

CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



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BELLING THE CAT OF INTELLECTUAL MEDIOCRITY



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An article titled '[Military Mediocrity – Who Will BellThe Cat](#)' by Mr Mohan Guruswamy is doing the social media rounds. (Published in the citizen.in). It paints the Indian Armed Forces leadership in poor light. Casting aspersions on the leadership of the Armed Forces, at present, sows doubt in the minds of common people. Is the safety, security and wellbeing of the nation in the right hands?

Mr Guruswamy's intellectual discourse on military leadership is a reproduction of his earlier diatribe titled '[Military Incompetence – Who Will Bell the Cat](#)' in Jul 18 (also published by the citizen.in). What is the difference between these articles? 'Incompetence' has been replaced by 'Mediocrity' over two years. Congratulations India! Your military leadership has graduated from incompetence to mediocrity while Mr Guruswamy and the Citizen are belling the same old cat. This new article with a few changed sentences, a paragraph on Fd Marshal Manekshaw and a dimwitted effort of Cut, Copy and Paste will put us on the way to global military leadership. Such intellectualism is below mediocrity. It is mendacity for attention. I must

also handit to the editorial staff of the media platform who re-published such scurrility. Even 'Global Times' is miles ahead in comparison. This represents only one of the two things. Poor journalism or ulterior motives. No third reason. Plumbing new depths of intellectual idiocy to seek relevance!

Am I shooting the messenger? No. [I shot the messenger two years back in Daily O. Click here to read it.](#) Instead of a full response just read the last paragraph to get the drift.

When I was penning these thoughts down, I read some tweets of Mr Guruswamy and learnt something about his persona. He has a daily and an hourly opinion on many issues, from Hema Malini to the Indian Army. That's his right to free speech and he is exercising it. However, I am thankful that he is in a pitiful minority regarding military leaders. It is not without reason that India feels that the Military is the most trusted institution in India. Is it possible without able leadership?

If Casablanca had been an intellectual, he would not have stood on the burning deck. The boy stood on the burning deck, and so are the Indian Armed Forces. I am proud to have donned the uniform of the Indian Army, which is internationally respected. Mr Guruswamy can hold his opinion about all of us, any way he thinks, any number of times. We heartily reciprocate it.

BTW. I am also confident that our Armed Forces will set right any aberrations which surface; including those of leadership. When the time comes. Till then the [Indian Armed Forces remain unyielding.](#)

The Indian Armed Forces are being led competently in the front. If not, China and Pakistan would have been all over India. In the current situation, our forces have stemmed the Chinese tide. The Chinese came with a well-prepared plan to teach India a lesson. In the process they are learning a lot of lessons. The greatest asset of the Indian Armed Forces are our men – better than the best. Unless our men are well led, they cannot defend the nation. We need good commanders – right from Langar commanders to

Army commanders to do that. Please realize our Armed Forces are not as well equipped as they should be. Still our military leaders are getting more out of our men and material than one can imagine. Galwan bears testimony. If military leadership was poor as reiterated by Mr Guruswamy, then the Chinese would be sitting at Thangu and the confluence of Shyok and Galwan Rivers. India would have then been in a soup.

I am also fully aware that there are problems with our military leadership which are institutional, structural and historic. They need correction and major reforms if India is to become a global power. We need the best leaders that India can and has the potential to produce. I have been raising these points through earlier articles. I will do so again once the current situation eases. However, at this point of time we must stand by those who are there. These commanders are laying a lot on the line. Some might make mistakes under battle stress. They are not gods. Weak links in any chain of command need strengthening. If they are beyond that, simply sack them. Otherwise back them. It is not easy to lead in an area where even the mere act of breathing is a problem.

Our senior military leaders were probably company commanders and 2ICs during Op Vijay. It is because of some of their demonstrated military ability that Kargil and other operations were successful. Later, they must have put in a lot of hard work to improve their professional acumen to reach their current ranks and positions. ACRs and promotions are not freebies. It took me back breaking hard work, study, deprivation, and application to become a three-star general. I have had many serious differences of opinions with my seniors, bureaucracy, and even national politicians from the rank of Lt to Lt Gen. Yet, I was never harmed in a CR or a promotion. I am sure I am not unique or a creature of exception. There are many more with similar back grounds. There will be systemic aberrations also. However, this is not the time to criticize or degrade our military leaders. It under mines morale at the cutting edge.

Scratch below the surface. I suspect a link between this great man and those 144 protesting veterans. Am I disappointed? At one level I am. At another level, I am sanguine that our democracy is strong to take such

aberrated opinions and journalism in stride. My only advice to them – Thank your gods that you are in India. Imagine your status under Xi Jinping if you had raised such voices. You would have been giving some hapless Uighurs company in a re-education camp and your hair would be on sale in USA as a wig.

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