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India's Armed Forces in the National Military Security Matrix— Need for 'Comprehensive' Integration



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1. The two terms 'Jointness' and 'Integration' are acclaimed by some to be the 'soul' and 'body' of the emergent 'purple force'. At times used interchangeably, both need to be specifically understood in their application to the Indian Defence and Defence apparatus in the present day context.

2. Significantly, the Armed Forces of the US and China have both undergone major structural reforms that seek to usher in 'Jointness' and 'Integration' both into the functional efficacy as also organisation structures. A brief recap on the reforms in both these countries makes a useful backdrop to a discussion on these aspects in the Indian context.

Reforms in the US Armed Forces

3. The American Doctrine for its Armed Forces describes the essence of Jointness

as a "cross-service combination wherein the capability of the joint force is understood to be synergistic, with the sum greater than its parts", adding further that "joint forces require high levels of interoperability and systems that are conceptualised and designed with joint architectures and acquisition strategies. This level of interoperability reduces technical, doctrinal and cultural barriers that limit the ability of joint force commanders to achieve objectives. The goal is to employ joint forces effectively across the range of military operations".

4. Though there had been a continuum of efforts to bring jointness in the US Armed Forces, it is the Goldwater–Nichols Act of 1986 (GNA) that brought about sweeping changes and is basis of the present organisational structure. The restructuring brought about unity of command and obviated inter-service



rivalry. The major features of the Command and control and decision-making structures of the US Armed Forces brought about by the GNA are:-

(a) Military advice centralized in the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs who is the 'Principal Military Adviser' to the President of the United States, National Security Council and Secretary of Defense (not the Service Chiefs). There is also a Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff cannot be from the same Service.

(b) The Chairman Joint Chiefs does not exercise military command over the Joint Chiefs of Staff or any of the Armed Forces.

(c) Command authority rests with "unified" and "specified" field commanders.

(d) As per Section 162(b) of the GNA, "unless otherwise directed by the President, the chain of command to a unified or specified combatant command runs—

"from the President to the Secretary of Defense," and

"from the Secretary of Defense to the Commander of the combatant command".

(e) The role of the Services is to "organize, train and equip" forces for use by the combatant commanders (CCDRs)". They are responsible for acquisition, modernization, force-development, and ensuring readiness of their components of integrated forces.

(f) The Services Chiefs do not exercise any operational control over their forces.

(g) Services component of the field forces support the respective

Commanders of the geographic region of the globe (Northern, Central, European, Pacific, Southern, and Africa Commands) or of a Special Operation.

(h) The role of the Combatant Commanders is to field a force capable of employing all assets available to the integrated unified action plan, including the military, inter-agency organizations of the US Government such as USAID and the Department of State, and intelligence agencies.

(j) Officers selected for and assigned to Joint Duty positions are educated in Department of Defence Joint Professional Military Education (JPME) schools as part of their career development.

(k) Improved interoperability brought about through shared procurement, sharing of technological advances such as stealth and smart weapons, common use equipment such as for communications. It is for this reason that GNA is widely seen as the first step towards the Revolution in Military Affairs.

PLA Reforms

5. In November 2013, the Third Plenum of the 18th Central Committee of the CCP announced the decision to "optimise the size and structure of the army, adjust and improve the balance between the services and branches, and reduce non-combat institutions and personnel". Beginning in September 2015, elements of the reform programme had been made public and the process is expected to last until 2020. The Chinese Armed Forces have introduced major restructuring of their command and control structures to meet modern joint warfare requirements. The philosophy for operations shifted from 'Joint Operations (JO)' to 'Integrated Joint Operations (IJO)' and the major restructuring includes:-

(a) Setting up of a Joint operation command authority under the Central Military Commission and Theatre joint operation command system" with the aim to "accelerate the building of new combat powers, and deepen the reform of military colleges"

(b) Transition from military regions to battle zones towards development of joint operations capability. Five theatre commands were set up based on geographical locations : Eastern theatre command, Southern theatre command, Western theatre command, Northern theatre command and Central theatre command replacing the erstwhile Military Regions named after the cities of location of their headquarters - Beijing, Shenyang, Jinan, Lanzhou, Nanjing, Chengdu and Guangzhou.

(c) Four general departments of the CMC replaced with 15 new departments bringing about a complete transfer of functions. (The hitherto powerful General Staff Department (GSD) became the CMC Joint General Staff Department, with its original intelligence units and functions integrated into the new Strategic Support Force (SSF). These new bodies comprise of six new departments: joint staff, political work, logistical support, equipment development, training and national defence mobilization.

(d) The Second Artillery Corps has been renamed as Rocket Force.

(e) Aerospace development allotted to the SSF, not to the Rocket Force, which would Air Force to take lead in bringing about an "integrated air and space" strategy.

(f) Recognises that for effective functioning of integrated commands, both Commander and Staff must understand the functioning in an



integrated set up. Emphasis therefore on Joint training.

6. Importantly, the rebalance is meant to correct the domination of the PLA Army, which with the Second Artillery had 73 percent of the PLA's total troops, followed by 17 percent for the Air Force (PLAAF) and 10 percent for the Navy (PLAN). the PLA, shed 300,000 troops and its dominance was downgraded by being placed at the same rank as the air force, navy, and rocket forces thereby transforming military operations from a Russian-style, army-centric system to a joint command.

Jointness and Integration in the Indian Context

7. Jointness is an aspiration of the Indian Armed Forces as well. A 'Joint Doctrine for India's Armed Forces' was released by the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee in April 2017, which states (Chapter V, Page 39) that *"Jointness implies or denotes possessing an optimised capability to engage in Joint War-Fighting and is not limited to just Joint War Fighting (Joint Operations). The attention to detail is in the placing of the hyphen. It needs to be clearly understood and discerned that Jointness is a 'Concept', whereas Joint operations are evolutions, of both, Joint operations as well as single-Service operations are sub-sets of the larger whole of 'conceptual Jointness'. Cooperative centralised planning enables appropriate concentration of forces, with the right mix at the right time and place. With Jointness, a high level of cross-domain synergy is attained and vastly enhances success potential, resulting in maintenance of high morale, camaraderie and spirit. Jointness needs active investment; Commanders need to invest in people, time and resources to develop Jointness amongst personnel of the Armed Forces".*

8. India's Joint Doctrine also describes *"the more common use of the term 'Integration' in contemporary Military matters is in reference to the integration of 'processes' across all operational domains*



of land, air, maritime, cyberspace and aerospace, towards optimisation of costs and enhancing readiness”, adding that “Integration is embodied across all functions; Operations, Intelligence, Technology Management, Perspective Plans, Logistics, Human Resources Development (HRD). It does not imply physical integration. Such embodiment enables common understanding leading to efficient and optimised responses. Beyond the Armed Forces, it also requires collaboration with the Diplomatic, Economic and Information instruments of the National Power, at all levels - strategic, operational and tactical. An Integrated approach comprises, pro-active engagement and shared understanding to bring distinct professional technical and cultural disciplines of entities and sub-entities together; this approach requires structures to be developed to further ‘shared understanding”.

9. There had been a time when the Indian Armed Forces had indeed been ‘Integrated’ - under an overarching single point command of the C-in-C in the days of the British Raj. Reporting directly to the Viceroy, the C-in-C provided ‘single point advice’ at the highest level of Government.

10. Post Indian Independence, separate Cs-in-C were appointed the appointment of C-in-C was split into three separate Cs-in-C, one for each of the Armed Forces. The authority to make final decisions on matters military was vested in Defence Committee of the Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister (also at the time the External Affairs Minister) with the Deputy Prime Minister (Home Minister), the Finance Minister and Defence Minister as its members. This was Independent India’s very first ‘Higher Defence Control’ organisation.

11. On 29th August 1947, all Departments of the Government of India were designated as Ministries and the then Defence Department, hitherto a ‘sheltered’ department under the Raj, came to be the Government of India’s Ministry of Defence.

12. The coordinating role to be played by the fledgling Ministry, in the words of HM Patel, one of its earliest Secretaries is that “...while the Government was convinced of the undoubted importance of allowing the three services to developing its own way in matters which are distinctly its own, it was no less convinced that the necessary separation should not be pushed too far, for matters in which common organisation was possible could obviously be dealt with efficiency and economy if so organised, and what is more important would in the process assist in building up a feeling of the essential oneness of the defence organisation”.

The Ismay Proposals

13. The advice of General Hastings Lionel “Pug” Ismay, a British Indian Army officer and diplomat with unique experience of a prolonged association with higher defence structures in England and the then Chief of Staff to the Viceroy was sought regarding how the higher defence management of the Armed Forces of newly Independent nation should be organised. Taking into consideration various factors prevailing at that time, he recommended a hierarchy of structures that would support the Cabinet Committee on Defence in its functioning. These are:-

(a) A Defence Minister’s Committee with the Defence Minister as Chairman, the Cs-in-C, Defence Secretary and the Financial Adviser as members.

(b) Defence Secretary’s Committees for each of the three Services with the concerned Service Chief, Financial adviser and the Joint Secretary concerned with the Service as members. (These functioned until 1949 where after, they were converted to the Defence Minister’s Committees for the Army, Navy and the Air Force with the Defence Minister as Chairman and the concerned Service Chief, Defence Secretary and Financial Adviser as members).

(c) The Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) consisting of the three Service Chiefs. Significantly, there was no separate Chairman for the COSC and the mantle of Chairmanship came upon the Chief who had been longest serving on the Committee.

(d) Other ‘Inter-Services’ Committees also set up such as the Joint Planning Committee, Joint Training Committee (JTC), Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), Inter-Services Equipment Policy Committee (ISEPC) and the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC). In addition were the Principal Personnel Officers Committee and the Principal Supply Officers Committee which were differently composed in that, apart from the concerned PSOs of the three Services Headquarters, they also had as Members representatives of the Ministry of Defence and Finance (Defence).

(e) A ‘Military Wing’ was set up in the Cabinet Secretariat to function under a Deputy Secretary (Military) as its head. The incumbent for this appointment was a Services officer of the rank of Brigadier and the post was held in rotation by the three Services.

The phase of ‘Dis’ integration

14. The issue of Rules titled “Organisation, Functions, Powers and Procedure of Defence Headquarters, 1952” was the next step towards the ‘Dis’ integration of the Armed Forces. The Services Headquarters had continued to be an integral component of the Ministry of Defence and were part of the ‘Apex Structure’ of the Government of India until the issue of the Organisation, Functions, Powers and Procedure of Defence Headquarters in 1952 by which the Services HQ were designated as ‘Attached Offices’ of the Department of Defence. Much of the present day discord in Civil Military Relations is rooted in the issuance of these Rules.



15. In 1955, with the passing of the Commanders-in-Chief (Change of Designation) Act the Cs-in-C of the three Armed Forces were re-designated as ‘Chief of Staff’ of their respective Forces.

16. The non-inclusion of role of Services Chiefs or the Services Headquarters in the Allocation of Business Rules and the Transaction of Business Rules issued in 1961 tantamount to a ratification of the ‘Attached Office’ status of the Services Headquarters.

‘Jointness’ in Post-Independence Operations

17. How conjointly have the Indian Armed Forces operated in its post-Independence operations? The J&K Operations in 1947-48 were essentially fought by the Army, with the Air Force providing support to transport personnel and air support to a limited extent. The Air Force was not deployed in the 1962 war with China, a decision prominent military experts have assailed as a poor one. The Navy did not come into play at all.

18. The 1965 Indo-Pak war saw all three Forces participating in operations, but not on the basis of any pre-formulated operations plan. Late Marshal of the Air Force Arjan Singh, then war-time Air Chief had mentioned of his being asked for air support much after hostilities had broken out. Thereafter, the Air Force did participate in battle with much glory, but whether there had been a synergy with the Army in operations remains a moot question. The Navy’s participation though having lent a psychological edge, is militarily viewed as a supportive role with no direct impact on the result of the war as such. There having being no Inquiry of the nature of the Kargil Review Committee on aspects of how the war was conducted, it is the accepted belief that India won the war, a victory claimed equally by Pakistan.

19. The 1971 war is the first military operation in which involved all three of India’s Armed Forces. Field Marshal Manekshaw having sought time to join battle only after due preparation and after the northern mountain



passes were snow bound did provide adequate time for joint planning, but did our Forces use that time draw up and operate under an overarching plan? Instances such as the attack on Chittagong being altered to Cox's Bazaar, the IAF attack of boats of the Mukti Bahini leading to own casualties are indicators to each force, in the words of Late Lt Gen JFR Jacob, 'doing their own thing'. In the bright glow of victory, no need was felt for an in-depth analysis of shortcomings on the battlefield. On the other hand, victory in war became an endorsement to the efficacy of the extant 'systems' no review was felt necessary.

20. The Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka only established how far distant the three Forces were to any operational integration or jointness. The then GOC-in-C Southern Command, Lt Gen Depinder Singh was appointed Overall Force Commander (OFC) and a formal Directive was issued for the OFC to undertake the ordered missions with Commanders from all three Forces placed in subordination to him. The fissures in operating together surfaced very soon with the Cs-in-C of the Southern Air and Eastern Naval Commands not delegating command. This led to Component Commanders being designated and functioning as Liaison Officers between the OFC and their respective Cs-in-C.

21. The COSC itself saw dissensions and rifts and there was no authority to enforce directions. The Army component increased from one to four Divisions over the two years. Effectively, the OFC remained a Commander of the Army forces with the Navy and Air Force cooperating, but at levels far short of being integrated operations.

22. The two month long Kargil War of 1999 again highlighted points of functional discord between the Armed Forces, particularly Army and Air Force Though essentially a land war, there was a critical requirement for Air support which, reportedly, came had come with some reluctance. The board room battles between the then Army and Air Force leadership have

also been well reported. The Navy's decision for an enhanced concentration on the western seaboard has been militarily viewed by some analysts as being disproportionate to the extent of the envisaged naval threat. A significant aspect of the Army – Air Force standoff is whether the Air Force sought political approval for deployment of his force. On a point of principle, the Air Force has consistently maintained an independent role and status as a strategic asset as apart from a support force to the Army.

23. The Ministry of Defence is reluctant to let go of any portion of its vast controlling charter. The political leadership, whose authority in any case final, also do not perceive any pressing urgency in disturbing the status quo. Substantive Integration of the Services is hence still a far way off with no one bearing responsibility to provide it the requisite traction.

Need for Reform Realised

24. **The Estimates Committee of India (1958)**. This Committee carried out a functional evaluation of the Defence Organisation after ten years of Independence. It recommended a 'Council System' as in the UK and for the Railway Board Administrative System be studied for adoption to the Defence Services Some pertinent observations of the Committee are that there is an "imbalance in the distribution of responsibility between Services Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence". And that the "...existing system was inefficient, not making for economy or speedy decision making, ridden by considerable duplication with various segments functioning in a compartmentalised manner instead of moving jointly towards achieving common objectives".

25. **Administrative Reforms Committee (1966)**. As head of a Sub-Committee that reviewed the higher defence organisation and presented their findings before the Nawab Ali Yavar Jang visualised regarding the need to appoint a CDS that "(the Defence Services) 'should retain their separate identities but all operational matters need to be coordinated

and operations eventually integrated..... We believe there is a need for a Chief of Defence Staff who would be the coordinator and the executive at the top echelon of all the three operational commands. The structure in peacetime should conform to the requirements of war". On an integrated Defence Ministry, he states: 'there is a factor to consider seriously of duplication of work which constitutes a waste, both financial and in terms of talent and time. Such duplication occurs mainly in the name of coordination and supervision, it contributes little except delay".

26. **The Committee on Defence Expenditure**. The next High-powered Committee to address the aspect of integration of the Ministry of Defence was the Committee on Defence Expenditure (CDE) headed by Shri Arun Singh, erstwhile Raksha Rajya Mantri with Gen K Sundarji and Shri K Subrahmanyam as its other members). Though the CDE Report is not in the public domain, its major recommendations, as gleaned from various references available, are:

- (a) Integration of the three Services Headquarters and the setting up of a Vice-Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS) from among any of the three Services (who would also have direct access to the Defence Minister).
- (b) Measures to preclude duplication of duties at different levels - Ministry of Defence, Service Headquarters and Finance to cut delays and reduce bureaucratic interference.
- (c) Enhanced financial powers to Service Chiefs who could directly channel funds according to priorities.
- (d) Integration of the Ministry of Defence with the Services Headquarters with the Defence Secretary being nominated as the Principal Administrative Adviser to the Defence Minister with functions including coordination Perspective Plans, Budgets etc.



(e) Setting up of 'Services Boards' for the management of individual Services to improve efficiency in functional and administrative matters.

27. **The Kargil Review Committee**. The K Subrahmanyam Committee was set up in 1999 to review the events leading up to the Pakistani aggression in the Kargil District of Ladakh in Jammu & Kashmir and to recommend such measures as are considered necessary to safeguard national security against such armed intrusions. On the aspect of National Security Management and Apex Decision-Making, the following extracts from the Committee's Report are relevant:-

- (a) "India is perhaps the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters are outside the apex governmental structure".
- (b) "Army Headquarters has developed a command rather than a staff culture. Higher decisions on equipment, force levels and strategy are not collegiate but command-oriented. The Prime Minister and Defence Minister do not have the benefit of the views and expertise of the Army Commanders and their equivalents in the Navy and Air Force so that higher level defence management decisions are more consensual and broad-based. The present obsolete system has perpetuated the continuation of the culture of the British Imperial theatre system of an India Command whereas what is required is a National Defence Headquarters".
- (c) "The Committee is of the view that the present obsolete system, bequeathed to India by Lord Ismay, merits re-examination. An effective and appropriate national security planning and decision-making structure for India in the nuclear age is overdue, taking account of the revolution in military affairs and threats of proxy



war and terrorism and the imperative of modernising the Armed Forces”, and that “the entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and the structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Headquarters be comprehensively studied and reorganised”.

28. The Kargil Review Committee’s emphasis on the ‘command oriented’ nature of decision-making in the Army and need for the political decision-makers to have the benefit of views and expertise of Army Commanders and their equivalents is significant. These observations in fact run contrary to the grain of the ‘single point military advice’ recommended later by the GOM.

29. **Task Force for Review of the Management of Defence.** This Task Force, one of the four task Forces set up to consider the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee was headed by Shri Arun Singh with ten other members. Its terms of reference included examination of existing organisations and structures and recommend such changes, as considered necessary, for improving the management of the country’s defence, to inter alia examine the evolution and the changes that have taken place in other parliamentary democracies, to examine the apex decision making structure and the interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Headquarters and to examine the desirability, necessity and modalities of setting up an integrated command structure for the Armed Forces. The major recommendations of the Task Force include the creation of an of appointment of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), setting up of Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) Organisation and the creation of the Tri-Services command at Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC).

The Group of Ministers’ Report on “Reforming the National Security System”(2001)

30. Some pertinent extracts from the GOM Report relating to systemic and structural changes that are of imminent necessity are as below:-

(a) **On Integration of Services Headquarters Into Government.**

The GOM sought to correct the perception of the Services HQ being ‘Attached Offices’ of the Ministry of Defence by recommending “in order to remove this impression” that the Service Headquarters be designated as “Integrated Headquarters” of the MoD and the Transaction of Business Rules and Standing Orders being appropriately amended to the effect. The GOM recognised that the existing procedures involve multiplicity of levels/channels often lead to delays in decision-making and the need to progressively decentralise decision-making and delegate powers to the Service Headquarters, wherever feasible and, at the same time, “*for efficacious exercise of delegated financial and administrative powers, the decision-making apparatus within the Services needs to be upgraded and strengthened*”.

(b) There being no inclusion of the Services Headquarters in the AoB and ToB Rules 1961 or any alterations to the functional arrangement between them and the Ministry of Defence, the nomenclature change remains merely cosmetic and has not even been accepted by all three Services Headquarters.

(c) **On appointing a CDS:** The Committee observed that “*The COSC has not been effective in fulfilling its mandate. It needs to be strengthened by the addition of a CDS and a Vice-Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS)*”. The envisaged role of the CDS is to Provide Single-Point Military Advice to the Government, to administer the Strategic Forces i.e. “*exercise*

administrative control, as distinct from operational military control” over them and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the Planning Process through intra and inter-Service prioritisation besides ensuring the required “Jointness” in the Armed Forces.

(d) This role of the CDS needs to be viewed in the context of the recommendations of the GOM on the role of the Defence Secretary, which it considered to be “*extremely important that there is no dilution in the role of the Defence Secretary as the “Principal Defence Adviser” to the Defence Minister*”. The GOM Report emphasised that “*The Defence Secretary should be officially designated in standing orders as the “Principal Defence Adviser” and rank primus inter pares among the secretaries in the MoD. This measure is intended to reinforce the view that this individual, irrespective of pay scale or inter-service status, is a vital element in the higher management of Defence and should be so recognised unequivocally in civilian and military hierarchies. Standing orders need to be promulgated specifying that the Defence Secretary has the primary responsibility for advising the Defence Minister on all policy matters and for the management of the Department, including financial management besides being responsible to the Defence Minister for Policy Advice, Besides supervising the Department of Defence, co-ordinating the functioning of all departments in the Ministry, the Defence Secretary bears the responsibility for co-ordinating the finalisation of the complete MoD Long Term Defence Perspective Plan, the five year and Annual budget for approval by the Defence Minister*”.



31. In a move that several in the Services have viewed as weighing on the side of the Ministry of Defence, the GOM Report sought to resolve the long-standing issue of parity between civil and military functionaries by unequivocally emphasising that “*the Defence Secretary will function as “Principal Defence Adviser” to the Defence Minister in a manner similar to the role to be performed by the CDS as the “Principal Military Adviser” and both will enjoy an equivalent status in terms of their working relationship as distinct from the Warrant of Precedence. Similarly, the Defence Secretary must enjoy an equivalent status vis-à-vis the Chiefs of Staff, in so far as their functional relationship is concerned. Meetings convened by the Defence Secretary on issues concerning him shall be attended by the CDS as necessary and vice versa. The Chiefs of Staff will also attend the meetings convened by the Defence Secretary, if required and vice versa. The purpose of this arrangement is to ensure that the aspect of Warrant of Precedence does not vitiate the working environment of the Ministry*”.

32. **The Naresh Chandra Task Force.** The Report of the Task Force on National Security Management under the Chairmanship of Shri Naresh Chandra, though not in the public space, as gleaned from various media reports and discussions, made the following recommendations:-

(a) The Services HQ being given a specific role under the AOB and TOB Rules 1961, with the responsibility for the Defence of the country being placed on the Services rather than on the Defence Secretary as at present.

(b) The Services Headquarters are to be designated as ‘Departments’ of the Government of India under the Ministry of Defence, with the internal administration of each department being under the respective Vice Chiefs.

(c) Induction of Military personnel into the Ministry of Defence, which



would bring in professional knowledge and advice seemingly lacking at present.

(d) Appointment of a Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee who would coordinate and priorities long-term procurement plans, administer tri-services institutions and agencies, the A&N Command as also other Commands such as the Special Forces Command. The PC COSC would also provide single-point military advice to the Government with direct access to the Raksha Mantri. The PC COSC is intended to be a precursor to the eventual appointment of the CDS on which a decision could be taken in due course.

(e) The Service Chiefs also to have direct to the Raksha Mantri on individual service aspects.

(f) The Department of Defence to administer all aspects with tri-services implications as also residual aspects, including the coordination between various departments of the Ministry of Defence, Defence Budget, control of Defence lands and properties, CSD, etc.

Jointness and Integration of the Armed Forces

33. There are yet deep concerns within the Services themselves, particularly the Navy and Air force, as to how Jointness would impact them and their role in the envisaged future structures. Addressing the 14th Subroto Mukerjee seminar recently, the Vice Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal S.B. Deo, said jointmanship was also about optimal utilisation of resources stating that *“Ours is a growing country, our budget is limited. We cannot afford duplicating capabilities,”* and that *“We cannot have an Air Force with the Army, an Air Force with the Navy and another Air Force.”*

34. Likewise, the Army Chief, General Bipin Rawat’s visualisation of tri-service integration at a Seminar in the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, also recently, would not have assuaged the concerns of the other Services. In his words, *“supremacy and primacy of the Army in a joint services environment”* should be maintained and that *“the other services, the Navy and Air Force, will play a very major role in support of the Army which will be operating on the ground because no matter what happens, we may be dominating the seas or the air, but finally war will be to ensure territorial integrity of the nation,”* and therefore *“the supremacy and primacy of the Army in a joint services environment becomes that much more relevant and important.”*

35. It is obvious that presently, there is a lack of unanimity amongst the three Armed Forces themselves on how they visualise future security decision-making structures and of their own envisaged role in these. By default, therefore, the Services accept the formulations prescribed by the Committees. It is time the Services take an initiative to draw up their own considered solutions that are compliant to the requirements of present day warfare that would be their responsibility to wage.

36. A vigorous ‘in-house’ discussion within the Services themselves, to confront contentious issues such as the CDS and Integrated Commands upfront and draw up practical solutions would be the appropriate first step. They would otherwise be left to implement and adjust to solutions derived by others to what are essentially their core issues.

Issues with the Ministry of Defence

37. Major existing functional and systemic fault-lines that the Services have amongst themselves and with the Ministry of Defence are:-

(a) No formal direct institutional Interface with Political Authority for the Services Chiefs.

(b) Services Chiefs and Services HQ not yet included into the Apex structure of Government by their inclusion of their roles and functions into the AOB and TOB Rules.

(c) Though a re-designation of the Services HQ has been accepted as per the recommendations of the GOM and two are cosmetically known as ‘Integrated HQ of the Ministry of Defence’ all three Services HQ till now remain to be Attached Offices” of the Ministry of Defence for all practical purposes.

(d) No traction on ground towards creation of the appointment of CDS or even the PC COSC.

(e) The erstwhile procedures and systems continue as hitherto. The much required ‘single file’ system has not been resorted to which ensures the denial to Services HQ of how proposals forwarded for approval by them have been consideration thereby depriving them of the knowledge domain to be noted and applied for future proposals.

(f) Services Officers not yet been formally inducted into the Ministry of Defence who see no urgent requirement for an induction of professional ‘hands on’ expertise supporting the decision making process.

(g) The Defence Minister functions through far too many Committees with varied members which slows down the decision making process and obfuscates authority with lack of accountability commensurate with responsibility.

(h) Present apparatus headed by CISC more ‘nodal’ with no authority to overrule. Needs empowerment.

(j) Budget allocation is not linked to requirements, which impacts



comprehensive capability building.

(k) A Single File System between Min of Def and Services HQ.

(l) An informed, specially trained and committed bureaucracy across the Defence Ministry and the Services Headquarters.

Integration Not Within the Services Alone

38. Substantive integration does not restrict to between the three Armed Forces alone. There is but one overarching national military-security architecture for the nation which includes and incorporates besides the Military, several agencies, several even outside the control of the Ministry of Defence. Integration is therefore a multi-layered and multi-faceted process – not just within the Military but equally between the Services and the Ministry of Defence, as also between the Services and the Ministry of Defence on the one side and other Security related organisations on the other.

39. There is no gainsaying that tomorrow’s wars would be ‘non-linear’ and fought across several dimensions including the cyber and information space. Operations in the future operations would necessarily require to adopt methods of integrated war fighting so as to ensure a synergistic application of military power.

40. There are a host of other organisations playing a cardinal role in policy formulation, planning, preparation for as also the very execution of operations. These include the Cabinet Secretariat, The National Security Advisor and the National Security Council Secretariat, the Ministry of Home and the CPOs, Ministries of External Affairs, Communications, Railways Petroleum and importantly, Finance, the R&AW, NTRO and where necessary, the local Police. These together form the overarching national security matrix which needs to work in confluence and sync in support of the Armed Forces at all stages upto and during the war effort.



41. It is important for the role of not just the Armed Forces but of each concerned department in the overall National Security architecture be clearly defined as must be their responsibility to provide the Military with requisite verified information to enable formulation of the 'single point advice' to be rendered to the Political Authority. Presently, it is the NSA who is effecting a coordination role and has become the de facto advisor on all operational matters, including of the Military. As a prelude to playing their role in the national security fabric on equal footing, it is imperative that Armed Forces Commanders be made an intrinsic part of the 'Apex Structure' of Government, duly sanctified by their functions and roles being stipulated in the AoB and ToB Rules.

42. Ground realities have change dimmensely in the seventeen years since the GOM Report had been accepted. Asymmetric and 4G warfare, not much known at that time, are an ominous reality today and have altered the very nature of warfare. The efficacy of existing decision-making structures to respond adequately and in time to meet the challenges of emerging threats would need to be sustained at the highest level.

CDS or a PC COSC?

43. The role of the CDS in such a context needs to be pragmatically charted. There are several sharp questions to which candid answers need to be sought :

44. If the CDS is to render 'single point military advice', what is he advising upon and

to which Authority / platform? Is it the Union Cabinet or the CCS or, as what has come to be the de facto arrangement of the day, the NSA?

45. What are the operationally relevant inputs upon which that advice is based? Are some of these critical inputs on which his advice is based sourced in agencies outside his command and control? If so, how does he validate the substance of those inputs?

46. A must read reference on this aspect is 'A Cabinet Secretary Looks Back' by Shri BG Deshmukh, erstwhile Cabinet Secretary who details how the then Chairman COSC, Gen K Sundarji, while rendering 'single point advice' on which basis IPKF operations were lodged had either missed or discounted intelligence assessments from the R&AW and the subsequent embarrassment that he and the Government had to face.

47. While creation of the appointment of CDS would no doubt be of definitive advantage in furthering Jointness and Integration in the Armed Forces, there is requirement to carefully re-assess his role and responsibilities, particularly how the advice he is to render is formulated. **The delay in approval of the CDS and Integrated Commands could well be a window of opportunity for the Armed Forces to revisit the solutions offered by the GOM Report and the recommendation of appointing a PC COSC as recommended by the Naresh Chandra Committee and thereafter put forth an agreed formulation in conformity to present day operational requirements.**

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