CHAPTER 4

INDIAN POLICY VIS-A-VIS MANAGEMENT, ROLE AND STRUCTURE OF DISASTER CONTROL SYSTEMS IN THE ARMED FORCES

1. Till the recent formation of the National Disaster Management Authority of India by an act of Parliament on 26 December 2005, the national response to crisis was governed by the National Crisis Management Plan of 2003. Under this plan a National Crisis Management Committee had been convened to address all crisis situations that arose in the country. The various types of crises had been identified and having identified these a nodal agency had been nominated to deal with a specific crisis. It could have been a ministry or an agency that specialised in dealing with that particular kind of disaster. This nominated agency or ministry then formed a Crisis Management Group, which comprised experts to tackle the crisis assigned and evolved a detailed contingency plan. This was the national approach and the nodal ministry to deal with Natural Disasters was the Ministry of Home Affairs.

2. Today at the helm in managing disasters is the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) - refer Appendices A, B and C. The significance of this body is evident from its composition. The chairman of the NDMA is the Prime Minister with nine members constituting the board. Of these, six members have already been nominated. The Executive Committee functions from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff is a member of this committee. Below that there is the State Disaster Management Authority structured in a similar manner, followed by District Disaster Management Authority.

3. Under the Disaster Management Framework, in India, in case of a crisis situation, the responsibility of governance lies with the concerned State Governments. They have the basic

48 Paper on Armed Forces’ Perspective by Brigadier RS Alhuwalia, Deputy Assistant Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Operational Logistics); Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff India, Op Cit., Seminar Report on International Seminar on Disaster Management, PP.43-46.

responsibility for undertaking rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures in any disaster. At the same time the civil administration may requisition the services of the armed forces during disasters. The role of the Central Government is primarily to supplement the efforts of the State Governments through financial and logistic support.

4. The first responder to any disaster has to be at the local community level with the resources at its disposal. Should these not suffice one has to look at the State resources. If these too do not suffice, the Centre through Ministry of Home Affairs steps in. If the efforts here too are not found to be sufficient, then the Home Ministry turns to the Armed Forces. In the recent years, there has been an increase in intensity and frequency of occurrence of disasters. This has led to a distinct change in orientation of the government to handle disasters. Firstly, there has been a shift in emphasis from post-disaster relief and rehabilitation to pre-disaster preparedness and mitigation. Secondly, also observed is a shift in emphasis to Multi dimensional and multi-sectoral approach, which integrates disaster mitigation in all aspects of development planning.

5. In the background of this change in orientation of the government and shift in emphasis, a National Disaster Management Roadmap has been drawn up covering the following and the states too have been advised to draw up similar roadmaps.

(a) Institutional mechanisms.
(b) Mitigation / prevention measures.
(c) Legal/policy framework.
(d) Preparedness and response.
(e) Early warning systems.
(f) Human resource development.
(g) Capacity building on all fronts.

6. The National Disaster Management Bill, has provision for a National Executive Committee (NEC), which will function as the Executive Committee of the NDMA assisting it in discharging its functions and to implement its policies. It would also help to prepare the National Plan in consultation with States and to monitor the implementation of National Policy and the plans of different Ministries & Departments of Central Government. The National
Executive Committee will have on board Secretaries of concerned ministries and Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff as members and Union Home Secretary as an ex officio Chairman. There is also a provision of need based co-opting of other officers as and when required. The Bill provides for a three tiered Institutional Mechanism for disaster management in the country. The National Disaster Management Authority is at the national level. Similarly at the State level there are the State Disaster Management Authorities and at the grass root level there will be District Disaster Management Authorities. Ultimately, there will be such bodies even at the village and tehsil levels.

7. There has been a paradigm shift in the perspective and vision of the government in the recent years on account of various recommendations. In the wake of changed perspective and vision a new National Draft Policy has been formulated, which envisages a holistic and pro-active approach towards prevention, mitigation and preparedness for Disaster Management. Each enjoins on each of the concerned Ministry/Department of Central/State Government to set apart funds under plan for Disaster Mitigation projects. It also lays emphasis on community involvement & awareness generation, particularly of vulnerable sections of population. The policy advocates inclusive, participatory, gender sensitive and eco-friendly interventions. This policy also provides for associating corporate sector, NGOs and media in disaster prevention and vulnerability reduction efforts. It promotes inculcating a culture of planning & preparedness at all levels for capacity building measures and lays special emphasis on promoting international co-operation in the area of disaster response, preparedness and mitigation.

8. An important initiative of Government of India has been a move to set up a specialist force called the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) consisting of 8 Battalions of Central Para Military Forces comprising 144 Specialist Response Teams (SRTs), which would have technicians, engineers, paramedics on board amongst other experts. Four training centres have been designated for the NDRF and Collapse Structure Search and Rescue (CSSR) and Medical First Responders (MFR) form an integral part for training of these Battalions - Appendix D refers. An analysis has also been carried out of the histories of various disasters and fault lines. For instance, Appendix E shows the major tectonic plates and distribution of earthquakes worldwide, Appendix F, the epicenters of major earthquakes (M ≥ 5.0) over India and in it's neighbourhood since 1800 and Appendix G the active fault map of Kutch.
9. In order to enhance the SAR capabilities, **all States have been advised to set up their own Specialist Response Teams (SRTs) on the lines of NDRF.** Central Government would facilitate Training of Trainers for this force. Another important initiative of the government has been a plan for optimum idolization of other adjusting resources at the ground level as force multiplier to build an effective Emergency Response Service. In this direction the Fire Services is proposed to be upgraded, equipped and trained as Multi-hazard Emergency Response Services at an estimated cost 534.13 million dollars. Similarly the Civil Defence and Home Guards set up are also proposed to be revamped to respond to natural and man-made disasters.

10. **Incident Command System** is yet another significant initiative. In order to professionalize the management of response, Incident Command System is being introduced at all levels to guide in different aspects of incident management. Core Training Institutions have been identified and Training of Trainers is being undertaken in collaboration with the United States.

11. **A Data base for Effective Disaster Management** is another vital initiative of the government. India Disaster Resource Network (IDRN) is a nationwide-web-enabled, centralized inventory of resources to minimize response time in emergencies. It is needless to mention importance of an effective and real time communication channel in the event of any disaster. With this in mind, a National Disaster Management Communication Plan is being prepared with triple redundancy for nearly 100 per cent reliability. Communication backbone to be used in this plan include Terrestrial link, Police Network (POLNET), National Information Centre Network (NICNET), Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN), Space Network (SPACENET).

12. The Government of India has also launched a number of initiatives in the Techno-legal regime and Capacity Building measures. These include the **National Earthquake Mitigation Programme** that aims to have a detailed evaluation and retrofitting of lifeline buildings in 38 cities in Zone III, IV & V at an estimated cost of 246 million dollars. Another initiative is the **National Programme for Capacity Building in Earthquake Risk Management** wherein 20,000 engineers and architects will be trained in seismic safe buildings and techno legal requirements. There is also a training programme for rural masons to assist the States in training and certification of 50,000 masons for multi-hazard resistant construction.
13. Considering the fact that the community is the first responder, in any disaster, a major initiative has been launched by the Govt. in the name of Disaster Risk Management Programme. This programme is assisted by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Europian Union (EU). Under this programme awareness generation, community preparedness planning and capacity building has been initiated in 169 districts in 17 Multi-hazard Prone States. Elected representatives, officials, engineers, architects & teachers are being trained in the management of floods & other disasters.

14. Cyclone is a common feature in east coat of India. To deal with this the Government of India has launched a National Cyclone Mitigation Project at an estimated cost 228.26 million dollars. This envisages construction of cyclone shelters, coastal shelter belt plantations, strengthening of warning system, education & training.

15. The futuristic vision of the NDMA is to minimize the loss of lives and property in disasters, by strengthening preparedness and mitigation efforts. They also envisage building a safer and secure India through sustained collective efforts, synergy of national capacities and people's participation.

16. To summarize, at the national level, other than the NDMA, each ministry has a Crisis Management Group. In the Ministry of Defence, the Defence Crisis Management Group comprises the heads of operational directorates of the three Services, the Intelligence Directorate and representatives of other Ministries like Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Home Affairs and an associated Ministry depending upon the nature of the crisis. The Defence Crisis Management Group functions from Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) Operations Room (Ops Room), which is also known as Interim National Command Post. The IDS Ops Room is always in direct communication with the Army, Navy, Air and Coast Guard Ops rooms. This is the place from where all disasters whether it was the Tsunami, floods or the recent earthquake were tackled. The basic document governing the assistance rendered by the Armed Forces to civil bodies is a publication issued by the Ministry of Defence called, 'Instructions on Aid to Civil Authorities by the Armed Forces' 1970. Further amplification on this as to how the three services should respond is contained in the 'Tri Services Emergency Response Plan' of June 2002. This plan has been examined and evaluated in detail by the Chiefs of the three Services, approved by the Chiefs of Staff Committee and has been promulgated to all field formations. Finally, these changes in the new organizations and concept of dealing with disasters have been given legal sanctity and concrete shape.
The interaction of these agencies in case of a disaster is shown graphically as under:

**ARMED FORCES IN THE NATIONAL EFFORT**

![Diagram of armed forces in the national effort](image)

**National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**

17. The NDMA's outline organization has already been covered and is as enumerated at Appendices A to C. In addition, the salient features of the organization, its charter, strategy, work in progress and other priority tasks in progress as encapsulated by the Vice Chairman of
the NDMA in his recent talk at the Army War College\textsuperscript{50} and during subsequent interactions are covered in the succeeding paragraphs.

18. **Charter.** The NDMA is responsible for response to all natural and man-made disasters, which may occur in the country. It's charter includes:

(a) **Operational.**

(i) Ensure prompt and effective response at national level.

(ii) Build up mitigation and preparedness efforts.

(iii) Create specialized response force.

(iv) Emphasize and promote active participation of community, NGOs and corporate sectors.

(v) Provide support to other countries affected by major disasters.

(b) **Financial.**

(i) Mainstream disaster management into developmental plans at all levels.

(ii) Formulate and execute mitigation plans.

(iii) Provide financial assistance.

(iv) Build upon ongoing and existing infrastructure and initiatives.

(c) **Policies And Guidelines.**

(i) Lay down disaster management policy at national level.

(ii) Lay down guidelines disaster-wise for central ministries and states.

(iii) Ensure preparation of plans at national and state level.

(iv) Supervise and monitor implementation of plans at all levels.

\textsuperscript{50} Vij, *Op Cit.*
19. **Strategy.** The vision is "technology as a driver" and the strategy focuses on:

(a) **Focus 1 - Prevention And Mitigation.**

(i) Minimize Loss to Life & Economic Assets through :-

(aa) Mainstreaming disaster mitigation into all developmental programmes.

(ab) Mitigation projects to be state of the art and eco-friendly.

(b) **Focus 2 - Preparedness.**

(i) State of the art forecasting and early warning system.

(ii) Fail safe communications and effective dissemination :-

(aa) District level and below.

(ab) Dedicated communication for disaster management.

(ac) Mechanism at all levels.

(ad) Availability of communication at disaster site.

(iii) Medical preparedness including mass casualty management.

(c) **Focus 3 - Capacity Development.**

(i) Raising and equipping of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).

(ii) Help each state train and equip six companies equivalent (500 personnel) of police.

(iii) Upgrade fire services.

(iv) Re-orient civil defence and home guards.

(v) Community awareness and training.
(d) **Focus 4 - Response.**

(i) Anticipatory deployment to meet challenge of a threatening disaster situation.

(ii) After disaster - robust and specialized response to supplement effort by states.

(iii) Create and position national reserves of equipment and relief material in most vulnerable states.

20. **Work In Progress.** Policies and guidelines under preparation for:-

(a) National policy.

(b) Earthquakes.

(c) Cyclones.

(d) Chemical / industrial disasters.

(e) Nuclear disasters.

(f) Landslides.

(g) Floods.

(h) River erosion.

(j) Micro finance and insurance.

(k) Disaster management (DM) information and communication system.

(l) Spatial data management.

(m) Coordination of scientific and technological organizations.

(n) Medical preparedness and mass casualty management.

(o) NGOs and corporate - systematic participation in DM.

(p) Financial mechanism for mitigation projects with planning commission - deliberations in progress.
21. **Other Priority Tasks In Progress.** The other priority tasks of the NDMA include:

(a) Equipping and operationalisation of national disaster response force.
(b) Creation of national disaster mitigation reserves.
(c) Reorientation and up gradation of civil defence and fire services.
(d) Inter-ministerial committee on funding of reconstruction and rehabilitation.
(e) Reconstruction work in Andaman and Nicobar islands.
(f) Proposed South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) centre for disaster management will be made functional.
(g) Mock exercises - being conducted.
(h) Public awareness campaign - 4 states for cyclone.

22. **NDRF Equipment.** The major equipment with the NDRF Battalions includes the following and they can move by air (containerized) or by road or sea to a disaster site:

(a) Life detection and location equipment including laser cameras.
(b) Break in and extrication equipment (air cushions, hydraulic supports, manual and mechanical saws, gas cutters, spreaders, rams, shoring, jacks, power tools).
(c) Power boats and diving equipment.
(d) Radios, Very Small Aperture Terminals (VSAT), cellular communication.
(e) Medical equipment.
(f) NBC equipment.
(g) Boats for flood relief.
(h) Search Dogs.
CHAPTER 4.1

REGIONAL CO-OPERATION PERSPECTIVES

1. The South Asian region has some of the world's oldest civilisations and countries in the region have made considerable progress over the years and many are now self-sufficient in agriculture, industry, infrastructure, science and technology. However, this is also one of the poorest regions of the globe with 22 per cent of the world population living here, which produces only 1.3 per cent of world income. South Asia is home to 40 per cent of the world's poor, 46 per cent of world's illiterates and 50 per cent of malnourished children. It also has the lowest sex ratio in the world. All these factors make it a vulnerable region as low human development ratio is a major contributive factor in making a hazard turn into a disaster. Better preparedness and human capability as we all know are tools to prevent disasters from occurring.

2. Global And Regional Initiatives. To address this area of concern there have been number of Global and Regional Cooperation initiatives. These include 1990-2000 being declared as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). In 1994, the Yokohama Strategy on Disaster Reduction and in January 2005, the signing of Hyogo Framework of Action by the World Leaders marks other landmark achievements to meet this end. Pacific Island Countries in March 2002 signed an agreement on Investment for Sustainable Development in the region, African Regional Platform for Disaster Reduction was established in June 2004 and the Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) countries now in August 2005 have signed a historic agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response.

SAARC Perspective

3. At a bilateral level, countries of South Asia have been cooperating with each other. We have witnessed instances of humanitarian assistance during disasters even among countries with strained relations. The proactive role of the Indian Navy in search and rescue missions in

---

Sri Lanka and Maldives during Indian Ocean Tsunami and the Indo-Pak cooperation during the more recent earthquake are some examples.

4. **Slow Progress in SAARC**. In 1987, during the 3rd Summit at Kathmandu, it was decided that the causes and consequences of natural disasters be studied comprehensively. In 1990, the study team submitted its report, which was subsequently examined by the Committee of Ministers of Environment in 1991 during the 6th Summit at Colombo. This lead to the creation of SAARC Meteorological Research Centre at Dhaka in 1995 and the SAARC Coastal Zone Management Centre at Male in 2004. In the 13th SAARC Summit 2005 the offer made by India to host SAARC Centre for Disaster Management and Preparedness in India was approved.

5. **The SAARC Roadmap.** The salient aspects of this are as under:-

   (a) **SAARC Centre for Disaster Management and Preparedness** to come up in the premises of National Institute of Disaster Management.

   (a) **SAARC Declaration on Mutual Assistance on Natural Disasters** – Member Countries to assist each other for improving disaster management capabilities and extend assistance in times of disaster.

   (c) **SAARC Agreement on Disaster Reduction** - Member Countries to agree on provisions for risk identification, prevention, mitigation, early warning and emergency response and standby arrangements for transit of personnel, equipment, facilities and materials of assistance.

**ASEAN Perspective**

6. ASEAN is a group of 10 countries which are at different levels of development such as Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia, which are much more developed than say Cambodia and Laos. In terms of Disaster Management too, there are different calamities in the region, for example, Philippines and Indonesia witness more disasters than Singapore and Malaysia and so forth.

---

52 Chakrabarti, *Ibid*
on. ASEAN was founded in 1967 and disaster management was one of the founding principles. At that time there were a lot of security concerns but the leaders of the then six countries thought that in order to absorb the security concerns it will be best to work through Social Development and Science and Technology and disaster management was one of the key areas. Over the years, despite a number of meetings, action plans and declarations, disaster management has not moved as strongly as other areas. This, however, intensified since year 2003 and in July 2005, the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (ASEAN ADMER) was signed and the ASEAN Standby Arrangements are now being finalised.
1. The basic organisation of the United Nations is as follows:

- **Security Council**: 5 permanent members; China, Russia, the USA, the UK, and France. There are 10 members from the general membership of the UN.
- **General Assembly**: 193 States across the world and also the observers.
- **Social and Economic Council**: Issues related to social affairs and economies of the world are discussed.
- **Secretariat**: A service to all member states in the United Nations System, headed by the Secretary General.
- **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**: Established to settle disputes between member states.
- **Trusteeship Council**: Looked into de-colonisation earlier, but now its future is being looked into.

2. The main body here is the **Security Council**, where there are 5 permanent members; China, Russia, the USA, the UK, and France. There are 10 members from the general membership of the UN. The **General Assembly** is constituted of representatives of 193 States across the world, and also the observers. The **Social and Economic Council** deals with social and economic issues of the world. The **Secretariat**, basically a service, is provided to all member states in the United Nations System and is headed by the Secretary General. The **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** is established to settle disputes between member states. Finally, the **Trusteeship Council** looked into de-colonisation earlier, but now its future is being looked into.

---

3. In addition to this core outline, in the charter we have some specialised agencies, and other organisations. The difference between them may seem subtle but is very important. Specialised agencies and other UN organisations have their own set ups and own governing bodies, for example, WHO, ILO, UNWFP etc., and these programmes sometimes fall under them and sometimes not. The United Nations also has a number of affiliated autonomous bodies, standing committees etc and the actions of all these need to be coordinated.

4. With regard to Humanitarian Affairs, the need to establish a body to help coordinate the activities of the UN system and the wider humanitarian community has been recognised earlier on. Presently, its function is under the Secretariat and the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) is a departmental office under the Secretariat. He is the Under-Secretary-General for humanitarian affairs and is the Emergency Relief Coordinator. The functions performed by OCHA under Emergency Relief Coordination (ERC) fall within the three heads of: **Coordination, Policy Development and Advocacy**.

5. More specifically, it deals with processing requests from member states for emergency assistance and mobilising emergency relief in order to meet those needs. It conducts pooling and analysis of early-warning information and joint inter-agency needs-assessment. Also facilitated is negotiation on access to deliver aid especially for military and to promote the smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation process through an effective exit strategy. The Emergency Relief coordinator also chairs the Inter-Agency Standing Committee which is the main body for coordinating all humanitarian affairs. It has all the humanitarian agencies within the UN system under it and manages the world-wide network of Humanitarian Coordinators at the country level.

6. The UN OCHA has its presence around the world. Importantly, with headquarters in New York and also in Geneva, it can be in close association with other humanitarian agencies who have representation in these cities. In addition to that UN OCHA has three dozen field offices, regional offices and other offices around the world. These are constantly changing according to the situation and requirement. To understand better the functioning of the UN system in Humanitarian Affairs it is important to know about the three main agencies functioning in this area and also UNDP in context with humanitarian assistance :-

   (a) UN High Commissioner For Refugees (UNHCR).

   (b) UN Development Programme (UNDP).
The UN at country level involves The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) who has the overall responsibility for humanitarian assistance being rendered in a nation. The UN Resident Coordinator not only helps in coordinating humanitarian assistance to the host country but is also responsible for the security of staff and property in the country. He reports to the DSS in New York but in emergency situations he reports to the ERC. The United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) consists of core members like the WHO, UNHCR, UNDP, FAO and UNICEF. These agencies are able to support emergency response operations in their areas very well. In addition to the core members, there are other agencies like Red Cross, Red Crescent Movement who may also be UNDMT members, if they are present in the country. Each agency has an important role to play in disaster management, each brings resources to the scene and effective co-ordination must include them, specially the NGOs which support the UN efforts.

In terms of national disaster response, it is important to be aware that all international assistance is in support of national authorities. The only way that the UN can be involved is on request by the national authority. The UN General Assembly has mandated the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) to coordinate international response. The coordination in International Disaster Response becomes difficult from the UN perspective as it becomes difficult to assess what assistance is being provided directly by the governments of other nations. In the disaster affected country the local actors on the ground include the National Disaster Relief Coordinator, Embassies, UN agencies' representatives, National Red Cross/Crescent members and the National NGOs. The representatives of UN OCHA in the country provide constant information to the OCHA officials in Geneva who can then relay this to the International responders like Donor governments/Agencies, UN agencies, International NGOs and others (including military).

**Humanitarian Military Coordination Structure**

There are numerous actors responding to humanitarian emergencies. Under most conditions, they can be easily divided into military and civilian. The civilian and military

---

actors in an emergency can be further divided into international and domestic. This results in four sets of civil-military relationships:

(a) Domestic civil - domestic military.
(b) Domestic civil - international military.
(c) International civil - domestic military.
(d) International civil - international military.

**International Humanitarian Coordination Structures**

10. The primary instrument used by the international community for coordination of international response is the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC). These teams are primarily used for sudden onset of disasters. At times, they are also used for complex emergencies. These teams have a standing capacity for employment worldwide. They are capable of deploying anywhere in the world within 24 hours and this they do on an average more than once a month. The UNDAC Teams have three primary functions of coordination, assessment and processing of information. They are in support of the host national government and the UN Resident Coordinator is the facilitator for their employment. Their employment is generally for 3 to 4 weeks and is free of cost to the recipient country. The UNDAC system has 176 members from 45 countries. In 2005, there were 17 missions which the UNDAC responded to and on an average - 13 to 14 missions are deployed each year and a total of 142 missions in 73 countries have been executed since 1993.

---