

Jointmanship And Attitudinal Issues

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INTRODUCTION

Most leaders are professedly staunch proponents of the concept of jointmanship. They acknowledge the criticality of jointmanship to national security. In other words, jointmanship has no opponents. Yet, the reality on ground is diametrically opposite. Every step towards jointmanship is fought fiercely by many. This dichotomy, though perplexing, has been entirely due to incompatible attitudes. Attitude is an attribute of human behaviour and defies cogent reasoning.

This paper attempts to identify and analyze the underlying attitudinal reasons for dissonance and tardy implementation of jointmanship in the Indian Armed Forces, thereby imperiling national interests. Finally, major corrective steps have been recommended to manage attitudes and force the pace of reforms.

This paper is not about benefits that accrue from jointmanship in the armed forces. They are too well known to be recounted and re-emphasised. For decades military strategists of all countries have been writing about the criticality of jointmanship. It is also undisputedly agreed that the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) precludes segregated service-wise operations. It is common knowledge that in contemporary RMA-oriented warfare, joint operations constitute the key to battlefield dominance and military superiority.¹ RMA pre-supposes total tri-service integration in thought and action.

Jointmanship means conducting integrated military operations with a common strategy, methodology and conduct.² A country is said to have attained jointmanship of its armed forces, if it institutionalises the following:

- Joint planning, development of doctrine and policy-making.
- Joint operational commands and staff structures.

- Evolution of joint equipment policy and procurement organization.
- Integrated preparation of budget and monitoring of expenditure – both capital and revenue.
- Joint training.

According to the famous dictum of Field Marshal Sir Philip Chetwode, "The safety, honour and welfare of your country come first, always and every time." If that be so, there should never be any opposition to jointmanship, as all military leaders recognize that jointmanship is central to national security. True jointmanship entails assigning supremacy to national interests, above every other consideration.

India fares dismally when judged against the standard parameters of jointmanship. It will not be incorrect to state that jointmanship in India is non-existent. The former Naval Chief Admiral J. G. Nadkarni put it candidly when he said: "Jointmanship in India exists to the extent of the three Chiefs routinely being photographed backslapping each other, but not much more beyond that."³

Implementation of jointmanship on ground has been excruciatingly difficult and slow. All jointmanship proposals get opposed fiercely on specious grounds. How can measures which are considered indispensable to national security concerns be opposed by the very military leaders entrusted with ensuring national security? It is a highly intriguing and paradoxical situation.

ATTITUDES, RESPONSES AND REACTIONS

Whenever jointmanship is talked about in India, the National Defence Academy (NDA) is cited as an example. There is no denying the fact that a three year course at NDA is exceedingly useful especially during the formative years. However, its value is limited in the long run as service prejudices tend to overwhelm the camaraderie of cadet days. Most of the senior appointments in the armed forces are held by ex-NDA officers. Yet they fail to rise above service bias and pay only lip service to jointmanship. Admiral Nadkarni acknowledges, "Jointmanship is not backslapping in public, playing golf together and stating that they all belong to one course in the NDA."⁴

Besides the NDA, a number of other inter-services courses are also conducted. They have also done little to generate genuine jointmanship except promoting social interaction during the course. Likewise, the

affiliation of a few naval warships with army regiments can at best be termed as a display of ceremonial interfacing.

Although the importance and need for jointmanship remain undisputed, the concept evokes wide-ranging reaction amongst Indian military leaders. On one side, we have fervent proponents of jointmanship whereas on the other, there is a small minority which is intransigently opposed. The majority lies somewhere between the two extremes.

Table 1 shows broad categorization of reactions. The percentages are approximate estimates, based on informal interaction with a large and varied cross-section of defence officers. The sampling is indicative in nature. The table has been compiled to highlight the fact that most military leaders do not oppose jointmanship. Only a small minority (about 10 per cent) resists introduction of all jointmanship measures.

True jointmanship assigns absolute importance to national interests. Therefore, there have to be very compelling reasons for dissonance. In order to understand why something there is dissonance, it is essential to understand how it came about. Response to jointmanship is an attribute of underlying attitudes and to appreciate the reasons for opposition to jointmanship, it is essential to identify attitudinal traits of the military leadership. It is only through the modulation of attitudes that willing acceptance of jointmanship can be facilitated.

Attitude is defined as a disposition or inclination in respect of something or someone. Attitudes are affected both by implicit and explicit influences. Attitudes can be positive, negative, neutral and even ambivalent (possessing both positive and negative hues at the same time). Even the degree or severity can vary.

Attitudes are formed by observational learning from the environment, individual judgment, personal beliefs and peer influences. The military is the most hierarchy-based organization where attitudes and behaviour are influenced by precedents as well. Attitudes do change with experience but it is normally a slow, unpredictable and spasmodic process.

What makes some segments of the Indian military leadership wary of jointmanship and adopt a negative attitude towards it? Major attitudinal reasons are discussed in Table 1.

Table 1: Jointmanship and Reactions

Reaction-wise Categorisation of Military Leaders	Attitudinal Traits	Resultant Attributes	Estimated Percentage
Initiators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Strong & pro-active advocacy > Seek speedy implementation at all costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Accord primacy to national interests by willingly relinquishing all other claims 	15
Encouragers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Pro-jointmanship disposition > Promote jointmanship enthusiastically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Willing to subordinate service and own interests to national interest 	30
Compromisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Appreciate criticality of jointmanship > Accept need for re-prioritisation of issues in national interests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Inclined to compromise their service and own interests for national security. 	25
Neutralists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Fence-sitters with no pre-disposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Need convincing > Need assurance of security of their interests 	20
Obstructionists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Do not question need for total jointmanship as such > Give untenable reasons for their opposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Highly skeptic of uncertainties of reforms > Concerned about safeguarding their service and personal interests 	10

LACK OF EFFECTIVE INTER-SERVICES COMMUNICATION

Despite all the public bonhomie, there is limited interaction, dialogue and communication between the three services. This results in non-development of mutual trust, which is essential for joint functioning. This lack of trust can be gauged from the fact that the Indian Army prepared General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQR) for helicopters without consulting the Indian Air Force (IAF).⁵ Similarly, it prepared GSQR for deep sea diving equipment without seeking inputs from the Indian Navy IN.⁶

Even the Comptroller and Auditor General of India has criticized the three services for separately buying the same equipment from the same source at different cost, thereby losing benefits of economies of scale.⁷ It found that items (like Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Sniper Rifles and Underwater Diving Equipment), which were common to the three services, were procured independently, without reference to each other. It resulted in failure to obtain best value for money for the country.

REGIMENTAL AFFILIATIONS PROMOTE CLOSE-MINDEDNESS

The services accord immense importance to the concept of 'Regimental/Corps/branch affiliations'. Undoubtedly, regimental spirit acts as a force multiplier at unit/battalion level but becomes counter-productive at higher levels. The psychology and mental outlook of senior leaders become insular, resulting in three major harmful fallouts.

First, some senior commanders tend to develop unhealthy prejudices and partisan attitudes. Many find it prudent to display their predisposition for their affiliations openly. Secondly, it damages organizational cohesion and gives rise to factionalism. Strong regimental loyalties result in social stratification and dissensions.⁸ And finally, affiliations encourage a 'protégé syndrome' and displace merit as the primary measure of competence in the organization.

Excessive adherence to affiliations inhibits the development of broadmindedness. If some military leaders fail to rise above petty regimental level thinking, they can hardly be expected to have an attitude necessary for promoting inter-services integration.

THE 'OUTSIDER' SYNDROME

Over-cohesiveness has both positive and negative effects. It may knit a group together but it also generates inter-group friction as highly cohesive groups tend to become inward-looking and dogmatic in their beliefs.

All the three services are affected by the 'outsider' syndrome. Decisions and responses are weighed on a 'we versus them' scale. 'We' implies a group owing allegiance to a Regiment or a branch and all others are branded as 'outsiders'. Merit becomes irrelevant. A few years ago some armoured corps officers were transferred to infantry battalions as there were no command vacancies in the armoured corps at that time. They were highly competent officers and yet were treated with brazen hostility. Almost all infantry battalions resented being commanded by the 'outsiders'.

The same is true of higher formations. Command of infantry brigades and divisions by artillery and engineers officers is considered a sacrilege by most infantry officers.⁹ According to them, only the infantry officers should command these formations. If there is opposition to the command of infantry formations by non-infantry army officers, will putting them under Naval or Air Force officers be readily accepted?

Such an attitude is not limited to the infantry alone. 'Outsiders' are considered a threat by all. A similar attitude was on display when questions were raised about allowing a helicopter pilot, an 'outsider'; occupy the top post in the IAF which was considered to be the exclusive domain of fighter pilots.

FEAR OF LOSS OF DOMAIN AND INDEPENDENT IDENTITY

Services guard their turf with fierce fanaticism. Every proposal that affects a service's span of command faces strident resistance. The services want jointmanship but with an assurance of protection of their domain, whereas jointness has to result in a reduction of the domain of each service to prevent duplication/triplication. Conservation of resources and effort is one of the primary objectives of jointmanship.

The degree of apprehension regarding jointmanship can be gauged from Air Marshal B.D. Jayal's views. He writes: "The army's case for transferring medium and attack helicopters to it has merely given us a sneak preview of the old mindsets that still prevail in all service headquarters beneath the veneer of jointmanship and bonhomie."¹⁰ According to Major General Ashok Mehta, the greatest fear of the Air Force is that it will be marginalized under the new dispensation.¹¹

Admiral J.G. Nadkarni frankly admits: "The Army is 20 times the size of the Indian Navy and 10 times the size of the Air Force. The first priority of the Air Force and Navy and their Chiefs in India is to maintain their identities." He further acknowledged that the two smaller services were wary of too much jointmanship lest they and their achievements got swallowed up by the bigger service.¹²

LACK OF EXPOSURE DURING FORMATIVE YEARS

Human beings are products of their environment. Their ethos, attitudes and disposition are tempered by the environment in which they operate and what they imbibe in their formative years. Many officers never get an opportunity in their formative years to serve in an open environment. Some remain cosseted in highly sheltered appointments throughout their careers, either within their Corps or under their regimental superiors.

Due to lack of adequate exposure, they fail to acquire a broader vision with advancement in career and remain encumbered with local issues. To them, national or inter-service matters are far too remote to be of immediate concern. Their apathetic attitude towards jointmanship is a result of their inability to grasp and fully appreciate the criticality.

CONCERN FOR PERSONAL INTERESTS

According to Morris Janowitz, in the civilian image, military officers are the personification of Max Weber's ideal bureaucrat. They resist change, prefer status-quo. They are also acutely aware of their personal status – both formal and informal, as status provides a sense of fulfillment in the highly hierarchy-conscious services. To them, jointmanship portends uncertainty and role ambiguity; whereas they want to be assured that their status will not be adversely affected. They dread loss of exclusivity and privileged standing. It is only human to be concerned about individual interests. Promotions are an important aspect of an officer's aspirations. Vacancies at higher levels are extremely limited.

The tri-services environment after the implementation of jointmanship is bound to be highly competitive and challenging. Overall merit and not corps/regimental seniority will determine higher military leadership. Apprehensions about the likely curtailment of promotional avenues and reduction in vacancies under the proposed dispensation weigh heavily on many. This sense of insecurity manifests itself by their being wary of jointmanship.

THE WAY FORWARD

A two-track approach needs to be followed. First, concerted efforts should be made to change the attitude of the military leadership to pave the way for smooth introduction of measures of jointmanship. And secondly, the Government should adopt a more pro-active stance and intervene effectively to force the pace of reforms.

Acceptance of jointmanship is contingent to the progressive development of a broader vision in the military leadership. Military commanders have to be groomed to rise above narrow issues to think big. There is, thus an urgent need for a thorough transformation of mindsets and attitudes. But it is not going to be an easy task.

As seen earlier, attitudes in the services are formed by regimental environment (traditions, precedents, norms and conventions), personal beliefs and experience. The manipulation of these seminal factors can facilitate management of attitudes (See Figure 1) Some of the suggested measures have been discussed below.

COMMON UNIFORM WITHOUT REGIMENTAL ENTRAPMENTS

All visually differentiating entrapments should be abolished. Regimental identity should be limited up to the rank of Colonel. For all senior ranks, there should be a common uniform with no regimental badges.

The three services could even have a common rank structure. This is one single step that shall alter the mindset of officers and act as a unifying factor. They will start identifying themselves as Indian defence officers rather than be always reminded of their own service and regimental affiliations.

ABOLISH THE INSTITUTION OF COLONEL COMMANDANT

To start with, a Colonel Commandant was like a father figure who acted as a 'conscious keeper' of the Regiment and a guardian of regimental traditions. His basic duty was to foster esprit-de-corps. However, in the last few decades this concept has got totally distorted as some over-zealous Colonel Commandants take it upon themselves to obtain undue advantages for their Regiments, apparently at the cost of the more deserving. Presently, it has degenerated into an anachronistic institution that inhibits progressive thinking and restricts the focus of senior leadership to petty issues. While heading the 'whole' they identify themselves with a 'part' and fail to rise to a higher plane.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TRAINING IN INTEGRATED SET-UP

All one star (Brigadier and equivalent) and higher officers must serve alternate tenures in an inter-services environment. This should be a mandatory requirement. Future promotions must take due cognizance of their performance under officers of the other services. Senior officers must also be imparted transformational skills. They should be competent to lead integrated set-ups and mould their subordinates into cohesive

functional teams. They must understand the psyche of officers drawn from different services and interact with them with empathy.

EVOLUTION OF TRANSPARENT POLICIES

Members identify themselves with an organization only when rules are applied in an impartial, non-arbitrary and transparent manner. No individual is going to subordinate his personal interests to organizational interests unless there are strong merit-performance ethical linkages in place. Transparency in policies, selection criteria and selection process will go a long way in generating confidence in the fairness of the system.

Frequent changes in policies breed uncertainty and uncertainty gives rise to apprehensions. For willing acceptance of jointmanship by all, it is essential that an environment of continuity and permanence is assured. There should be an institutionalised arrangement for collegiate decision making for long term policy preparation. Decisions must not be inconsistent or capricious.

JUST AND IMPARTIAL ENVIRONMENT

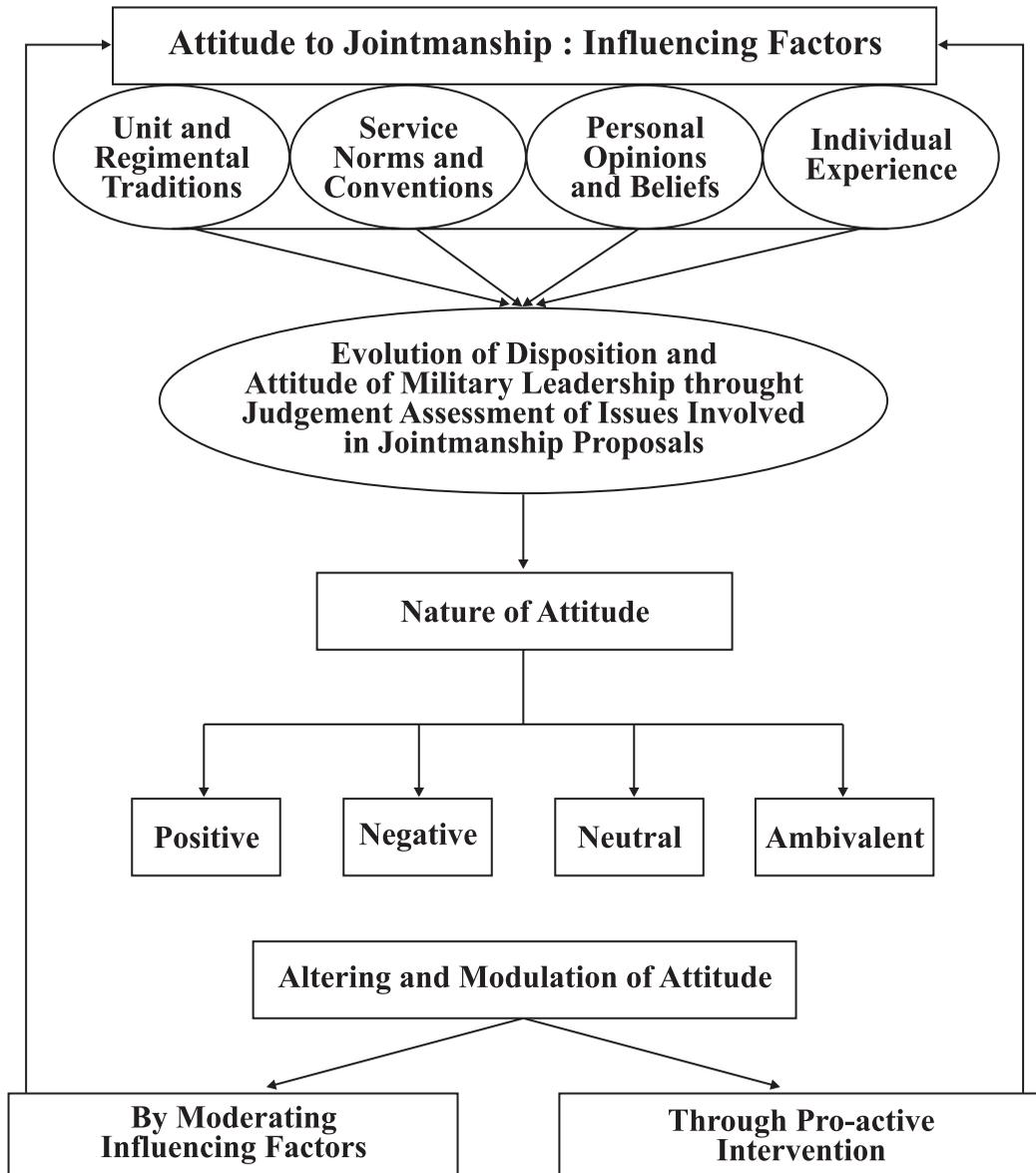
For leaders, impartiality is an ethical requirement and an essential component of their functioning. Trust is the expectancy that the followers can rely on a leader's impartial and just approach. Trust is valuable, visceral, complex and intuitive. It is an incredibly potent force and virtually non-substitutable. It flourishes on credibility that a leader enjoys in his command.

Jointmanship can thrive only if the environment has implicit faith in the fairness of the system. Impartiality means treating everyone as equal and rewarding them purely on their merit – free of service or regimental bias. Stringent standards for non-partisan conduct have to be laid down with suitable monitoring mechanisms to rectify aberrations. The armed forces lay a lot of stress on 'integrity'. Of late, integrity has come to be identified solely with financial propriety, whereas integrity also entails just and impartial conduct.

EVOLVE HEALTHY NORMS

Social scientists consider the military as a highly structured and dynamic society which needs to follow well laid down norms for its continued sustenance. Norms are unwritten rules. Norms can be descriptive and prescriptive. Norms get evolved due to precedents and conventions set over a period of time.

Fig 1: Evolution and Modulation of Attitude towards Jointmanship



Organizational researchers have concluded that precedents and organizational norms have profound effect on moulding attitude. Jointmanship is characterised by trust and confidence, mutual respect for each other’s capability and cooperation, rather than competition.¹³ A culture of synergistic relationships and mutually accommodative demeanor will contribute immensely towards jointmanship.

RESPONSIBILITY OF GOVERNMENT

If the services continue their quibbling and jointmanship remains stalled, it is time the Government intervenes to fulfill its mandated duty. It cannot let the drift continue and force introduction of jointmanship in a time-bound schedule. The role of the Government could be in three incremental stages, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Government’s Role in Jointmanship

Stage	Objective	Methodology	Time Period (months)
Facilitative	Allow the services to sort out all dissonance amongst themselves and reach consensus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprise the services of Government’s determination to introduce joint-manship • Prompt the services to adopt collaborative approach to resolve differences 	9-15
Persuasive	Adopt a pro-active approach and coax the services to evolve joint plans for time bound implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify areas of dissonance and the personalities involved • Provide clarification of issues, if required • Persuade skeptics to accept jointmanship with credible persuasive reasoning 	9-15
Decree	Issue unambiguous directive and accept no disagreement or dithering thereafter. Military leadership should be given option to accept or quit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directive must be all-encompassing and well-reasoned. • Piecemeal orders should be avoided as they create uncertainty • Implementation must be monitored closely 	6-12

Notes:

- (a) The stages are neither exclusive in terms of time frame nor necessarily sequential in nature. They may and should overlap. It is for the Government to initiate simultaneous measures to keep the process on track.
- (b) The time mentioned for each stage is indicative in nature and is based on the normal tenures of senior military leaders.

- **Facilitative Stage**

Decision by consensus is always the preferred option as it creates synergy in an organization and facilitates smooth implementation. All conflicts of interest – real or perceived – must be resolved in a spirit of mutual accommodation.

As the term indicates, initially the Government should act a facilitator. However, it should make its determination to introduce jointmanship in a time-bound schedule be known to the three services in no uncertain terms. The services should be prompted to adopt collaborative conflict resolution methodology and reach a consensus.

- **Persuasive Stage**

The Government should adopt a more pro-active approach if the facilitative approach fails to yield the desired consensus. The services must be told in categorical terms that the Government would intervene compellingly in case the services fail to respond positively.

Generally, consensus building gets stalled due to the apprehensions in the minds of a few dominant personalities. When some leaders get rooted in a denial mode, they fail to acknowledge the existence of any logic. It is also a well established fact that changing attitudes through persuasion is considerably difficult if the target group is intelligent and possesses high self-esteem.

It is for the Government to handle the skeptics in a more persuasive manner to put their reservations at rest and convince them of the criticality of jointmanship. If handled with firmness, finesse and empathy, all military leaders will come on board as their commitment to the cause of national security remains unquestionable.

- **Decree Stage**

In case even persuasion fails, the Government should fulfill its obligation to the nation by issuing clear-cut orders to enforce

jointmanship. No disagreement thereafter should be tolerated. Even the US Congress had to enact Goldwater-Nichols Act to force the implementation of jointmanship.¹⁴ National interests cannot be permitted to be held hostage to the intransigence of a few dissenting military leaders.

CONCLUSION

Most military commanders are professedly staunch proponents of the concept of jointmanship. In other words, jointmanship has few opponents.¹⁵ Additionally, jointmanship has been universally accepted as the engine that drives RMA. Yet, the reality on ground is diametrically opposite. All rhetoric in favour of jointmanship does not get translated into ground action. Every step towards jointmanship has been painstaking and protracted. This dichotomy has been the bane of the Indian Armed Forces.

The search for recognition is one of the pursuits which all human beings indulge in and continuously strive for. As regards military leaders, their affiliation to their regiments and services generates a sense of brotherhood and intense group loyalty, thereby fulfilling their need for identity. However, it adversely affects their growth as leaders who need to articulate a much broader vision.

All soldiers are sworn to be prepared to make supreme sacrifice for national security. For them, national interests remain absolute and all other considerations become non-existent. If that be so, there should never be any opposition to jointmanship from any quarter whatsoever. But soldiers are also human. They have aspirations and apprehensions. An endeavour should be made to provide assurance to the environment that the new dispensation will be fair, just and equitable to all.

Attitudes are moulded by environment. Acceptance or resistance of any change is totally dependent on the attitudinal approach of the target group. Attitudes can, however, be changed by changing environmental influences and persuasion. As seen earlier, this can be achieved through implicit and explicit measures. But it requires mature and concerted effort.

There are times in the life of every nation when hard decisions are required to be taken by the leadership. Delay or wavering can cause irreparable damage to national security imperatives. As regards jointmanship, enough time has already been lost for specious reasons. Immediate and resolute implementation is absolutely inescapable.

National security is too serious a matter to be permitted to drift. Regimental and service loyalties cannot be permitted to take precedence over national interests. If the Government and the military leadership are convinced that jointmanship is central to India's defence preparedness, a decision must be taken and implemented accordingly. Genuine concerns of all must be addressed but unjustified obduracy should not be tolerated. □

Notes

1. Vinod A. Kumar, "Will the Joint Doctrine Result in Synergy on the Ground," *IDSA Strategic Comment*, New Delhi, June 08, 2006.
2. According to Vinod Anand, the essence is inter-service cooperation for synchronisation of all components of military power to achieve a common military aim. See Vinod Anand, "Future Battlespace and Need for Jointmanship," *Strategic Analysis*, New Delhi, January 2000.
3. J.G. Nadkarni, "India's Forces Must Join or Perish," Rediff on theNet, June 8, 2000, at <http://ia.rediff.com/news/1999/feb/09nad.htm> (Accessed on May 16, 2007)
4. J.G. Nadkarni, "A Lean Mean Fighting Machine," Rediff on the Net, February 9, 1999, <http://ia.rediff.com/news/2000/jun/08nad.htm> (Accessed on May 16, 2007).
5. The army had put up a case for procuring helicopters to replace its aging fleet of Cheetah's and Chetaks in 2002-2007
6. General Staff Qualitative Requirements (GSQR) were prepared in isolation without availing expertise available with the Air Force. Needless to say that GSQR were highly flawed necessitating abortion of the case and fresh initiation, resulting in time and cost overruns.
7. The Army needed deep sea diving equipment for its special forces. GSQR were prepared without availing the benefit of Navy's expertise. GSQR were so ambitious that at the time of field trials, the Army found it to be beyond their operational requirement and capability.
8. See Comptroller and Auditor General of India, "Report for the year ending March 2006: Union Government (Defence Services)," No. 4 of 2007, pp. 9-10.
9. There has been an exponential increase in the number of court cases being filed by service personnel to seek justice. Seeking justice through courts shows soldiers' lack of faith in the fairness of the system. Soldiers knock at courts' doors only when driven to it as a last resort. They feel aggrieved and deprived of their rightful dues. Partisanship caused by affiliations is considered by many to be one of the main contributory causes.
9. Other arms officers (artillery, engineers and signals) can command infantry formations if selected for the General Cadre. There are no permanent rules in place. It depends entirely on a Chief's views. There is an interesting case which occurred a few years ago. A non-infantry Chief inducted a large number of artillery and other arms officers into the General Cadre. The next Chief who was from the infantry reversed the policy. Such instances only go to prove that the top leadership that fails to free itself of biases at service level can hardly be expected to have a national perspective of jointmanship issues.
10. Brijesh D. Jayal, "Chinks in the Armour – How were Actual Operations Conducted in the Kargil War," *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, August 4, 2004.

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11. Ashok K. Mehta, "Three Chiefs in Search of a Chair," *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, August 29, 2001.
12. Nadkarni, no. 3. Admiral Nadkarni laments that Indians are only aware of India's Army and the soldier. "Most have never heard of the other two services; leave alone their contribution in any conflict. In Punjab, for example, there are Jarnail (General) Singhs and Karnail (Colonel) Singhs. But one has not come across an Admiral Singh or an Air Marshal Singh," he adds.
13. Vinod Anand, no 2.
14. The Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defence Reorganisation Act of 1986 (GNA) is generally considered to be the first step of the currently ongoing Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA). After the US failures in the Iran hostage rescue attempt and Grenada operations, a need was felt to re-organise the US forces through an act of legislation. Under GNA, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs was designated as the principal military advisor to the President, National Security Council and Secretary of Defence. The restructuring provided unity of command, unity of effort, integrated planning, shared procurement and a reduction/elimination in inter-services rivalry.
15. All the three services have laid down doctrine that support jointmanship. The stress is on cooperation, mutual trust and partnership. According to the Army Doctrine issued in October 2004, future wars are likely to be characterised by added emphasis on the all-arms concept and need for increased jointmanship between the land, naval and air forces.