



EDITOR'S NOTE

Armed forces are always changing although within the framework of the military's natural conservativeness, changes in technology, the dynamics of the strategic environment and a host of other factors. Every new military weapon and equipment brings in its own demands of tactics and technical requirements; and every shift in the power equations that might impact our country would demand modification, if not a more definitive change in military strategy. But while dynamic change is intrinsic to military force, surprisingly, the institution is perceived as an almost static system. So, where does the concept of transformation of the armed forces fit in, and how does it impact on the military?

Transformation by definition would imply major changes in technology, force levels, doctrine and strategy, and force employment, individually and/or collectively. But the crucial difference between the inevitable change in each and all these areas is the rate of change. It is for this reason that the advantages sought and promised by changes in each and all these areas must be carefully assessed, including their inter-relationships and relative importance in the given circumstances. Hence, it is inevitable that military force transformation would also need to affect organisation and institutions, especially those related to command and control. The example of network-centric warfare comes immediately to mind. But perhaps the more important area is the introduction of the Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) in our operational environment since it promises

to alter the way air warfare would take place in the future particularly, with long-range precision strike weapons for both air-to-air, and more critically, air-to-ground warfare.

It is obvious that given the above factors, the most important aspect of transformation is the transformation of the mind. More failures are caused in the military profession (and intelligence assessments) by a rigid mindset than any other single factor. The Indian Air Force (IAF) is undoubtedly in the process of transformation, including the reality of a depleted combat force level. The most crucial challenge of the ongoing transformation, therefore, is to adapt the mind of air warriors to the process taking place so that old habits (which proverbially die hard) acquired over a period of time begin to adjust to the new paradigm of air warfare.

Another aspect of military transformation is the direction that the relative role each of the three components of military power will play in the future. This paradigm is perhaps the most contentious in all countries (including the United States which has an extensive record going back more than a century of working together) between the army and the air forces. Historically, land forces have seen the air forces as the supporting component and the army itself as the supported force. However, the transformation that is taking place and that has been tested in all the wars during the past quarter century unambiguously shows that this role has been reversed even though some countries may not fully agree with it at this stage. But because land forces are acquiring longer range weapons which traditionally and technologically would have remained the preserve of air forces, there is a critical need to lay down clear boundaries for operations of the three components of military power.