

# REAPPRAISAL OF MISSIONS, ROLES AND TASKS OF INDIAN ARMED FORCES – GAPS AND PATHWAYS FOR COMPLEMENTARITY, INTEGRATION AND JOINTNESS: A DOCTRINAL APPROACH

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## Abstract

*Roles, missions and tasks of the armed forces when viewed through a doctrinal prism reveal ruggedness or the lack of it for war fighting preparedness. Intangibles like jointness and integration among the armed forces also evolve from the doctrinal framework. Like most world militaries, Indian armed forces also have a plethora of doctrines evolved over a period of time. Land Forces doctrine was published in 2018 after the publication of the Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces-2017 but was required to be read in conjunction with it rather than a self-contained document. The Indian Maritime Doctrine, 2015 version and IAF doctrine of 2012 were more detailed and defined roles, missions and tasks of the respective services more clearly. The jointness and integration aspects were also spelt out to a great extent even though they preceded the Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces-2017. The non-availability of the National Security Strategy in the open domain seems to have straitjacketed the service specific doctrinal thinking of the respective services. Joint doctrine have addressed a number of issues but gaps still remain. A national defence doctrine is reportedly under preparation which is likely to suggest pathways for complementarity, integration and jointness through a doctrinal approach. Inspired by this doctrine, Service*

*specific doctrines would reinvent themselves and inspire the leaders for higher level of military preparedness in a shortest timeframe without much additional cost.*

Missions, Roles and Tasks of the Indian Armed Forces have evolved over a period of time and have been articulated by the respective Services through various documents including doctrines. These documents are largely well researched and Service specific. The doctrines issued by the respective Services reflect the realities of times and address some aspects of the integration and jointness in a limited way. An analysis of the annual reports of the Ministry of Defence<sup>1</sup> also clearly reveals the Service specific nature of the functioning of the armed forces. Doctrinal aspects of the Intelligence, remained untouched by the Service specific doctrines. A joint doctrine was issued by the HQ IDS in 2017 which highlighted the changed realities of preparedness for war fighting which was far from Service specific missions, roles and tasks. Integrated Intelligence Structure were briefly described by this doctrine. This doctrine served its purpose well but gaps continued to remain requiring developments of pathways for complementarity, integration and jointness.

Reportedly, work is under progress for preparation of a national defence doctrine for addressing future requirements realistically. Earlier it was widely reported that NSA was ready with the new doctrine for the armed forces<sup>2</sup>. In this article, missions, roles and tasks of the Indian Armed Forces have been reappraised, gaps identified and pathways for complementarity, integration and jointness suggested through a doctrinal approach.

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1 Ministry of Defence, Annual Reports, <https://www.mod.gov.in/documents/annual-report>. 21 July 2021.

2 Ashwin, "National Security Adviser Ajit Doval ready with India's new military doctrine", Strategic Front, 19 September 2019 <https://www.strategicfront.org/forums/threads/national-security-adviser-ajit-doval-ready-with-indias-new-military-doctrine.3497/>. 09 July 2021.

### **Land Warfare Doctrine – 2018<sup>3</sup>**

The document is not complete in itself and is required to be read in conjunction with the Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces-2017<sup>4</sup>. Missions, roles and tasks of the Indian Army have not been sufficiently elucidated in the doctrine. The Doctrine provides broad guidelines for the conduct of operations by the Indian Army across the entire spectrum of conflict. The focus remains on force modernisation, resource optimisation and innovative conceptual processes leading to winning strategies for future wars. As always, geostrategic environment, external and internal threats, possible responses and a way ahead to develop capabilities for the future were stated to be the major determinants shaping the Land Warfare Doctrine. The doctrine was expected to lay the foundation for formulation of strategies for the Northern and Western Fronts and Operational Directives.

As theorised in the doctrine, the Indian Army continues to develop strategies and capabilities for contingencies throughout the expanding spectrum of conflict aiming to dissuade, deter, delay and defend by proactive and responsive engagements at the place and time of own choosing, whenever there would be an imminent threat to National Security. In doing so, the strategy was expected to be application of all the elements of the military arsenal in conjunction with other instruments of Comprehensive National Power. The focus of the Indian Army continues to develop capabilities for facilitating jointness and integration amongst the three Services. Inspired by the doctrine, the Indian Army should continue to be a potent force with deterrent.

Land Force Power doctrinal aspects were summarised differently in the Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces which stated that “The threat perception arising out of large disputed land borders, directive to defend territorial integrity and response options over the entire spectrum

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3 Indian Army, Land Warfare Doctrine – 2018, <https://www.ssri-j.com/MediaReport/Document/IndianArmyLandWarfareDoctrine2018.pdf>. 10 July 2021.

4 HQ Integrated Defence Staff, Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces, [https://bharatshakti.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Joint\\_Doctrine\\_Indian\\_Armed\\_Forces.pdf](https://bharatshakti.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Joint_Doctrine_Indian_Armed_Forces.pdf), 10 July 2021.

of conflict, in the realm of defensive and offensive operations, guide the employment philosophy of land forces. The overall force generation matrix would be achieved through optimum force structuring, modern equipment and effective training across all types of terrain and climatic conditions. Land forces could be employed singly or in conjunction with the other two Services in conventional and sub-conventional role during Joint operations at a very short notice. Capabilities through specialized forces would be maintained to fight persisting sub conventional threats with timely re-orientation, for conventional employment/deployment”.

The overall doctrinal aspects of the Indian Army were well analysed by the Arzan Tarapore who concluded in his paper titled, ‘*The Army in Indian Military Strategy: Rethink Doctrine or Risk Irrelevance*’;<sup>5</sup> that “within the military, the Indian Army is presently demonstrating a notable capacity for reform with the recent establishment of a CDS, the restructuring of Army Headquarters, and the creation of IBGs. These reforms seem to be designed to support the old offensive doctrine that has defined the Indian Army’s use of force for over half a century. Modernization is not only new equipment and organization but also involves new theories of victory, and doctrinal change that allows responses along the full spectrum of conflict. Punitive incursions into enemy territory, using mass and firepower, are not always effective in wartime, and even rarely useful as coercive options during a crisis. If the Indian Army remains focused on conventional offensive operations, it is likely to become increasingly irrelevant as a tool of national security policy”. The author also pointed out that, “this doctrine is orthodox in its preference for large combined-arms army formations, usually operating with minimal coordination with other services and relatively autonomously from its political masters. It is offensive in its military aims of imposing a punitive cost on the enemy—usually in the form of capturing territory for the purposes of gaining leverage in postwar negotiations—even if it

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5 Arzan Tarapore, “The Army in Indian Military Strategy: Rethink Doctrine or Risk Irrelevance”, Carnegie India Working Paper Aug 2020, [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Tarapore\\_Ground\\_Forces\\_in\\_Indian\\_Military.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Tarapore_Ground_Forces_in_Indian_Military.pdf), 11 July 2020.

is usually deployed in the service of a strategically defensive policy of maintaining the territorial status quo. And it is perhaps a doctrine which represents an enduring set of principles governing the Indian Army's use of force, regardless of the scarcity of public doctrinal publications".

The Land Warfare Doctrine could have adopted the essence of the Joint Doctrine of the Armed Forces to make it a self-contained document, highlighting pathways for complementarity, jointness and integration as has been done to a great extent in the Indian Maritime Doctrine and the IAF Doctrine which were authored before the publication of the Joint Doctrine in 2017.

### **Indian Maritime Doctrine<sup>6</sup>: Indian Navy, Roles, Missions and Tasks**

The doctrine states that the roles, missions and tasks of a navy encompass its core activities and describe what the navy does in times of peace and war and also define the scope of employment of the navy and application of maritime power by a country. The doctrine determines the way in which the navy would be organised, equipped and trained.

The stated roles of a navy are the broad and enduring purposes that govern the establishment of that navy. In the performance of these roles, various objectives would need to be attained for which, naval forces are deployed on specific Missions for accomplishment of which, naval forces have to perform a variety of operational and tactical level Tasks, which span the entire spectrum of maritime operations.

A reappraisal of the roles, missions and tasks of the Indian Navy seen through the doctrinal prism would reveal that several possible gaps have already been plugged to a great extent through a clarity in the writings of the doctrine and strategy<sup>7</sup>. As these publications are navy specific, pathways for jointness and integration, even those enunciated

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6 Indian Navy, Indian Maritime Doctrine, <https://indiannavy.nic.in/content/indian-maritime-doctrine-2015-version>. 12 July 2021

7 Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy, [https://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian\\_Maritime\\_Security\\_Strategy\\_Document\\_25Jan16.pdf](https://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf). 20 July 2021.

in the Joint doctrine are needed to be articulated and incorporated in the doctrinal approach of the Indian Navy as is evident from the following paragraphs summarizing roles, missions and tasks of the Indian Navy.

### **Role of Indian Navy<sup>8</sup>**

The role of the Indian Navy covers entire range of operations in which naval forces would be employed ranging from high intensity war fighting at one end to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations at the other and each role demanding a specific approach to the conduct of operations.

**The Military Role.** The navy's military role is characterised by threat or use of force at the sea and includes application of maritime power in offensive operations against enemy forces, and defensive operations to protect own forces and territory. The military role is performed through accomplishment of specific military objectives, missions and tasks.

**Diplomatic Role.** Naval diplomacy entails the use of naval forces in support of foreign policy objectives for strengthening international cooperation. The larger purpose of navy's diplomatic role is also to shape the maritime environment to serve the national interests of India. This is facilitated by the traits of the naval forces which can be readily deployed and can perform multiple roles and tasks.

**Constabulary Role.** In the constabulary role, naval forces are employed to enforce law of the land and force is employed for self-defence only while executing this role. The promotion of India's maritime security is one of the prime responsibilities of the Indian Navy. The range of tasks that the India Navy has to undertake in the constabulary role range from Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO) to maintaining good order at sea. This further includes aspect of coastal security, as part of India's overall maritime security. With establishment of the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), law enforcement aspects of the constabulary role within

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8 Indian Navy, Role of Navy, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/role-navy>. 13 July 2021.

the Maritime Zones of India (MZI) have been transferred to the ICG. Constabulary tasks beyond the MZI are vested with the Indian Navy. Responsibility for overall maritime security has been mandated to the Indian Navy, in close coordination with the ICG, State Marine Police and other authorities.

**Benign Role.** The benign tasks including humanitarian aid, disaster relief, Search and Rescue (SAR), ordnance disposal, diving assistance, salvage operations and hydrographic surveys. The Indian Coast Guard is the designated national agency for maritime SAR in the Indian Search and Rescue Region (ISRR) and Naval units are also called upon to undertake SAR operations when required.

### **Missions<sup>9</sup>**

Naval mission is a clear and concise statement of the task of the command, together with the purpose, that indicates the action to be taken towards the attainment of the objective(s). Broad missions of the Indian Navy are; Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), Sea Control, Sea Denial, Blockade, Power Projection, Force Protection, Expeditionary Operations, Compellence, Destruction, Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) Interdiction, SLOC Protection, Special Force Operations, Seaward Defense, Coastal and Offshore Defence, Naval Co-operation and Guidance for Shipping (NCAGS) Operations and above all Nuclear second strike.

### **Tasks<sup>10</sup>**

A naval task is a specific piece of work that is to be done as a duty. It defines the precise activity and its sphere towards accomplishment of the mission. Major tasks envisaged by the Indian navy are; Surveillance, Maritime Strike, Anti-Submarine Operations, Anti-Surface Operations, Anti-Air Operations, Amphibious Operations, Maritime Patrol, Information

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9 Indian Navy, Role of Navy, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/role-navy>. 15 July 2021

10 Indian Navy, Role of Navy, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/role-navy>. 16 July 2021

Operations, Information Exchange, Electronic Warfare, Mine Warfare, Visit Board Search and Seizure (VBSS), Harbour Defence, Naval Cooperation and Guidance to Shipping (NCAGS) and Naval Coastal Security (NCS) Operations and Protection of Offshore Assets.

Reappraisal of the roles, missions and tasks of the Indian Navy articulated in the Indian Maritime Doctrine reveal insufficiency of incorporation of jointness and integration, later included in the Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces. This well written doctrine would need an upgrade after the arrival of the National Defence Doctrine in the near future.

### **IAF Doctrine 2012**

The Primary purpose of the IAF is to defend the nation and its airspace against air threats in coordination with Army and Navy. The secondary purpose is to assist civil power during natural calamities and internal disturbances<sup>11</sup>.

Roles of the IAF listed in the IAF Basic Doctrine 2012<sup>12</sup> state that the exact role that an air force will play would depend upon the nature of the threat, resources available and the nature of the campaign. Main roles of the Air force are listed as; Defence of the national and the island territories, against attack from the air and space both during peace and war, Deterring an aggressor from carrying out hostile acts and if deterrence fails to mount an effective response, During operations, achieve control of the air to the required degree to provide full freedom of action to the air and surface forces, Applying direct force on the enemy's power of resistance by attacking his crucial center of gravity, Synergizing the combat potential of air power with that of the surface forces to achieve joint military aims and objectives, Deploying and

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11 IAF Handbook on RTI Act 2005, Chapter 2, Particulars Of Organisation, Functions And Duties, <https://indianairforce.nic.in/sites/default/files/HandbookOnRTIAct2005%20-%20latest%20%2827jun19%29.pdf> 15 July 2021

12 Indian Air Force, Basic Doctrine of the Indian Air Force 2012, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/109721067/Basic-Doctrine-of-Indian-Air-Force-2012-PDF>, 15 July 2021.



employing forces to protect and project the national interests in any out of country contingency operation, Assisting the authorities in disaster management or humanitarian relief tasks, Executing counter terrorism and counter insurgency operations, Fulfilling international commitments requiring air power assets, consistent with our national interests and Providing viable second strike capability in case of nuclear attack.

The doctrine recognises that the Revolution in Military Affairs has transformed the role of technology and doctrines in fighting wars. The aim is to isolate the enemy's command and control structures, augment psychological warfare and precision strikes on the critical vulnerabilities deep inside enemy territory. These changes favour employment of air power more than any other form of military power.

The doctrine recognises that the air power today applies parallel force at all levels of war as the strategic, operational and tactical levels have been merged and are now more related to functionality than to location or type of targets. It highlights that the networking of sensors, operators and decision makers has significantly reduced the sensor-to-shooter time period which has resulted in transforming linear warfare into non-linear warfare. The doctrine states that increased focus now is on knowledge and effect and to apply forces synergistically to achieve the desired outcome in the shortest period of time, with minimum casualties and collateral damage.

### **Air Power and Jointness<sup>13</sup>**

The doctrine has laid emphasis on fact that air power delivers best when used in synergy with the other components of military power stating that the conflicts and developments of the past several decades indicate a growing role for air forces

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13 Indian Air Force, Basic Doctrine of the Indian Air Force 2012, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/109721067/Basic-Doctrine-of-Indian-Air-Force-2012-PDF>, 15 July 2021.

The comprehensive doctrine gives details of various missions and tasks which would be undertaken for performance of the role. Written nine years ago, the doctrine reveals some insufficiencies related to jointness and integration which were later incorporated in the Joint Doctrine of the Armed Forces. Gaps revealed during reappraisal of the roles, missions, and tasks of the IAF would need to be complemented in its new avatar which should follow the publication of the National Defence Doctrine.

### **Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces**

Missions, Roles and Tasks of Indian Armed Forces have been outlined in the Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces 2017<sup>14</sup> to the large extent. The Military Instrument consists of the three Armed Forces of the Union, namely Indian Army (IA), Indian Navy (IN) and Indian Air Force (IAF) alongwith support elements. The doctrine recognises that the Military Instrument is characterised by provision of insurance and assurance to the Nation and its employment towards these purposes highlighted in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. It envisages that the Military instrument must remain lethal and precise as it serve as the ultimate instrument for maintaining the unity and the integrity of the Nation in the face of external and internal threats.

The major roles of the Armed Forces, encompassing both domestic and international responsibilities listed in the doctrine are : Safeguard sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of India and preserve National Interests against any threat in the entire spectrum of conflict by possessing and projecting a robust deterrence capability or by application of force, as required; Assist civil authorities to cope with internal threats/ contingencies and provide necessary aid, when requested; Participate in peacekeeping operations and protect the global commons under UN charter; Render military assistance including HADR to friendly foreign

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14 HQ Integrated Defence Staff, Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces, [https://bharatshakti.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Joint\\_Doctrine\\_Indian\\_Armed\\_Forces.pdf](https://bharatshakti.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Joint_Doctrine_Indian_Armed_Forces.pdf), 16 July 2021.

countries, when requested; Progress military diplomacy to constructively engage with defence forces of friendly foreign countries.

Major functions of the armed forces are, conventional (Offensive Operations, Defensive Operations, Sub Conventional (Low Intensity Conflict Operations /Low Intensity Maritime Operations), Non-Combat (Aid to Civil Authority, Maintenance of Law and Order, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief). Conventional War will fall under the “Military Role” and encompass Offensive Operations; Defensive Operations; Non-Combat Operations.

The Joint Doctrine in the open source domain resulted in a lot of comments and revealed gaps in jointness and integration which are expected to be mitigated through innovations. The National Defence Doctrine is expected to surpass and complement the gaps noted in this doctrine as well.

### **Doctrinal Aspects and Intelligence Structures**

Intelligence Structures form the bedrock of successful completion of military missions, role and tasks in practice. Intelligence gaps especially in the military domain have been revealed on several occasions, including during the Kargil Conflict. Service specific doctrines have remained silent on this aspect. The Joint Doctrine has a section on the Integrated Intelligence structure<sup>15</sup> which states that “Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) synergises the efforts of the intelligence agencies of the three Services. DIA also coordinates with other National agencies involved in gathering external and internal intelligence and provides requisite intelligence support to the Armed Forces”. The three Services have their respective intelligence organisations. These organisations collect and collate intelligence required for Service specific operations and disseminate it to Commanders at all levels. Coordination among the plethora of Intelligence agencies within the armed forces and at a

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid*

national level has found many critics pointing to sub optimal response on several occasions. This vast subject of intelligence coordination with apparent gaps also needs specified pathways for complementarity, integration and jointness after a thorough reappraisal.

## **Conclusion**

It could thus be surmised that the reappraisal of the roles, missions and tasks of the armed forces, seen through doctrinal prism, reveals a number of areas where, jointness and integration among the armed forces is required to be enhanced. Service specific doctrines as well as joint doctrine of the armed forces exhibit a number of gaps where complementarity is essentially needed to make the armed forces ready for fighting future wars. Initiatives like preparation of the national defence doctrine and national security strategy are steps in the right direction. Upgraded versions of the Service specific doctrines would need to be issued thereafter. The timeframe for preparation of these documents is important and should be issued before the end of this year 2021. Small cost for consultations with the experts and think tanks is worth the value addition and should be indulged without hesitation.

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