

# Seminar Report

## LOW INTENSITY CONFLICTS IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

September 19, 2018



Centre for Land Warfare Studies  
New Delhi



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KW Publishers Pvt Ltd  
New Delhi

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Online radicalisation has emerged as a major threat today and needs to be countered effectively.
- In all military operations, the battle for narratives remains very important.
- The strategy to neutralise Low Intensity Conflicts (LICs) should combine the elements of offensive and defensive intelligence.
- India has almost entirely focused on Defence and Diplomacy while dealing with LICs, and should now explore Deterrence.
- A strategy based on deterrence should focus on the correct identification of target, values important to it, and self-analysis.
- A strong exhibition of political will, as also the alignment of political aims with military capabilities, and community-mobilisation has the propensity to deter terrorist groups.
- To bring down civilian casualty, the ways and rules of engagement should be calibrated.
- Armed forces need to train and be prepared for urban combat.
- Armed forces need to lay more emphasis on dealing with the public interface, i.e., the media.
- Positive example by the armed forces is the best counter-narrative.
- The psychological needs of the populace and armed forces personnel in LIC areas need to be addressed.
- Any news item that is published should be cross-verified with all parties concerned.
- Every insurgency may have a different centre-of-gravity and should be studied to find out the same.

## DETAILED REPORT

*The aspects enumerated as part of this report are based on the deliberations by panelists. These do not necessarily conform to the views of the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) or that of the Indian Army or the Ministry of Defence, Government of India.*

A national seminar on “Low Intensity Conflicts in Uncertain Times” was conducted on September 19, 2018, at Taber Hall, Manekshaw Centre, Delhi Cantonment.

### *Aim*

The seminar was aimed at carrying out a broad-based analysis of low intensity conflicts (LICs) in general, and its ramifications in the Indian subcontinent in particular.

### *Modalities of Conduct*

The one-day seminar was conducted at Taber Hall, Manekshaw Centre, Delhi Cantonment on September 19, 2018. It was divided into two sessions: Session I on “Deterring Low Intensity Conflicts—A Military Perspective,” and Session II on “Low Intensity Conflict—The Human Element.” The participants were from the armed forces, strategic community, veterans, academia, students, and media. Nominated army officers from field formations also participated in the seminar.

### *Chair*

Session I was chaired by Lt Gen Gurmit Singh, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd.), Distinguished Fellow, CLAWS. The Chair for Session II was Lt Gen Kamal Davar, PVSM, AVSM (Retd.), Convenor (Strategic Studies Cell, Kasauli) and Head (Delhi Forum for Strategic Studies)

### *Speakers*

- Brig Ben Barry, OBE, Senior Fellow for Land Warfare, IISS
- Mr. Tilak Devasher, Author and Retired Civil Servant
- Prof. Rajesh Rajagopalan, JNU
- Lt Gen Rakesh Sharma, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM, (Retd.), Distinguished Fellow, CLAWS
- Lt Gen Asit Mistry, AVSM, SM, VSM, GOC Delhi Area
- Ms. Suhasini Haidar, Diplomatic Editor, *The Hindu*
- Col Christopher Todd Barber, US Air Force

### *Opening Session*

Delivering the opening remarks, the Director (CLAWS) quoted the report by Centre for Economics and Peace, Sydney, which mentioned that 12.4% of the Gross World Product went into preventing and managing violence in 2017 and that India ranked 136th among 163 countries in the Global Peace Index, 2018. Explaining terminologies such as asymmetric warfare, sub-conventional warfare, people's war, protracted people's war, No War No Peace, hybrid warfare, revolutionary warfare, etc., he mentioned that LICs are conflicts just below the threshold of the conventional warfare. Giving the reference of General Sir Frank Edward Kitson's book, *Low Intensity Operations: Subversion, Insurgency and Peacekeeping*, he elucidated the difference between subversion and insurgency.

The term "LIC" was first introduced in a US Joint Chiefs of Staff publication. The term, applicable to Third World countries, had a distinct politico-military dimension to it, allowing the legitimisation of external involvement in those countries. Within one year, the term "LIC" was dropped in favour of the term "operations other than war," perhaps due to the bloody, 1993 Somalia experience.

India adopted the term Low Intensity Conflict Operations (LICO) and it figured prominently in her Sub-Conventional Warfare Doctrine.

In a time when the world's economic centre-of-gravity is shifting towards Asia, the region is, simultaneously, facing serious challenges, namely, insurgencies, terrorism, piracy, territorial dispute, displacement of people, security of SLOCs, demographic inversion due to illegal migrants, presence of nuclear-armed states, nexus between terrorists, drug mafia, and arms lobby in the Af-Pak region, etc.

### *Keynote Address by the VCOAS*

Elaborately discussing the changing world order, the VCOAS, Lt Gen Devraj Anbu, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, brought out how terrorism, like globalisation, is metamorphosing and linking the world. Technology has given LIC an entirely new dimension which continues to keep it contemporary.

Talking about the subsets of LIC, he highlighted two, prominent subsets: deterrence, and the human element. Giving examples, he mentioned how deployment of disproportionate force could be a deterrent in today's age when the world is more amenable than before to endorse the use of force during LICs. He, however, also cautioned that deterrence was not so simplistic either as there are several ramifications for the actions. Apart from this, alignment of political aims with military capabilities, use of technology, especially in tracking communication and terror-finances, the legal framework, effective policing, well-equipped intelligence agencies, countering online propaganda, as also strengthening the social fabric of the country are important tools in deterrence.

Mentioning how terrorism is a tool used to offset conventional disadvantage, the speaker remarked that even though the majority of the conflicts have been resolved by political means, it had been possible because of the availability of strong military options.

The soldier on the ground has a pivotal role to play in managing human perceptions during LICs and should know the pulse of the

populace. Any doctrine of retributive deterrence is neither desirable nor politically feasible.

There is no silver bullet solution to altogether deter LICs, but a sustained, multi-faceted approach can go a long way.

## Session I

### *Opening Remarks by the Chair*

Pointing out that Low Intensity Conflicts (LICs) are a global phenomenon, the Chairperson underscored how, since independence, India has been successful in controlling only the Mizo and the Punjab insurgencies. The Chairperson highlighted the need for exploring and establishing strong deterrence measures.

### ***Theme 1: Responding to Low Intensity Conflict Situations in Uncertain Times***

The speaker mentioned that even though ISIS had been overcome, the threat of violence from Islamist extremists remained high, and online radicalisation remains a major concern.

Dwelling on the consequences and drivers of conflicts, the speaker opined that the future is likely to see an increase in terrorist insurgencies in which the State forces would be a part of the problem. Businesses may become armed actors.

Giving the example of the first period of the Iraq War in which US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was reluctant to put the necessary resources, the speaker said that identifying hybrid conflict was not difficult, but getting the political leaders to acknowledge it, and making them spend the necessary political capital was.

Elaborating on the lessons learnt by the US, UK, and their allies in the counterinsurgency operations, the speaker mentioned how, at the tactical level, there has often been a political dimension to the military operations. Many local and political actors have become important

actors in counterinsurgency areas. The need for an inter-agency strategic plan as part of the national strategy was brought out.

The military operations in the last 20 years have been conducted in urban, and densely populated rural areas, making the battle of narratives increasingly important as the insurgents and terrorists have made propaganda an integral part of their operations.

The centre-of-gravity in such an environment is not the terrain but the minds and attitudes of people. Army commanders at all levels need to view the battle in different ways apart from conventional warfighting. Equally crucial in a counterinsurgency environment is the leadership.

A comprehensive military strategy should include the following:

- Military action leveraging all the governmental agencies at all levels.
- An integration and coordination mechanism.
- Effective intelligence architecture.
- A plan for countering enemy propaganda.
- Strategic and tactical patience in long-term operations.
- Commanders capable of communication of military matters to non-military actors.

Air power gives an asymmetric advantage in terms of joint campaigns, intelligence and surveillance capability, precision attacks, transport, and rapid deployment of ground troops.

In cases of cross-border terrorism, border security as a deterrence should also include counter-intelligence and anti-corruption methods.

### *Theme 2: Role of Intelligence in Deterring Low Intensity Conflicts*

Giving the example of Pakistan, the speaker mentioned how States have assumed the roles of sponsors of Non-State proxies, and how

State-sponsored terrorism is used as a force-equaliser against a stronger country.

The use of LICs can be traced back to the Cold War period when the fear of a conventional war led to the use of safer and cost-efficient proxies. The reason for engaging in LICs could be ideological, e.g., the Iranian backing of Shia proxies, or security-dilemma-related which motivates the weaker side to respond through Non-State actors.

Though the purpose of intelligence has not changed, the changing nature of security and threats has made the deterrence potential of intelligence very dynamic. In today's times, terrorism has become the immediate instrument of LIC, and matching the proactiveness of terrorists who have a pre-emptive advantage in space and time, remains a challenge. Countries cannot fight the enemy using the Army alone. There have to be simultaneous political, combat, and intelligence operations.

Speaking at length on the crucial aspect of Psychological Operations (PSYOPs), the speaker elucidated how narratives can undermine the adversary's will to resist even before the hostilities begin. In an environment of PSYOPs, it is crucial to grab the initiative and put out the narrative first. Any narrative that is built has to be targeted at 4 different audiences:

- Local population that is the victim of LIC
- Larger domestic audience
- Population of the country that is sponsoring LIC
- International audience.

While for deterring LICs, the government can use a range of policy options including diplomacy, working the international system, forming strategic partnerships, deployment of security forces in LIC areas, increasing and upgrading military infrastructure, and use of soft power, etc., countering LICs would require understanding their characteristics.

The following are the means by which intelligence agencies combat LICs:

- Creation of various databases
- Human infiltration into terrorist organisations
- Electronic intelligence
- Digital intelligence
- Identification of modi operandi of terrorist organisations for determining long-term threats.

Intelligence can be both offensive and defensive and only a strategy combining both these elements can neutralise LICs.

Secretly funding political parties in order to influence the country's elections, employing foreign journalists to build narratives are examples of non-offensive covert operations. In offensive PSYOPs, the human element lies at the core and the battle of public perception at home and abroad could be decisive. Military success, even backed by a political outcome, must be perceived as such by the population.

The following are the 4 cardinal principles of offensive intelligence ops:

- Clarity about objectives.
- Careful selection of the target with focus on leveraging the vulnerabilities of the enemy.
- Sustenance of operations over a period of time.
- Plausible deniability of the operations.

Intelligence agencies are both the shield and the sword of the country. A government that invests in intelligence over a long period of time has superior intelligence when required. Whether to take offensive

or defensive actions or no action at all is ultimately, a political decision, and usually the price to be paid for the latter is higher.

### *Theme 3: Deterring State Support for Low Intensity Conflicts*

Giving the examples of the alleged poisoning of a former spy by Russia, Chinese meddling in the domestic politics of Australia, as also trying to control the academic discourse in the US, the speaker mentioned that Pakistan's support to terrorists is part of this larger, global pattern.

Diplomacy, Defence, and Deterrence are the three ways in which state-supported terrorism can be dealt with, and Indian strategy has almost entirely been Diplomacy and Defence.

Giving examples, the speaker mentioned how bilateral diplomacy has its limitations as treaties and agreements are not necessarily respected. It becomes even more difficult at the multilateral level. Defence does not always work because of the multiplicity of soft targets. Hence, there needs to be a focus on deterrence.

A counter-strategy to State-sponsored terrorism needs to have the following three elements:

- Identification of the actor to be deterred.
- Identification of the values that are important to the actor.
- Self-analysis with respect to capabilities and capacities.

Elaborating on the specific issue of Pakistan, the speaker said that it is the Pak Army (and not the society or State of Pakistan) that needs to be deterred. PoK (Pak Occupied Kashmir) is the most appropriate target as it is a land which is claimed by India as opposed to the Pak territory across the Punjab and Rajasthan border.

Speaking on the absurdity of the fear of nuclear escalation, the speaker elucidated how it was a Cold War construct, not applicable to the India-Pakistan equation. Be it the case of Kargil or the surgical strikes, Pakistan has backed down each time India has escalated.

The speaker also elaborated on the challenges of mountain warfare and civil-military relations.

***Theme 4: Impact of Low Intensity Conflicts on India's National Security Imperatives***

Stressing on the need to address both internal and external threats, the speaker quoted the ancient Indian treatise 'Thirukkural', which says that the important elements that constitute a nation include being disease-free, being wealthy, having high productivity, harmonious living, and a strong defence.

When LICs impact even one of the following issues, they become a national security threat:

- The secular and multicultural nature of our State, and the freedom of speech, thought, and equal opportunity.
- Secure and stable environment conducive to sustained growth and progress.
- Territorial sovereignty, unity, integrity, and culture of the country.

The speaker made the following points while analysing how LICs have affected India:

***Macroeconomic Instability***

There is poverty, decline in the long-term growth, and increasing inequality between people which are evident in LWE (left-wing extremism)-affected areas, the North East, and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

Speaking about the qualitative difference in the unrests of 2008, 2010, and 2016 in J&K, the speaker mentioned how the population stocks itself mentally, physically, and financially during curfews.

As per the World Bank report of 2015, J&K was the worst performer in the assessment of the implementation of business reforms

by states. Compared to other non LIC-affected states, the investment in J&K was minuscule. Giving statistics, the speaker established how the entire effort of the national machinery goes across sustaining a state. From 2006 to 2016, J&K received central grants of Rs.1,00,000 crore to sustain itself.

### *Polluted Politics*

Low voter turnout is a serious issue. Corruption and nexus between politicians and insurgents undermine the process of elections and the elected representatives cease to be the true representatives of the people. MP and MLA funds are not utilised properly and the authority of the state administration gets eroded.

### *Developmental Expenditure*

Giving ample statistics, the speaker established how in the case of J&K, the state is spending funds on administrative work and not on developmental activities. At times there is no professional output, yet salaries continue to flow. The situation in the NE is so bad that it is called an industrial desert; the lone exception being Assam.

### *Human Development Index*

Even though there are 11,633 Army Goodwill Schools in the Valley alone, it means little if they remain closed 5 months of the year on account of conflicts.

Of the population of J&K, 30% is below 30 years, and 25% of that population is unemployed.

Data from the sixth Census of 2013 shows that the number of employed males in the Valley has reduced from 2.79% to 1.74%. This could be a contributing factor to the unrest.

The Valley has one doctor per 2,000 persons, which is four times the WHO-recommended guideline of one doctor per 500 persons. Overburdened hospitals affect the quality of care provided. Giving eight significant examples from the NE, the speaker elucidated

how internal displacement of people is a phenomenon in conflict-prone areas. This results in the fear of minoritisation.

### *Psychosocial Effects*

A sense of insecurity prevails in LIC areas. There are psychological complications, especially in children. Delays in the criminal justice system and corruption in police and administrative bodies compound the problem further.

## Session II

### *Opening Remarks by the Chair*

Delivering the opening remarks, the Chair, Lt Gen Kamal Davar, talked about the centrality of the human element in all types of warfare. Innocent, unarmed civilians are the recipient of maximum suffering in LICs, at times called the war on the poor.

The following make LIC a formidable challenge:

- advances in technology,
- external, covert support,
- rise in sub-nationalities, sectarianism, extremism, and so forth,
- increasing disaffection among certain sections of the society, and
- easy availability of modern weaponry.

Underscoring the importance of perception management and how devious actors use the same to disrupt peaceful narratives, the Chair highlighted the need to win the battle of perceptions at all levels—local, national, and international.

Most LICs have trans-border linkages. The armed forces have to step in to protect the political integrity and values of the country and one should not be apologetic about it. The uniformed community has

to protect the civilians even as they combat the wrong. It has to be made sure that they do not indulge in human rights violations.

In many cases, low intensity conflicts are hardly “low.” They have to be addressed by the State keeping the collateral damage quotient in mind. The human cost should be factored into the cost of war. Any massive firepower operation should exclude the civilians. India has a proud record of using the minimum force and not indulging in retributive deterrence.

Most States do comprehend the moral and legal complexities and constraints while engaged in LICs. Self-restraint by the government and the armed forces is generally ensured. It takes effective leadership and statesmanship within the nation to ensure that all factors are taken into consideration while devising a strategy to tackle LIC.

#### *Theme 5: Protection of Civilians during Low Intensity Conflicts*

The speaker gave a United Nations (UN) perspective of protection of civilians (POC). The UNPK (United Nations Peace-Keeping) Forces are the only forces clearly mandated and tasked to protect the civilians. In places where it is not deployed, it is the responsibility of belligerents or the parties to the conflict to ensure protection of civilians.

The following points were highlighted:

- *Increase in number of conflicts*

The number of intra-state conflicts has overtaken the number of inter-state conflicts. In the last 10 years, the number of violent conflicts has increased about three times.

- *Changing nature of conflicts*

Conflicts have become more complex, transitional and endless. There is a blurring of lines between the combatants and civilians. It is being fought more among people and less in the battlefields.

- *Urbanisation*

By 2040, almost two-thirds of the entire population of the world would be living in urban centres. So the conflict would move towards urban areas.

- *Persistent military conflicts*

While a large-scale inter-state war particularly among the major powers is quite unlikely, all other forms of military competition are likely to persist. Shades of major power rivalry in South and East China Sea, Ukraine, West Asia and so forth are clearly evident.

- *Human suffering*

In all the conflicts, the civilian casualty is increasingly high.

- *POC*

A civilian is anybody who is not part of the conflict, including those who have ceased to be a part of the conflict. Protection of civilians flows from the Geneva Convention.

- *Lakhdar-Brahimi Report*

It said that POC should be given as a clearly defined mandate and the mission should be resourced adequately. In 1999-2000, the first explicit POC mandate was given to United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone.

These are not sequential or linear in action. A number of these activities will have to go on simultaneously. Depending on the nature and level of threat, some activities will take more importance at a certain stage.

- *What constitutes POC*

There are three approaches to what constitutes POC. The first one is to keep civilians out of physical harm. The second one encompasses their rights, ways of life, and so forth. The third definition, also given

in the Security Council guidelines for peacekeeping missions, is about POC being the net effect of everyone fulfilling their respective mandates.

- *Three-tiered approach*

Tier 1: protection through political process

Tier 2: protection from physical violence

Tier 3: establishment of protective environment.

- *Measurement of the success of POC*

The success or failure of POC is invariably measured in terms of the physical, visible element. Preventing a crisis situation from escalating into a conflict is not appreciated enough.

- *Primacy of the state*

The UNPK mission can supplement the state capability, not replace it. When the state is unwilling, incapable, or complicit in harming the civilians, political advocacy and coercive measures have to be used. UNPK mission cannot respond to it in a kinetic manner.

- *POC in absence of peacekeeping operation*

The first and foremost responsibility lies with the state; then the parties to the conflict as also the regional players, and finally the international community. POC can be done through observers, advocacy, diplomacy, and in extreme cases, military intervention.

- *Challenges in POC in absence of peacekeeping operations*

- Regional dynamics and domestic politics
- Large number of belligerents
- Cultural and social faultlines: frequent realignments
- Proliferations of small arms and light weapons

- Weak command and control
- Transnational actors
- Lack of accountability
- Lack of early warning and fast pace of events.
- *Types of threat*

There are threats in the following four dimensions: physical, economic, psychological and environmental.
- *Phases in Executing POC*

There are four phases to executing a POC mandate: prevention, pre-emption, response to a situation, and post-response activity (consolidation). These are not necessarily linear, but correspond to levels of threat.
- *Challenges for POC*
  - Increasingly complex political environment
  - Failing states/state authority
  - Increased focus and visibility
  - Increasing expectation
  - Role of social media
  - Physical protection as the yardstick for success or failure.

As of September 2018, over 16 missions have had a POC mandate. Currently, 7 out of the 14 missions have a chapter 7 POC mandate.

The UNPK force has to be prepared for proactive use of force. Even one civilian killed is one too many.

*Theme 6: Determining the Human Cost of Low Intensity Conflicts in Uncertain Times*

Talking about the need for military commanders to know levels of civilian casualties and the actors responsible, the speaker talked about the following ways of reducing civilian casualties, refugees, Internally Displaced People, and human suffering in general:

- *Limitations on ways and rules of engagement*

Use of force can be regulated and use of minimum force should be the overriding principle. Lethal force should be used only in self-defence. Depending on the circumstances, both massive show of strength and defensive use of force can help in containing the situation. It is imperative to keep in mind that inappropriate use of too much force, even within the rules of engagement, might destabilise the political situation just as too weak a response can undermine the credibility of the force. Elaborating on “escalation dominance”, the speaker mentioned that to be an effective peacemaker, one has to be a combat-capable warfighter. Giving the example of British troops who were allowed to carry only rifles in urban areas while fighting the Irish Republican Army, the speaker established how limiting the means and restraining the capability of troops can help minimise civilian casualty.

- *Handling of detainees*

It should be kept in mind that when a person is detained, his/her family, friends, employers, and dependants are also affected. Suspected militants are an important source of intelligence and detaining them reduces the level of threat without killing anyone, but they have to be handled in accordance with the Geneva Convention and domestic laws. Extracting information from them requires properly trained interrogators and expert linguists. Young armed forces personnel are likely to be easily tempted to bully and any abuse is a potential tool for recruitment. Military leaders have to hold moral compasses and be prepared to make themselves unpopular when they use them.

- *Urbanisation and the “reverberating effect”*

Urban environment limits the effectiveness of conventional forces, particularly the long-range weapons, making command and control much more difficult. There are also added complexities of varied terrain, rush-hours, etc., making cities very vulnerable to modern weapons. In urban operations, armed forces will need to operate in self-contained, combined arms groups of infantry, armoured vehicles, and engineers, supported by indirect fire as well as air power – the more precise, the better. The presence of a population may not necessarily favour defenders over attackers, like in the case of Iraq where the advanced armour on British and US tanks and armoured infantry fighting vehicles made them immune to RPG-fire and gave them the ability to manoeuvre in cities. Elaborating on the reverberating effect, the speaker explained how any military attack on a city can have consequences well beyond those originally intended. Hence, there is a need to understand not just the enemy force, but also the city, its human dynamics, economics, and ecology.

The speaker concluded with the following recommendations:

- Armed forces and defence ministries need to acknowledge that urban is the new normal.
- Armed forces need to audit their capability for urban combat and those not competent in urban operations should be seen as incompetent.
- Operating in urban areas requires plans for communicating with and managing civilians. This places a premium on multi-agency synergy. Armed forces should invest in purpose-built, multi-agency urban training facility and, where possible, train in real facilities.
- State forces should have sockets for government agencies, NGOs, Red Cross, and other services to plug into.

*Theme 7: Managing Perceptions during Low Intensity Conflicts*

Beginning by addressing the problems in shaping the narratives and portrayal of conflicts in the era of social media, the speaker pointed

out that the lack of a definitive end to wars and conflicts means that, ultimately, all the concerned parties are losers.

From the 1990s when journalists used to get messages from the local army commanders and/or militant groups in cyclostyled sheets in Kashmir, to this day when governments put out positive reinforcements of their narratives over the Internet and on TV using friendly channels and commentators, the method of dissemination of information has undergone a sea change. In this time of social media, every truth has a counter-truth and we end up becoming a post-truth society.

Tracing the history of LICs, the speaker mentioned how the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the US intervention in Vietnam, and the arming of the original jihadis by the US and Pakistan led to spin-off LICs all over the world. The regime-changes carried out by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, especially in Libya, have changed the narratives of other wars. The Libyan regime was one which voluntarily gave up its nuclear capability in return for a promise of non-intervention.

The speaker talked about various models of narrative-building, mentioning the Russian model (studied by a UK-based foreign policy centre), and the US model. The study of the Russian model, named Sharing Worst Practices, brings out how national sovereignty, countering Western influence, co-opting civil society, enhancing security service cooperation is of prime importance to the Russians. The author of the study described it as the Moscow Consensus as Russia gets these narratives to be put out by the Commonwealth of Independent States as well.

The Western model, referred to as the Western Consensus by the speaker, is about Western powers occupying the moral high ground and instilling their values even in those who do not share them. It also focuses on building a case such that their domestic audience feels threatened. “The American way of life,” for example, was a phrase that was used often during the Iraq War. Giving examples how the Western media covered the alleged possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction by Saddam Hussein, and Libyan civilians allegedly asking for help, the author mentioned how, regardless of how free the Western media is seen to be, it gets in line with whatever the military position is.

The following are the challenges in building narratives in LIC areas:

- LICs are long-running conflicts. Hence, access to information cannot be restricted; certainly not in a democracy.
- Since virtually everyone owns a smartphone, it is very easy to gather as well as manipulate information.
- Regulating the Internet is a challenge as that would restrict many other services which may be essential.
- LIC does not allow for some extreme steps to be taken.
- Morale of the forces is a big issue. Continued presence in disturbed areas may increase the danger of violations.

The speaker concluded by giving the following comments and recommendations:

- There is no substitute for access and information.
- Special emphasis required on dealing with the public interface. Specially trained cadre is required for working the public narrative.
- Positive, unquestioned coverage for any government or security force is a dangerous echo-chamber. It will do more harm in the long run. The perception of the victim population cannot be different from that of the larger, domestic population. If it is, it would alienate the victim population.
- The population needs to be dealt with empathetically.
- Positive examples by security forces are much better counter-narratives than being defensive or in denial. LICs are long-running conflicts and soft power wins in the long run.

*Theme 8: LIC—The Human Element (Afghanistan Experience)*

The speaker elaborated on the efforts that have been made to address the impacts of conflicts and also on the factors that contribute to continued conflicts.

Talking about the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and his experience in CASEVAC (casualty evacuation) in Afghanistan, the speaker explained how these initiatives are ways of not just improving the socio-economic-security situation, but also of building legitimacy, and reducing the popular support that the masses had for insurgents.

The PRT initiative began in 2002 in Afghanistan and was aimed at dealing with the non-kinetic activities in a conflict, i.e., improving security, supporting good governance, and enhancing provincial development. A total of 26 PRTs are in operation in Afghanistan at the moment, out of which, 12 are US-led.

CASEVAC is the secondary mission of the US Air Force in Afghanistan, the primary being combat search-and-rescue. Its aim is to reduce suffering and save lives. CASEVAC mission does not discriminate on the basis of who the casualty is; insurgents too have been moved.

Talking about the difficulties faced during such operations, namely, conditions of zero illumination, bad weather, etc., the speaker mentioned that CASEVAC helicopters are not afforded any special protection under the laws of armed conflict, unlike ground vehicles and helicopters marked with Red Cross or Red Crescent.

The speaker concluded by stating that such initiatives were ways of communicating the level of importance and concerns the US, the Coalition Forces, and the Afghan government placed on the human suffering that was occurring and mitigating the same. This was in stark contrast to the insurgents who were destroying schools, and threatening and killing villagers. The US consistently provides the power of positive example to improve the narrative and address the impacts of a conflict.

### *Closing Remarks*

The Director (CLAWS) elucidated that every insurgency needs to be studied to establish the centre-of-gravity which may not necessarily be the people. In the case of India and Peru, the centre-of-gravity was the leader of the movement; in Greece, it was the movement of the rebels into Albania and back as the borders were not sealed properly; in the Philippines, it was the land reforms. Within the same state, it could be different for different regions.

The armed forces can do the limited task of securing the environment and managing the conflict, after which governmental intervention to meet the aspirations of the people is crucial.

Underscoring the economic cost of violence which, for India, was 9% of her GDP in 2017, he mentioned that the Indian defence budget of 2018 is just 1.49% of the Indian GDP.

Mentioning that by 2040, 43% of the Indian population could be living in urban areas, he stressed on the need for urban doctrines, strategies, training, institutions, etc., for dealing with urban insurgencies and LICs.

He also mentioned that it was very important to address the psychological trauma of LICs on the populace, especially kids, as also the junior military leadership operating in such areas.

The Director concluded by mentioning that prior to publishing news related to disturbed areas, the media personnel should cross-verify the information with all parties concerned.

# CONCEPT NOTE

## General

1. The end of World War II has brought about major changes in the conduct, purpose and objectives of warfare. No longer is war limited to carefully designated battlefields. Wars are now majorly intra-State and mostly include non-state armed groups (NSAGs) backed by rival states to fight and destroy the State structures. There has been an increase in low intensity conflicts (LICs) the world over and transnational non-state actors are involved in destabilising neighbouring countries.
2. LIC has showcased itself from the Vietnam War to Iraq, Syria, India, and even the on-going crisis in Venezuela. These wars show how states fight not on singularly defined battlefields with armies respecting international laws on war, but rather states fighting using terrorists, insurgents, economic manipulations, among other means to destroy the system of state established by the adversary.

## Uncertain Times

3. The world order today is in a flux; be it the MENA where the Arab Spring has given way to the Arab Winter, Europe where the Crimean crisis has increased support for Ukraine's NATO-membership, the trade wars between the US and China, the new 'democratic' transition in Pakistan, the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar spilling into its neighbourhood, etc. Strategically placed countries like Yemen, Syria, Afghanistan, etc., have become battlegrounds for external players for influence and control in the region. India has seen these grey zone operations in the form of 'no-war no-peace' situation along the LoC, use of social media to mobilize groups for stone-pelting, information warfare, etc.
4. The humanitarian angle to such conflicts cannot be overlooked either. Breakdown of civil administration and governance aid in

sustaining these conflicts and extract a major toll on the civilian population.

5. The world over, there is an increased reliance on technology, criminal networks, non-State actors, etc. to secure foreign policy goals. This multi-dimensional character of LICs—military, social, political, economic, psychological—makes it imperative for us to devise a multi-dimensional strategy to counter it. Against the above backdrop, the Centre for Land Warfare Studies proposes to host a one-day national seminar on ‘Low Intensity Conflicts in Uncertain Times’.

### **Objective**

6. The objective of the seminar is to carry out a broad-based analysis of low intensity conflicts (LIC) in general, and its ramifications on the Indian sub-continent in particular.

### **Conduct**

7. The seminar would be conducted in two sessions, Session I on ‘Deterring Low Intensity Conflicts—A Military Perspective’, and Session II on ‘Low Intensity Conflict—The Human Element’.

### **Participants**

8. The participants will be from the armed forces, strategic community, veterans, academia and media.
9. For any queries / clarifications, please contact:

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## PROGRAMME

0900h – 0930h	<b>Tea and Registration</b>
0930h – 0940h	<b>Opening Remarks</b> by Lt Gen V K Ahluwalia (Retd), Director CLAWS
0940h – 1000h	<b>Keynote Address</b> by Vice Chief of the Army Staff
1000h – 1200h	<b>Session 1 : Deterring Low Intensity Conflicts – A Military Perspective</b>
	<b>Opening Remarks by Chairperson :</b> Lt Gen Gurmit Singh (Retd), Distinguished Fellow, CLAWS
	Responding to Low Intensity Conflict Situations in Uncertain Times by : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brig Ben Barry OBE, Senior Fellow for Land Warfare, IISS</li> </ul>
	Role of Intelligence in Deterring Low Intensity Conflicts by : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Tilak Devasher, Author and Retired Civil Servant</li> </ul>
	Deterring State Support for Low Intensity Conflicts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prof Rajesh Rajagopalan, JNU</li> </ul>
	Impact of Low Intensity Conflicts on India’s National Security Imperatives by : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lt Gen Rakesh Sharma (Retd), Distinguished Fellow, CLAWS</li> </ul>
	Q&A session
1200h – 1210h	<b>Tea Break</b>
1210h – 1400h	<b>Session 2 : Low Intensity Conflict—The Human Element</b>
	<b>Opening Remarks by Chairperson :</b> Lt Gen Kamal Davar (Retd)
	Protection of Civilians during Low Intensity Conflicts by : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lt Gen Asit Mistry, GOC Delhi Area</li> </ul>
	Determining the Human Cost of Low Intensity Conflicts in Uncertain Times <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brig Ben Barry OBE, Senior Fellow for Land Warfare, IISS</li> </ul>
	Managing Perceptions During Low Intensity Conflicts by : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms Suhasini Haidar, Diplomatic Editor, <i>The Hindu</i></li> </ul>
	LIC – the Human Element (Afghanistan Experience) by : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Col Christopher Todd Barber, US Air Force</li> </ul>
	Q&A session
1400h – 1405h	<b>Vote of Thanks</b> by Lt Gen V K Ahluwalia (Retd), Director CLAWS
1405h onwards	Lunch and Dispersal