

Jointmanship in the Defence Forces : The Way Ahead

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INTRODUCTION

The experience of our Armed Forces during various conflicts has not been a happy one in terms of jointmanship. Each Service has viewed warfighting from its own perspective thus lacking a holistic approach to problems of defence and security. The Kargil crisis of 1999 provided the required political consensus to initiate the desired restructuring of the higher defence organisation and raising of joint structures. Based on the Group of Ministers report, a Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS) was set up in 2001 to provide a single point, tri-Service, military advice to the government. This was followed by the setting up of two integrated commands -- Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) and Strategic Forces Command (SFC) -- which were to serve as test-beds for raising more such joint structures. These tri-Service organizations have taken root and are endeavouring to bring about emotional integration and purple thinking in the Defence Forces.

A modest beginning has thus been made but the road to focused jointmanship is a long one. The three Services continue to remain engaged in turf battles and are unable to shed their individualistic white, green and blue mind-set, and go 'purple'. They compete with each other fiercely for what they perceive as their core interests; be it creation of new formations, increase in higher ranks, or their share of the budgetary cake. This stems from apparent fear and mistrust, particularly amongst the smaller Services, that a unified structure may hamper their individual Service growth plans and shrink budgetary allocations. Their rivalry prevents them from having a clout in important security forums and in taking a unified position on key policy issues affecting the Defence Forces.²

An enhanced level of jointness amongst the three services is a prerequisite for the future. Modern warfare necessitates waging battles in an integrated manner with structures created to support such a strategy. The creation of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) seems unlikely in the near future. In the interim HQ IDS which is now well entrenched, should be allowed to chart and steer the course to true jointmanship with the three Services remaining on board.

APPROACH TO JOINTNESS

There is consensus of opinion in the higher ranks of the military that desired level of integration may perhaps be unachievable in the absence of an overarching entity like the CDS. The CDS system has been implemented in 64 countries, including China, and India too will eventually have to adopt it. In the meanwhile, lateral integration should be continued and necessary joint structures created, to affect economy and efficiency. The debate on the extent to which jointness is to be achieved and in what manner is unending. The Indian mindset is not given to radical changes, therefore no drastic transformation as ushered in by the Goldwater-Nichols Act in the US Armed Forces can ever be implemented. Instead, a phased implementation of a carefully thought-out strategy of jointness, with a well articulated vision and time lines, is the need of the hour.

To achieve jointness, a 'Top Down' or a 'Bottoms Up' approach should be adopted. It would however, be preferable in a force as large as ours to execute both the approaches simultaneously. This will not only accelerate the process, but also change attitudinal biases that are a major barrier in the way of jointmanship. It would be useful to identify areas which need integration and then work out a methodology for implementation. The wholehearted support of the Services, particularly the Service heads would be essential, as integration would entail sacrificing resources presently within the respective fold of each Service, for the common goal.

RECOMMENDED AREAS FOR INTEGRATION

There are a number of areas where the three Services can pool their resources and share assets instead of individually spending vast amount on duplicating each others' facilities. The budgetary savings thus achieved can be used to acquire more quantities of modern and sophisticated resources.² Some of the important areas which lend themselves for integration are highlighted in succeeding paragraphs.

Integrated Logistics System: This is one area where a lot of progress can be made towards effective integration. Presently, medical, postal, works services, movement control, quality assurance, defence land, military farms and CSD are already integrated and functioning well. However, the prospect of bringing many more such areas under joint fold exists. An integrated joint logistics system would reduce the requirement of holding large single Service inventories of common items. A common logistic nomenclature and number code for the inventory of all the three Services and other agencies connected with material management should be evolved. Bringing about a joint approach

towards development and acquisition of common equipment and weapon platforms like helicopters, communication equipment, radars, missile and electronic warfare systems would lead to optimisation in terms of budgetary support and R&D effort. It would also ensure interoperability and commonality of training and logistics. The three Services have separate logistic facilities in a number of stations which can be easily combined. For example, the staff cars and other vehicles of the three Service headquarters and HQ IDS in Delhi can be placed under one organization with a common repair facility.

Joint Training: It is envisioned that joint training will play a major role in tri-Service integration and convergence of mind. Emphasis on jointness must start early and continue to be stressed throughout the career span of officers. The end state of joint training should be that senior commanders and staff officers comprehend the capabilities and limitations of each Service. This will enable them to effectively employ the resources of all the Services jointly, to achieve the desired aim. Some recommendations for joint training are as under:

- (a) The training year of the three Services must be synchronized. The Army training schedule runs from 1 July to 30 June, the Air Force from 1 April to 31 March and the Navy from 1 January to 31 December. If full synchronization cannot be achieved sufficient overlap should be created to enable joint training to be conducted.³
- (b) It is recommended that once in three years, a major joint exercise should be conducted involving all the three Services. This will provide appointments at various levels in the three Services the required expertise of planning and conducting joint operations
- (c) HQIDS should work towards the early establishment of the Indian National Defence University (NDU) which can advance jointmanship. It should also issue annual joint training directive and joint training doctrines and concepts to synergize effectiveness of the three Services at the tactical, operational and strategic levels.
- (d) Joint training facilities should be set up for common weapon systems, vehicles and equipment to reduce duplication of effort, bring in standardization of training and expose personnel to each others' Service culture and professionalism. Joint training institutions should also be set up for imparting training on common subjects like Electronic Warfare and Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Warfare.

Air Defence and Air Space Management: Air space no longer remains the exclusive domain of the Air Force. Air defence and air space management have in essence become very intricate. There has been an unprecedented proliferation in the number of users with the introduction of unarmed aerial vehicles, helicopters and aircraft of the three services, long range artillery, missiles and aircraft of various civil airlines. It is therefore, vital that an integrated joint Service organization be put in place to control and monitor the air space. This would necessitate commonality in the Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence and Inter-operability (C4 I2) systems of all the three Services.

Operational and Functional Commands: The geographical zones of responsibilities of various operational Commands of the three Services have no perceptible commonality. In most cases, the Command of one service overlaps or is linked with two or three Commands of the other two Services. None of the Commands are co-located, leading to lack of coordination in intelligence sharing, planning and conduct of operations. If we have a war in the West for example, the Army Commander will be in Pune, the Naval Commander in Mumbai and Air Force Commander in Ahmedabad. The establishment of the two tri-Service Commands should ideally have generated a debate on the requirement of Integrated Theatre Commands and Integrated Functional Commands. All single Service Commands should gradually evolve into either Integrated Theatre Commands on the lines of ANC or Integrated Functional Commands on the lines of the SFC.

Communications: Keeping in mind the challenges of the envisaged security environment it is imperative for the Services to be interoperable. This can be possible only through a secure, reliable and robust defence communication network interconnecting the three Services at various functional levels. A viable communication system promoting interaction at all levels and synergizing efforts towards a common goal is the backbone for jointness. The work on a common media and interoperable communication system has commenced and when fully in place, will augment decision making and compatibility.

International Military Cooperation (IMC): There is today a gradual recognition of the importance and value of international defence and military cooperation as a foreign policy tool. At present, each Service HQ has got a separate foreign cooperation cell/directorate with an International Affairs Division at HQ IDS for planning and conducting IMC. There is very little interaction and coordination between them and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). This leads to bottlenecks in planning IMC activities and the projection of a common face to foreign delegations. The military establishments of

most countries of the world follow an integrated approach to boost cooperation. There is therefore, a requirement to give more teeth to HQ IDS by posting of additional staff and delegating appropriate powers from the MoD to enable a better response from the Services. A JS (International Affairs) from the MEA and an official from the MoD should be posted to HQ IDS to create a single window for IMC. A separate fund for IMC should also be instituted under the defence budget and HQ IDS should be empowered to spend it within laid down parameters. The reorganised International Affairs Division at HQ IDS will then be able to plan and conduct IMC in a coordinated and effective manner.

JOINT STAFF FUNCTIONING

Personnel policy is based on the individual requirement of each Service. Joint staff appointments and duties do not play a significant role in the career profile of an officer.⁴ This at times, results in under manning as well as posting of unsuitable officers at key posts in HQ IDS, ANC and the SFC. There is also inhibition amongst officers to serve in a joint Services environment due to the disparity in the appraisal system of each Service. It is essential that these tri-Service organisations be given full support by posting officers with a good career profile. It should gradually be made obligatory for all officers to have held at least one joint appointment in a tri-Service HQ before being considered eligible for consideration for promotion to the one star rank and above, as is the practice in the US. A common appraisal system should be adopted for officers serving in joint Services organisations/institutions to protect their career interests. A separate category of Honours & Awards for distinguished service in tri-Service institutions/establishments should also be instituted. It is essential that HQ IDS approves postings of critical appointments in the tri-Service organisations to ensure that the laid down career profile is not diluted.

GREATER ROLE FOR HQ IDS AND CHIEFS OF STAFF COMMITTEE (COSC)

In the absence of the CDS, the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman (COSC) (CISC) should be the prime mover in implementing functional jointness within the Services. HQ IDS is striving to coordinate the activities of the three Services and put up a joint face at important forums. Those who have been in the organisation are convinced that it has a lot of potential. The resistance of the three Services to part with resources and functions is however, proving to be a major bottleneck. Planning, budgeting and operations continue to largely remain single Service roles. HQ IDS needs to play a key role in formulating joint doctrines and concepts, long term integrated

perspective plan, progressively reduce duplication in training, logistics and maintenance and implement joint staffing in all three Services. It also needs to set inter-Service prioritisation of capital schemes, make up critical deficiencies in force capabilities and seek resources for joint exploitation of space. HQ IDS should also formulate Joint doctrines for Special Forces and amphibious operations and coordinate joint response for out of area contingencies.

The COSC is the apex forum where the Services come together and the Chairman COSC acts as the 'rotational CDS' to some extent. Despite marginal strengthening of the COSC since September 2001, by giving it a few enhanced roles and functions, it continues to be plagued by ills which are inherent in a committee. The consensus driven 'committee system' is antiquated and unsuited for quick and decisive action. As decisions and recommendations are sought to be based on 'consensus', in the interest of tri-service camaraderie, there is an inevitable temptation to shelve contentious issues. It is usual for a Chairman to get tenure of about a year or so. This is too short a period to allow meaningful formulation, initiation and direction of any long term policy. Till the time the CDS is sanctioned, there is a need to enhance the effectiveness of COSC. This can be done by having a fixed tenure for the Chairman and giving him veto powers so as to be able to take important decisions in the overall interests of the Defence Forces. He should also have direct access to the Defence Minister and represent the Services in joint forums within and outside the country.

INTEGRATION OF ARMED FORCES WITH MOD

Integration of SHQ with MoD should transcend nomenclatures, cut out duplication, decentralize decision making and devolve financial powers. Joint staffing throughout MoD by Service and civilian officers should be the norm. Financial advisers must work under SHQ and act as advisers not controllers.⁵ Cross-posting of Service officers to MEA, Ministry of Home Affairs(MHA) and National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) which has already commenced, should be reciprocated by posting of civilian officers to Service HQ and HQ IDS and subsequently even to the Theatre/Functional Commands, when raised. In addition, there is a need for the MoD to respect proposals moved by the three Services that have been analysed in great detail, at different levels and are an organizational necessity.

CONCLUSION

The nature of modern and future wars makes it imperative to fight in an integrated manner. True jointmanship would lead to synergized

military effectiveness and maximisation of combat power. Major spin offs like taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by RMA and out of area intervention capabilities will automatically accrue. The day may not be far when India may have to use its Defence Forces as part of a joint coalition to deal with emerging regional security threats. This will only be possible if the three Services are sufficiently integrated.

While acknowledging the separate identity of each Service and respecting the divergence of views, it is essential to remain careful that for short term parochial gains, the long-term interests of the defence forces and the nation are not sacrificed. Loyalty to the Service should not surpass the common interests at large. The three Services must work in a decidedly cohesive manner and exhibit a unified approach. A beginning has been made by projecting a joint requirement to the Sixth Central Pay Commission unlike separate projections in the past. The joint response to disaster management during Tsunami was also creditable. The release of India's first Joint Doctrine in May 2006 marks a major step towards integration and interoperability among the three Services.

CISC and HQ IDS have an important role to play in bringing about a greater degree of jointmanship till the time the CDS is sanctioned by the government. Lateral integration to reduce duplicity of organisations and establishments must be continued. Tangible goals should be kept to ensure that the required pace of restructuring and transformation is maintained. There must also be a positive attitudinal change amongst the Service HQ to make the joint structures truly and fully functional. The three Services must appreciate that success in future wars will go to the military which is best able to synergize the application of combat potential of all resources of the land, sea and aerospace. □

Notes

1. Arun Prakash, *Inaugural Address*, College of Defence Management Seminar on Jointness in the Armed Forces, November 2006.
2. P.S. Joshi, *Implications of Jointness in Synergistic Management Of War*, College of Defence Management Seminar on Jointness in the Armed Forces, November 2006.
3. R.C. Tiwari, *Concept of Jointness and its Relevance in Achieving Synergy for National Security Management*, College of Defence Management Seminar on Jointness in the Armed Forces, November 2006.
4. Satish Uniyal, *Military Jointness Implementation Strategy*, College of Defence Management Seminar on Jointness in the Armed Forces, November 2006.
5. George Mathai, *Military Jointness: Implementation Strategy*, College of Defence Management Seminar on Jointness in the Armed Forces, November 2006.