

Observation no: 215 – India (Kargil War)

Country-year: 1998

1. Did the current regime come to power in a military coup?

No.

2. Has the country ever experienced a military coup?

No.¹

However, the prime minister of India was assassinated in 1984 in retaliation for an internal military operation against Sikh separatists in the Punjab region. See 8 below.

3. Is the country's top leader a former military officer?

No.

The prime minister of India in 1998 was Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a four-decade member of parliament (and leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party).

4. Are ethnic, sectarian, or racial criteria used to exclude segments of the population from the officer corps?

No.

The British created India's military system in the mid 19th century. The basic structure for the army's recruitment, composition, and command has remained resilient over 200 years. Members of the infantry were recruited "on the basis of religious, regional, or caste quotas. The British called these different recruitment groups 'classes' (essentially ethnic groups) and the term is still in use...Each class has an elaborate tradition anchored in the 'martial' history of the particular caste or ethnic group, and the different classes engage in friendly competition...These diverse castes and classes were held together by a British officer corps, subsequently replaced in India (and in Pakistan) by indigenous officers within a few years of partition. They are still English-speaking officers, recruited nationally and competitively, and drawn largely from India's vast middle class. They received a modern military education and viewed the army as a long-term professional commitment. Thus, the armed forces, especially the army, represent the melding of ancient practices, recently invented traditions, and modern professional norms."² In sum, the Indian army in 1998 was a highly professional organization without strict ideological or political requirements for entry, and

¹ Raghavan, Srinath. "Civil-Military Relations in India: The China Crisis and After." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 32, no. 1 (2009): 149; Cohen, Stephen Philip. *India: Emerging Power*. Brookings Institution Press, 2002: 22.

² Cohen, 21-22.

military training did not involve ideological indoctrination. [*update Indian army information*]

5. Are there strict ideological requirements for entry into the senior officer corps?

No.

See 4.

6. Is party membership required for entry into the senior officer corps?

No.

See 4.

7. Does military training involve extensive political education or ideological indoctrination?

No.

See 4.

8. Has the military been used to repress internal dissent in the last five years?

Yes.

India faced several internal threats from insurgent groups in the Northeast border region. Since the early 1950s, these groups executed large-scale insurgent operations against security forces and mainland Indian communities. "As a result, the Indian federal government and those governing the states in the Northeast have deployed large formations of regular army, federal para-military forces and state armed police for counter-insurgency operations."³ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Indian army was extensively used to conduct high-intensity counterinsurgency operations and sustained campaigns in Kashmir and Punjab. The Sikh separatist movement in the Punjab led to widespread dissent, detention, and repression in the 1970s. The independence movement culminated in Indira Gandhi's decision to launch Operation Blue Star in June 1984, with the principle objective of expelling Sikh fighters from the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Although the Indian army carried out a successful operation, the damage to the temple and significant loss of life on both sides generated severe blowback against Indira Gandhi. Several months later in October 1984, Gandhi was assassinated by two of her own Sikh bodyguards in relation for Operation Blue Star. The assassination set off four days of brutal anti-Sikh riots in which thousands of people were killed before the armed forces could

³ Subir Bhaumik, "Insurgencies in India's Northeast: Conflict, Co-option and Change," East-West Center Washington Working Papers, No. 10, July 2007, 1.

restore order. As Staniland notes, “the army, in addition to police and paramilitaries, was used extensively for more than ten years as an internal security/counterinsurgency force...[By] 1994, the military was being used on average of forty to fifty times per year for internal reasons.”⁴

9. Has the military been used to govern the country in the last five years?

No.

India was created in 1947 as a parliamentary democracy under civilian control. Although political leaders suspended democracy in 1975 for two years (“The Emergency”), the military was never used to govern the country. Civilians always maintained control.

10. Is there a paramilitary organization separate from the regular military, used to provide regime or leader security?

Yes.

In addition to the armed forces, India also has a substantial paramilitary force. These various paramilitary organizations conduct a wide range of internal and external security operations. The Assam Rifles, for example, reported directly to the Ministry of Home Affairs but was led by Indian Army officers and performed many roles.

11. Is there an internal intelligence apparatus dedicated to watching the regular military?

Yes.

The intelligence services of India are best conceptualized as a cluster of agencies with competing and overlapping services: the roots of the Intelligence Bureau stem back to the 19th century and became the core agency used to gather internal and external intelligence (as well as perform counter-intelligence and counter-terrorist operations with the Indian Policy Service and the armed forces), and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) was formed in 1941 as the primary internal police and investigatory agency. The Intelligence Bureau reports directly to the prime minister.⁵ After the Intelligence Bureau fared poorly during the 1962 Assam War with China and the 1965 Second Pakistan War, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) was created in 1968 as India’s primary external intelligence agency.⁶

⁴ Staniland, Paul. “Explaining Civil-Military Relations in Complex Political Environments: India and Pakistan in Comparative Perspective.” *Security Studies* 17, no. 2 (2008): 356-7.

⁵ Cohen, 76.

⁶ Cohen, 77.

12. Has a purge of the officer corps occurred in the last five years?

No.

13. Is there an institutionalized forum through which civilian leaders and military officers regularly exchange information?

Yes. [Update]

India is parliamentary democracy. As such, its foreign and security policy process is coordinated and led by the prime minister and the cabinet. The various ministries and bureaucracies include the Indian Civil Service (ICS), the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), a multitude of intelligence agencies, and the armed forces and paramilitary forces. "At the highest levels, foreign and security policy processes are dominated by civilians who are generally free of corruption."⁷ The civilian bureaucrats exert tremendous influence over the military and security agencies. "The most remarkable fact about the decisionmaking process is that the military plays almost no role in it. This is not to say that military factors (whether in terms of hardware or strategy) are not considered. Rather, in no other middle or great power is the military's advice so detached from political and strategic decisions."⁸

Additional information for this time period: After India lost the Assam War in 1962 to China, "a convention was established whereby the civilian leadership restricted itself to giving overall directives, leaving operational matters to the military."⁹ A recent conclusion from Srinath Raghavan on civil-military relations in India is worth quoting in length:

The pattern of civil-military interaction in India is informed by the notion that civilians should eschew involvement in operational matters. As a senior MoD official observed,

while the operational directive is laid down by the political leadership, the actual planning of operations is left to the chiefs of staff, and, over the years, a convention has been established that in purely operational matters such advice of the chiefs is almost automatically accepted.

This arrangement is sustained by a particular understanding of what had happened during the China crisis and after – an understanding shared by military and civilians alike. In this view, the defeat was the result of extensive civilian interference dating back to 1959. In the subsequent war with Pakistan, it was believed, that the politicians got it right. They set clear political objectives, and let the military get on

⁷ Cohen, 71.

⁸ Cohen, 76.

⁹ Raghavan, 167.

with their task. The outcome of the war vindicated this pattern of civil- military interaction.¹⁰

¹⁰ Raghavan, 172.