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Civil Defence: Need for Reviewing the Training for Preparations of War



Colonel Gurpreet Singh Bajwa is Former Senior Fellow at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, he was commissioned into Artillery in 1992, and was an instructor at the School of Artillery. He is qualified in the Technical Staff Officers Course and the Long Gunnery Staff Course. The Officer commanded an Artillery Regiment in the Eastern Sector and has also served in various staff appointments in operational areas. The officer has been awarded Army Commander's Commendation Card twice.

Introduction

The denial of an outright victory to Russia in Ukraine has been credited to the national will of the Ukrainians, to fight for their sovereignty to the last man. This has further been augmented by support of the civil population and the paramilitary and armed forces fighting in coordination with the common aim to 'bleed the aggressor', duly supported morally and materially by the West. This has drawn the attention of the world to the efficacy of Civil Defence capabilities and need to review, reform and exploit their capabilities—to harness their potential for National Defence.

India is located in a strategic position in South Asia and occupies a dominant position in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). India has a coastline of 7516.6 km and 1382 small and big offshore islands. India's land border is about 15,000 km which it shares with seven

Key Points

- The Ukraine conflict have increased the need to review, reform and exploit the capabilities of Civil Defence—to harness their potential for National Defence.
- Civil Defence activities in India are restricted to 259 categorised towns spread over 36 States/Union Territories. The training of master trainers and specialised training is conducted at the National Disaster Response Force Academy (NDRF), Nagpur and team/leadership training is conducted at the respective State Civil Defence Training Institutes.
- There is a need to review the existing Training methodologies and the world trends especially Ukraine, Europe and Taiwan and create contemporary content for training and awareness of civilians to survive the impact of war in various war time situations likely to be faced by the Nation.
- The organisation of an armed resistance against an aggressor will further strengthen National Defence and the provision of basic military skills will enable the reservists to secure urban buildings and blocks, provide logistics to the front, carry out identification checks and prevent infiltration to own area during war and also enable mitigation of effects of war on the civil population.
- The Armed Forces, in a warlike situation, will need to be augmented by a 'resilient civil defence force' and the training of this force needs to be upgraded at the earliest.



countries; 70% of the world's shipping trade and 80% of global energy transits through the IOR. India's internal security challenges are invariably linked with the security of India's borders. Hence, the armed forces, in a warlike situation, will need to be augmented by a resilient civil defence force, training of whom needs to be upgraded at the earliest, to meet the current requirements to protect our nation's population and assets.

Civil defence in India operates under the statutory authority of the 'Civil Defence Act, Rules and Regulations 1968'¹, and primarily deals with 'the war time preparation of the civil administration'. It aims to prepare civilians and community to survive the impact of war and augment the armed forces' function during wartime. Civil defence volunteers also play a crucial role of protecting the civilians as per the International Humanitarian Law, the four Geneva Conventions (1949) and Customary International Human Law.

Civil Defence Organisations falls under the Ministry of Home Affairs and their State and District level functionaries primarily comprises of Volunteers. There is a need to create contemporary content for training and awareness of civilians to survive the impact of war in various war time situations likely to be faced by the Nation in the future.

Civil Defence is primarily organised on a voluntary basis except for a small nucleus of paid staff and establishment that are augmented during emergencies. The present target of raising Civil Defence volunteers is 14.11 lakh, out of which 5.38 lakh have already been raised.² Formulation of Civil Defence policy in the country falls under the responsibility spectrum of the Central Government. To help the State Governments, the Central Government reimburses 50% of the expenditure, incurred by the State Government, in the form of grants-in aid for raising, training and equipping of Civil Defence Services for North Eastern States excluding Assam and 25% for other States including Assam.

The Director General (Fire Service, Civil Defence and Home Guards) headquarters are located in Delhi under the MHA. The National Civil Defence College, Nagpur has been merged with the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Academy.

Home Guards

It is a voluntary force, first raised in India in December 1946, to assist the police in controlling civil disturbance and communal riots. The role of Home Guards³ is to serve as an 'auxiliary force to the State police' in the maintenance of law & order and internal security situations; help the community in any kind of emergency like in times of air raid, fire, cyclone, earthquake, epidemic, etc.; help in the maintenance of essential services; promote communal harmony and assist the administration in protecting the weaker sections;



participate in socio-economic & welfare activities and perform Civil Defence (CD) duties. As per requirement, they can also be merged with CD organisations.

The additional role in disaster management will be enacted by Civil Defence Personnel before, during and after emergencies, arising out of calamities/disasters—whether natural or man-made. Although, the Civil Defence Act, 1968 is applicable throughout the country, the organisation is only raised in such areas and zones which are tactically and strategically considered vulnerable from enemy attack point of view.

Civil Defence towns have been converted into districts and categorisation of these districts, with respect to State/ Union Territory, comprises 100 Multi Hazard Prone Districts. At present, Civil Defence activities are restricted to 259 categorised towns spread over 36 States/Union Territories. It has been set up in 199 districts and activated by the States. The 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission in its 3rd Report titled “Crisis Management” have recommended to constitute Civil Defence organisation in all districts which are vulnerable to hostile attacks as also to natural calamities.⁴

Civil Defence training is conducted by the State Governments/UT Administrations in three tiers—at the Local/Town/district level, State level and National level. The training of master trainers and specialised training is conducted at the NDRF Academy, Nagpur and team/leadership training is conducted at State Civil Defence Training Institutes. Training of volunteers in Civil Defence Organisation is conducted at the local/town levels by trainers in the form of short-term training programmers.

Analysis of Existing Training Focus Areas

The Compendium of Civil Instructions (2011)⁵ needs to be upgraded as per the evolving geopolitical realities. It extensively covers the training requirement—for both local and state level training functions, in managing the emergencies. However, there is an essential need to incorporate smart content i.e. a content that is easily understood by the masses and can be disseminated smoothly, including the use of NCC, NSS, CEME, and Air Raid/ Emergency alerts for the local population as also the use of space based assets for disaster/emergency response.

All ministries should coordinate with civil defence organisations as an extension of peace time functions. The MoD provides advice for the likely extent of area to be affected in the war zone, security of military establishments and the disposal of unexploded bombs and Aircrafts. The District Magistrates (also designated as Controllers of Civil Defence) are the ultimate authority for Civil Defence in a district. NCC units maintain a close liaison with CD units in the area and can be mobilised for CD functions as NCC cadets are trained as per



civil defence syllabus. National Service Scheme (NSS), in the colleges also trains for the same. The Master Plan for Civil Defence includes three stage viz. Peace Time, Preparatory, and War Time. These plans/contingencies are tested annually in April.

NDRF

As per the National Policy on Disaster Management, 2009, the primary responsibility for undertaking rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures, in the event of a disaster, rests with the State Government. The Central Government supplements the efforts of the State Governments by providing logistic and financial support in case of severe natural calamities. The logistic support includes deployment of aircrafts, boats, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), special teams of Armed Forces and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), arrangements for relief materials and essential commodities including medical stores, restoration of critical infrastructural facilities including communication networks and such other assistance as may be required by the affected States and UTs to handle the situation effectively. The NDRF have now evolved into a dependable responsive force which is able to coordinate the strengths of various government agencies through its core teams, as was witnessed by the Nation during the ropeway accident and subsequent three day rescue operation conducted at Deogarh, Jharkhand in April 2022.⁶ The NDRF also runs a 'sophisticated' media strategy through social media and YouTube channel which can be easily replicated for disseminating the Civil Defence messaging.

Lessons from COVID

A few of the lessons that we need to learn from the ongoing Covid pandemic are as under:

- Civil Defence needs to have a pan-nation footprint.
- Trained module of specialists need to be inducted on full payroll of the State.
- Mapping of Resources for Disaster Rescue and Relief— both human and defensive resources, are essential for all states (as was seen in the oxygen resource allocation during April- May 2021).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, State / UT Governments had actively leveraged the services of Civil Defence volunteers; such community based volunteers contributed to running the Covid-19 war room in the state, helped medical professionals with their duty, manned quarantine centres, delivered food at homes etc.



Contemporary Lessons in Civil Defence from the Ukraine Conflict

Armed Resistance

Ukraine has advocated that individual citizen's rising up to defend their own country from any kind of a military incursion or effort to subordinate their sovereignty by picking up arms and perhaps in support of or in tandem with the regular armed forces of the country, is a national duty. The Ukrainian Parliament have authorised civil defence volunteers and paramilitary forces to use small arms including personal hunting weapons.

In Ukraine, a concept of 'national resistance' was put into effect earlier this year and the Ukrainian Armed Forces — the regular armed forces, invested a lot of their time in training the volunteers so that they were ready to join the territorial defence units and other voluntary militias. The 'Armed Resistance'⁷ conveys the sense that it's an 'organised struggle' — it's not guerrilla warfare per se, it's not a rebellion, — it's an effort to organise violence, not independently but under state leadership against any kind of aggressor that is trying to take over a country or to subordinate its people.

Another force engaged in conventional and resistance efforts is the National Guard of Ukraine (NGU); with authorised strength of 60,000, the NGU was created in combat conditions in the wake of Russia's intervention in the Donbas region. While its mandate is to protect the country's constitutional & territorial integrity and maintain public order & safety, one of its primary goals is to improve the coordination and government control of the voluntary militia units engaged in fighting in eastern Ukraine. A pamphlet titled "National Guard of Ukraine: Ways of Development"⁸ was released in Ukrainian language in 2017. It comprises the modernisation of the National Guard of Ukraine, as part of the process of transformation of state defence system, under the influence of Russian aggression, with updates on conceptual construction of national guards alongside practical recommendations for reforming the National Guard of Ukraine.

Asymmetric Defence

The use of asymmetric defensive weaponry by Ukraine, made the "military operation" more tough for Russia. Ukrainians used small personal weapons to attack a larger adversary. Resistance-capability development and actual fight includes variety of risks and requirements, such as the need to ensure careful vetting of personnel to avoid insider threats and accidents; the need to maintain popular support; and the requirement for solid training and exercise programs for voluntary forces.



The 'Emergency Information System' requires to be revamped; Air Raid sirens are now augmented by the 'Siren App' which is faster than the conventional sirens and covers the entire zone wherein air threat is imminent. For providing basic military training for handling self-defence guns and tactical measures to save oneself in conflict zone including paramedic first aid, emergency survival logistics including water and basic necessities, a two week training capsule was organised, in groups of 40, by specialists of government, non-governmental and international agencies. Psychological screening of volunteers for high risk mission was also conducted before induction into conflict zones.

Ukrainian Territorial Defence Units

These units comprises the second tier defence for the nation, behind the regular and paramilitary forces operating on the front. Each volunteer contributes to the defence of the nation— the basic military skills will enable the reservists to secure buildings, provide logistics to the front, carry out identification checks and prevent infiltration to own area. The Russian prowess and technological superiority has not been able to bend the Ukrainian' will to fight for their sovereignty to the last man.

National Civil Defence

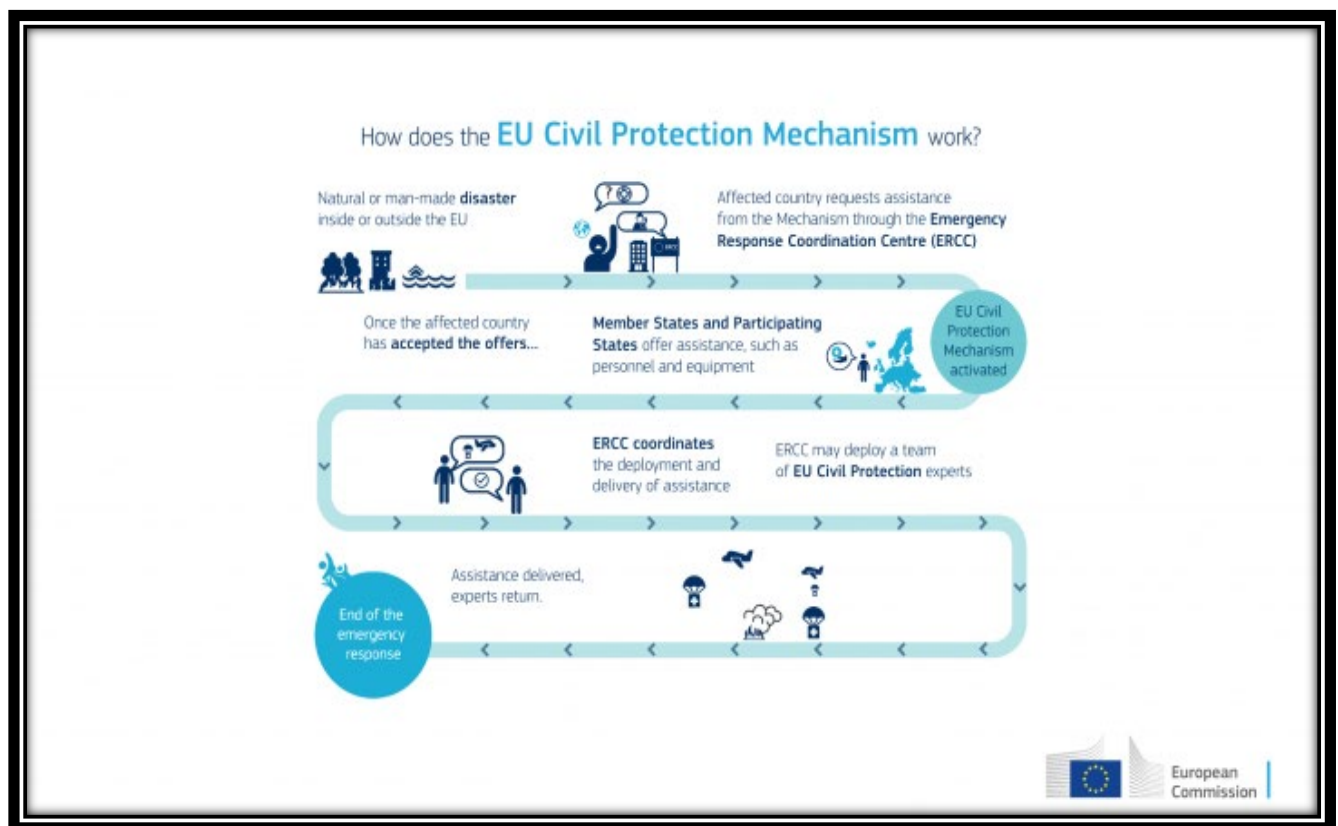
All of the males in Ukraine have showcased their determination to defend the country. They are volunteering to go to war zones to fight against Russia. This national will to defend against the aggressor has been harnessed by well-orchestrated 'Information Operations' supported by the West. Ukraine has considerable internal resources and human capacity to raise the cost of Russian occupation; sustaining a national resistance is also augmented by significant international support including political support, economic assistance and military assistance, in the form of providing weapons, communication equipments, intelligence and training.

Refugees to Europe

Presently, approx. 20% of Ukraine is occupied by Russia, after 100 days of conflict, and about 30% of the population been displaced by the conflict with over 5 million refugees from Ukraine. Economic losses are pegged at least 45% of the GDP. Ukraine requested support from the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM)⁹ for assistance in order to respond to the needs of population affected by the ongoing conflict; 26 EU Member States and 1 Participating State have already offered more than 40 million of shelter items (beds, tents, blankets), fire equipment, personal protective equipment, medicines, and other medical

supplies. Poland, Slovakia and Moldova have also activated their UCPM in order to manage the influx of refugees.

Figure 1: EU Civil Protection Mechanism



Source: https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/civil-protection/eu-civil-protection-mechanism_en

In October 2001, the European Commission established the EU Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM). The Mechanism aims to strengthen cooperation between the EU countries and 6 participating states (Iceland, Norway, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Turkey) on civil protection, to improve prevention, preparedness, and response to disasters. It finances training activities, exercises studies and projects on prevention and preparedness, as well as transport of in-kind assistance to the country affected by disaster.¹⁰ When an emergency overwhelms the response capabilities of a country in Europe, then it can request assistance through the UCPM.

A joint approach further helps to pool expertise and capabilities of first responders, avoids duplication of relief efforts, and ensures that assistance meets the needs of those affected. Pooling together civil protection capabilities, allows a stronger and more coherent collective response.

Training in EU Civil Protection Mechanism

The Knowledge Network¹¹ focuses on well-established and known civil protection activities, structured along two pillars vis. capacity development and science. Knowledge Network activities include training, civil protection exercises, exchange of experts, lessons learnt/ best practices, scientific advice & innovation, thematic workshops & conferences, community engagement and partnership facilitation opportunities. It cues in information from EU's early warning & information systems, the Emergency Response Coordination Centre, the Emergency Support Instrument (ESI), European Civil Protection Pool, and also inputs from the national disaster management systems.

Taiwan's Preparedness for War

Taiwan has learned from the successful resistance fielded by Ukraine. Taiwan's new All-out Defense Mobilization Agency, part of the Ministry of National Defense (MND), issued a "war survival guide"— a National Defence handbook¹² that explained various crisis responses, like how to find bomb shelters as well as food & water via smartphones, how to prepare first-aid kits, etc. Taiwan is yet to move towards organising civil resistance. The All-out Defense Mobilization Agency will probably look to upgrade reservist training and synchronisation with the military and even consider extending reservist conscriptions from four months to one year.

Themes for Evolving Civil Defence Training in India

The emerging geopolitics dictates that India should prepare for a two front war with an asymmetric threat in the hinterland. To counter such threat, civil defence training needs to be upgraded with current requirements of the battlefield; there is also a need for nationwide civil defence awareness campaign through social media platforms and mass media. The need for focussed military and basic tactical training, alongside first aid & rescue and fire fighting, identifying unexploded ammunition, guiding access to shelter and government services, basics about minefield and need to demarcate one, emergency logistics & maintenance of the essential services and basic survival off the land, refugee management for internally displaced population, are just few of the themes which need to be disseminated to the volunteers of Civil Defence. A smart curriculum can also be evolved on the following additional themes.

Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT)

The content of this course¹³ can incorporate the following skill sets:

- Basic life support in the absence of medical personnel: first aid.

- Protection of sensitive and classified information.
- Orientation, map reading and satellite based navigation.
- Procedures and means of communication (use of radios).
- 4×4 vehicle driving techniques.
- Driving in convoy.
- Stress management.
- Personal health care.
- Protection and response to threats of sexual violence.
- Set of threats, associated risks, and personal security.
- Risk management.
- Mobile security: protection and security procedures when traveling in vehicles.
- Managing threats related to large concentrations of people, demonstrations, protests, and riots.
- Hostage-taking and kidnapping survival.
- Weapons, mines, improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and unexploded ordnance (UXOs).

Introduction to Survivor and Community led Response in Crisis

The content of this course¹⁴ can incorporate the following skill sets:

- What survivor and community led crisis response is about.
- Which capacities, skills and strategies are needed.
- How to support communities to better meet short-term needs and reduce future vulnerability.
- How to bring this method back to the organisation, financial and advocacy strategies.

Personal Safety Awareness Training

The content of this course¹⁵ can incorporate the following skill sets:

- Personal Safety & Security.
- Mitigating Threats.
- Situational Awareness.
- Communications.
- Travel Safety.
- Weapons Awareness.
- Abduction and Sexual Violence.
- Basic Life Support.

- Field Resilience.
- Stress Management.

Humanitarian Supply Chain Management

The content of this course¹⁶ can incorporate the following skill sets:

- Identify the strategic elements of logistics & supply chain along the project cycle, and integrate ethics & environmental aspects.
- Set and monitor a procurement strategy, fight against fraud and corruption.
- Set and monitor a strategy for storage and inventory adapted for the prevailing environment.
- Set and monitor flexible transport strategy to address the challenges of complex environment.

Negotiation Skills for Humanitarian Aid Workers

The ability to effectively negotiate in stressful circumstances is a skill which is essential for every humanitarian worker– from field-based aid worker negotiating access on the frontline to the manager in headquarters talking to donors and local governments.

Way Ahead

- Review the Civil Defence Training of preparations for war. Rollout Smart Educational campaigns for incorporating Civil Defence charter at all levels i.e. Central Government, State and Local Governments.
- Border Infrastructure for Civil Defence needs to be audited and augmented. Map and transmit resources for defence of the public in a war time scenario.
- Test resilience of community safety protocols on a half-yearly basis. Ensure border infrastructure and benefits of development. Enable the citizen defender for inputs against anti-state elements. Exploit the Veteran human resources in critical areas for augmenting the civil defence force.
- The NDRF Academy needs to train the trainers for the State level Civil Defence Training Institutes for preparations for war. Conduct training programmes at all levels to improve own civil defence preparedness
- ‘Smart Learning’ pedagogy needs to evolved to enable strategic mass education in a short time during crisis situations.
- There is a need to review existing training methodologies and the world trends in Ukraine, Taiwan & Europe and create contemporary content for training and awareness of civilians to survive the impact of war in various war time situations likely to be faced by the Nation.



- The organisation of an armed resistance against an aggressor will further strengthen National Defence and the provision of basic military skills will enable the reservists to secure urban buildings and blocks, provide logistics to the front, carry out identification checks and prevent infiltration to own area during war and also enable mitigation of effects of war on the civil population.

Conclusion

The rear area security grid of the nation needs to be bolstered in view of the return of full scale conflict as witnessed in Ukraine and this requires a revisit of the training methodologies and curriculum proposed for civil defence organisations. Although, the state police networks are undergoing modernisation, but a ‘whole of nation approach’ is required to spruce up our civil defence capabilities— annual exercises at district level will require to be more result oriented than being just formalities. A responsive civil administration, leveraging the capabilities of their veterans to augment Civil Defence, will enhance the security grid of the nation and put the inimical forces on the back foot.

Ukraine’s ‘universal mobilisation’ enabled the defence of its cities instead of the rollover expected by the superpower, turned the tables from a ‘lightning shock and awe’ campaign to a prolonged offensive with limited victories for Russia and a heavy cost to pay in terms of personnel and equipment. It’s time that civil defence training be revamped as per current requirements and resource mapping of trained personnel be done at the district level.

End Notes

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CENTRE FOR LAND WARFARE STUDIES (CLAWS)

RPSO Complex, Parade Road, Delhi Cantt, New Delhi 110010

Tel.: +91-11-25691308, Fax: +91-11-25692347, CLAWS Army No. 33098; Email: landwarfare@gmail.com

Website: www.claws.in