pyramid: Moves from Money (Survive) to Recognition (Succeed) to Meaning (Transform). Fulfilling the peak layer elevates work from a mere job or career into a true calling, fostering profound professional

inspiration.

2. The Customer Pyramid: Elevates a consumer relationship from merely Meeting Expectations (Survive) to Meeting Desires (Succeed), and ultimately Meeting Unrecognized Needs (Transform). This transformational tier turns everyday consumers into active brand evangelists.

3. The Investor Pyramid: Reorients capital deployment from short-term Transaction Alignment (Survive) to Relationship Alignment (Succeed) and finally Legacy (Transform). Reaching the peak yields a lasting sense of pride of ownership.

Conley argues that the boundary lines between these tiers are highly dynamic and relative depending on industry variables. Crucially, the text positions corporate culture as the organizational heart, reinforcing the systemic dependencies where supported employees take care of customers, who subsequently secure value for investors.

Critical Analysis: The Strengths

The foremost triumph of *Peak* is its exceptional narrative authenticity. Unlike standard theoretical management textbooks, Conley introduces his frameworks through the lens of extreme vulnerability—specifically, his company's desperate struggle to navigate the catastrophic 2001 dot-com crash and the post-9/11 tourism depression in San Francisco. By documenting his own raw experience of stopping his CEO salary for three and a half years, cashing out retirement savings, and confronting structural survival, Conley builds instant credibility. The book demonstrates that Maslow-inspired leadership is not a luxury reserved for prosperous bull

markets; rather, it is a robust tactical survival asset for navigating severe economic downturns.

Furthermore, the updated edition provides powerful cross-industry scalability. Conley skillfully shows that his model operates effectively across drastically diverse economic environments. He presents illuminating case studies from high-margin knowledge economies like Google and Facebook, where employee perks target higher-order psychological well-being. He pairs these with unexpected, low-margin examples, such as Latin American security firm Liderman. There, despite guards living paycheck to paycheck, the company built a highly decorated culture by implementing high-touch initiatives like family visits and late-night graveyard shift radio shows. This successfully underscores the universality of human motivation.

Finally, the text excels at making highly abstract, psychological concepts instantly operational. Every chapter concludes with pragmatic "Peak Prescriptions"—such as utilizing the Great Places to Work "Trust Index" or adopting Intuit's "follow-me-home" ethnography to discover unarticulated customer needs. This transitions the reading experience from passive philosophy to active organizational execution.

Critical Analysis: The Weaknesses

Despite its narrative brilliance, *Peak* possesses distinct strategic vulnerabilities. First, Conley's fundamentalist attachment to the rigid geometric shape of the pyramid occasionally forces oversimplifications of complex business relationships. Human relationships, customer sentiment, and

institutional capital flows are rarely as orderly or linear as a neat three-tiered model implies. By trying to fit every nuance of enterprise behaviour into an identical structure, the text runs the risk of presenting human behaviour in a slightly formulaic manner.

Second, the structural execution of the model relies heavily on a leadership style that is highly charismatic, deeply empathetic, and emotionally intelligent. Conley notes that "the mood of an organization has a causal effect on everyone within that organization" and emphasizes in-person connection. However, this framework presents a steep adoption barrier for highly analytical, technical, or inherently transactional executives who lack natural emotional eloquence. For leaders operating in hyper-automated, data-driven B2B markets, the intense focus on "high-touch" rituals, theatrical reward structures (such as executives performing onstage in drag or shaving their heads), and intuitive "mind-reading" can feel culturally alienating and operationally impractical.

Additionally, the framework exhibits a potential systemic weakness regarding sequential dependency. Conley explicitly warns that if an organization possesses a weak foundational base—such as sub-market compensation packages—high-minded alignment with a corporate mission will ultimately fail to retain talent when employees face real-world financial pressures. This structural vulnerability means that a leadership team can easily misdiagnose organizational health by prematurely focussing on the peak of the pyramid while ignoring silent, corrosive fractures at its baseline.

Conclusion and Practical Recommendations

Ultimately, Chip Conley's revised edition of *Peak* stands as a masterfully written, profoundly impactful treatise on "karmic capitalism". It successfully refutes the outdated, purely transactional models of baseline survival management, effectively demonstrating that authentic human fulfilment directly accelerates sustainable financial performance.

For contemporary organizational leaders, veterans transitioning into corporate spheres, and management professionals, *Peak* provides far more than mere intellectual exercise. It delivers an actionable roadmap for cultivating institutional resilience. To unlock the book's full potential, executive teams should implement its frameworks via three concrete steps:

- First, move away from isolated annual climate surveys and establish dynamic, real-time feedback loops to closely monitor baseline stakeholder sentiments.
- Second, design and mandate structured peer-to-peer recognition programs that directly align your team's everyday victories with the overarching strategic mission of the enterprise.
- Third, cross-reference and audit customer discovery data to actively identify and serve unarticulated consumer needs, positioning your brand well ahead of shifting marketplace expectations.

By treating corporate management as a conscious, humanistic practice rather than a series of rigid operational metrics, *Peak* offers leaders a brilliant, enduring path to elevate their businesses to their absolute summits.

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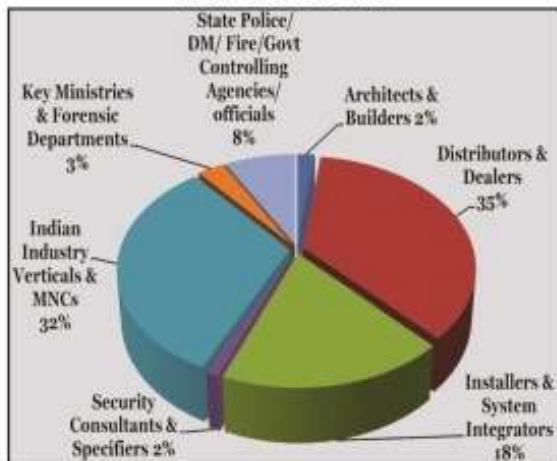
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