**Leadership decline in the Indian military**

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July 04, 2021

While discussing the need for the creation of integrated theatre commands in India, differences emerged between Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat and Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria.

India Today highlighted the spat by stating that the turf war over theatre commands has escalated and IAF Chief Bhadauria rejected CDS Rawat’s ‘supporting role’ view. Speaking to India Today TV, Air Chief Bhadauria said, “It’s not a supporting role alone. Air power has a huge role to play. In any of the integrated battle areas, it’s not an issue of support alone. A whole lot of things go into any air plan that’s made. And those are the issues that are under discussion.”

General Bipin Rawat, in the same session with India Today, had stated “Do not forget the IAF continues to remain a supporting arm just as artillery support or engineers support the combatant arm in the Army. They will be a supporting arm.”

[Russian, Tajik presidents discuss situation in Afghanistan](https://nation.com.pk/06-Jul-2021/russian-tajik-presidents-discuss-situation-in-afghanistan)

Any student of military strategy and revolution in military affairs would tend to agree with the Indian Air Chief. Even a medium sized air force would retain a strategic capability to not only defend airspace but also conduct offensive air operations across the borders. The Indian Air Force has already projected itself to be the new airspace command of India, it will never accept a downgraded role of a supporting arm under the Khaki.

The discourse has also exposed the level and acumen of military leadership and its understanding of the future challenges facing India. There are many reasons for this decline.

General Bipin Rawat, as a political favourite of Modi and Doval has been tasked by Modi to bring the armed forces under his control. The Indian military, being the only depoliticised institution left in India, will become subservient to the RSS agenda. Indian NSA Ajit Doval has a special relationship with Bipin Rawat as they come from the same district. When Rawat was promoted to the four-star rank and made the Army Chief, Indian media had pointed out this special relationship.

[US forces shoot down armed drone over US embassy in Baghdad](https://nation.com.pk/06-Jul-2021/us-forces-shoot-down-armed-drone-over-us-embassy-in-baghdad)

Another theory discussed was that the appointment of Rawat as Army Chief was affected to stop the appointment of Lt Gen Muhammad Hariz from becoming the first ever Muslim Army Chief in India. On appointing Bipin Rawat as the Army Chief in Dec 2016, Godi media had projected his credentials of effective command in Indian Illegally Occupied Kashmir. However most military officers who served with Rawat disagreed. One officer, wishing not to be identified, had told Janta Ka Reporter, “Reports of his performance in Jammu and Kashmir are simply too exaggerated. Gen Rawat’s performance was simply too lackadaisical during his time with the 5 Sector of RR (Rashtriya Rifles) in 2007. His contacts with the NSA has clearly landed him the top job”.

There is nothing new to the allegations of Rawat using contacts to achieve excellence or awards during his time in the army. As an army cadet in the IMA, Rawat was awarded the prestigious Sword of Honour, which is awarded to a cadet for all-round excellence, despite being fifth in the order of merit. Rawat had superseded at least four cadets to earn the Sword of Honour award, allegedly because of the then commandant, Ganju Rawat. The story goes that Ganju Rawat, who later became the Vice Chief of the Army Staff, was from 5 Gorkhas, the same battalion Gen Rawat’s father belonged to. There were also murmurs of Ganju Rawat favouring his fellow Garhwali cadet ahead of other more deserving individuals.

[Israel releases Jordanian citizen accused of 'spying for resistance'](https://nation.com.pk/06-Jul-2021/israel-releases-jordanian-citizen-accused-of-spying-for-resistance)

Gen Bipin Rawat has political ambitions and his hunger for power is expanding, he has a personal grudge against the Air Chief and wants to humiliate him. From Cadetship to CDS, he has exploited the system and climbed up the ladder through cronyism, his latest godfather is Ajit Doval.

The Indian Defence Forces gobble 70 billion dollars every year, the performance in the past three years has been pathetic. The 3rd largest military in the world failed to rise to the occasion against Pakistan in 2019 and against China in 2020. The Indian military has poor leadership, the Generals, Air Marshals and Admirals squabble over petty issues for expanding their power. On ground, the Indian armed forces have failed to deliver when the chips are down.

The Indian Army is also affected by a poorly designed command structure, especially at the formation level. The Command headquarters are commanded by Three Star Generals while their Chiefs of Staff also wear the same rank. No wonder the commanders and their staff officers remain daggers drawn in an uneasy relationship. Last year the Commander of South Western Command Lieutenant General Alok Kler, an Armoured Corps officer, had a nasty fight with COS Lieutenant General KK Repswal, who is from the Corps of Engineers. The fight intensified to a level that the Army Chief had to jump in and appoint another three-star officer to conduct a court of inquiry. Sometime back, three high-ranking Indian Army officers of the rank of brigadiers and above were charged for extra-marital affairs with wives of their subordinates. Some reports suggest that the case of South Western Command, which was hushed up by Indian Army Chief, involved the issue of exploitation of wives of junior officers by Indian generals. The COS Lt General Repswal wanted to hold an enquiry, whereas the army top brass wanted to hush it up. The court of inquiry was dumped by the Indian Army in Feb this year.

[Highly contagious Delta variant raises concerns of 3rd wave of COVID](https://nation.com.pk/05-Jul-2021/highly-contagious-delta-variant-raises-concerns-of-3rd-wave-of-covid)

Most of the senior defence analysts in India believe that a decline in military ethos and political interference in military affairs will turn the Indian military into a police force. The current spat between the CDS and Air Chief may just be the tip of the iceberg.