

Evaluating Jointness in the Indian Military

A Conceptual and Methodological Approach

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The institutionalisation of jointness in the Indian military is a key driver of ongoing defence reforms. To attain this goal, the Indian Armed Forces are encapsulating principles of joint warfare, inhabiting joint capabilities and inculcating joint culture. However, the pace and process of jointness in the Indian military has been contentious since Independence. This article seeks to evaluate the state and nature of jointness in the Indian military by employing Jackson's conceptual and methodological model for joint military activities.

Keywords: *Jointness, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Integrated Theatre Commands (ITC), Indian Military, Defence Reforms*

INTRODUCTION

The jointness in military affairs has become a new norm in contemporary warfare strategies across the globe. Notionally, jointness has been in existence since antiquity and attained prominence from the 1980s onwards.¹ In military parlance, jointness implies the degree of integration and coordination among various stakeholders. Recently, a study has theorised the precepts of joint military activities and its ingredients.² Another study has critically explored the evolution of joint operations, from coordination to interoperability, through a reflexivity approach.³

In India, with the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), the creation of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and attempts

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for creating the integrated theatre commands (ITC), the concept of jointness has become significant in both academic and policy circles. Prior to origin of these new institutions and ideas, the Indian military has been practising 'the coordination model of jointness' over integration.⁴ However, India's coordination model of jointness maximises autonomy of services, stymies interoperability, facilitates 'single-service approach to operations' and augments inter-services rivalry.⁵ A range of studies, committee reports and parliamentary debates have recommended for institutionalisation of jointness in the Indian military through incremental integration to address these debilities. To illustrate, the Kargil Review Committee (2000), the Group of Ministers Report (2001), the Task Force for Review of the Management of Defence (popularly known as Arun Singh Task Force) (2001), the Naresh Chandra Committee (2012), the Shekatkar Committee (2015) and the Defence Planning Committee (DPC) (2018), along with others, have highlighted the need for defence reforms to attain higher degree of jointness.

This article evaluates the degree of jointness in the Indian military. It also analyses the extent to which recent defence reforms have enhanced the degree and nature of jointness. It engages with these questions by using Aaron P. Jackson's model for evaluation of jointness. According to Jackson, the degree and nature of jointness can be assessed by examining four fundamental aspects of inter-service coordination and integration: operational, organisational, educational and doctrinal.⁶ The rationale to use this model is as follows: (i) it is a new conceptual framework to understand the extent of jointness in a given case; (ii) it accounts for historical evolution and theoretical development of jointness; and (iii) it has been applied for comparative evaluation of jointness in four Western armed forces, namely, the United States (US), Britain, Canada and Australia.

However, this model may not be suitable to compare the Indian case with that of the above-mentioned countries as they have initiated reforms towards jointness many decades ago. Nonetheless, Jackson's model can provide direction to ongoing debates vis-à-vis the institutionalisation of jointness in the Indian military. In short, this model is theoretically rigorous and practically guides us to undertake the necessary steps to institutionalise jointness in the Indian military.

The article uses data from declassified official documents, oral history, media reports, op-ed commentaries and scholarly work to evaluate four aspects of jointness—operational, organisational, educational and

doctrinal—in the Indian military. However, lack of detailed official data about joint force structures, organisations and doctrines limits the scope and in-depth analysis of the subject. Notwithstanding, Jackson’s model, discussed herein, would be useful for in-house discussions and internal deliberations to institutionalise jointness in the Indian military. It is also useful to identify key lacunae, opportunities and challenges to jointness in the Indian military.

The article is divided into different sections. It begins with a brief description of jointness in military affairs and its key drivers, principles and methods. The next section applies a conceptual and methodological model to evaluate jointness in the Indian military. The following section then assesses the impact of defence reforms carried out by the present government under Prime Minister Modi on institutionalisation of jointness. Further, it describes what India needs to do to strengthen jointness. The research reveals that the recent efforts to institutionalise jointness within the Indian military are transformational and phenomenal. In spite of this, jointness in the Indian military remains marginal, fictitious, ephemeral and feeble. Therefore, India has to learn relevant lessons from the aforementioned four countries to institutionalise jointness.

JOINTNESS IN MILITARY AFFAIRS: DEFINITIONAL, CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL COMPLEXITIES

According to a Ministry of Defence (MoD) glossary, the term ‘joint’ denotes military activities ‘between two or more Services of the same nation’, namely, the Indian Army (IA), the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Indian Navy (IN).⁷ From a joint doctrinal perspective, the concept of jointness denotes ‘cooperative centralised planning’ to optimise joint warfighting capabilities and attaining a high level of cross-domain/inter-service synergy to ‘enhance(s) success potential’ and induce ‘high morale, camaraderie, and spirit’ among services.⁸ Thus, jointness as a concept signifies the state or quality of being joint in inter-service domains. Nevertheless, jointness is not about dissolution of services, rather to complement each other’s role.

From a theoretical perspective, jointness is about the degree of coordination and integration between the three services to plan, train and operate synergistically.⁹ The *raison d’être* of jointness is to dismantle service-specific silos, streamline service-specific autonomy and reduce their distinctive preferences for resources and organisational parochialism.

Jointness is, therefore, a counter thesis to organisationally separate and autonomous military services and their ideological, psychological and doctrinal silos. In essence, systematic and synergetic psychological integration at operational, organisational, educational and doctrinal level is the *sine qua non* of jointness in military affairs.¹⁰ It is aimed at de-institutionalising service-specific culture through conceptual, organisational, doctrinal and educational military innovations and change. In this regard, we have seen intensification of joint military activities in the last 100 years across the warfighting spectrum, worldwide.¹¹ In fact, institutionalisation of jointness is a logical outcome of the evolution of warfare strategies.¹²

For instance, the British Armed Forces have been institutionalising jointness since 1964.¹³ A legislative act of 1968 is responsible for the integration of Canadian Armed Forces. Since the 1970s, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has been institutionalising jointness.¹⁴ The Goldwater–Nicholas Act (1986) has been aimed at inculcating jointness in the US Armed Forces. Similarly, the Russian Armed Forces are transforming towards jointness.¹⁵ The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) has been working vigorously to strengthen jointness, ranging from restructuring the PLA's logistical system (1998) to new 'combat regulations' (1998) and establishment of new integrated theatres.¹⁶

In sum, a comparative analysis of the practices of jointness in different countries suggests variation in visualisation, pace and outcomes of joint military activities.¹⁷ Notwithstanding, key push factors and principles of jointness are almost similar. To be precise, the quest for military effectiveness is a key driver. It includes efficient management of scarce resources, right-sizing and mutual alignment of roles and missions of various military services and swift operational military victory.

Further, increasing hybrid threats and non-traditional armed conflicts have become an immediate cause for institutionalisation of jointness.¹⁸ The degree of uncertainty and unpredictability has increased with these threats and emerging warfare technologies. The service-specific specialisations are inadequate to counter these challenges as they demand swifter, flexible, mobile and responsive armed forces. The institutionalised jointness provides more flexibility, responsiveness, mobility, interoperability and full-spectrum capabilities.¹⁹ It also broadens the horizon of the decision-making apparatus beyond service-specific rationality and strategies.

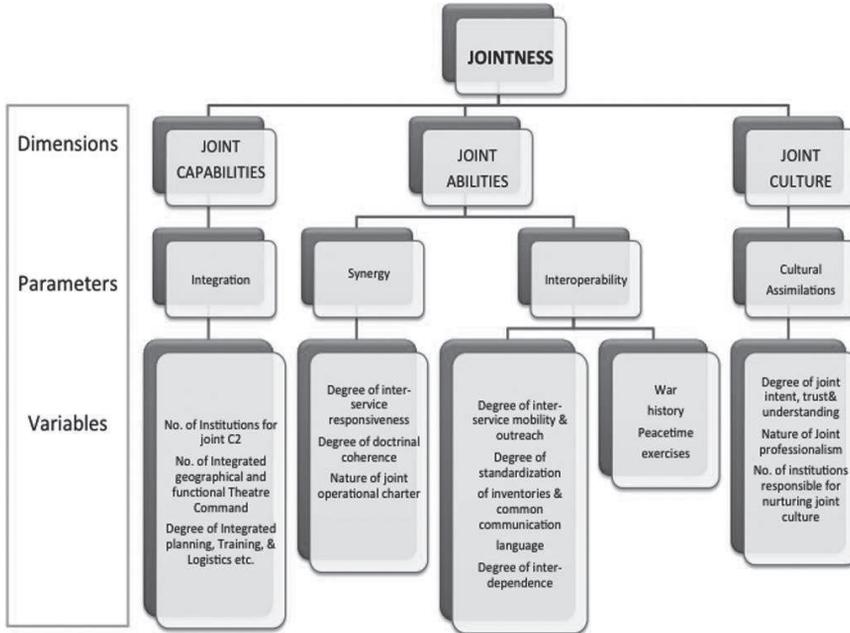


Figure 1 Attributes of Jointness

Source: Author’s own.

Note: C2: command and control.

Figure 1 depicts jointness as an amalgamation of joint capabilities, joint abilities and joint culture. Joint capabilities are indicative of joint force posturing, including technical and administrative capabilities, at an operational, organisational, educational and doctrinal level. Joint abilities are intangible cognitive skills about synergetic responses and interoperability. They can be assessed through an analysis of a concurrence of actions of the services and systemic outcomes of joint military activities. The indicators of synergy and interoperability are operating strategy, strategic vision, systems integration and culture. Further, the degree of cultural assimilation reflects depth of jointness. In fact, jointness is about raising a new military culture to transcend traditional service-specific cultural boundaries. Herein, jointness signifies a cognitive assimilation of critical roles of the services and augmentation of inter-services understanding and trust for seamless interactions at all four levels.

Thus, joint culture is a necessary condition for joint military professionalism. Joint military professionalism entails adequate level of joint expertise, joint responsibilities and joint corporate identity.²⁰

To this end, joint military professionalism is evolving within major militaries, as the network-centric warfare necessitates integration, synergy, interoperability and cultural assimilation. It has evolved from notional jointness to institutionalised jointness. Table 1 summarises the various stages of jointness and its key features as it evolved. Moreover, the tabulation is intended to highlight its philosophical foundations as well as delineate fundamental differences between scattered ideas of jointness and its modern conceptualisation. Put differently, the table locates modern concept of jointness and its central tendencies to comprehend the ongoing debates pertaining to jointness within the Indian military.

Table 1 The Evolutionary Scale of Jointness

<i>Sr. No.</i>	<i>Notional Jointness (Ancient era)</i>	<i>Rudimentary Jointness (Medieval era)</i>	<i>On-again, Off-again Jointness (16th century to the 1960s)</i>	<i>Organised/ Institutionalised Jointness (1960s to present)</i>
1.	It refers to philosophy of 'intra-service' combined arms.	Tactical use of combined arms strategy. Minor innovations in organisational restructuring and arms technology.	Development of a sense of independent service culture. Practices of joint operations at strategic and tactical levels. Development of joint planning and logistics. Increase in the frequency of joint military operations. Joint operations commands were formulated/ dissolved as and when required.	Creation of a number of institutions and structures for jointness. Legislations on integration of the armed forces. Creation of a large numbers of joint doctrines. Creation of joint professional military education (PME) institutions. Creation of permanent joint C2 and theatre commands.

Source: Author.

On this evolutionary scale, the defence reform initiatives and their implementation are aimed to achieve organised/institutionalised jointness within the Indian military. However, reforms to reorganise and reorient traditional military organisations may trigger more

problems than solutions.²¹ Furthermore, jointness beyond a threshold may adversely impact the performance of the armed forces.²² Therefore, institutionalisation of jointness is both a herculean and delicate task. Moreover, the evaluation of practices of jointness and its impact is much harder than its conceptualisation.

A Method to Evaluate Jointness

Jackson's model to evaluate jointness is based on four aspects of joint military activities, namely, operational, organisational, educational and doctrinal (see Figure 2). This model illustrates that the threshold of jointness would be unification of the three services into one force, whereas absence of inter-service cooperation in a given case could be categorised as the non-joint military. Theoretically, the key parameters to differentiate 'very joint military' and 'non-joint military' are as follows: (i) number of joint operational command and control (C2) structures and joint operations; (ii) nature of integration within the Higher Defence Organisation (HDO) to reduce duplication of roles and resources, service support systems, etc.; (iii) nature of professional military education (PME) institutions and scope of joint military education in career advancement of military officers; and (iv) frequency and nature of joint military doctrines. Jackson has evaluated these four aspects of jointness through devising a set of eight questions, two from each of four dimensions:²³

- Q 1: Are there permanent joint operational C2 structures and joint operational organisations?
- Q 2: What percentage of operations are joint?
- Q 3: Are there permanent joint organisational structures that are not directly operational?
- Q 4: To what extent has duplication between each service been minimised through the creation of joint organisations?
- Q 5: Is joint PME for O4²⁴ and above common?
- Q 6: What percentage of PME institutions offering courses for O4 and above are joint?
- Q 7: Does the armed forces have a comprehensive series of joint doctrine publications?
- Q 8: Does the armed force have an organisation explicitly tasked with developing and maintaining joint doctrine?

The following section examines these questions to understand the nature and extent of jointness in the Indian military.

**STATE OF JOINTNESS IN THE INDIAN MILITARY: EVALUATING THE
FOUR ASPECTS OF JOINTNESS**

Contemporary debates within the Indian strategic community open up a Pandora’s box of the issues pertaining to jointness in the Indian military.²⁵ Historically, India has failed to formulate a joint strategy.²⁶ A seminar report of the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) underlines the fact that ‘India is woefully short’ in institutionalising jointness as ‘currently, India is behind 66 countries of the world’ on jointness ranking.²⁷ Within the Indian military, jointness has ‘*only regressed over the decades*’.²⁸ Jointness in the Indian military is ‘just skin-deep and to an extent, cosmetic,’ claims an authority on the subject.²⁹ However, most of these studies lack methodology to understand and evaluate the problem of jointness in the Indian military. Therefore, the application of Jackson’s model (see Figure 2) would be helpful as a conceptual tool to explore the Indian case, if not to compare level of jointness with other mature case studies. Let us discuss the four aspects of jointness within the Indian military to identify the problems and paths of future defence reforms.

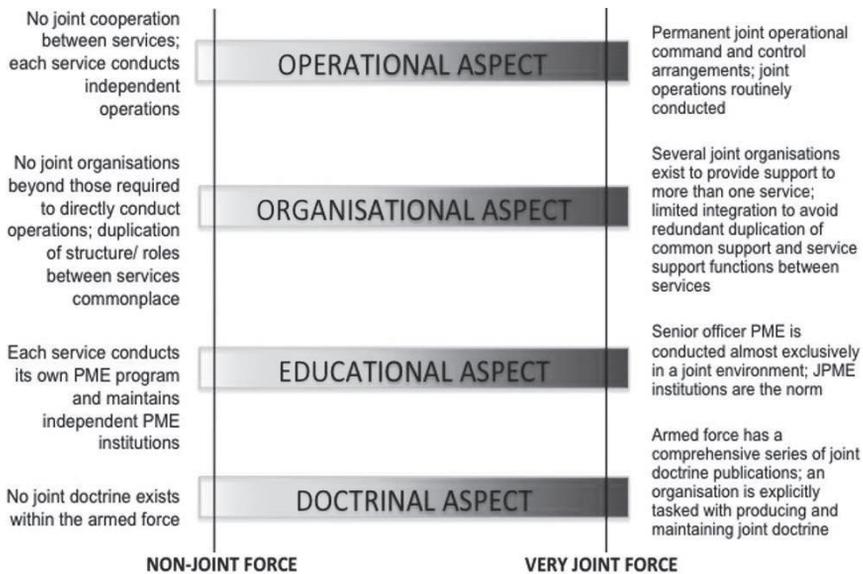


Figure 2 Jackson’s Model to Measure Jointness
Source: Jackson, ‘The Four Aspects of Joint’, n. 2, p. 22.

Operational Jointness

Indian military has humongous C2 structures and operational theatres. It has three service-specific headquarters (IA, IAF and IN); one Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS), 17 service-specific operational commands (seven IA, seven IAF and three IN); two joint operational commands (Andaman and Nicobar Command [ANC] and Strategic Forces Command [SFC]); and three 'autonomous' operational tri-service agencies, namely, Special Operation Division, Defence Cyber Agency and Defence Space Agency.

The Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) is responsible for regulating and supervising all joint military activities in India. Currently, the incumbent CDS acts as the Chairman, COSC. Prior to appointment of India's first-ever CDS, the Chairman, COSC had negligible operational power, and limited role and reason to cultivate a joint C2 system.³⁰ Under the previous system, jointness was rare in the major wars since 1947.³¹ Indeed, India's joint operational C2 structures have been disjointed in the absence of empowered authorities and unified commands vis-à-vis the institutions in the US, Britain, Australia and Canada.³² Owing to joint C2 structures and adequate defence reforms, major military operations undertaken by these countries are marked as 100 per cent joint.³³ The purpose to highlight this is not to compare but to learn from their experiences and innovations.

The evolution of jointness in these countries indicates that India has to move miles to raise and nurture permanent operational joint C2 systems. India's operational history and contemporary debates illustrate this assertion.³⁴ For example, the 1947–48 conflict in Jammu and Kashmir was predominately planned and executed by the IA, with the IAF playing a limited role. The 1962 debacle against China was an army-centric operation. Again, during the 1965 war, the three services of the Indian military fought 'without any preconceived [joint] plan'.³⁵ Similarly, some accounts suggest that during the 1971 war, integrated planning and synergy between the three services was inadequate. The spontaneous change in an assault on Chittagong to Cox Bazaar, the IAF's friendly fire on Mukti Bahini vessels and Operations Trident and Python (1971) reflect a lack of synergy and jointness.³⁶ Further, instead of addressing these debilities, service-centric military modernisation and restructuring committees were formed in the aftermath of the 1971 war,³⁷ thereby deviating the progression towards jointness. Also, multiple narratives expose the inadequacies of the operational jointness during

Kargil crisis. However, the post-Kargil defence reforms have prioritised the need for operational jointness.

In this regard, Jackson's model is useful to understand the need for reforms to institutionalise operational jointness within the Indian military. For instance, the US Armed Forces have the most complex and well-defined permanent joint operational C2 structures under nine combatant commands with global scope and responsibilities. The British Armed Forces have had Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) since 1996. The Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) governs operational joint military activities in Australia. Canada has three permanent joint operational commands: Canadian Joint Operations Command; Canadian Special Operations Command; and Canadian Forces Intelligence Command.³⁸

The evolutionary trends in these countries suggest that the ad hoc joint operational commands have been replaced with truly joint force headquarters to remedy the problems of duplication of roles and missions, disruption and conflicting values. These organisations have been set up with proper legal backing and clear operational mandates. Further, they have been provided with dedicated permanent staff and specified budgetary allocations. The chain of command is also clearly delineated. For instance, the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 of the US reorganised the existing operational chain of command and empowered the civilian authorities to implement the envisioned restructuring. Similarly, in the case of Britain, the Defence Costs Study facilitated the enactment of new laws for institutionalisation of jointness, including the PJHQ.³⁹

When we compare the defence reforms in India with those in the above-mentioned countries, it is evident that institutionalisation of jointness within the Indian military requires enactment of parliamentary laws. The operational jointness also can be enhanced through empowering the CDS, especially his operational role, as existing structuring are weak and need further reforms.⁴⁰ In short, the envisaged defence reforms, such as the ITCs, need legislated roles and responsibilities to strengthen operational jointness.

Organisational Jointness

This section analyses 'Q 3' and 'Q 4' of Jackson's model. India's HDO is composed of permanent joint organisations and follows a three-tier hierarchical system. The first tier is high-powered political bodies and

committees, such as the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) and the National Security Council (NSC). The second tier is the civilian defence establishment under the aegis of the MoD, specially the Department of Defence (DoD) and the DMA. The third tier of the HDO comprises the military establishment.

Presently, the MoD is the nodal agency responsible for coordinating and integrating competing priorities and perspectives of the three services through the DMA. However, a recent study suggests that the

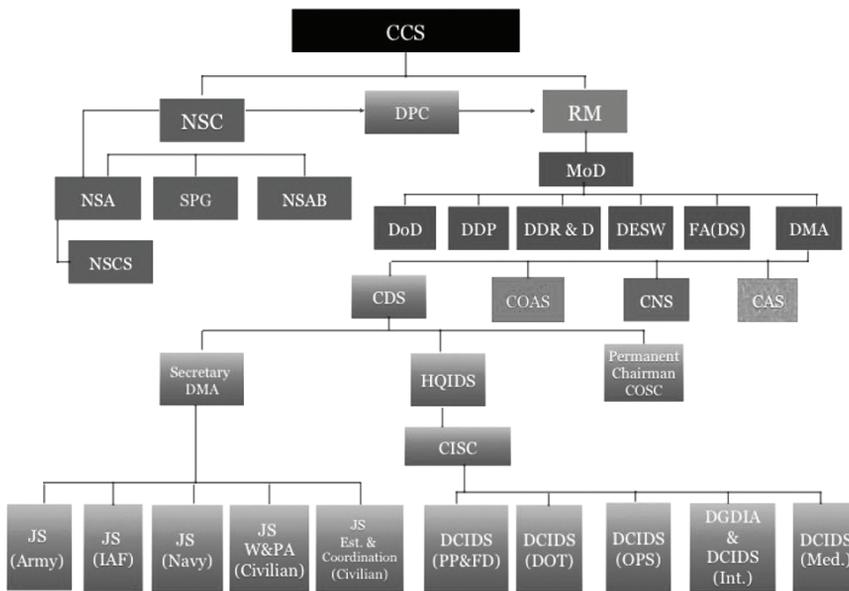


Figure 3 India's HDO and Joint Organisational Ecosystem

Source: Flowchart prepared by the author after referring to various official sources, e.g., www.ids.nic.in, www.mod.gov.in.

Note: CCS: Cabinet Committee on Security; RM: Raksha Mantri; NSA: National Security Advisor; SPG: Strategic Planning Group; NSAB: National Security Advisory Board; MoD: Ministry of Defence; DoD: Department of Defence; DDP: Department of Defence Production; DDR&D: Department of Defence Research & Development; DESW: Department of Ex Servicemen Welfare; FA(DS): Financial Advisor (Defence Services); NSCS: National Security Council Secretariat; COAS: Chief of the Army Staff; CNS: Chief of the Naval Staff; CAS: Chief of the Air Staff; JS: Joint Secretary; DCIDS: Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff; PP&FD: Policy Planning & Force Development; DOT: Doctrines, Organisation and Training; OPS: Operations; DGDIA: Director General Defence Intelligence Agency; Int.: Intelligence; and, Med.: Medical.

three services are relatively autonomous within the existing system, denoting the absence of dialogue among various stakeholders within the HDO.⁴¹ This has resulted in duplication of resources, repression of military innovations and tardy defence policymaking.⁴² More worryingly, India's integrated HDO has regressed as it evolved. For instance, until the 1960s, India had a large number of joint organisations to facilitate inter-service cooperation, however, as India's higher defence system evolved, these organisations become defunct.⁴³ Also, despite the recommendations for restructuring and overhauling of the HDO, the post-Kargil defence reforms had cosmetic and semantics changes towards the institutionalisation of jointness.⁴⁴ Figure 3 depicts the existing organisational jointness.

The organisational structure illustrates many bureaucratic layers. The role of these organisations to institutionalise jointness is limited.⁴⁵ A former Chairman of the COSC has explained the functioning of the HDO as follows: each department of the MoD has a separate layer of bureaucracy; each service and its preferences are being treated in silos; the queries of these departments to the Service Headquarters (SHQs) are often sequential and repetitive; the MoD and the SHQs maintain separate files; and this system takes longer than required time to resolve the issues.⁴⁶ Several studies of defence budget and planning also underscore debilities of existing organisations to minimise duplication/triplication of resources.⁴⁷

However, the integration of the three services with the MoD and institutionalisation of the office of the CDS would certainly provide remedies to existing shortcomings. For instance, prior to appointment of the CDS and creation of the DMA, the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC) was a weak authority to fructify the priorities of the HQ IDS as military officer equivalent to the Vice Chief of Army Staff headed it. In absence of the CDS, the HQ IDS had faced multiple roadblocks and bureaucratic obstacles to formulate Long-term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP). As a result, India's first-ever LTIPP (2002–17) and subsequent plans were delayed for several years.

This indicates that India's defence planning has been rather disjointed. The SHQs recast and revise their demands and needs after the allocation of defence budget. This hampers modernisation pace and intensifies inter-service competition. To resolve this persisting problem, the MoD had established a Defence Planning Cell in the early 1960s.

This cell compiled service-specific plans without critical analysis of needs and justifications. Consequently, it failed to provide joint planning perspective and optimisation of resources. Thereafter, a DPC was constituted in 1978 under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary, with seven key secretaries and three Chiefs as its members. However, it was not very effective in rectifying the persisting problems. In 1986, the then Minister of State for Defence, Arun Singh, attempted to enhance joint planning and integration through establishment of a joint Defence Planning Staff (DPS). Later, the institution of the DPS was merged with the HQ IDS in 2001. Since then, the HQ IDS has the responsibility to produce LTIPPs. However, some studies suggest that without the CDS, the LTIPP is 'integrative merely on paper while in reality, it remains a compilation of single-service plans'.⁴⁸

Therefore, India needs to revamp the existing system to make it truly integrated and functional. For this, it has to streamline the existing joint defence intelligence and planning apparatus. Further, a joint communication and logistic defence system should be developed to improve the level of inter-service coordination and support. At the same time, India's defence research, development and production system must be reformed in accordance with the experiences of the US, the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. A study on how to eliminate the duplication/triplication of resources may show a suitable way forward for required organisational defence reforms. The Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution (PPBE) system for resources allocation to the US Department of Defense could be a model to revamp India's defence planning practices.⁴⁹ Notwithstanding, an in-house comprehensive analysis of the functioning of the inter-service organisations responsible for joint logistics, communications and planning would provide imperatives to reform the system. The paucity of data and declassified sources limits the scope of this study to analyse deep fault lines within the organisational structures.

Educational Jointness

The joint PME de-institutionalises service-specific culture and legitimises joint culture of planning, thinking and strategising. Whether India's PME institutions are enriching joint culture is the major question. The PME institutions, namely, the National Defence Academy (NDA), Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), College of Defence Management (CDM) and National Defence College (NDC), are key

establishments for upholding joint military education for entry-, mid- and senior-level military leaders. Along with these institutions, there are many service-specific education and training institutions. For instance, the IA has around 26 training and educational institutions.⁵⁰ The IAF has five educational institutions for its officers and the IN has 33 naval training establishments.⁵¹ These service-specific PME institutions rarely promote principles of jointness and cultural assimilation; rather, the promotion of service-specific culture is a natural and justified output. From this vantage point, India's PME institutional ecosystem is known as 'financially wasteful and not conducive for jointness'.⁵²

For instance, the service-specific PME has diluted the intent and blueprint of the NDA.⁵³ The DSSC is facing several administrative, political, military and intellectual challenges.⁵⁴ The faculty composition and curricula of the DSSC are indicative of a poor joint culture.⁵⁵ The NDC is a premier institution for imparting joint military education to top military leaders. However, a cursory observation of the faculty, structure of the courses and composition of participants indicates that jointness remains marginal in the vision and practices of the NDC.⁵⁶ Though first proposed in 1967, the establishment of an Indian National Defence University to proliferate joint military education has not materialised till date.⁵⁷

It is thus obvious that joint PME for O4 (as mentioned earlier, Major in the army, Lieutenant Commander in the navy and Major/Squadron Leader in the air force) and above is common, but it is elementary, customary and limited to bonhomie. These institutions rarely teach to transgress service-centric cognitive boundaries to cultivate jointness. Nevertheless, one study claims India has around 62 per cent joint PME institutions.⁵⁸ Despite this, joint PME for O4 and above is weak and lacks operational follow-up. This contributes to ephemeral jointness at the educational level. Therefore, India needs more joint PME institutions to cultivate joint culture. The political leadership must devise an outcome-oriented joint PME system. The traditional methods of examination, selection criteria and promotion need revision. To this end, India needs to transform Macaulay's basic education system towards the cultivation of creativity, innovations and skills. The government should provide incentives to officers of the Indian military who excel in joint PME. The joint role and duties must be made an integral part of the officer's promotional assessment and performance. In short, the Indian PME system must be revised to cope up with emerging security challenges. The

experiences of some of the countries mentioned in preceding paragraphs can help as guiding template.⁵⁹ Moreover, a parliamentary act must guide the objectives and role of joint PME institutions in India.

Doctrinal Jointness

The doctrinal aspects of jointness inform us about the development, dissemination and implementation of joint military doctrines. The Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Doctrine, Organisation and Training) of the HQ IDS is responsible for development of joint doctrines. According to the website of the HQ IDS, it has developed six declassified joint doctrines in last two decades: Joint Air–Land Doctrine (2010); Joint Perception Management and Psychological Operations Doctrines (2010); Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces (2017); Joint Training Doctrine (2017); Primer on Military Doctrine (2018); and Primer on Military Strategy (2018).⁶⁰

However, various commentators have exposed the inherent weakness of Indian joint doctrines.⁶¹ To sum up, the joint doctrines are biased to service parochialism, disjointed in orientation, often lack political approval and demonstrate gaps between intended goals and acquired capabilities. For instance, a former Vice Chief of Army Staff has asserted that the services promulgate their military doctrines either in vacuum or to suit their turf in the absence of national security doctrines.⁶² A former Chairman of the COSC has underlined that the service-specific operational doctrines and perspectives give ‘rise to a polarisation of attitudes as far as jointmanship or centralisation of control was concerned’.⁶³ Another expert has argued the services are pushing for their own version of joint warfare.⁶⁴ In short, India’s joint military doctrines are facing challenges from service-specific doctrines.⁶⁵

Hence, the evidence shows that not only does Indian military lack a regular series of joint doctrine publications but also there are very few organisations responsible for the development of these doctrines. Moreover, the existing processes of drafting of the joint doctrines are inadequate for doctrinal confluence due to various reasons.⁶⁶ First, joint doctrines are amalgamated from service-specific doctrines. Thus, to a large extent, they resemble the Common Minimum Programme of a coalition government. Second, these doctrines lack the primary principle of war: ‘selection and maintenance of aim’. Third, the service-specific doctrines differ from the joint doctrines on certain issues and strategies. In fact, the published Indian military doctrines reflect inconsistencies

and poor conceptualisation of joint warfare principles, strategy and resource mobilisation.⁶⁷ In sum, given the service-centric doctrinal preoccupation, the joint doctrine has marginal impact in shaping the behaviour of the Indian military towards jointness. This indicates feeble character of doctrinal jointness.

Jackson's analysis suggests that development of joint concepts and doctrines is a fundamental precondition for inculcating joint professionalism. Therefore, the Indian military needs more resources and organisations to develop comprehensive and cohesive joint military doctrines, which contain adequate political guidance and balanced inter-service perspectives. The immediate requirement is production of a regular series of joint doctrines. The next section analyses to what extent the ongoing defence reforms have contributed towards institutionalising jointness.

DEFENCE REFORMS UNDER MODI: TRANSFORMATIVE, YET PARTIAL

Defence reforms, a continuous process, have evolved in different phases since Independence. The evolutionary history of defence reforms in India suggests that major crises have stimulated military changes, with the political class navigating the trajectories of these changes. To dissect major trends, this evolution can be categorised into four phases: post-1962 debacle; aftermath of the 1971 victory; the review of Kargil crisis; and defence reforms initiated by the Indian government under Prime Minister Modi since 2014. The first three waves of defence reforms were stimulated by major wars/crises. Most of these reforms were service-specific and did not attempt to integrate the SHQs with the MoD, until partial implementation of post-Kargil defence reforms in the early 2000s. The previous reforms were also less focused on revamping organisational structures for facilitating inter-service coordination and integration.

In contrast, the ongoing wave of defence reforms under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi is distinct from previous reforms in three ways. First, these defence reforms are driven by the political will of the civilian leadership to achieve military effectiveness. Second, these reforms have prioritised the institutionalisation of coordination and integration over service-specific preferences and perceptions. Third, the reforms are intended to restructure HDO and operational commands. Therefore, these reforms are transformational in intent and character.

To illustrate, since 2014, the institutionalisation of jointness has been a primary goal of the Indian government. While addressing the

Combined Commander's Conference on 15 December 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated that the Indian military requires more 'jointness across every level of our Armed Forces...Jointness at the top is a need that is long overdue', and further emphasised that it would be an 'area of priority'.⁶⁸ To fulfil this priority, Modi government constituted the DPC as a permanent apex body 'to facilitate comprehensive and integrated planning for Defence matters'.⁶⁹ Also, three tri-services agencies were created for joint operations in specialised domains.⁷⁰ Along with these initiatives, during Prime Minister Modi's first tenure (2014–19), several joint military doctrines were declassified and a number of expert committees were constituted to scrutinise the prospects for reforms and key hurdles. In sum, a fair amount of groundwork and consistent commitment of the Indian government under Prime Minister Modi paved the way forward to appoint the CDS, with multiple roles and responsibilities, in December 2019.

Indeed, the appointment of the CDS is a bold step as its need has been repeatedly realised ever since Independence; and this idea failed to materialise under the previous governments.⁷¹ The incumbent CDS has been assigned three simultaneous roles, namely, the Secretary of the DMA, the head of the HQ IDS and Permanent Chairman, COSC (see Figure 3). Through these roles, the CDS has the primary responsibility to create integrated geographical and functional commands. Further, the establishment of the DMA, through amendments in Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, has been an innovative idea that surprised most of the strategic analysts. The reforms are aimed to promote jointness, facilitate restructuring of the armed forces and ensure optimal utilisation of resources.⁷²

For instance, the appointment of the CDS as the Secretary of the DMA has facilitated the integration of the armed forces with the MoD. This will eventually bridge the silos between military establishment and civilian defence bureaucracy. The CDS will also enable the HQ IDS to push further joint capacity-building projects and plans. Under the leadership of the CDS, the HQ IDS will elaborate joint doctrines, training, intelligence and specialised operations. As the Permanent Chairman of the COSC, the CDS will be able to devote more time and resources to streamline inter-service concerns. He would also provide single-point military advise to the civilian government, thereby mediating civil–military relations and reducing bureaucratic bottlenecks. In a nutshell, these reforms are considered as 'the most significant development in the

national security domain since Independence'.⁷³ Thus, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the defence reforms have got a new lease of life.⁷⁴

Some reports suggest that various proposals to create the ITCs are under consideration and it will happen within the scheduled time.⁷⁵ The creation of integrated geographical and functional commands would empower the joint C2 structures. Further, there are reports that point out that the new organisational set-up has minimised duplication of resources by establishing coordination among the armed forces.⁷⁶ These reforms have also strengthened the integration of the SHQs with the MoD.⁷⁷ In addition, the reforms are expected to enhance the authority and responsibilities of the Indian military for defence preparedness, planning and capability build-up,⁷⁸ along with giving preference to domain specialists and environment-specific jointness.⁷⁹ In fact, through coordination and better supervision, the reforms have boosted India's defence exports by 700 per cent.⁸⁰ They have transformed the operational, organisational and strategic role of the Indian military in various critical areas pertaining to promotion of jointness.⁸¹ All these trends mark a positive shift towards institutionalisation of jointness.

At the same time, these reforms have created more debates on models of jointness than resolving it. For instance, the DPC has still not come up with a unified strategic doctrine and strategy document. As per the present mandate, the CDS heads the HQ IDS, the ANC, the SFC and other tri-service agencies. However, none of these organisations have dedicated permanent staff and cadre. These organisations have staff deputed from the three services, often on rotational basis, with relatively short tenure and exposure. The CDS also has limited joint operational powers. Thus, despite these reforms, the three service Chiefs still hold the responsibilities related to development of doctrines, strategies, recruitment, training and logistics of their service, as well as have operational responsibilities of their force. Within the Indian military discourses, it is known as 'the Two-Hat Problem of the Chiefs'.⁸² The upcoming defence reforms must address this issue to enhance military effectiveness and institutionalise jointness.

Further, India's ITC models are highly debatable—ranging from India as one theatre to existing 19 commands.⁸³ The debates suggest that proposed joint/integrated theatre commands and expected reforms are still a 'work in progress', with persisting and irreconcilable differences between the army and the air force.⁸⁴ The government must also look into complex inter-service issues to cultivate jointness, such as impact on

officers’ promotions, autonomy of the services and their budgetary and strategic requirements.⁸⁵ Above all, the ongoing defence reforms need political supervision, mentoring and ownership.⁸⁶

A Way Forward

The existing level of jointness as well as emerging geo-strategic challenges to India’s national security suggest that India’s march towards institutionalisation of jointness needs more ideational and political investment. At the ideational level, it requires vigorous debate within the services to chart an appropriate model of reorganisation of the Indian Armed Forces in all four aspects. Further studies and discussions within think tanks and universities, as well as a movement led by the strategic and veteran community, need to rationalise, organise and popularise the cause. For instance, the social movement for adequate defence reforms paved way for the Goldwater–Nicholas Act (1986) in the US.

The political leadership must provide legislated joint operational charter to the Indian military, with rationalisation of dedicated human and physical resources. Herein, a truly integrated and functional higher defence management system is necessary, rather than creation of humongous bureaucratic organisations and appointment of authorities through executive orders. We are witnessing ‘inter-services squabbling’ over their primary roles and missions, organisational parochialism and

Table 2 Necessary Steps to Institutionalise Jointness in the Indian Military

<i>Aspects of Jointness</i>	<i>Operational</i>	<i>Organisational</i>	<i>Educational</i>	<i>Doctrinal</i>
Necessary Steps	More clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the DMA and DoD is needed. Joint operational charter for ITCs.	Symbiotically integrated organisational ecosystem.	Functional National Defence University to cultivate joint culture. Duties/ assignments in joint military organisation must be incentivised or given priority in promotions.	National security strategy and doctrine should guide joint military doctrines. A regular series of joint doctrines production would bring attitudinal/ cultural changes.

Source: Author’s own.

allocation of resources, despite the appointment of the CDS. In fact, there is hardly any precedent to cite that the services themselves institutionalised jointness for military effectiveness. Thus, the political leadership has to play a catalytic role to envision and enact laws to institutionalise jointness, and then actively oversee the implementation. The reforms should not be selective and piecemeal measures, rather they should be guided by a whole-of-government approach.⁸⁷ The government should address all four aspects of jointness—operational, organisational, educational and doctrinal—simultaneously. The initiated defence reforms also need simultaneous thoughtful discussions within the political establishment, military establishment and strategic community. Table 2 proposes some necessary steps to be undertaken in all four aspects under discussion.

CONCLUSION

This article concludes that jointness in the Indian military has been limited in scope and objectives. It has remained in ‘on-again, off-again’ mode, if not at the rudimentary level, then in practice and principle. Operationally, jointness has been sporadic, momentary and tactical within the Indian military. Organisationally, it represents the façade of integration, rather than being truly integrative in intent, extent and existence. Educationally, it has been outdated, stratified, bureaucratised and technical. Doctrinally, jointness has been dogmatic, disoriented and dubious.

Therefore, the appointment of the CDS is a great leap towards institutionalisation of jointness. However, the government needs to build up an ecosystem of ownership for jointness both at the civilian and military level. On the civilian front, the government should enact a parliamentary act to institutionalise jointness. At the military end, it needs to inculcate joint culture through education, training, doctrines and rewards. Clearing up the long-pending proposal of the Indian National Defence University can be a good kick to move towards both the goals.

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