

IDSA Monograph Series  
No. 40 July 2014

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# British Reforms to Its Higher Defence Organisation

## Lessons For India

Col Rajneesh Singh



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE  
STUDIES & ANALYSES

रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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ISBN: 978-93-82169-43-7

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First Published: July 2014

Price: Rs. 160/-

Published by: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses  
No.1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg,  
Delhi Cantt., New Delhi - 110 010  
Tel. (91-11) 2671-7983 Fax.(91-11) 2615 4191  
E-mail: [contact.idsa@nic.in](mailto:contact.idsa@nic.in)  
Website: <http://www.idsa.in>

Cover &

Layout by: Geeta Kumari & Vaijayanti Patankar

Printed at: M/S A. M. Offsetters  
A-57, Sector-10, Noida-201 301 (U.P.)  
Mob: 09810888667  
E-mail: [amoffsetters@gmail.com](mailto:amoffsetters@gmail.com)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr Arvind Gupta, Director General IDSA, and all my colleagues in the Military Affairs Centre for their support and guidance in my research endeavour. The project has also benefitted from the comments received from the two referees who spared their time and gave me valuable inputs to improve and refine the monograph. I am also grateful to Mr Vivek Kaushik, Associate Editor for his efforts in the review process and to Geeta Kumari and Vaijayanti Patankar for their support in the publication. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the help and encouragement provided by my wife in this maiden attempt in scholarly research.



# INTRODUCTION

The Higher Defence Organisation (HDO) of any country is the function of its history, culture, security environment, system of governance and its polity and this makes the HDO of any country unique and distinct. The United Kingdom (UK) and India have vast differences in threat perception to their respective national security, even greater differences in resources availability with their defence establishments and in the strategic culture of its polity and people. So is it paradoxical to study the British reforms to draw lessons for Indian HDO? The answer is, regardless of the differences, the HDO of the two countries have to perform the same management functions. The two countries follow a very similar political system and have comparable directional and oversight functions assigned to its legislature and the executive for defence management. The HDO in the two countries is manned by the elected representatives, civil bureaucracy and military officers albeit with varying job functions and accountability. It is in the area of the reform process, the HDO structure and the inter-relationship amongst the principal constituents of the HDO that India can benefit the most from the best practices available in UK and the world. The Indian HDO can draw lessons from the British innovations in defence management system, its architecture and the accountability functions.

The UK follows the 'Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) model' for its defence management (for appointment equivalence between the United Kingdom and the Indian system see Appendix A). The HDO of UK has changed significantly from the days when the system did not have Ministry of Defence (MoD) or Minister for Defence. The Services enjoyed far greater autonomy in policy making and the Service Chiefs had a dream run in policy formulation and Services related management functions even to the extent that single Service Chief could dictate government and NATO policies. The role of bureaucracy was subdued in comparison. Today, the UK conducts its governance of defence through an integrated civil and military organisation where collective and individual functions and accountabilities as also system of oversight are well defined. The British model has achieved a high degree of

operational effectiveness and administrative efficiency making it an attractive proposition to study. The points of interest include:

- Fully integrated civil and military staff for the conduct of strategic level staff work.
- Equal status afforded to Permanent Under Secretary (PUS) (equivalent of Indian Defence Secretary) and the CDS and the 2<sup>nd</sup> PUS and the Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS).
- The creation of the appointment of the CDS and the consequential reduction in the role and responsibility of the Service Chiefs.
- The necessity of creation of the defence and planning staff answerable to the CDS to help him perform the tasks of the Commander-in-Chief and of being single point military adviser to the government.

The defence management of any country must evolve as the country transits through various phases of development in the field of governance and in management practices. The nature of the security threat, technological advancements and the aspirations of the people with regards to the governmental decision making will also impact the nature of the HDO of the country. This is particularly true of India which has seen unprecedented growth in economic field in the recent past resulting in greater concern for security issues. It was during the Kargil War<sup>1</sup> in 1999 when perhaps for the first time it became public knowledge that all was not right with the Indian HDO. There have been significant changes in the geo-strategic situation and the nature of threat faced by India since then and yet little has changed with the HDO of the country. There is thus an urgent need for a greater understanding and a clearer vision of the security management of the country and the road map to implement the desired reform. The Kargil

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<sup>1</sup> Kargil War was an armed conflict between India and Pakistan that took place from May to July 1999 in the Kargil district of Kashmir and elsewhere along the Line of Control (LOC). The Indian Army launched Operation VIJAY to clear the area of the LOC occupied by Pakistani troops which had infiltrated on the Indian side of the LOC.

Review Committee Report<sup>2</sup> and the follow up Group of Ministers Report<sup>3</sup> had recommended some far reaching changes to the Indian defence establishment. Many of the recommendations have been implemented and some consigned in the files of the MoD. Principal recommendation which has not been implemented is the appointment of the CDS. Off late many in the strategic community have expressed the desirability of having a CDS<sup>4</sup>. It is in this context the lessons from the British experience will prove invaluable when designing the Indian HDO.

## Reforms to the British HDO

One of the important lessons of World War I was the acceptance of the fact that defence is a national endeavour which has to be fought jointly by the three Services, supported by all the departments of the government and the will of the people. In pursuance of this understanding the British commenced reforms to their HDO, which to date is a process in continuation. The UK MoD in its present form is a fusion of old ministries: from 1946 to 1964 there were five departments of state doing what the unified MoD does now: the Admiralty, the War Office, the Air Ministry, the Ministry of Aviation and the MoD itself. In 1964 the first three and the MoD were

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<sup>2</sup> The Government of India constituted a committee on July 24, 1999 to look into the episode of Pakistan's aggression in the Kargil Sector. The committee comprised of four members, namely K. Subrahmanyam (Chairman), Lieutenant General (retd.) K. K. Hazari, B.G. Verghese and Satish Chandra, Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat, Member Secretary. For the detailed report, with some deletions made by the Government see National Security Council Secretariat (1999), Government of India, *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report*, Sage Publications, New Delhi.

<sup>3</sup> A Group of Ministers (GOM) was constituted by the Prime Minister on April 17, 2000 to review the National Security System in its entirety and in particular to consider the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee and formulate specific proposals for implementation. The GOM after initial deliberations decided to address the recommendations through four Task Forces, one each in the areas of Intelligence Apparatus, Internal Security, Border Management and Management of Defence. The Task Forces considered not only the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee falling within their respective competencies, but also other aspects impinging upon national security which were not touched upon by the Kargil Review Committee.

<sup>4</sup> Jayal, B. D. et. al. (2012), *A Call for Change Higher Defence Management of India*, New Delhi: Lancers Books.

amalgamated, and the defence functions of the Ministry of Aviation Supply (as it had by then become) were absorbed in 1971, when the MoD took over responsibility for supplying military aircraft and guided weapons. Thereafter series of reform measures were instituted which brought about three major changes, first greater cohesion and jointness amongst the three Services, second greater integration between the Services and bureaucracy and lastly concentrated the powers of strategic policy decisions in the higher echelons of the HDO. The British HDO today is a result of integration of the various ministries and the three Services and dwelling of powers of strategic policy making in the highest level and decentralisation of the management functions to the Services. The model is as much significant for the lessons it provides for designing the HDO as for the sagacity displayed by the successive British Government in initiating and persisting with the various reforms necessitated by national security imperatives, financial compulsion, advancement in technology and the lessons of the military ventures.

The reform process in the UK can be divided into three phases: 1902-55, 1955-89 and 1990 onwards. The three phases are characterised by the quest for equilibrium between the major stake holders in the national security, the Services, civil bureaucracy and the elected representatives. The establishment of the Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) initiated the search of politico-military balance during the early days of reforms. Prior to World War I there was not much overlap between the role of the Army and the Navy. The formation of Royal Air Force (RAF) as the third Service at the end of World War I commenced the process of enhancement of jointness between the three Services and saw the formation of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) in 1923. Enhancement of jointness was the main theme of reforms during the period 1923-55. The process of unification of decision making in the early 1960s initiated the search for equilibrium between the strategic policy makers and the managers of the Service Departments<sup>5</sup>. Finally the reforms from 1990 to 2010 catered for the change in the nature of

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<sup>5</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin (1992), *The Chiefs*, London: Brassey's, 440. The author of the monograph would like to acknowledge the contribution of the book in clarifying the chronology and the rationale of the British defence reforms.

security threat post cold war necessitating centralisation of powers of policy formulation and decision making in the higher echelons of the HDO.

## **Aim**

There is no single right answer to the issues concerning defence management. The intent of the study is not to replicate the UK model to suit Indian conditions rather to highlight the best practises available in the UK. The study will not provide readymade solutions to Indian problems which are far too many and complex to be resolved based on study of one model. The monograph is an attempt to provide inspiration to find solutions to some of the problems in India, more specifically in the area of the higher defence security architecture, the inter-relationship between the important constituents of the HDO and the reform process per se.

## **Scope of the Study**

The scope of the study is limited to the period 1902 to 2010. The study will focus on the role and the responsibility of the various appointments of the HDO and the interrelationship between them. In doing so an attempt would be made to draw specific lessons with respect of the following:

- How has the UK been able to achieve equilibrium between the principal constituents, viz. the PUS and the CDS?

**Chapter One** brings out the reforms undertaken to British defence establishment during the period 1902-55. The highlights of the reforms during the period include attempts to establish politico military balance and move towards centralisation of authority for making policies and for executive decisions. Of particular interest are the establishment of the COSC and the appointment of the independent Chairman of the COSC. The formation of MoD and the appointment of the Minister of Defence and the Chairman of COSC led to greater centralisation of authority in the higher echelons of the MoD and greater jointness amongst the Services.

**Chapter Two** focuses on the reforms during the period 1955-89. A vital issue during the period was the search for equilibrium between

the strategic policy makers and the managers of the Service departments. The chapter attempts to study the manner in which the UK was able to concentrate powers in the office of the Minister of Defence and the CDS. It also highlights the consequential evolution of the Service Chiefs to become capability providers and managers of their respective Services.

**Chapter Three** In the last two decades the strategic thinkers in the UK have begun to debate, how much of centralisation of authority is good for the system. In 2010 Levene Committee was constituted to recommend measures to make the British armed forces operationally more effective and administratively efficient besides provide inputs on the question of centralisation of authority. The chapter critically analyses the recommendations of the Levene Committee report to bring out lessons for India.

**Chapter Four** is compilation of the lessons for India from the study of British military reforms. For the ease of understanding, the lessons have been discussed under four major headings viz., structural reforms, relationship between the constituents of the HDO, reforms within the military and the reforms process.

## **REFORMS TO BRITISH ARMED FORCES 1902-55**

### **POLITICO MILITARY BALANCE AND MOVE TOWARDS GREATER CENTRALISATION**

The HDO in the UK during the period 1902-55 was characterised by presence of influential Service ministers and Service Chiefs and jostling for even greater influence amongst the constituents, primarily the elected representatives and the Services. The period also witnessed limited co-ordination between the Admiralty, the War and the Air Council resulting in instances of incoherent military strategy and inefficient administrative functioning. It was also the period when realisation set in that the higher defence management was not functioning in the most efficient manner setting stage for military reforms. The period 1902-23 saw the political class assert itself and try to restructure the HDO which provided enhanced control to the elected representatives over the military. The establishment of the CID and the appointment of the deputy Chairman of the CID, forerunner of MoD and the Minister of Defence were steps in the direction. The period 1923-55 witnessed enhancement of co-ordination amongst the Services with the formation of COSC in 1923. Post World War II the British tried to implement the lessons learnt during the war by concentrating the authority of policy making in the higher echelons of the HDO.

#### **Politico Military Balance 1902-23**

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Prime Minister and two of his colleagues, First Lord of the Admiralty (minister to oversee Royal Navy) and the Secretary of State for War (minister to oversee British Army) were responsible for the security of the nation in their individual and collective capacities. The Admiralty Board and the Army Council were separate departments under their respective ministers. Subsequently when the RAF was created by the end of World War I the Air Council was also established. The Services through their ministers had access to the government, the Prime Minister and the parliament. The access

enjoyed by the Chiefs to the Prime Minister and the parliament made them extremely influential to moderate policy decisions to suit actual and perceived requirements of their Services. There was very limited, if at all, interaction amongst the two Services to develop a common military strategy for the country or co-ordinate the budget which would provide greater administrative efficiency. The Chiefs were often accused of indulging in turf battles and deferring controversial issues. A need was felt to have independent Chairman who could adjudicate between the Chiefs. *There was also a realisation that the reforms have to achieve military efficiency without losing political control.* The CID<sup>6</sup> was ‘established in 1902 as an advisory body with no executive powers. With the assistance of numerous sub-committees it advised the Cabinet and government departments on both the general principles of defence policy and their detailed application. The Prime Minister was its Chairman and only permanent member’<sup>7</sup>. There were certain shortcomings in the functioning of the CID. The CID which should have been the centre of strategic planning “undertook no strategic planning and offered no advice of its own but drew together and circulated the work of the various departments”<sup>8</sup>. A forerunner to the modern day MoD, it did not develop a national strategy or oversee the functioning of or co-ordinated the allocation of resources between the two Services. From time to time demands were made from some quarters for the appointment of the Minister of Defence; however, the majority view was that the task was too great for one person to handle. Although,

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<sup>6</sup> The CID was set up by Prime Minister Arthur Balfour in 1902 in the aftermath of the Boer War and consisted of senior Cabinet Ministers concerned with defense (the Secretaries of State for War, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Foreign Secretary, the Dominion and the Colonial Secretaries etc. and their Permanent Under Secretaries and the Chiefs of Staff). See Dockrill, Michael (1998), *British Defence since 1945*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 37.

<sup>7</sup> UK Government, The National Archives, (2013), “The Cabinet and its Committees”, [Online: Web], Accessed 01 March 2013, URL: <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/research-guides/cabinet-office.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> MacKintosh, John P. (1962), “The Role of the Committee of Imperial Defence before 1914”, *The English Historical Review*, 77(304), 490-503. [Online: Web], Accessed 01 March 2013, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/561324.pdf?acceptTC=true>.

the establishment of the CID was not an ideal solution to the problem, nonetheless it ensured that the ‘principles needed for balance in politico-military relations were firmly established by 1923’<sup>9</sup>. The functioning of the HDO also began to concretise around this period. Prime Minister alone in the cabinet had the mandate to take important decisions on defence policy. His deputy, who later became the Minister of Defence, shared some of his responsibility during peace time, but the ultimate responsibility of defence of the realm rested with the Prime Minister. The Service Chiefs were made responsible to provide military advice in their individual and collective capacities and were responsible for administrative and operational efficiency of their respective Services<sup>10</sup>. By 1923 a clear chain of command had begun to emerge where Prime Minister and more importantly his deputy had begun to assert their political position but it would be long time before the deputy could overrule the powerful Service Ministries.

### **Enhancement of Jointness amongst the Services 1923 to 1955**

**The Chiefs of Staff Committee** Co-ordination of the strategy between the Army and the Navy and the allocation of resources amongst them was a major weakness which persisted even after the formation of the CID. The problem became even more acute post World War I with the formation of the RAF. Salisbury Committee, convened by the Prime Minister Bonar Law, recommended the creation of the Chiefs of Staff system. Based on the recommendations of the committee the COSC was made responsible “to keep the defence situation under review, to ensure the co-ordination of defence preparations, and to advise the CID on questions of sea, land and air policy, as well as on defence policy as a whole”<sup>11</sup>. One of the operative sentences of the report of the committee ran: “...each of the three

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<sup>9</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 441.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> UK Government, The National Archives, (2013), “Committee of Imperial Defence: Chiefs of Staff Committee: Minutes and Memoranda”, [Online: Web], Accessed March 01, 2013, URL: <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/SearchUI/details?uri=C3860>.

Chiefs of Staff will have an individual and collective responsibility for advising on defence policy as a whole, the three constituting, as it were, a Super-Chief of a War Staff in Commission”<sup>12</sup>. The Chiefs were charged with the responsibility of keeping, “the defence situation as a whole constantly under review so as to ensure that defence preparations and plans and the expenditure thereupon are co-ordinated and framed to meet policy, that full information as to the changing naval, military and air situation may always be available to the Committee of Imperial Defence, and that resolutions as to the requisite action thereupon may be submitted for its consideration”<sup>13</sup>.

The COSC met for the first time on July 17, 1923. It was soon realised that the Committee was taken seriously only if there was consensus amongst the Chiefs. The formation of the committee by itself was not reason enough for three Chiefs to come to an agreement and evolve a corporate view on every issue under consideration. Each of the Chiefs was a representative and head of his own Service. He was expected to take stand for his Service and place his Service before ‘defence’. Very soon it became evident that single Service loyalties took precedence over their collective responsibilities. An obvious outcome of it was that the contentious issues were procrastinated, as far as possible. The problem was further compounded by the resource crunch. All this began to change when the UK was faced with the growing threat of World War II. The Chiefs still avoided controversial issues, as far as possible, but as the threat grew so did their interaction and the quality of their advice. Thus, it was obvious that when the security of the country was threatened the COSC functioned better than during peace time. During war the Chiefs subverted the interest of their respective Services for the collective good but not during peace time. There was another important development, before the war was declared in 1939, which furthered the cause of jointness amongst the three Services, it was the formation of the Secretariat, Joint Planning Staff and the Joint Intelligence Committee to the COSC.

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<sup>12</sup> Cmd 2029, Salisbury Committee Report, p 25, para 1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, p 17-18, para 7 (iv).

The British successes in the World War II underscored the benefits of the COSC. Besides the COSC, there were three other factors which also contributed for the success:

- Prime Minister Winston Churchill amalgamated the office of Minister of Defence in his office of the Prime Minister.
- Selection of Chiefs who enjoyed the confidence of the Prime Minister and that of their respective Services.
- The Chiefs had in their office the powers of strategic policy making and executive responsibility.

### **Towards Greater Centralisation – Phase I**

**Formation of MoD and the Appointment of the Minister of Defence** In December 1945 Prime Minister Clement Attlee appointed a committee composed of Lord Ismay, General Ian Jacob and Lord Bridges to make recommendations regarding the future HDO. The committee recommended setting up of MoD which should be “a guiding hand to formulate a unified defence policy for all three Services”<sup>14</sup>. A separate Minister of Defence was also appointed for the first time. However, he had imprecise co-ordinating and non-executive functions. The Minister of Defence had a small ministerial staff of some 50 military officers and administrative grade civil servants to co-ordinate service administration, and to administer Joint Service establishments. The minister derived his strength from his “membership of the Cabinet: the three Service ministers no longer attended that body as of right. The CID was replaced by the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, consisting of the key Cabinet Ministers with the Chiefs of Staff in attendance, presided over by the Prime Minister, with the Defence Minister as vice-chairman”<sup>15</sup>. Besides these the other changes that were introduced reflected the turf war between the constituents

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<sup>14</sup> Johnson, Franklyn A. (1980), “*Defence by Committee: The British Ministry of Defence 1944-74*”, London: Duckworth, 19.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 20 and Dockrill, Michael, Op. Cit., 38.

of the HDO and some of the reforms were vague and incoherent. The Minister of Defence became the sole representative of the Services in the cabinet, however, the Service ministers were invited to attend the cabinet meetings when the defence matters were discussed. The Service ministers continued to remain responsible to the Parliament for their respective Services and the Service ministries retained their executive and financial independence. The recommendations of the Ismay's committee did not impact the functioning of the COSC. The Chiefs retained their corporate responsibility as military advisers of the government and continued to remain responsible for preparation of strategic plans. The Chiefs were expected to discuss such plans with the Minister of Defence first, but this in no way implied submission through him<sup>16</sup>. The appointment of the Minister of Defence and the consequent reduction in some of the role and responsibilities of Service Ministers marked the beginning of greater centralisation of policy functions, though at this stage the Services still retained sufficient clout to influence policy decisions. There were still many impediments in realisation of a HDO model that could handle the complexities of 20<sup>th</sup> century security threats.

The centralisation of policy making function in higher echelons of the HDO was subject of many debates after the war. One of the more popular views discredited greater centralisation in the higher echelons of the HDO as it was deemed to be divorced from the execution of those policies. In fact the failure of the German General Staff was cited as an example of the failure of this system in the White Paper titled *Central Organisation for Defence* released in 1946.

“The German system failed because the Planning Staffs of the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW) were not drawn from the headquarters of the three Services. The plans had later to be handed to those headquarters for execution, and were often found to be unrealistic. The cleavage between

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<sup>16</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 268-269.

planning and execution set up dangerous antagonisms, and entirely nullified the theoretical advantages of the German system'<sup>17</sup>.

In the late 1940s the dominant theory that the 'person who has to execute the plan makes the plan' ensured that Chiefs and the Service Ministries retained their position of pre-eminence and an organisation with greater centralisation of powers in the higher echelons of the HDO was still decades away. This theory, however, was challenged by many including eminent military historian, Michael Howard<sup>18</sup>.

**Appointment of Independent Chairman of the COSC** In mid 1950s another attempt was made to modify the system. Mountbatten who was then the Naval Chief proposed an independent Chairman of the COSC as against the system of rotational Chairman which was prevalent till then. The proposal perhaps was before its time. *There was resistance to the proposal, and not surprisingly, it was from other Chiefs who feared dilution of their corporate responsibilities and infringement in single Service sovereignty. There was also an apprehension that the Chairman may become a political appointee.* When the proposal was being considered the then Prime Minister and the Minister of Defence wanted the new independent Chairman to be the 'Chief Military Adviser to the Government'. Army Chief General Sir Gerald Templar was most vociferous in his opposition and was even prepared to resign over the breach of principle of corporate responsibility in case the government proposal was implemented. Templar's views prevailed and the new post came to be known as 'The Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the Chief of Staff to the Minister of Defence'. The appointment came about with certain restrictions:

- The incumbent of the post was chosen from amongst one of the Chiefs.

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<sup>17</sup> Cmd 6923 of 1946, p5, para 16.

<sup>18</sup> See Howard Michael, *The Central Organisation for Defence*, wherein he substantiates his claim by suggesting that the theory was based on the evidence of the German Generals captured on the Western front whose knowledge was partial and were a disgruntled lot because of their failures.

- The Chairman would present the corporate views of the Chiefs to the Minister of Defence and the Defence Committee.
- He was given only a small personal briefing staff which ensured he had little power and no executive responsibility<sup>19</sup>.

It was also the period when great advancements were being made in the field of military technology and in the manner of war fighting. Advancement in communication systems and sophistication and lethality of the weapon platforms called for greater centralisation in decision making. Increasing cost of military equipment had direct impact on the budget to be allocated amongst the three Services. This set the field for the appointment of CDS with strong supporting staff and set in motion next set of reforms, viz. greater centralisation in policy making to neutralise inter Service rivalry.

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<sup>19</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 296.

**REFORMS TO BRITISH ARMED FORCES 1955-89**

**SEARCH FOR EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN  
THE STRATEGIC POLICY MAKERS AND  
THE MANAGERS OF THE SERVICE  
DEPARTMENTS**

Economic compulsion was the prime mover for the next set of reforms which was directed towards greater centralisation of policy functions and delegation of managerial duties to the Service Departments. The Prime Minister Harold Macmillan was mindful of the fact that to centralise the function of policy making in the higher echelons of the HDO he will have to strengthen the office of the Minister of Defence. This was less controversial and faced lesser resistance than appointing the Permanent Chairman of the COSC. To begin with the Minister of Defence was given not so important responsibility of determining “the overall composition and the balance of the Armed Forces, and required him to concern with the content as well as the costs of Service programmes”<sup>20</sup>. His staff was limited and he did precious little than to move the proposal and recommendations of the powerful Service Ministries. Later the office was made responsible for “deciding all questions on the size, shape, organisation and disposition of the forces as well as their equipment and supply, their pay and conditions of service”<sup>21</sup>.

The above was a breakthrough in the eventual quest to allow the office of the Minister of Defence to overrule the Service Headquarters and the Service Chiefs, and greatly reduce the powers of the Service

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Ministries and of the Chiefs. This required the appointment of the CDS and there was still opposition from the Chiefs to such an appointment.

## **Duncan Sandys Reforms**

**Appointment of CDS** The process of reforms in UK was slow and measured though there were times when some ministers tried the revolutionary approach. In the late 1950s the then Minister of Defence, Duncan Sandys<sup>22</sup> was one such proponent of the revolutionary approach. He initiated the reforms by appointing Sir William Dickson, former Chief of Air Staff and the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff since 1955 as the Chief Staff Officer to the Minister of Defence for a ‘trial period of 18 months’. This move of Sandys removed any doubt as to who would be the single point military adviser to the minister even though there was still no suggestion to call him the CDS.

Simultaneously Sandy initiated measures to strengthen the appointment of the Minister of Defence. The 1958 White Paper ‘The Central Organisation of Defence’ confirmed the enhanced powers of the minister. Notable advancements made in the reform process included the following:

- The Minister of Defence was made responsible to the Prime Minister for military operations.
- A new Defence Board akin to the Service Boards was set up with the Minister of Defence as its Chairman and Service Ministers, the Chiefs, the PUS and the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) as members.
- The appointment of the Chairman of the COSC was re-designated as the CDS<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> Duncan Sandys was minister in successive Conservative governments in the 1950s and 1960s. He was appointed Minister of Defence in 1957 and produced the 1957 Defence White Paper that proposed a radical shift in the RAF by ending the use of fighter aircraft in favour of missile technology. Sandys pursued reforms with single minded devotion, though his style of functioning was not always appreciated by the Services. Also see note 25 below.

<sup>23</sup> Sir William Dickson became the first CDS being the senior most and the Chairman Chiefs of Staff since 1955.

On the face of it the reforms looked substantial, however, in concrete terms it meant little as the Service Ministries still wielded great powers with access to the Parliament and the Service Ministers retaining seat in the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. The CDS was no different from his previous 'avatar' of the Chairman of the COSC. As CDS he was authorised a small briefing staff. The Joint Planning Staff was responsible to him in his capacity as the Chairman of the COSC and not as the CDS. The terms of reference for any study or proposal had to be sanctioned by the Chiefs in the Committee and most importantly each Director of Plans "worked for, was supported by, and was loyal to his own Chief and Service Ministry. That loyalty was powerfully reinforced by their confidential reports, on which their future careers depended, being written within their own Ministries and not in office of the CDS"<sup>24</sup>. *The PUS also had limited control over the Services because of his lack of access to the files of the Service Headquarters and lack of specialised knowledge to analyse those files.*

**Sandys: A 'Trying' Personality** Duncan Sandys was not very popular<sup>25</sup> with the Chiefs mainly for the manner he was pursuing with the reforms and his style of functioning. He was "able to dominate the defence establishment. He achieved this as a result of the full support he received from the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer"<sup>26</sup>. The minister relied on the close group of advisers and paid scarce regard to the Chiefs. He tried to change too many things too fast. This was not to the liking of the Chiefs who were loathe to give up their entrenched positions. The Prime Minister was also aware of the stresses as a result of the reforms being pursued by Duncan Sandys and this cost him ministerial position in the next cabinet reshuffle. *The Chiefs were still very powerful.*

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<sup>24</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 323.

<sup>25</sup> Mountbatten once described the experience of working with the autocratic Sandys as 'trying': they did however, manage to work together sufficiently well to be able to impose their ideas on the rest of the Defence establishment.

<sup>26</sup> Dockrill, Michael, op. cit., 5 - 6.

## Mountbatten Reforms

Mountbatten took over as the CDS in 1959. Taking cue from the events before he followed a more evolutionary approach to reform the system. If he had his way, Mountbatten would have preferred more sweeping changes. His vision for reforms included more integrated Service ministries and strengthened office of the CDS. He initiated the transformation by posting in officers of his choice in his staff. He then proposed to appoint his “Director of Plans who would chair the Joint Planning Staff Committee meetings, thus reflecting CDS’s chairmanship of the Chiefs and ensuring his views were reflected in their work. He won in the end against intense opposition from his colleagues...”<sup>27</sup>.

**Establishment of Tri Services Command** Mountbatten then set out to establish unified command headquarters overseas as a precursor to integrate commands at all levels including the Whitehall. The UK established tri-Services command at Cyprus in 1960, Aden in 1961 and in Singapore in 1962 against a very determined resistance from the Services. Setting up of tri-Services command necessitated setting up of joint services staff, in the office of the CDS, to give operational directions to these commands, thereby enhancing the powers of the CDS. The credibility of the reforms was established during the Kuwait crisis of 1961<sup>28</sup>. The operation established the viability of tri-Services command structures and that of the joint staff under the CDS<sup>29</sup>. The operations also, very successfully, demonstrated the inherent weaknesses of the earlier system of launching operations through Service ministries.

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<sup>27</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 328-329.

<sup>28</sup> On July 01, 1961, the British Government under Prime Minister Harold Macmillan launched a major military intervention in the emirate of Kuwait, the largest mobilisation of British forces in the Middle East after the Suez crisis. The lessons the British learned from the Kuwait crisis had far-reaching consequences for British military and political involvement in the entire Persian Gulf area.

<sup>29</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 334. Also see Bismarck, Helene von (2009), “The Kuwait Crisis of 1961 and its Consequences for Great Britain’s Persian Gulf Policy”, *British Scholar* 2(1), 75-96.

**Towards Greater Centralisation – Phase II** Mountbatten became the principal driver of the reforms programme after Duncan Sandys was moved from his appointment. In the normal course his three years term as the CDS would have concluded mid way through the reforms and this would have slowed the reform process. Prime Minister Macmillan “initially toyed with the idea of making him a non political Minister of Defence. Instead he took the easier option of extending Mountbatten’s tenure to five years to enable him to undertake the task”<sup>30</sup>. The question before the decision makers was how far-reaching should the reforms be and the manner in which they should be undertaken? Mountbatten recommended sweeping reforms wherein he overturned all the principles which were considered non-negotiable by the Chiefs – *corporate responsibility, independent single Service management, and firm linkage between power to advice and responsibility for implementation*. Mountbatten proposed “broad outline of his new style unified ministry”<sup>31</sup>. There would be one Secretary of State assisted by Ministers of State with functional rather than single-Service responsibilities. The Naval, General and Air Staffs would be integrated into a Defence Staff responsible to the CDS, who would be advised by the single-Service Chiefs of Staff on sea, land and air matters as the heads of their sections of the overall Defence Staff. The CDS would have clear authority over them, not just as their chairman, but in his own right; and the Service Chiefs would lose their status as the professional heads of their Services, which would be taken over by three Commanders-in-Chief or Inspectors General of the Navy, Army and Air Force, who would act as the Principal Personnel Officers of their own Services, responsible for their general ‘well-being’, taken to mean their management, training, morale and operational efficiency”<sup>32</sup>. His proposal, if implemented

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<sup>30</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 335.

<sup>31</sup> Vision of a fully unified MoD was first articulated in 1962. Memorandum from Lord Mountbatten to Prime Minister Macmillan of October 09, 1962 is analyzed in *Defence by Ministry* by Franklyn A Johnson, (Duckworth, 1980), p105-107.

<sup>32</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 336. Also see Air Marshal Sir Timothy Garden KCB (1999): “Last post for the Chiefs?”, *The RUSI Journal*, 144(1), 47-51. Mountbatten was able to successfully argue that the individual Service Ministries be abolished and the Defence Minister be overall in charge. In a parallel way he wanted the Service Chiefs to tender advice through the CDS. The Service Chiefs were still powerful they retained their individual roles and responsibility for military operations.

would have undermined the very basis of the Chiefs of Staff system. The Chiefs were vociferous in their opposition to Mountbatten's proposal and they found ready support in the retired Chiefs. In fact they came out with their own paper with a set of recommendations. Faced with this impasse Prime Minister Macmillan invited Lord Ismay and Sir Ian Jacob to propose reforms. Ismay and Jacob's recommendations were implemented with effect from April 01, 1964. "The Minister of Defence now became Secretary of State in a unified structure, with three Ministers of Defence under him for the navy, RAF and the army. The First Lord of the Admiralty and the other service Secretaries of State were abolished, while the former Board of Admiralty and Army and Air Councils became sub-committees of the Defence Council for individual service matters. This Council was chaired by the new Secretary of State and its membership included the three Ministers of Defence, the Chiefs of Staff, the CDS, the PUS at the Department of Defence and the Chief Scientific Adviser. The Cabinet Defence Committee now became the Defence and the Overseas Policy Committee"<sup>33</sup>. Mountbatten and the Service Chiefs all had something to cheer in the compromise solution that was implemented and at the same time were determined to go beyond the model in pursuant of their respective aims. On one important issue Mountbatten's view had not been implemented. The new Ministry was joint rather than integrated, that is to say, sections of the Naval, Army and Air Staffs with similar responsibilities remained separate within their own Departments, but were brought together in Joint Committees. However, four new integrated staffs were created: the Defence Operations Executive for crisis management; the Defence Operational Requirements Staff for weapon specification; the Defence Signals Staff; and the Defence Intelligence Staff. The co-ordination work amongst the three Services was done by the civil bureaucracy.

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<sup>33</sup> Dockrill, Michael, *op. cit.* 88-89.

The reforms to strengthen the Centre continued, though at a slower pace after Mountbatten retired. Some of the important milestones in the reform process are given under:

- 1967 Service Ministries were downgraded a notch by creation of appointment of two ministers of state for Administration and Equipment.
- 1969 Greater centralisation of authority took place with regards to Personnel and Logistics matters.
- 1970 Procurement Executive was established and made responsible to the Secretary of State. Junior service ministers appointment were abolished, but were restored the following year by the new Conservative Government (but with much less authority).
- 1977 Financial Planning and Management Group was created under the Chairmanship of PUS with Chiefs as the members. This move was significant since it increased the power base of the PUS as also linked the policy with management.

The Mountbatten reforms of 1964 fell short of the desired ‘integration’ of the Services and ‘functionalisation’ of the MoD. The CDS derived his powers from being chairman of Chiefs of Staff Committee rather than in his own right. He was required to represent the views of the COSC and not his personal opinion. Moreover, the Defence Staff was responsible to the COSC and the CDS was authorised a small personal briefing staff. Chiefs were still very powerful and wielded veto powers in the COSC. The model of the HDO functioned for some years before ‘more power centres’ developed. The PUS, his Secretariat and the financial staff took over the coordinating functions of the ministry and the CSA came into prominence as a result of technological explosion, complexities in weapons and equipment and corresponding requirement of financial prudence in budget preparation. The equilibrium between policy and management had not yet been achieved. There was requirement of more reforms.

## **Lewin & Nott Reforms**

**Towards Greater Centralisation – Phase III** Through the 1970s there was some movement towards centralisation; however, it was

not to the extent that it caused consternation amongst the Chiefs. Service Chiefs passionately guarded their turfs, spoke in different voices and ‘defence’ was not on the top of their agenda. CDS as an appointment did not wield power in his own right; he controlled the Defence Planning Staff on behalf of the COSC and not *as* CDS. In 1980s another round of reforms were undertaken to strengthen the Centre and reduce the inter Service rivalry and turf war. *Principle amongst them was the abolishment of the three single Service ministers thereby making the MoD totally functional and more importantly severing the direct link between the individual Services and the Parliament.* Sir Terence Lewin<sup>34</sup>, the then CDS initiated reforms in under mentioned five areas<sup>35</sup> wherein he was ably supported by the then Secretary of Defence John Nott<sup>36</sup> and by other Chiefs in varying degree:

- The CDS became the principal military adviser to the Government in his own right, and not just as Chairman of the COSC<sup>37</sup>.
- The COSC became the forum from which CDS drew single-Service advice, but it was not mandatory for the CDS to forward only the unanimous decisions of the committee.

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<sup>34</sup> Sir Terence Lewin was First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff in the late 1970s. He became the Chief of the Defence Staff during the Falklands War. He was also the first Chief of Defence Staff to act as Head of the Armed Forces rather than just Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Also see note 37.

<sup>35</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 426.

<sup>36</sup> Sir John Nott is a former British Conservative Party politician prominent in the late 1970s and early 1980s. He joined the shadow cabinet in 1976 and the Cabinet when Margaret Thatcher won the 1979 general election. He served first as the Secretary of State for Trade and was moved to Defence in the reshuffle of January 1981. Nott remained Secretary of State for Defence throughout the four-month Falklands War. He was eventually replaced by Michael Heseltine in January 1983 when he announced that he would not seek re-election in 1983.

<sup>37</sup> See Nott, John (2007), “THE FALKLANDS WAR – 25 YEARS ON Inside the War Cabinet Reflections by Britain’s Defence Secretary during the Falklands War”, *RUSI*, 152(2), 74–77. In the *ibid* article John Nott, recounts, “Lewin was distressed that the chiefs could not agree on how to share out the pain of bringing the naval programme into reality. He came to me asking for the CDS to be given proper authority over the other chiefs so that he could knock heads together. With the Prime Minister’s authority, I changed the status and authority of the CDS vis-à-vis his colleagues. He was appointed for the first time as Military Adviser to the government; fortunately just before the Falklands began”.

- The Chiefs were to remain the professional heads of their Services, responsible for their efficiency and morale, and for tendering single-Service advice to the CDS.
- Central operational and military policy staffs were made responsible to the CDS rather than the COSC. The CDS now had initiative to give direction for their studies and the results of which would be put subsequently to his colleagues for endorsement or criticism. This ensured a more positive approach to proffer advice to ministers and speedier dispatch of operational business.
- Senior Appointments Committee was set up to oversee the promotion and appointments of all three and four star officers.

The efficacy of the reforms was soon put to test and they proved their merit during the Falkland War<sup>38</sup>. The success of the model during the war was the ultimate test since the war was fought under most extreme circumstances viz. political, strategic and geophysical conditions 8,000 miles from the homeland in South Atlantic.

## Heseltine Reforms<sup>39</sup>

**Increase in Authority of the Secretary of the State** Heseltine<sup>40</sup> succeeded John Nott as the Secretary of Defence. It was over two decades since Mountbatten had commenced reform process to

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<sup>38</sup> The Falklands War, also known as the Falklands Conflict or Falklands Crisis, was a 1982 war between Argentina and the UK. The conflict resulted from the long-standing dispute over the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, which lie in the South Atlantic, east of Argentina. The Falklands War began on Friday 2 April 1982, when Argentine forces invaded and occupied the Falkland Islands and South Georgia. The British Government dispatched a naval task force to engage the Argentine Navy and Air Force, and retake the islands by amphibious assault. The resulting conflict lasted 74 days and ended with the Argentine surrender on June 14, 1982, which returned the islands to British control. During the conflict, 649 Argentine military personnel, 255 British military personnel and 3 Falkland Islanders died. Wikipedia (2014), "Falklands War", [Online: Web] Accessed February 19, 2014, URL : [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falklands\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falklands_War).

<sup>39</sup> Heseltine's MoD Organisational Review was published in 1984. See Cmd 9315 *Central Organisation for Defence*, July 1984.

strengthen the 'centre' and there were some who thought that despite 'on and off' reforms Services had gradually regained their position of eminence in central policy functions viz. programmes of the MoD and in allocation of resources at the cost of the central Defence Staff. Heseltine continued with the reform process in his trade mark fervour. He like Sandys paid little heed to the opinion of the Services and proposed the following<sup>41</sup>:

- Functionalism of the Defence Staff.
- Weakening of the influence of the Service Departments and in particular the powers of the single Service Chiefs.
- Creation of new and largely civilian office of Management and Budget which reported directly to him through the 2<sup>nd</sup> PUS and was responsible for deciding the shape and size of the force.

**Weakening of the Position of the Service Chiefs** It may be recalled that Lewin / Nott reforms had resulted in diminishing the powers of the Chiefs; however, the reforms at the same time strengthened the position of the CDS. The reforms undertaken by Heseltine, on the other hand further weakened the position of the Chiefs without much reference to strengthening the position of the CDS. His proposals were mainly to reinforce the position of the Secretary of State in the ministry. The position of the Chiefs was considerably weakened when the appointment of the Vice Chiefs along with some of the executive staff were abolished and in its place four functional sections of the central Defence Staff were created viz. Deputy Chief of Defence Staff 'Commitments', 'Systems', and 'Programmes and Personnel' (the fourth being 'Policy' under a three star civil servant). All four appointments were to report to the CDS through a four star VCDS.

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Heseltine, is a British businessman, Conservative politician and patron of the Tory Reform Group. He was a Member of Parliament from 1966 to 2001, and was a prominent figure in the governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major. Heseltine entered Parliament in 1966, entered the Cabinet in 1979 as Secretary of State for the Environment, and was Secretary of State for Defence from 1983 to 1986.

<sup>41</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 430.

The single-Service Chiefs were to be left with two star Assistant Chiefs of Staff advised by one star directors. Other major changes included making CDS and PUS jointly the principal advisers to the Secretary of State. CDS became the adviser on military and strategy while PUS looked after political and financial policy. The appointments of VCDS, four Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (DCDS), the 2nd PUS with the Office of Management and Budget, the CSA and the Chief of Defence Procurement (CDP) left a rather small policy role within the MoD for the individual Service Chiefs, whose boards could provide advice to the centre. The 2nd PUS was a member of all of the service boards to give that linkage<sup>42</sup>.

The reforms, as expected, invited mixed reviews. The measures taken to centralise policy making functions, allocation of resources and control of operations were welcomed. However, the steps taken to reduce the staff of the Service Chiefs which had a negative impact on discharge of their duties as heads of their respective Services and as advisers to the CDS were criticised. There was another major flaw. The aim of defence reforms is largely to simplify procedures, fix responsibility for actions and bring about greater cohesion amongst the various Services. Haseltine reforms were supposed to be no different. Paradoxically the office of Management and Budget created under the reform process defied this basic principle and created a new power centre to challenge established norms. The management and budget functions are complicated and the lines demarcating the responsibilities amongst the various Services and offices blurred. This office contributed to further complicating an already complex function.

**Functioning of the British HDO: Falkland War vs. Gulf War** War is one of the most severe test that an organisation or facility connected to armed forces can be subjected to. A study of the functioning of the HDO during Falkland War and the Gulf War brings out the areas of divergence in the roles of the key appointments as also in their inter-relationship. Just before the Falkland War the UK had undertaken Lewin / Nott reforms and by the time the UK

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<sup>42</sup> Air Marshal Sir Timothy Garden KCB, *op. cit.*

participated in Gulf War it had implemented Heseltine reforms. Before drawing any lesson it is important to appreciate the context in which the UK participated in the two wars. In the Falkland War the UK was a principal player while in the Gulf War it was part of larger collation of forces led by the United States. As a result of Lewin / Nott reforms the CDS had become the principal adviser to the government in his own right. However, he and the Prime Minister continued to rely on the counsel of the Chiefs. The CDS always consulted the Chiefs before War Cabinet meetings. The Falkland War was perhaps one of the most spectacular of the British military successes because of the complexities involved in the operations. The war successfully validated the reforms undertaken and the resultant organisation, system and processes. The situation changed significantly by the time Heseltine reforms were implemented and UK participated in Gulf War. CDS was single point adviser to the government, though he did *debrief* the Chiefs on the proceedings of the meetings of the War Cabinet he relied more on the briefing of his central staff. The Chiefs were “confined to planning and organising the deployment of British forces, and to making the complex movement and logistic arrangements involved”<sup>43</sup>. Though, the allies did manage to achieve their military objective, considering the role of the British armed forces in the overall scheme of things, perhaps the system was not put to as severe a test as during the Falkland War.

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<sup>43</sup> Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit, 443.

## REFORMS TO BRITISH ARMED FORCES 1990-2010

# MOVE TO ENHANCE JOINTNESS AND CONCENTRATION OF DECISION MAKING AUTHORITY IN HIGHER ECHELONS OF THE HDO

The *Strategic Defence Review* of 1998<sup>44</sup> was a milestone in the reform process and was appreciated for variety of reasons; principal amongst them was for its thrust towards greater jointness amongst the three Services. By 1990s globally there was a consensus that the joint operations are the way forward to achieve operational effectiveness and resource efficiency in the conduct of war. To enhance jointness, the status of Chief of Joint Operations was made equal to the three Service operational C-in-Cs. A critical analysis of Strategic Defence Review suggests that although the jointness amongst the Services was enhanced, it further diminished the powers of the three Services. Post defence review the readjustment of responsibilities did not result in powers being transferred from one Service to the other rather to the 'centre' and the Joint Headquarters<sup>45</sup>. "The establishment of Joint Force 2000 (Harriers), Joint Defence Centre (Doctrine), Joint Helicopter Command, Joint Ground Based Air Defence, Joint Nuclear, Chemical and Biological Defence has diminished the role of single Services and

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<sup>44</sup> Cmd 3999, The *Strategic Defence Review*, July 1998.

<sup>45</sup> "The substantial expansion in both the number and types of forces assigned to our Joint Rapid Reaction Forces, and hence the number of operations likely to come under the command of the Permanent Joint Headquarters, has led us to reassess the role of the Chief of Joint Operations... We will therefore increase the responsibilities of the Chief of Joint Operations". See Ministry of Defence (1998), UK Government, *The Strategic Defence Review Supporting Essays*, The Stationery Office, London, 8-6.

by implication that of their Chiefs. This is in marked contrast from the days when each one of them was capable of dictating the government and NATO policy<sup>46</sup>.

## **Status of British HDO**

During the 1990s the focus of reforms was on centralisation of powers in higher echelons of HDO and this resulted in further reduction in authority of Chiefs. In 2010 the government constituted a committee under Lord Levene to recommend measures to reform the HDO of the country. The committee commenced its work by familiarising itself with the strength and weaknesses of the system on date in order to make meaningful contribution. To that end the committee in its report has highlighted the following issues:

**Strength of the British Model** Strengths of the British HDO which were taken into cognizance by the committee and are relevant in our context are given under<sup>47</sup>:

- “The high level of integration between MoD civilians and Service personnel across the organisation, including in Head Office;
- A new joint generation of officers who have primarily trained and operated in a joint environment, and have a more joint outlook than their predecessors;
- The model for conducting operations overseas, centred on the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ), is widely admired internationally”.

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<sup>46</sup> Air Marshal Sir Timothy Garden KCB op.cit.

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Defence, (1998), UK Government, *Defence Reform An independent report into the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence*, The Stationery Office Ltd., London, 15, [Online: Web] Accessed January 30, 2013), URL: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/27408/defence\\_reform\\_report\\_struct\\_mgt\\_mod\\_27june2011.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27408/defence_reform_report_struct_mgt_mod_27june2011.pdf).

**Problems facing the Defence** Some of the problems identified by the Levene Committee and relevant to the subject of the monograph are given under<sup>48</sup>:

- “An inability to take tough, timely decisions in the interest of defence, particularly those necessary to ensure financial control and an affordable defence programme, reflecting:
  - The political pain of taking such decisions and the lack of immediate consequences of deferring them;
  - The ‘conspiracy of optimism’ between industry, the military, officials and Ministers;
  - An institutional focus on short-term affordability at the expense of longer-term planning;
- A lack of clarity over who is responsible and accountable for taking decisions and an emphasis instead on reaching decisions by consensus in committees to achieve coherence across defence, which can let the best be the enemy of the good”.

### **Levene Reforms and After**

The government of the United Kingdom launched the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) in October 2010. The key objectives of the SDSR were to determine “the Armed Forces which the UK will need over the next decade and beyond to meet the most likely future threats”<sup>49</sup>. The Secretary of Defence, however, felt that SDSR alone was not adequate to tackle all the ills plaguing the defence of the UK. On August 13, 2010, he had launched a full and fundamental review of the way Defence is run. The committee entrusted with the task came out with the report: Defence Reform An independent report

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 9.

into the structure and management of the MoD<sup>50</sup>. The committee was constituted under the chairmanship of Lord Levene<sup>51</sup> to study the HDO of UK and recommend measures to make it operationally more effective and administratively efficient<sup>52</sup>.

**Centralisation vs. Decentralisation: Ongoing Debate** All reforms since 1964 were focused on centralising decision making in the higher echelons of the HDO. In the 1990s there came about a constituency which was of the opinion that perhaps over centralisation of the system may not be in the interest of the Defence. Liam Fox,<sup>53</sup> while announcing the formation of Defence Reform Unit, stated the requirement of “leaner, less centralised organisation” with “greater transparency”<sup>54</sup>. The Secretary of State said two broad principles would be followed for reforming the MoD. The first, “structural reform which will see the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Also see Dunn, Mike, Egginton, Bill, Pye, Nigel, Taylor, Trevor and Watters, Bryan (2011), “The Defence Reform Agenda”, *Briefing Paper, RUSI*. “The SDSR involved a small adjustment in the UK’s policy stance and some cuts in force structure, but no major changes in the organisation of defence. Planning for further changes, especially to improve the efficiency of the United Kingdom defence machine, was entrusted to a Defence Reform Unit (DRU) headed on a part-time basis by Lord Levene and a small group of external advisers, supported by a small staff within the MoD, and operating largely in secret”.

<sup>51</sup> Lord Levene has enjoyed a long and varied career in business, government and banking. He is Chairman of Starr Underwriting Agents Limited and of NBNK Investments plc. Previously, he served as Chairman of Lloyd’s, the world’s leading specialist insurance and reinsurance market from 2002–11, after having been Vice Chairman of Deutsche Bank, one of the world’s leading providers of financial services. Prior to this, he held the position of Chairman of Bankers Trust International and was formerly with both Morgan Stanley and Wasserstein Perella. Wikipedia (2014), “Peter Levene, Baron Levene of Portsoken”, [Online: Web] Accessed March 13, 2013, URL : [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_Levene,\\_Baron\\_Levene\\_of\\_Portsoken](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Levene,_Baron_Levene_of_Portsoken).

<sup>52</sup> The selection of the committee members with vast and varied experience but essentially not related to the field of defence was to ‘challenge the in-house thinking’ and learn from the ‘experience of other major organisational reform across the public and private sectors’.

<sup>53</sup> Liam Fox is a British Conservative politician, Member of Parliament for North Somerset, and former Secretary of State for Defence. Wikipedia (2013), “Liam Fox”, [Online: Web] Accessed March 15, 2013, URL : [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liam\\_Fox](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liam_Fox).

<sup>54</sup> BBC News (2010), “Liam Fox announces review to produce a ‘leaner’ MoD”, [Online: Web] Accessed February 14, 2013, URL : <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-10962559>.

Department reorganised into the three pillars of Policy and Strategy, the Armed Forces, and Procurement and Estates. The second is a cultural shift which will see a leaner and less centralised organisation combined with devolved processors which carry greater accountability and transparency<sup>55</sup>. He then added “*the Department must get away from the over-centralising tendency that has become the hallmark of the MoD in recent years...*”<sup>56</sup>. An analysis of how much of decentralisation the Levene committee has been able to achieve will be in order.

The Levene report is not without its share of criticism. There are some who believe “the report does not bring a holistic or sufficiently fresh approach to the problem. While it highlights a number of critical deficiencies and identifies a number of solid recommendations on what needs to be fixed, it is strong on structure and weak on implementation”<sup>57</sup>. Also it is “heavily laced with structural changes (without any idea of the adverse consequences) and some recycled ideas that seem focused on symptoms rather than root causes – one such example would be responsibility and accountability”<sup>58</sup>. It would, therefore, be wise to understand the context and the implication of recommendations before any lessons are drawn.

The Levene report has made 53 recommendations. Four of the recommendations, which have been deliberated upon in the monograph since they have relevance to our system are given below:

- “Create a new and smaller Defence Board chaired by the Defence Secretary to strengthen top level decision making.

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<sup>55</sup> Ministry of Defence, (2013), UK Government, *Providing versatile, agile and battle-winning armed forces and a smaller, more professional Ministry of Defence*, [Online: Web] Accessed February 14, 2013, URL : <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/providing-versatile-agile-and-battle-winning-armed-forces-and-a-smaller-more-professional-ministry-of-defence>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Barton, Bob (2012), “Defence Reform – a Precision Attack?” RUSI Defence Systems Spring.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

- Make the Head Office smaller and more strategic, to make high level balance of investment decisions, set strategic direction and a strong corporate framework, and hold to account.
- Clarify the responsibilities of senior leaders, including the Permanent Secretary and the CDS, to strengthen individual accountability.
- Focus the Service Chiefs on running their Service and empower them to perform their role effectively, with greater freedom to manage, as part of a much clearer framework of financial accountability and control”<sup>59</sup>.

## Top Level Decision Making

Prior to the implementation of the recommendations of the Levene Committee report the advisory group of the Secretary of State included the PUS and the CDS. The PUS headed the Defence Board and the CDS headed the COSC. There were conspicuous deficiencies in the system. The Defence Board, which was a senior non-Ministerial executive body, was ill equipped to take tough and timely decisions; hence a need was felt to revamp the system. Based on the recommendations of the committee the composition and the role of the Defence Board were changed. The committee also redefined new relationship equations between the senior appointments, the details are given below.

**Defence Board** The new Defence Board is the highest committee and the main corporate board of the MoD. It provides senior level leadership, strategic management of defence and undertakes full range of defence business, other than the conduct of operations. In order to decentralise, as per the directions of Secretary of State to the Levene Committee, the Defence Board does not cover policy, or operations. The board is ‘chaired by the Secretary of State and provides senior

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<sup>59</sup> “Defence Reform An independent report into the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence”, op. cit., 4.

level leadership and strategic management of defence. The current membership of the Defence Board is: the Secretary of State; the Armed Forces Minister; the PUS (the senior most civilian in the Department); the CDS (the professional head of the Armed Forces); the VCDS (the Chief Operating Officer for the Armed Forces); the Chief of Defence Materiel (the head of Defence Equipment and Support); the Director General Finance; and three non-executive Board members<sup>60</sup>. There are three subordinate sub committees, viz, the Investment Approvals Committee, the People Committee and the Audit Committee. The Peoples' committee provides oversight of career management functions for senior military officers and senior civil servants. The underline principle of the present model of the Defence Board is its emphasis on individual executive accountability and the discouragement of the tendency to convene committees. The model aims to bring greater clarity over the responsibilities and accountabilities of the senior leaders and attempts to move away from its erstwhile culture of consensual, committee-based decision-making. The model ensures that the committees are created only when absolutely necessary to support effective decision-making.

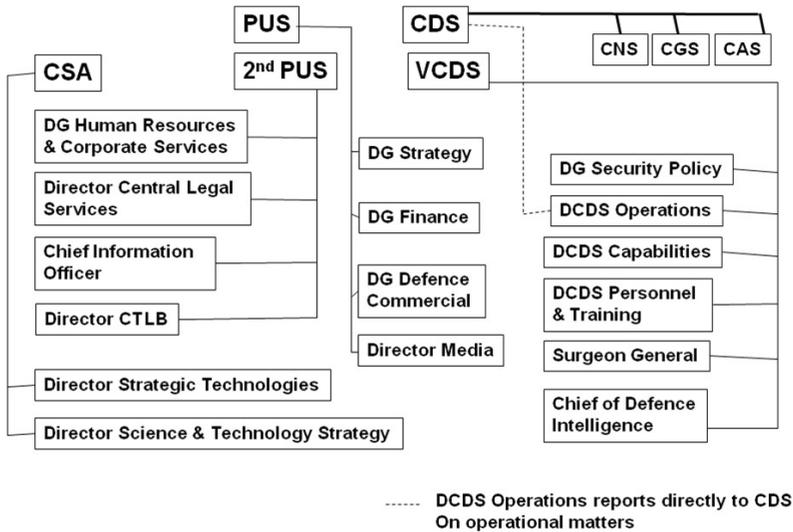
**Head Office** The offices of the CDS and the PUS are located in the Head Office. The Head Office is integrated to the extent that it allows the two very important appointments to function from the same headquarter and undertake their primary responsibility as 'lead policy adviser' and 'strategic military commander' respectively. The main role and organisation of the Head Office is given under:

- Advice government on issues related to the Defence.
- Promulgate Defence strategy.
- Planning and allocating resources.
- Management of Defence.
- Strategic direction to military operations.

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<sup>60</sup> Ministry of Defence, (2013), UK Government, *Defence Board*, [Online: Web] Accessed March 13, URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/groups/defence-board>. For the objectives and the core tasks of the Defence Board see ibid website.

As on September 2010



The challenge before the Head Office is to synchronise the two disparate duties of the CDS and the PUS, without undermining any of them. During its deliberations the Levene Committee had considered organisationally separating the ‘Department of the State’ and the ‘Armed Forces’ but did not recommend it since in their opinion though this would have created clear demarcation of responsibilities but it would have ‘introduced extra interfaces and risked incoherence and conflict between the two’<sup>61</sup>. Recommending on the functioning, the Committee proposed that the Defence Department should bring greater clarity to its role and “resist temptation to do more”<sup>62</sup>. Further, the committee had advised that the ‘Headquarters should avoid micro-managing the business of commands, as it has in the past, since it undermines the ownership (and accountability) of the Chiefs which is so critical to the success of the model’. The committee also recommended that in order to avoid duplication of tasks between the

<sup>61</sup> “Defence Reform An independent report into the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence”, op. cit.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Headquarter and the PJHQ, commanders deployed overseas and single Services, the roles and tasks of each of them must be stated in as clear terms as possible and all efforts should be made to consistently ensure there is no deviation from the stated roles.

**Permanent Under Secretary** The PUS is the government's principal civilian adviser on defence. His primary responsibilities include policy formulation and financial planning and he is the Departmental Accounting Officer. The PUS reports to the Head of the Civil Service and is a member of the Defence Council and the Defence Board. He or she co-chairs, with CDS, the Defence Strategy Group. The PUS's responsibilities include:

- Leading defence (with CDS).
- Setting strategy for defence, including corporate strategy (subject to ministers' direction, and together with CDS).
- Heading the Department of State and the MoD Civil Service.
- Providing policy advice to ministers and leading the relationship with other government departments.
- The overall organisation, management and staffing of defence.
- Performing the full range of Accounting Officer responsibilities, including the delegation of financial and other authority and accountability to senior colleagues, with personal accountability to Parliament for the economic, efficient and effective use of defence resources<sup>63</sup>.

**Chief of the Defence Staff** The CDS is the professional head of the armed forces and principal military adviser to the Secretary of State for Defence and the government. He reports to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister. The CDS's responsibilities include:

- Leading defence (with PUS).

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<sup>63</sup> Ministry of Defence, (2013), UK Government, *Jon Thompson*, [Online: Web] Accessed March 19, 2013, URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/people/jon-thompson3>.

- Setting strategy for defence, including the future development of the armed forces (subject to ministers' direction, and together with PUS).
- The conduct of current operations (as strategic commander).
- Leading relationships with other countries' armed forces<sup>64</sup>.

The CDS is the principal military adviser and in this capacity he is the member of the Defence Board and is in attendance at the National Security Council.

### **Equilibrium between Bureaucrats and Service Officers in UK**

**MoD** Levene in the foreword of the report has given an interesting insight into the relationship between the bureaucrats and the Service officers<sup>65</sup>. Even though the context of the foreword is different but it does throw light on the relationship shared by the bureaucrats and the Service Officers in the MoD in UK. This relationship is not unique to UK but has almost universal applicability. The officers tend to identify themselves as bureaucrats and as Service Officers and even within Services from the colour of their uniforms. The organisation structure of the HDO of the UK does throw some light as to how the British have attempted to define equilibrium in the relationship between Service officers and bureaucrats. *The unique feature of the Head Office, its integrated structure to support CDS and the PUS to undertake their primary responsibility as 'lead policy adviser' and 'strategic military commander' respectively and them functioning from the same rather than from different Headquarter defines the*

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<sup>64</sup> Ministry of Defence, (2013), UK Government, *General Sir David Richards GCB CBE DSO ADC Gen*, [Online: Web] Accessed March 19, 2013, URL <https://www.gov.uk/government/people/david-richards>.

<sup>65</sup> "My past experience in the Department left me with an understanding of the unique nature of the MoD as a Government Department. The uniqueness comes from the fact that it consists of two parallel groups of servants of The Crown, both made up of able, talented and determined people. What I found was that when they combine together well they are able to achieve some pretty remarkable and successful results. However, what we used to call "creative tension", can sometimes lead to internal disputes with the two groups appearing to be at odds with each other and often under close public scrutiny". See "Defence Reform An independent report into the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence", op. cit.

*equilibrium between the top appointment of the two Services. The fact that both these crucial appointments are equal in status, are supported by the same Headquarter and have an equal access to the Secretary of State has facilitated the system to achieve equilibrium between the military and the bureaucracy in the UK. The PUS and the CDS jointly lead defence. To bring about greater joint responsibility together they co-chair the new 'strategy group'<sup>66</sup> which supports them in delivering this function.*

**Service Chiefs** A Service Chief is the professional head of his Service, with responsibility for developing and generating military capability and for maintaining the fighting effectiveness, efficiency and morale of his Service. He reports to the CDS and, as a Service Chief of Staff, has a right of direct access to the Secretary of State and the Prime Minister. A Service Chief is a member of the Defence Council<sup>67</sup> and his respective Service Board, the Armed Forces Committee (mainly concerned with administrative issues), the Chiefs of Staff Committee (mainly concerned with operational issues) and the Senior Appointments Committee. His responsibilities include<sup>68</sup>:

- Maintaining the institutional health of his Service by exercising full command responsibility for all Service personnel.

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<sup>66</sup> The strategy group has been established to enhance senior focus on this critical issue. The group considers how Defence can most usefully engage in the world to deliver foreign and security policy objectives, and should both inform and be informed by the National Security Strategy. Defence Strategy Group first met in December 11 under PUS and CDS and it meets monthly.

<sup>67</sup> The Defence Council is the senior Departmental committee and provides the formal legal basis for conduct of defence in the UK. The membership of the Defence Council has in the past reflected the membership of the Defence Board, minus the non-executives, along with Ministers. See Taylor, Claire, UK Government, House of Commons, (2011), "Defence Reforms", [Online: Web], Accessed February 19, 2014, URL: [http://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&ved=0CEEQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.parliament.uk%2Fbriefing-papers%2Fsn06036.pdf&ei=gCUEU6SILcmArgf\\_3oD4CQ&usq=AFQjCNHtUFriMAX8UpHfvXKw7B1oPNveMg&bvm=bv.61535280,d.bmk](http://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&ved=0CEEQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.parliament.uk%2Fbriefing-papers%2Fsn06036.pdf&ei=gCUEU6SILcmArgf_3oD4CQ&usq=AFQjCNHtUFriMAX8UpHfvXKw7B1oPNveMg&bvm=bv.61535280,d.bmk).

<sup>68</sup> Given are the representative duties of the Service Chiefs, [Online: Web], Accessed March 19, 2013, URL:<https://www.gov.uk/government/people/general-sir-peter-wall>. Links to Service Chiefs can be accessed from the link of the UK MoD: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence>.

- Ensuring the efficient and effective governance of the Service.
- Chairing the Executive Committee of the Service Board and the Service Command Group.
- Contributing to the conduct of defence higher level business, with a particular responsibility for providing specialist advice on Service matters.
- Developing future Service capability within the context of defence strategic direction and resource allocation.
- Leads the senior management team of his Service.

As a result of the Levene Committee recommendations the functions of the Service Chiefs have become more focussed and ‘reduced’ at the ‘defence’ level. Service Chiefs remain ‘responsible for the overall leadership and custodianship of their respective Services and the CDS and the PUS continue to seek their advice as appropriate but their ‘direct’ role in making of departmental strategy, resource allocation and defence management has been reduced<sup>69</sup>.

- **Chiefs and the Prime Minister** The UK model of HDO authorises the Service Chiefs to advise the Prime Minister on the employment of their Service as a last resort. This was formalised in the 1984 White Paper. To lay to rest any controversy that may arise since the CDS is now the single point military adviser to the Secretary of State and the government the Levene committee has observed and recommended that, “mechanism for the Prime Minister and Service Chiefs to meet when required to discuss the health and morale of their Service seems entirely reasonable. However, we would not expect this to cut across the clear lines of accountability that we have set out for the management of the department, with corporate decision making lying with

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<sup>69</sup> “Defence Reform An independent report into the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence”, op. cit.

the new Defence Board and CDS's position as the Defence Secretary's and the Government's principal military advisor strengthened"<sup>70</sup>. They have even gone to the extent of recommending that the single Service staff presently housed in the Head Office should move to Service Headquarters leaving behind small support staff thereby ensuring there is no reduction in inter-Service integration.

**Implementation of Report** Implementation of any reform report is as important as the report itself if not more. The Levene committee has been cognizant of this fact and has devoted an entire chapter with suggestion for implementation of the report<sup>71</sup>. Of interest are the following key recommendations from the chapter of the report:

- The Secretary of State should chair the group specifically created to oversee implementation.
- Implementation should be led at four star level. They should be responsible to the Secretary of State group and the Defence Board for driving through the detailed design and implementation. They should stay in post to see it through.
- Implementation should be one of the department's top priorities and will need to be resourced accordingly. This will need to cover training for defence as a whole, as well the core teams who will lead the work.
- The Defence Reform Steering Group should be asked to reconvene on an annual basis for the next three years to check on progress, and report to the Secretary of State, who should in turn report on progress to Parliament.

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<sup>70</sup> "Defence Reform An independent report into the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence", op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 63-65.

## LESSONS FROM BRITISH REFORMS

The design of HDO of any country is based on certain non-negotiable principles and certain functional requirements. Work ethos and sensibilities of its principal constituents, viz. the polity, bureaucracy and the Services also influence the architecture of the HDO. The supremacy of the legislature and the elected representatives over the other two constituents of the executive is one such inviolable function of the Indian HDO, whatever is its form. The Indian HDO should ensure military efficiency without loss of political control; maintain a balance between authority, responsibility and accountability and between policy and management functions. The Services, for variety of reasons, are 'feared' in their own countries and this is true even for more established democracies. It goes without saying that the HDO should ensure checks and balances to ensure political control over the Services but at the same time the views of the Services in matters concerning strategy, force structures, weapons and equipment policy and national security reaches the decision maker in the form generated by them. The architecture of the HDO besides incorporating the principles mentioned above should be able to macro manage the defence of the country. For this the HDO of necessity must generate best possible staff inputs, for the elected representatives, who are mandated to take decisions on behalf of the nation.

### Structural Reforms

**Integration in Decision Making** It is an accepted fact that very few areas of defence management can be reduced to normal bureaucratic processes. Defence management is a specialised field where 'generalists' need the advice of 'specialists'. In the UK the approach has been to integrate all the constituents of the HDO at all levels. The structure of their HDO facilitates integration of the staff inputs of Services and the civil bureaucracy at all levels before it is put up to the decision makers for their action. In a comparative study between the UK and

the Indian model one finds the Indian Defence Minister is less well supported compared to his British counterpart, the Secretary of State. In the UK the Secretary of State is provided with a fully integrated advice which incorporates views of the three Services and all other agencies, the civil bureaucracy, the CSA and of the finance department. To assist the Secretary of State to take decision, option or multiple options are generated, each of which is fully integrated with views of all the constituents of the HDO. In comparison the Indian Defence Minister is presented with multiple points of view, from the three Service Headquarters and from various departments of the MoD, after limited reconciling in the office of the Defence Secretary. The office of the Defence Secretary is devoid of specialists limiting its capacity to meaningfully integrate, at times divergent opinions and present the Defence Minister with a holistic counsel. The integration of the civil and the military staff ensures that the quality of advice is holistic and is of superior quality. *There exists a case to initiate reforms in India to mitigate the anomaly.*

**Centralisation vs. Decentralisation** In today's age the threat to a nation can manifest in many ways and so are the means available to fight them. All this increases the complexity of modern day warfare demanding great degree of specialisation. In the normal course greater specialisation would dictate greater degree of decentralisation; however, it has not been the case. Advances in the field of command and control technology, electronics and communication have facilitated centralisation of decision making. Furthermore greater emphasis on issues like human values, media explosion has made centralisation of decision making process an operational imperative.

The UK has gone through a series of reforms, the more recent ones having been initiated in the wake of World War II. Mountbatten pioneered the process of strengthening the centre, Lewin/ Nott and Heseltine reforms furthered the cause of centre, which was considered an ideal solution to fight a modern day war. No system, as it is said, is perfect. Of late there are many in the UK who feel that perhaps the HDO has become 'over-centralised'. The issues confronting the British armed forces in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are very similar to the ones they started with in 1950s. Almost 60 years and many reforms later the debate is still on with regards to the appropriate balance between 'centralisation

and delegation', equilibrium between the military and the civil and suitable level of jointness amongst the Services<sup>72</sup>. The Levene reforms though mandated to find balance between centralisation and decentralisation seems to suggest that the direction in which the reforms in the UK are progressing viz. greater centralisation of planning and policy functions and integration of the three Services and MoD and greater delegation of powers for implementation of those policies is the right approach. Post implementation of the recommendations of the report the centre has been further strengthened by enhancing its powers of policy making and reducing the powers of the Chiefs.

In India there is a strong constituency which believes the Indian HDO should move towards greater centralisation in policy making, equipment procurement and for provision of military advice to the government. Establishment of Headquarter IDS and the ongoing debate for the appointment of CDS are steps in the direction. *There is no denying the need for greater centralisation because of the benefits that accrue of it, however, it would do well for the policy makers to define the balance in the Indian context before strengthening the centre.* In addition the following two issues also require deliberations:

- What should be the equilibrium between the bureaucracy and the military and how do we achieve it?
- The functions of defence are complex and overlapping amongst various functionaries. How do we define the responsibility and accountability between these functionaries?

**Jointness in Armed Forces** The study of British reform process in the context of jointness has significant lessons. Enhancement of jointness

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<sup>72</sup> The first paragraph of the Executive Summary of the *Levene Report*, speaks of the issues confronting the British defence establishment. "Many of the issues are not new, and have troubled similar reviews over the last century. How centralised or delegated to be? How joint Defence should be? Where the right balance between the military and civilians lies?" See *Ibid.*, 4.

would impact the position of the Chiefs in the HDO<sup>73</sup>. The road map of jointness in the UK armed forces was initiated with the appointment of Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and subsequently the CDS to co-ordinate the functioning of the three Services and it culminated with the establishment of PJHQ and an all powerful CDS with both executive and advisory role. As a derivative of the reforms the responsibility and status of the Chiefs has been drastically curtailed to one of being the manager of their Service. The CDS, VCDS and the head of the PJHQ have become four star appointments. It took the UK almost 60 years of serious debate and reforms to get to the present model of the HDO.

India has fought five major wars and skirmishes besides fighting insurgency in many parts of the country on a model based on Chiefs of Staff Committee and Chiefs being both operational and administrative head of their Services. There have been some notable successes in these operational endeavours but then they have been despite inherent weaknesses in joint planning and execution by the Services. There is no denying that enhancement of jointness amongst the Services is the way forward and the Indian Armed Forces will have to tread this path if they have to become power of consequence. *What is of greater concern is how far and how soon the Services will accept diminishing of the powers of the Chiefs which will be a natural consequence of enhancing jointness and of centralising the policy decisions in the higher echelons of the HDO?* The aforesaid will dictate the contours of reform process and the architecture of the Indian HDO.

## **Relationship between the Constituents of the HDO**

**PM and the Chiefs** For a democracy to win wars the PM and the Chiefs must share a healthy relationship based on mutual trust. Their

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<sup>73</sup> Air Marshal Sir Timothy Garden KCB op.cit. The Strategic Defence Review of 1998 proposed a number of bold initiatives to improve the armed forces' ability to carry out joint operations. In the article referred, Air Marshal Garden, who was a member of the panel of experts for the Review, argues that there will be significant negative consequences for the power and influence of the Chiefs of Staff because of greater centralisation and jointness.

association must have a sense of honesty which is essential to ensure there is no ambiguity in the political direction. In the UK the relationship between the two war time Prime Ministers, Churchill and Thatcher, and their Chiefs were defined by these two important truisms. Churchill combined the roles of the PM and the Defence Minister<sup>74</sup> while in the case of Thatcher her Secretary of Defence, John Nott, ensured nobody came between her and Lewin, the CDS<sup>75</sup>. An aspect that stands out in this war time arrangement is the absence of Defence Minister and civil servants and direct interaction of the PM with the Chiefs / CDS resultantly ensuring unmistakable political directions in war. Churchill and Thatcher were both very strong personalities in their own right; however, both never overrode the professional advice and judgement of their Chiefs, a critical factor for the success of British armed forces. They gave the Chiefs operational freedom which helped Britain in the war effort. The logistics was also taken care of since Churchill as the Defence Minister headed 'panel for supply'.

**Defence Minister and the Chiefs** The relationship between the Defence Minister and the Chiefs follow a different trajectory during

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<sup>74</sup> "One thing that Churchill did not do was to provide himself with a MoD. All that he needed was what he called a 'handling machine'. The Cabinet Secretariat's Military Wing under Ismay, assisted by Lieutenant Col Ian Jacob was just what he wanted, and so it was renamed the Office of the MoD and stayed within the Cabinet Office. The Military Co-ordination Committee was replaced by a Defence Committee, headed by the Prime Minister, with two panels, one for operations and the other for supply. Whenever vital but intractable problems arose, Churchill would call together special sub-committees to work with him in finding solutions for them. The Atlantic Committee, the Tank Parliament, and the Night Air Defence were examples of these ad hoc bodies which he spawned and disbanded when their work was done. Ismay records in his memoirs: "It might seem on the face of it that these innovations made little change in existing arrangements: but the practical effects were revolutionary.... There was a remarkable intensification of national effort in every field". See Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit., 192.

<sup>75</sup> "When the Prime Minister asked me how I wanted to present the military proposals of the MoD to the War Cabinet, I said that this role was better filled by Lewin, rather than by me. Lewin was infinitely more important in the War Cabinet than I, the Defence Secretary. And so he should have been. The position of the Defence Secretary in times of war is anomalous. In times of peace, or near peace, the Defence Secretary has to be in charge, but in war that role must be exercised by the Prime Minister, supported by the CDS." See John Nott, op. cit.

peace and in war. In the UK Chiefs have made clear their abundant dislike for reformers like Sandys, Nott and Heseltine (all Secretaries of State) who have pursued reform process without much concern to the views of the Services<sup>76</sup>. However, it is a matter of deliberations that, had these Secretaries of State mentioned above not pursued reforms the way they did the process would have perhaps been even more long drawn with perhaps not very satisfactory outcome. Although, prudence demands that the reforms are undertaken after adequate deliberations of all issues, at times government may have to take difficult decisions in national interest even though there may be reservations from certain quarters. As far as possible the reforms should take care of the sensibilities of all concerned without vitiating the working atmosphere<sup>77</sup>. At times the Defence Ministers have also treated Chiefs with some weariness especially on issues where it is thought that the Services have entrenched position. They have avoided taking the Chiefs into confidence early on relying mainly on small group of civil servants with whom they share a comfort zone. All this does not behold good for the reform process. The personality of the Defence Minister plays an important role and government would do well to show diligence in its selection of Defence Minister. *To undertake reforms on issues which have no consensus government will have to select its points man who has a gift as a reformer, namely an ability of man-management of the bureaucracy, civil and military, political skills to manoeuvre within the government, and an ability to garner support of colleagues within the own party as also those from the opposition*<sup>78</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> “Chiefs are highly suspicious of politically or financially inspired initiatives, and they dislike reformers like Sandys, Nott and Haseltine with political ambitions, whose tenure in the office can often be much shorter lived than the damage that they can inflict”. See Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit., 446.

<sup>77</sup> It may be recalled the manner of reforms undertaken by Duncan Sandys caused stresses in the system and this cost him ministerial position in the cabinet reshuffle.

<sup>78</sup> Spiers, Professor Edward (2010), *Learning from Haldane*, RUSI Analysis, August 19, 2010. Richard Burdon Haldane, the Liberal secretary of state for war (1905-12) had undertaken wide-ranging army reforms, and is widely credited with the despatch of the best organised, trained and equipped expeditionary force that Britain sent to war in the twentieth century. Professor Edward Spiers article studies reasons for Haldane’s success before United Kingdom undertook *Strategic Defence Review*.

During wars and conflict situations the position of the Defence Minister may become somewhat nonconforming to the peace time role. The British war time experience suggests national interest is better served if the PM and the Chiefs share a more direct relationship and the Defence Minister plays a role of a facilitator in this relationship<sup>79</sup>.

The Indian Defence Minister, during peace time, has a more direct role of providing central leadership and also acts as arbitrator for the competing views of the three Services. In most of the countries during peace time single Service interests take precedence over 'defence' issues, turf wars become a norm and the Chiefs are expected to take stand for their Services. The Indian Defence Minister is expected to take decision on competing view points with limited reconciliation in the office of the Defence Secretary. Based on British experience the quality of decision of the Defence Minister is likely to improve provided he has the benefit of advice of the experts to reconcile the competing view points before they are presented to him for decision. In UK the PUS and the CDS and their integrated staff in the Head Office perform this role.

**Civil Bureaucracy and the Military** The study of the UK HDO provides an insight into the manner in which the British have been able to achieve equilibrium between the Services and the civil bureaucracy, more specifically between the CDS and the PUS. Prior to the reforms initiated for greater centralisation of powers for policy formulation and resource allocation, the Services and their Chiefs had direct access to the Parliament through the Service Ministers and thus wielded enormous influence on matters concerning resource control and policy decision. The military staff officers and civil servants were part of the Service Departments and worked for the respective Services under

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<sup>79</sup> "John Nott too played a well judged and significant part. In war, the position of the Secretary of State for Defence, who is not also the Prime Minister, can be anomalous. There has to be a direct relationship between the Prime Minister and the Chiefs. Nott cast himself as something of a devil's advocate in his discussions with the Chiefs within the MoD, ensuring that political requirements and military planning were co-ordinated, and that realism always prevailed". See John Nott, op. cit.

the Chiefs. Post World War II decision was taken to reform the system and make it consistent with the lessons learnt during the war. Subsequent reforms created the appointment of the CDS and ensured civil bureaucracy under the PUS was given a more defining central role. The PUS was made a power centre in his own right by authorising him a secretariat outside of the Service Departments which had the staff and expertise to exercise control over the allocation of resources and provide direction in framing the defence policy. All this happened at the expense of the Services and the Chiefs, limiting their turfs. The British, however, ensured equilibrium between the civil bureaucracy and the military by having the two appointments, CDS and PUS, equal in status and protocol. The appointments have been made jointly responsible for some of the tasks and for some, one of them, is a lead appointment. In areas where the CDS and the PUS share joint responsibility the staff below them report to them equally. The CDS and PUS thus have similar access to staff below them and also to the Secretary of State above.

*The CDS has been made the principal military adviser, is a member of the Defence Board and has presence in the National Security Council while the PUS is the principal civilian adviser on defence, has primary responsibility for policy, finance and planning, and is the Departmental Accounting Officer. There is thus a clear demarcation of tasks between PUS and CDS yet both of them work together in some of the areas of defence ensuring greater equilibrium between the two appointments and civil and military bureaucracy they represent. In fact because of the level of integration of the civil and military officers in the model the issue of equilibrium does not remain central in defining the relationship between civil and military bureaucracy. The British model has thus been able to obviate some of the causes of discord between the civil and the military prevalent in the Indian system including as a result of the hierarchical nature of the Indian HDO.*

## **Reforms within the Military**

**CDS** CDS in the UK is the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, single point military adviser to the government on defence and security issues and would be in charge of operations during peace time crisis

and in war if and when the UK undertakes military operations outside NATO. Post World War II there was a sharp increase in military technology with resultant change in the manner of war fighting. The cost of defence equipment also rose exponentially. All this necessitated the appointment of the CDS. Although, the need for a neutral Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee was felt even during the World War II the appointment was not easy to come. There were many impediments, primary being the rationale that the authority of policy making should not be divorced from the responsibility of execution. During war it is easy to build consensus amongst Services but during peace time when each Service wants a larger share of the limited defence budget it is difficult to come to an agreement<sup>80</sup>. Overtime reforms for greater centralisation and the appointment of the CDS were implemented largely due to the efforts of some of the elected representatives as also some of the Chiefs. In many of the cases the push for reforms was not appreciated by the entrenched interests mainly in the Services. However, the government did take some unpleasant decisions despite misgivings aired by the Chiefs. The resultant model has stood the test of time and has proved its efficacy during the Falkland conflict, the Gulf War and the subsequent intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- **Selection of CDS** Selection of the right candidate is important for any model to succeed. The system of selection must ensure that only the best with proven professional competence, ability to handle South Block bureaucracy and political sensitivities rise to become the CDS. The CDS would be expected to provide strategic direction to the armed forces, provide objective advice to the government and also see that the Chiefs work towards the objectives of defence rather than that of single Service. While deliberating on the issues concerning the appointment of the CDS the government would have to consider the following critical issue.

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<sup>80</sup> See Note 37.

- Should the CDS be selected by rotation from amongst the three Services Chiefs or select the best man for the job based on promulgated qualitative requirements?
- The Indian system of the selection of the officers for tenancing higher ranks is time tested and has number of advantages. It ensures only the best rise to the higher ranks. In the recent appointment of the Chief of the Army Staff the government has given overt concurrence to the system of selection based on seniority. Similarly, selection of CDS by rotation from amongst the three Services and from one of the serving Chiefs, at least in the initial days, would satisfy the three Services and more importantly be a hedge against political nepotism. In India like in the UK the selection of the Chiefs has so far been free from political biases and it would certainly be regrettable if the Chiefs and CDS are selected on political leanings rather than on merit and professional qualities.
- **Increase in Authority of the CDS and its Consequences**

The appointment of the CDS would eventually result in the reduction of role and authority of the Chiefs at the central level. This transition of powers is inevitable in the UK model of reforms. What is of interest is how this transition is handled by all concerned, civil and military? In the UK the transfer of power from the Chiefs to the CDS has been gradual. William Dickson, the first CDS, derived his authority from being the Chairman Chiefs of Staff rather than in the capacity of the CDS. The Service Ministries then wielded major powers with access to the Parliament and the Service Ministers retained seat in the Defence Committee of the Cabinet. As CDS, Dickson was authorised a small briefing staff. The Joint Planning Staff was responsible to him in his capacity as the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and not as the CDS. After almost 60 years of reform process the CDS has become the sole representative of the British armed forces in the Defence Board and is in attendance at the National Security Council. The Chiefs have been relegated to a position of ‘managers’ of their respective Services. If the CDS continues to rely on his position as the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee without devolution of authority in the appointment

of CDS the system would lack dynamism and would continue to produce insipid compromises which the three Services would subscribe. The UK model is one of the models universally appreciated and considered appropriate to fight modern wars. Many of the countries have adopted the model, of course with modifications to suit local conditions. India is seeking to reform its HDO. In its quest for reforms the policy makers will also have to deliberate whether the country needs to tread the beaten path and learn our lessons and then implement an apposite model or study the experiences of other countries and device a model for ourselves without wasting too much time.

- **Problems for the CDS** In the initial days of the reform process the CDS, when appointed, will face a peculiar situation, in that he will be the representative of the Services and the Chiefs to the government and would be expected to pursue cases on behalf of the Services. At the same time there would be inevitable reduction in authority and influence of the Chiefs which the CDS would be expected to implement as government policy. Similar dichotomy made Dickson and Mountbatten unpopular and were looked upon with suspicion by other Chiefs. The government will have to support the CDS on many of the issues critical in the initial days of reforms.

**The Chiefs of Staff Committee after CDS** One of the reasons for the appointment of the CDS is to obviate inherent weaknesses in the COSC system. If so what then should be the future of the COSC after the appointment of the CDS? In the British model of the HDO the Chiefs of Staff Committee continues to play an important role despite the enhanced authority of the CDS and for some very good reasons. These reasons are as much applicable to other countries where COSC has a similar role as it is there<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> In their book *The Chiefs* Bill Jackson and Dwin Bramall have articulated in great detail the reasons to continue with the COSC, these reasons are as much applicable to India as they are to UK and are being highlighted here.

- Principle criticism against the COSC is the divided loyalties of its members, viz. the Chiefs are more concerned about their respective Services rather than the ‘defence’ of the nation. Service Chiefs have been accused of displaying narrow parochial interests of their Services and since there is no one of authority over them the committee nearly always comes out with compromise solutions rather than hard decisions in the interest of the national security. The criticism is a valid argument, however, one has to see this in the light of the fact that Chiefs are the last bastions of their respective Services and if they are not to fight for the right of their Service then who will? Also many times the argument for the ‘defence’ of the nation is largely based on extraneous factors of economy and political considerations rather than hard realities of defence of the country.
- The COSC provides a formal forum for discussion amongst the Chiefs. Professional advice of the committee is not only based on the background and experience of individual Chief rather on the vast accumulated experience of the three Services. “Four heads, each possessing some forty years of personal and three centuries of inherited experience in the armed forces of the Crown, can still be better than one in developing and implementing Britain’s grand strategy, ...”<sup>82</sup>. Individual Chiefs may have biases but as a collective body they are less likely to fail.
- The British model of HDO has been a strong advocate of the belief that power to proffer advice should be tempered by responsibility of accomplishing resultant decision. This principle is as sound today as it was in World War II. The continued functioning of the COSC in present form would ensure that this important principle is not impugned by the appointment of the CDS.

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<sup>82</sup> See Jackson, Bill and Bramall, Dwin, op. cit., 437.

- Despite all the criticism the Chiefs have fulfilled the responsibility of keeping the Services motivated and equipped to face the challenges of existing and potential adversaries. They have ensured that limited defence budgets, frequent down gradation in pay and allowances as also rank equivalence when compared to the civil services did not affect the fighting capability of the troops. Even though the nature of war has changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and political expediency has become even greater factor in decision making; the military realism and service expertise provided by the Chiefs should not be allowed to be tempered by the bureaucrats. The Chiefs themselves have evolved overtime to operate effectively under various political and financial constraints ensuring that the Indian armed forces are battle worthy and have successfully fought wars and battled the terrorists all over the country as also maintained the morale of the forces thereby building a case for this fine institution.
- *Lastly and importantly if the CDS has to be a power centre as is being envisaged he would do well to have support of his professional colleagues who are themselves the heads of their respective Services. The support of the three Chiefs would make it difficult for anyone to ignore the advice of the CDS.*

The composition of the COSC in the UK may be of interest to the strategic thinkers in India. In addition to the CDS, VCDS and the Chiefs the PUS is a co-opted member of the committee and he does attend some of its proceedings. This guarantees tacit concurrence of the PUS to the decisions taken in the committee thereby ensuring smooth passage of the case in higher forums. In addition the meetings are routinely attended by other relevant senior MoD officials and other specialist advisors, including representatives from the Cabinet Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for International Development, and the security and intelligence agencies.

**Relations between CDS and the Chiefs** As discussed earlier in the monograph the changing nature of security threat, method of war fighting and advancement in technology stipulated a change in the manner in which ‘defence’ has to be approached. A requirement has been felt of greater centralisation of strategy, authority to allocate

resources and control of operations. In the UK the solution was the appointment of the CDS and the PUS with their well defined roles and consequent reduction in the influence of the Chiefs in central policy decisions. It was not a smooth transition. Chiefs resisted the dilution in their corporate responsibilities as also infringement in their single service sovereignty. There were apprehensions that the Services may be forced to accept compromise policies and weapon systems much against their wishes. Economics and political expediencies would be deciding dynamics rather than the battle winning factors. Then there was the lurking doubt that the CDS may become a political appointee.

The UK approved the appointment of the CDS in 1957. It has been a slow process of centralisation until 1982, when just before the Falkland war the CDS came of his own. Subsequent Haseltine and Levene reforms recommended greater centralisation of powers in the CDS and PUS and devolved managerial responsibilities of their respective Services in the Chiefs. Post implementation of the Lewin / Nott reforms the PM and the CDS continued to rely on the counsel of the Chiefs. The CDS would take the opinion of the Chiefs before he briefed the War Cabinet during the Falkland war. The situation changed post Haseltine reforms during the Gulf war when the CDS would debrief the Chiefs after his meeting with the War Cabinet, relying mainly on the advice of his planning staff. *So how much of centralisation is good for the system?* This is the question many in India would ask. The Chiefs and the Services are the repository of vast amount of information and experience. The views of the Chiefs if incorporated would improve the quality of advice of the CDS. He would do well to achieve consensus in policies, if not, try and identify points of divergence and their consequences and then annotate them with his own opinion for the benefit of the decision makers. He should present the whole spectrum of advice to the government at the same time harmonise them with political objective.

The CDS would be expected to provide central leadership to the Services. There would be occasions when he may have to go against the popular political opinion, because of military compulsions. He would need the support of the Chiefs if his opinion is to carry any weight with the decision makers. The COSC would provide the right forum. Without this support base the CDS would be another bureaucratic appointment subject to manipulations.

## The Reform Process

In the UK HDO, as brought out earlier, the Services and the Chiefs wielded great authority and they could influence government policy and decisions based on the parochial interest of their respective Services. The lessons learnt in the wars and conflict situations as also the economic situation of the country dictated a change in this approach and a need was felt to reduce their influence. A need was also felt to centralise many of the functions which were previously performed at the level of the Services and the Chiefs. The appointment of the CDS and the PUS, fulfilled the above requirements, reduced the authority of the Chiefs in both relative and absolute terms. These were not, so to say uncontested by the Services which used every means possible, constitutional or otherwise, to put their points of view.

The country can follow either the evolutionary or revolutionary model to reform its defence setup. The British reforms largely fall in the former category. A great number of the reforms to the UK HDO are the result of the changes necessitated by the circumstances. However, there have been occasions when the Secretaries of State and Chiefs, dictated by their commitment to the system, have used the force of their personalities to bring about reforms. Changes which are forced due to circumstances rarely, if ever, cause serious disquiet; on the other hand revolutionary changes though produces quick results may cause stresses in the system. Duncan Sandys and Michael Heseltine pushed for reforms against the wishes of many in the system. The revolutionary reformers relied on small council of advisers paying scant regard to the opinion of the Chiefs. At times this created unpleasant situation even going to the extent of causing Sandys to loose his cabinet position. When Heseltine pursued with his unpopular reforms the Chiefs approached the Prime Minister, a compromise solution was found wherein the blueprint of the reforms was implemented for a period of a year which was then reviewed at the end of the period.

Should India choose to model its HDO on the CDS system, the situation would be quite challenging. Here the bureaucracy as a body enjoys the position of eminence which, if the system has to attain equilibrium, will have to give up its entrenched position. On the other hand the Services, because of the legacy of 1962 Indo-China War, are generally not questioned on matters related to operations. This does

give the Chiefs and the Services autonomy not only in matters of operations but many administrative issues as well. It therefore becomes paradoxical that bureaucracy and the Chiefs whose authority and influence need to be reduced have to perhaps initiate and certainly give concurrence for the reforms. The resolve of the government to undertake reforms and the choice of Defence Minister thus becomes crucial. The Defence Minister should have demonstrated qualities of a reformer, viz. capacity of man-management, besides the political acumen and skill to carry both his cabinet colleagues as also the opposition members. *The reforms themselves should be balanced taking care of ground, economic and political realities and crucially without closing the future options*<sup>83</sup>. The government has in the past instituted committees to recommend reform measures, the Kargil Review Committee (KRC) and the Naresh Chandra Task Force to name two of them. Going by the media reports some in the strategic community feel that the recommendations of the task force may fall short of the expectations. Whatever be the recommendations of the task force it is important that the organisation and the systems and processes are so designed that they should be able to absorb changes which may be pursued and implemented at a later date and with minimum tribulation to the security architecture. This is important since the idea of security is dynamic and subject to frequent changes. A country like India faces multifarious threats. What would be the nature of the next ‘war’? It is extremely difficult to predict. The spectrum of threat is wide, from full scale nuclear war to conventional, sub-conventional, cyber, economic, the nature of threats are many. It is also a matter of debate how to prioritise these threats and factor our assessment while designing our security architecture. *The answer, therefore, lies in designing a flexible system with capacity to change yet robust to withstand rigours of politics and war and not succumb to personalities as it has in the past.*

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<sup>83</sup> “Inskip’s efforts to balance economic risks and rearmament in the late 1930s were crucial if Britain was to navigate successfully the threatening international situation and maintain her own long-term economic stability. Tough choices on defence policy, however, were quickly outdated by rapidly moving events on the continent and adjustments had to be made. The Inskip Defence review demonstrates the importance of balance and crucially of not closing off future options”. See Peden, Professor George (2010), Problems of Setting Strategic Priorities: The Inskip Defence Review of 1937-38, *RUSI Analysis*, August 19, 2010.

**Composition of the Committee** The study of the composition of the Levene Committee is indicative of the inventive thinking in composition of reform committees. The British Government was determined to get the benefit from the best practices available in the military and in the public and private sectors. This reflected in the composition of the Committee. The Committee was headed by Lord Levene<sup>84</sup>, a distinguished businessman with stint in government and banking sector and six other members<sup>85</sup> with equally distinguished careers in the civil. Ursula Brennan, 2<sup>nd</sup> PUS<sup>86</sup> and General Sir Nick Houghton, VCDS provided the defence expertise and departmental standpoint. This approach of the government had armed the committee with expertise available to resolve the issues of MoD.

**Implementation of Reforms** The Indian experience of reforms has been a mixed bag. Whenever, the recommendations of the committees constituted by the Government of India have been implemented they have obviated many of the ills plaguing the system. However, the hard part of the reform process has been the implementation of the recommendations which infringe on the traditional turfs of the executive. The MoD is a complex department and management of defence, its prime responsibility, a multifaceted enterprise. The MoD and its tasks are susceptible to internal and external environments which makes implementation of reforms, in the best of times, a challenge. This has made MoD wary of changes which may upset the existing *time tested and functional* setup. Resistance to change is a normal reaction and to some extent it is healthy. However, “a high resistance is often a direct consequence of a record of unsuccessful change. Such resistance tends to reflect the perceived lack of management commitment to driving and sustaining the change, and

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<sup>84</sup> See Note 51.

<sup>85</sup> Civil members of the Levene Committee included Baroness Noakes, Dr David Allen, Raymond McKeeve, Björn Conway, George Iacobescu and Gerry Grimstone.

<sup>86</sup> Ursula Brennan was replaced by Jon Day on the latter’s appointment to the position of 2nd PUS in February 2011.

the way the resistance itself is managed. To manage resistance to change, there must be single-mindedness from the top, expressed through management actions and consistently applied through the layers. In the case of the MoD, the organisation has many relatively independent elements and layers, and a history of starting a large number of initiatives, but demonstrating relatively low levels of real change. These factors combine to generate an ‘immune system’ within the MoD that is almost perfect. So we cannot underestimate the degree of difficulty of making successful change in such a historically resistive and conditioned environment”<sup>87</sup>.

- **Impediments to Reforms** Reforms should bring fresh approach to the problems. Recycled ideas which focus on symptom rather than the cause of the problem will not find ready acceptance. Besides there are number of other impediments to reforms. Knowledge of these are important before initiating reforms process. Some of the issues of concern are<sup>88</sup>:
  - **Leadership** The UK experience has been that whenever the reforms have been driven from the top they have nearly always succeeded. Realisation of necessity of reforms by the government is a pre-requisite to undertake reforms in the MoD. Given the manner in which the Indian MoD is organised holistic changes to the organisation is possible if the Defence Minister, Defence Secretary and the Chiefs

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<sup>87</sup> At the first Shrivvenham Acquisition Conference, *Bob Barton*, managing director of Niteworks, coined a concept to define the difficulty of driving successful change within the MoD. He used the term ‘immune system’, and he described the phenomenon of resistance to change in the MoD as analogous to the reaction of the human body’s immune system to something it wants to reject. The article was written in the context of acquisitions for the British armed forces. See Barton, Bob (2011), “Driving Change in the Ministry of Defence – Are We Learning the Lessons?”, *RUSI Defence Systems* Spring.

<sup>88</sup> For lessons from the past organisational reforms in the United Kingdom see “Defence Reform An independent report into the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence”, op. cit., 78-80.

are united behind the reforms. They would need to dedicate their time and resources to pursue reforms, which is hard to come, considering the busy schedule and the short tenures of these appointments.

- **Vested Interests** Vested interests are usually strong in the defence. The three Services and the bureaucracy have a very strong identity in the department. These interests do succeed, on many occasions, to resist the change they dislike. The answer to this problem perhaps lies in creating an integrated organisation where individual service identities will get diffused.
- **Culture** Defence as an institution is not conducive to change. It is tradition bound and tends to 'perpetuate conservatism and insularity' mainly because the senior cadre of the military are home grown with strong sense of single Service identities. On the other hand *status quo* bureaucrats tend to believe that the problems of civil military relations, which at times manifests, in the functioning of the MoD is an 'overhype'<sup>89</sup> perpetuated largely by retired Service officers. The resistance to change thus becomes stronger because of 'culture', 'immunity to change' and scepticism about the benefits of anything new.
- **Implementation of Reforms** The implementation of reforms many times fails because adequate attention is not paid in terms of finance, manpower, training and leadership. Unusual circumstance demand unusual solutions. Midway through the reforms in the UK in early 1960s Mountbatten was to retire after his stipulated tenure of three years as CDS. Prime Minister Macmillan initially contemplated with the idea of making him a 'non political' Minister of Defence so that he could pursue reforms which had been initiated earlier. Later the Prime Minister extended his tenure to five

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<sup>89</sup> Interview with a senior Indian Official.

years to enable him to complete the task at hand. Macmillan's decision only reiterates necessity of well thought off, innovative solutions for atypical problems.

**Follow up Actions** The follow up actions to the recommendations of the committee form a significant part of the reform process. Involvement of parliament provides legitimacy and a sense of urgency to the process<sup>90</sup>. The Levene Committee went a step further to recommend that the Committee itself should be reconvened on an annual basis for three years to report the progress to the Secretary of State who would then report to the Parliament. This will enable the committee, which is in know of the nuances of its recommendations, keep an effective check on the implementation process. In the Indian context, implementation has been a bane of all reform process and the decision makers would do well to take lessons from the British reform process.

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<sup>90</sup> In 1997, the British Government had launched a Defence Review. Subsequent to the completion of the Strategic Defence Review, three follow-up up-dating policy exercises were conducted by the MoD to ensure that feedback is provided on the implementation of Strategic Defence Review's recommendations, and to incorporate and explain defence policy and capability changes that were being introduced to reflect changed strategic and resourcing circumstances. The latest update was issued publicly (in Parliament, hard-copy and electronically) in July 2002. See Ministry of Defence, *The Strategic Defence Review: A New Chapter* (Cm 5566 Vol. 1, July 2002).

## CONCLUSION

India inherited its defence security management system including the HDO from the British in 1947. Lord Ismay was the principal architect of India's security management system and he played a major role in designing the system in the UK. In 1947 the lessons of World War II were being concretised and realisation had set in that the organisation which had guided the UK to victory was perhaps not ideal and there was a need for reforms. Reforms, more so military reforms are difficult to implement for variety of reasons; vested interests, cultural reasons, cautious approach of the elected representatives etc. Ismay designed security architecture for India, very similar to the one in UK and a legacy of World War II. Over a period of time in the UK the lessons of the war began to be implemented and the security system was modified. The appointment of Chairman of the COSC was created which subsequently became the CDS. To begin with the CDS was not an effective appointment and was later vested with adequate authority to command the armed forces and was made the single point military adviser to the Secretary of State and the government. Similar and more radical changes were introduced in other branches of the HDO and the whole security management system was revolutionised. It took more than four decades to make the CDS 'effective'. It is not as if an ideal system has been achieved; even today the reforms are a process in continuation.

India on the other hand continues with its 'inherited' system, despite a major military debacle where the large part of the blame was apportioned to the higher decision making authority and its systems and processes. The military debacle was followed by a 'stalemate' in 1965 and victory in 1971. Many strategic thinkers credit the victory in 1971 to reasons other than HDO or its systems and processes. In 1999 post Kargil War the government by its own admission acknowledged that the HDO needs to be redesigned. The task forces constituted in the aftermath of the Kargil War recommended radical reforms which were perhaps not a day too soon and should have been implemented post-haste. It is approximately decade and half since those recommendations were made and some of the non-controversial ones

implemented. There is no indication from the government that it wishes to implement the balance of the recommendations which will revolutionise and modernise the Indian security establishment.

The defence reforms in UK perhaps would not have been possible but for political astuteness, bureaucratic prudence, military incisiveness and years of perseverance. These besides the reforms were not without share of controversies, wrangling, undercutting, behind the back dealings *et al.* The reform process as in any democracy was a result of introspective deliberations and public opinion often resulting in over cautious decision making and guarded progress. However, there were a few, in the military and amongst the elected representatives, who had reasonable comprehension with regards to the final shape of the security architecture and the processes and they took on the onerous task of reforming the set up against determined opposition from the vested interest. The British model has stood the test of time and has proved its efficacy during operations. Their model and the reform process have lessons for India.

# Appendices

*APPENDIX -A*

**APPOINTMENT EQUIVALENCE BETWEEN  
THE UNITED KINGDOM AND THE  
INDIAN SYSTEM**

Secretary of Defence	Raksha Mantri.
Permanent Under Secretary	Defence Secretary.
2 <sup>nd</sup> Permanent Under Secretary	In the Indian system we do not have the appointment of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Permanent Under Secretary.
Chief of Defence Staff	In the Indian system we do not have the appointment of the CDS.
Vice Chief of Defence Staff	In the Indian system we do not have the appointment of the VCDS.
Chief of Imperial General Staff	Chief of the Army Staff.

**ABBREVIATIONS**

Chief Scientific Adviser	CSA.
Chief of Defence Staff	CDS.
Chiefs of Staff Committee	COSC.
Chief of Defence Procurement	CDP.
Chief of Imperial General Staff	CIGS.
Committee of Imperial Defence	CID.
Deputy Chief of Defence Staff	DCDS.
Higher Defence Organisation	HDO.
Ministry of Defence	MoD.
Permanent Joint Headquarter	PJHQ.
Permanent Under Secretary	PUS.
Royal Air Force	RAF.
Strategic Defence and Security Review	SDSR.
Vice Chief of Defence Staff	VCDS.
2nd Permanent Under Secretary	2 <sup>nd</sup> PUS.

All is not right with the Indian Higher Defence Organisation (HDO) became public knowledge, perhaps for the first time, after the Kargil War in 1999. There have been significant changes in the geo-strategic situation and the nature of threat faced by India over the years and yet little has changed in the higher defence management and the HDO of the country. There is an urgent need for a greater understanding and a clearer vision of the security management of the country and the road map to implement the desired reform. It is in the area of the reform process, the HDO structure and the inter-relationship amongst the principal constituents of the HDO that India can benefit from the best practices available in United Kingdom and the world.

This monograph is the first in the series of two monographs. The second deals with lessons for India from the analyses of the United States reforms to its HDO. The two monographs are intended to provide stand alone and focused studies to those interested in the higher defence management and study of HDO.



**Col Rajneesh Singh** was commissioned in Infantry in December 1989 and has varied operational, staff and instructional experience. He has commanded a Rashtriya Rifles company and battalion in Jammu and Kashmir. He has been a military observer in Congo for a year. His staff experience includes tenure in the Military Operations

Directorate and in Military Secretary's Branch. The officer has also been an instructor at the NDA, Khadakwasla and at DSSC, Wellington. Col Rajneesh Singh is presently pursuing PhD at the JNU, New Delhi.



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### Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

No.1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg,  
Delhi Cantt., New Delhi - 110 010  
Tel.: (91-11) 2671-7983 Fax: (91-11) 2615 4191  
E-mail: [contactus@idsa.in](mailto:contactus@idsa.in) Website: <http://www.idsa.in>