

IDSA Monograph Series
No. 6 July 2012

A Call for Change: Higher Defence Management in India



BD Jayal, VP Malik, Anit Mukherjee and Arun Prakash



IDS A Monograph Series

No. 6 July 2012

**A Call for Change: Higher Defence
Management in India**

**Air Marshal BD Jayal, General VP Malik,
Dr. Anit Mukherjee and Admiral Arun Prakash**



**Institute for Defence
Studies & Analyses**

© Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, sorted in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photo-copying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA).

ISBN: 978-93-82169-05-5

Disclaimer: It is certified that views expressed and suggestions made in this Monograph have been made by the author in his personal capacity and do not have any official endorsement.

First Published: July 2012

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: idsa@vsnl.com
Website: <http://www.idsa.in>

Cover shows Prime Minister Nehru with Defence Minister Krishna Menon in September 1961. Source: *bharat-rakshak.com*. Second photo shows Prime Minister Manmohan Singh addressing the Combined Commanders' Conference at New Delhi, September 13 2010. Source: http://www.iptu.co.uk/images/india_digest/india_193.jpg

Cover &
Layout by: Geeta Kumari

“No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come”

-Victor Hugo



Contents

<i>Acknowledgement</i>	7
1. Introduction: A Call for Change.....	9
<i>Anit Mukherjee</i>	
2. Defence Reforms: Contemporary Debates and Issues.....	18
<i>Admiral Arun Prakash</i>	
3. Higher Defence Management and Defence Reforms: Towards Better Management Techniques.....	37
<i>General VP Malik</i>	
4. Management and Delivery of Joint Military Capabilities.....	52
<i>Air Marshal BD Jayal</i>	
5. Next Generation Defence Reforms: A Roadmap.....	72
<i>Anit Mukherjee</i>	
Contributors.....	77



Acknowledgements

This monograph could not have been possible without the institutional support from IDSA. For this I would like to thank the Director General, Dr. Arvind Gupta, and the Deputy Director General, Brigadier Rumel Dahiya, for their support. In turn this project benefited from a joint conference held with Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) on April 30-May 01, 2012. I would like thank all the participants who took part in this conference. Special thanks are due to our RUSI counterparts- Malcolm Chalmers, Jonathan Eyal and, especially, Mark Phillips. Colonel Vivek Chadha, Aparna Krishna, Ameeta Narang and Jasleen Lonial, constituted the team at IDSA who deserve recognition for putting this conference together. Last, but not least, I would like to thank Air Marshal BD Jayal, General VP Malik and Admiral Arun Prakash for their time and efforts and for putting up with my editorial requests. This monograph is aimed at generating a debate on higher defence management and, hopefully, ushering in the next generation of defence reforms. It is therefore dedicated to the current and future generation of men and women in uniform.

Anit Mukherjee

New Delhi, July 2012



1

Introduction: A Call for Change

by Anit Mukherjee

In recent times the study of defence reforms and higher defence management in India has undergone a renaissance of sorts. A decade after the post-Kargil national security transformation there is an increased debate surrounding defence reforms and higher defence management. Some recent controversies have also focused attention on civil-military relations and overall defence management. Most prominently, controversy around a leaked letter suggests that India's overall "defence preparedness" is suffering due to institutional weaknesses.¹ Most analysts agree that despite incremental changes the post-Kargil defence reforms have largely 'failed to deliver.'² As a result of these concerns and resultant public pressure the Government of India, in June 2011, appointed the Naresh Chandra Committee to revisit the defence reforms process. This committee has recently submitted its report which is under consideration by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).

While there are some media speculations about the recommendations made by the Naresh Chandra Committee however these are, at best, tentative. An honest appraisal of the functioning and outcome of this Committee can be made only when a public version of its report is made available. Even then it may take a few years to truly evaluate the changes, if any. However, despite the dangers of taking a first cut at writing history, there are some issues surrounding this Committee that merit attention and perhaps criticism. Three of them are discussed here. First, the setting up of the committee unfortunately did not trigger a debate on defence management or defence reforms in India. For

¹ See Saikat Datta, "DNA exclusive: Gen VK Singh tells PM some hard truths," *Daily News and Analysis (DNA)*, March 28, 2012.

² See mine, "Failing to Deliver: Post Crises Defence Reforms in India, 1998-2010," *ISIA Occasional Paper No. 18*, March 2011.

instance, it was never debated whether India should emulate the US Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff system with theater commands or the British Chief of Defence Staff structure with its Permanent Joint Headquarters. Or for that matter any other system in vogue in any other democracy. Indeed, most analysts are unclear about the differences, advantages and weaknesses of these institutional structures. There are other issues too that could have been debated, like the desirability and efficiency of the current geographically separated Commands in the three services and whether one should impose joint theater commands.³ Or whether civilian billets should be created in War Colleges to invigorate professional military education. Ordinarily this could be viewed as a singular failing of India's strategic community. However, in this case, the Naresh Chandra Committee may be partially at fault. Unlike the Kargil Review Committee, the Naresh Chandra Committee functioned in near-total secrecy and it was not entirely clear to others in the strategic community about its scope and mandate.⁴ As a result the strategic community was neither informed nor engaged. This, of course, stands in stark contrast to the rich debates that preceded the Goldwater-Nichols Act in the US, and other countries.

Second, the Naresh Chandra Committee was an entirely apolitical committee and, more importantly, did not ascertain the views of political parties on issues relating to defence management and reforms. Hence it does not stand to logic that the views of political parties on the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) was not ascertained when by the government's own admission the appointment was held up, as "this kind of a decision needed a political consensus."⁵ The lack of political involvement in this effort then may come back to haunt

³ For a discussion of this issue see mine, "Facing Future Challenges: Defence Reforms in India," *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 156, No.5, October-November 2011, pp. 30-37.

⁴ The Kargil committee had requested for inputs from the general public on matters pertaining to national security in newspaper advertisements. By contrast, it does not appear that even senior field commanders or faculty at military war colleges were consulted by the Naresh Chandra Committee.

⁵ See Standing Committee on Defence, *Thirty Sixth Report: Status of Implementation of Unified Command for Armed Forces* (Lok Sabha Secretariat: New Delhi, 2009), p.5. Also see Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 1225, answered on 02 August 2010, <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult15.aspx?qref=89959>

the implementation of the committee report. One could also legitimately question the composition of the committee as it consisted mainly of former senior bureaucrats—both civilian and military.⁶ Most former bureaucrats, especially those who reach the top of their organisations, have to deal with a dissonance that comes with accepting that their organisations might be flawed. Many can do so, however most cannot, and hence weaknesses are conveniently blamed either on an external agency or on factors beyond their control.⁷ More worryingly, if certain media reports are true, there are indications that an attempt has been made to politicise defence reforms.⁸ This would be an unfortunate development as national security, just like our post-independence wars, should not be treated as associated with any political party, ideology or coalition. Instead, these issues should be above party politics.

Finally, the Naresh Chandra Committee did not conduct any independent research and instead based its recommendations on the testimony offered by different agencies.⁹ In turn these agencies, for example the respective Service Headquarters, for obvious reasons either glossed over their own failings or did not conduct research into their own claims and assertions. It is not surprising then that most organisations blamed some other agency for perceived or real weaknesses. Hence, for instance, it is not evident that this Committee examined previous files of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) to ascertain its efficacy. Or, for that matter, it did not examine the files of the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS), Service Headquarters or Ministry of Defence offices to identify problem areas.

However the purpose of this monograph is not to conduct a *post-mortem* of the Naresh Chandra Committee. Despite these criticisms

⁶ There was only one non-official, Dr. Manoj Joshi, on this committee.

⁷ It is important to note that while Admiral Arun Prakash was a member of this committee yet his paper in this collection proves that such intellectual honesty and flexibility is possible.

⁸ See Coomi Kapoor, “Filtering out NDA,” *Indian Express*, June 03, 2012, <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/filtering-out-nda/957220/>

⁹ This account is based on an interview with a member of the committee who wishes to remain unnamed. A similar methodology was adopted for the Kargil Review Committee and the Arun Singh Committee Report to the Group of Ministers; see mine, “The Future is Now,” *Times of India*, June 17, 2011.

the setting up of the Naresh Chandra Committee, its deliberations, the expected public release and implementation of its report is commendable in its own right. For once, despite the absence of a crisis or precipitating event, the Indian state has displayed a willingness to acknowledge problems in higher defence management and proactively attempt to fix them.¹⁰ This effort must be welcomed. This monograph intends to complement the efforts of the Committee and, hopefully, trigger a debate among the strategic community. It does so by presenting ideas and offers a roadmap for the next generation of defence reforms. Accordingly this collection presents prescriptive analysis from three of the most distinguished soldier-scholars of their generation—Air Marshal BD Jayal, General VP Malik and Admiral Arun Prakash. Besides their public service these officers have served at the very top of their organisations and have remained engaged with the strategic community through their writings. As such this ‘tri-services’ effort should fetch attention at the highest levels, more so because all them make one common argument—the need for greater political involvement in defence reforms and higher defence management in general. The rest of this chapter discusses the salient features of their papers and explains the significance of their arguments.

Admiral Arun Prakash has had the unique and solitary honor of serving on two of the most significant reform initiatives in recent times. He was a member of the Arun Singh Committee on the “Management of Defence,” which functioned under a Group of Ministers. This was a follow up to the Kargil Review Committee and was one of the most significant reform initiatives in the history of the Indian military. More recently he was a member of the Naresh Chandra Committee, which just submitted its report to the government. Besides this he was the Chief of Naval Staff and concurrently held the post of Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) for close to two years. As such he is in an ideal position to write on “Defence Reforms: Contemporary Debates and Issues.” He begins his paper suggesting that at the time

¹⁰ While the precise reason for setting up this committee is, as yet, unclear however it can be assumed that it was created in response to criticism from many members of the strategic community.

of independence “two surreal perceptions” emerged among India’s political class—that as a pacifist country we would have no enemies and, more importantly, the Indian military was a “mercenary force” loyal to the colonial rulers and therefore “deserved to be shown its place.” Rejecting both notions, Admiral Prakash argues that the military made a “crucial contribution” to both the freedom struggle and the post-independence stabilisation phase. This historical account hints at what has been known for long—the distrust between the politicians and soldiers at that time amidst fears, real or imagined, of praetorian tendencies. One could argue then that the roots of a separation between the political class and the military stems from this historical baggage. Later in his paper Admiral Arun Prakash makes a more in-depth analysis of contemporary events and the current “crisis of confidence” in civil-military relations and argues that, in part, it stems from the flawed structure of higher defence management. He then discusses critical issues like the equation between the Ministry of Defence and Service Headquarters, functioning of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, force modernisation and indigenisation voids, paucity of domain knowledge in the civilian bureaucracy and impediments to reform. In the penultimate section he examines the political context surrounding defence issues and argues that there is a “lack of adequate political involvement in national security issues.” He concludes with a stirring appeal to India’s political class and suggests the next steps that need to be taken *after* the Naresh Chandra Committee. In light of its significance it is worthwhile reproducing this in its entirety:

“it may be prudent to place the Naresh Chandra Committee Report, for examination, either before the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Defence or a specially empowered multi-party Parliamentary Commission. Assisted by a team of experts, the Commission could provide oversight as well as the legislative leverage to ensure speedy and resolute implementation of reforms. Such a Commission could also give serious consideration to the embodiment of certain important recommendations in the form of an Act of Parliament.”

In sum, he advocates for an Act of parliament, similar perhaps to the Goldwater-Nichols Act enacted by the US Congress, and argues for greater political and parliamentary interest. His appeal to place the report of the Naresh Chandra Committee to the Standing Committee on Defence to trigger a larger debate is commendable and should be

acted upon. However, in light of the previous actions and recommendations made by the Standing Committee, this appeal might be a little idealistic. Hence, for instance, in 1994 the Standing Committee on Defence had made a fervent appeal to release a public version of the Arun Singh led Committee on Defence Expenditure Report.¹¹ The Defence Ministry refused to comply and till date has not released this report.¹² This suggests that the Standing Committee maybe powerless to place demands on the government. More recently, according to some media reports, it appeared as if the Standing Committee on Defence was poised to play a proactive role by calling the three Service Chiefs for a joint testimony in response to the leak of the Army Chief's letter on the lack of "defence preparedness." This unfortunately did not happen.¹³ It appears therefore that the Standing Committee on Defence is unable, or worse unwilling, to play a more active role in reforming national security institutions.

The next paper is by former Chief of Army Staff and Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee, General VP Malik. Besides being at the helm of affairs during the 1999 Kargil War, General Malik is among the few senior army officers to have written extensively in various newspapers and journals and remained intellectually engaged with the strategic community. His paper is titled "Higher management of defence and defence reforms: Towards better management techniques." His paper begins by an often repeated refrain about the lack of strategic culture in India. He then argues that this can be overcome when there is "adequate awareness and consciousness about defence and security amongst policy makers, and we create suitable defence management structure and techniques." General Malik also shares the sentiments of Admiral Arun Prakash of the post-independence disconnect between the politicians and the military. Next he describes the antiquated structure

¹¹ See Standing Committee on Defence, *Second Report: Demand for Grants (1994-95)* (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, April 1994), p. 13.

¹² Shockingly, in response to a recent Right to Information (RTI) request, the Ministry claimed that they could not locate this report; see "MoD can't locate five key reports on military reforms," *Times of India*, October 14, 2011.

¹³ See "Service Chiefs unlikely to be called by parliamentary standing committee," *Times of India*, April 13, 2012.

and functional problems, much of which he illustrates from his own experience, which stem from the structure of higher defence management. After briefly describing the post-Kargil defence reforms, General Malik then explores four concepts that he feels makes an even more compelling case for organisational restructuring—changing strategic environment, likely nature of future conflicts, emerging trends in functioning of the military and management of nuclear weapons. Before concluding he makes raises some points for future discussions and then makes some recommendations.

The final paper is by Air Marshal BD Jayal who had a distinguished service career including heading operational commands. After retirement he has been a regular contributor to magazines and journals and is among the more thoughtful members of the strategic community. His paper is titled, “Management and delivery of joint military capabilities.” Unlike the others this paper focuses more on the operational aspects with a special focus on jointness. He begins the paper by arguing that jointness in India has been left almost entirely on the military and is considered to be an issue under their domain. Air Marshal Jayal rejects this notion on the grounds that it is impossible to neatly divide the military and civilian domains and moreover argues that this policy has created “deep fissures” among the Armed Forces. His paper then is divided into three sections. In the first section he analyses recent military operations including Operation Pawan (Sri Lanka, 1987-1990), Operation Cactus (Maldives 1988) and the 1999 Kargil war. His analysis of Operation Pawan relies to a large extent on his experience in Air Headquarters at that time and he argues that “left to themselves, [field formations] worked in true spirit of jointness and shorn of inter service parochialism.” This claim however must be put in context. While there is no doubt that lower formations often work on well on inter-personal relationships, however Operation Pawan revealed major problems in jointness and planning for joint operations.¹⁴ To his credit in his analysis of lessons emerging, Air Marshal Jayal concedes that the current structure has not functioned in an optimum

¹⁴ For more on this see Kalyanraman, “Major Lessons from Operation Pawan for Future Regional Stability Operations,” *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 6, No.3, July 2012 (forthcoming).

manner and argues in favor of a Joint Chief- an idea that he develops later in his paper.

His next section examines three issues of contemporary relevance. First is higher defence management wherein he makes a point similar to the other two papers—the woeful lack of political attention to defence management. In addition to his analysis of relations between the Service Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence, Air Marshal Jayal emphasises the need for declassification to learn from the past. This is a noteworthy recommendation especially since it has not got the attention it deserves among the military community.¹⁵ The second issue examined by him is the role of Service Headquarters in perpetuating jointness. He begins with a bold assertion that “the institution of the Chiefs of Staff Committee [COSC] has neither contributed to integrated operations nor succeeded in resolving inter-service professional differences.” While this argument is well known among informed analysts, Air Marshal Jayal has done a service by speaking truth to power. He also correctly adds that problems in jointness stems not at the operational level but from higher defence management and unless this is restructured jointness will remain an issue. An added problem is the Chief of the Service wearing two hats.¹⁶ The third issue discussed by Air Marshal Jayal pertains to operational aspects of jointness. In this discussion he brings out the problems stemming from the geographical location of different operational commands and argues in favor of “legislative intervention.” The next section of his paper, like the discussion in General Malik’s paper, examines the changing dynamics of technology and warfare. In the final section he makes some recommendations and offers a roadmap for change.

All the writers present interesting perspectives based on a combination of their experience, research and study of national security over the last few decades. While their papers offer many similar insights, however

¹⁵ For a discussion of this issue see PK Gautam “The need for Renaissance of Military History and Modern War Studies in India,” *IDSA Occasional Paper No. 21*, 2011; also see mine “Republic of Opinions,” *Times of India*, January 18, 2012.

¹⁶ For a larger discussion on this issue see mine, “Facing Future Challenges: Defence Reforms in India,” *RUSI Journal*, Vol. 156, No.5, October-November 2011, p.33.

three broad themes are particularly important. First, all three papers highlight to the disconnect between the political class and the military and argue that this is unhealthy for civil-military relations and for national security policy making. This confirms what is more widely known that, exceptions apart, politicians rarely interfere in what is considered to be in the internal affairs of the armed forces.¹⁷ It is not surprising therefore that there is a narrative which argues that the Indian military is “not under civilian control but is under bureaucratic control.” The second theme found in all the papers refers to the flawed interaction between the Ministry of Defence and the Service Headquarters. This insight too is not all that surprising but it does not take away from the urgency of fixing it. Significantly, both General VP Malik and Admiral Arun Prakash blame the current spate of crises in civil-military relations, in part, on the structural interaction between the Defence Ministry and the Service Headquarters.¹⁸ Finally, Admiral Arun Prakash and Air Marshal Jayal feel that a legislative act of parliament, on the lines of the US Goldwater-Nichols Act, is required to transform higher defence management in India. Air Marshal Jayal recommends the appointment of a Blue Ribbon Commission, a demand articulated by many others in the strategic community including the venerable K. Subrahmanyam.¹⁹ Ignoring such calls for legislative intervention would now appear to be an act of political irresponsibility.

The last chapter of this monograph offers a series of recommendations and suggests a way ahead to engineer the next generation of defence reforms. This, of course, is not an exhaustive list but is a humble attempt to help policy-makers. Above all else this monograph aims to engineer a debate that we believe is of vital national concern, without claiming to hold all the answers.

¹⁷ For a perspective on this see mine, “Absent Dialogue,” *Seminar*, No. 599, July 2009 and Srinath Raghavan, “Civil-Military Relations in India: The China Crisis and After,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2009.

¹⁸ For more about the recent crises in civil-military relations see Shashank Joshi, “The Indian Mutiny That Wasn’t,” *Foreign Policy*, 05 April 2012; also see Catherine Cheney, “In India, Latest Strain in Civil-Military Relations May Create Urgency Needed for Reforms,” *World Politics Review*, April 10, 2012

¹⁹ For a good analysis of this demand see the following blog roll: <http://pragmatic.nationalinterest.in/2008/10/27/blue-ribbon-commission-faq/>

2

Defence Reforms: Contemporary Debates and Issues

by Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd)

“They had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing...” -Talleyrand²⁰

The Indian Soldier and the State

It is a sad commentary on the lack of maturity of India’s democracy that, 65 years after independence, a trust-deficit, bordering on suspicion, appears to persist between the political elite and the armed forces. The unsavoury and unprincipled ambush of the armed forces by a sensationalistic report in the *Indian Express* could not have been laid without receptive minds, and even helping hands, within the Establishment.²¹ Cunningly contrived, using a combination of coy innuendo and screaming headlines, to proclaim that the government had been “spooked” by intelligence reports of sudden troop movements towards Delhi, the newspaper attack was followed by an interregnum of deafening silence; after which both the PM and RM hastened to issue denials.

However, the newspaper’s purpose had been served. It is unlikely that these protestations served to dispel the germ of suspicion planted in the minds of citizens about India’s, so far, “apolitical” armed forces; had they finally decided to go the way of many neighbourhood militaries and considered a *coup d’état* ? The presence, in South Block, of a

²⁰ 19th century statesman Talleyrand’s acerbic remark about the Bourbons who, once restored back to power, relapsed into their old ways.

²¹ In April 2012 the Indian Express carried a highly controversial story on allegedly unplanned troop movement and resultant civil-military discord, see Shekhar Gupta, Ritu Sarin and Pranab Dhal Samanta, “The January night Raisina Hill was spooked: Two key Army units moved towards Delhi without notifying the Government,” *Indian Express*, April 04, 2012.

querulous Army Chief, brooding over a personal grouse, possibly served to lend credence to such speculation.

A man in uniform can, today, sense the cognitive lack of empathy, if not antipathy, to his cause in the political establishment of all shades, because of certain skewed perspectives inherited from the pre-1947 era. It is essential to squarely address this issue at the outset, since its implications tend to recur in this paper.

Mahatma Gandhi's firm adherence to the principle of non-violence throughout India's independence struggle has no parallel in history. However a misinterpretation of his unique vision and profound values led to the emergence of two surreal perceptions amongst India's political leadership. For one, they were convinced that since a pacifist India would have no enemies, the armed forces would become redundant after independence. Their second conviction was that the Indian Army was a mercenary force which had been used as a tool by the British to suppress the freedom movement, and deserved to be shown its place. Let me dwell briefly on both perceptions.

Major General KM Cariappa (later the first Indian Commander-in-chief) called on Gandhiji in December 1947 and sought his advice on how he should put across the concept of *ahimsa* to his soldiers whose *dharma* was to fight for the nation. The Mahatma pondered over the question and replied: "*I am still groping in the dark for the answer. I will find it and give it to you one day.*" A month later he fell to an assassin's bullet, and Cariappa never received an answer. But by then the first of these illusions already lay shattered as Pakistani supported tribal hordes came pouring into Kashmir in October 1947. It was the only the gallant and dogged year-long campaign waged by the Indian Army which could save a major part of Jammu & Kashmir from the marauders.

The politicians were right that the British Indian Army had served the King-Emperor loyally in many wars, in India and abroad. But after the string of early British defeats in WW II, Indian prisoners of war (PoWs) in Singapore, Germany and Italy were confronted with the most awesome moral dilemma that a soldier can ever face; a choice between the oath they had given to the King and the chance to fight for freedom of the motherland, being offered by Netaji Subhash Bose. After agonizing over this quandary, and fully recognizing the terrible

consequences of either option, many Indian officers and jawans decided for their motherland, with the result that 3000 Indian PoWs were formed into the *Legion Freies Indien* or Free Indian Legion as a unit of the German *Wehrmacht* 40,000 out of 45,000 PoWs in Singapore joined the *Azad Hind Fauj* or Indian National Army (INA) as it was commonly known.

The story of these expatriate Indian warriors is a romantic but forgotten chapter in India's freedom struggle. Suffice it to say that the *Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind* (Provisional Government of Free India) formed in Singapore by Bose in 1943, formally, declared war on the British Empire, and INA units fought alongside the Japanese 15th Army in its abortive invasion of India with "*Dilli Chalo*" as their inspiring slogan.

In early 1946, politically-conscious, sailors of the Royal Indian Navy mutinied, and the insurrection spread right across the country, with units of the RIAF, Army Signal Corps and Electrical and Mechanical Engineers joining their naval comrades in revolt. These events not only inspired and galvanized the freedom movement in India, but also struck fear into British hearts. General Wavell, the C-in-C admitted in a secret report: "*It is no use shutting one's eye to the fact that any Indian soldier worth his salt is a Nationalist...*" Disciplined Services never dwell on mutinies, regardless of the cause, and that is why these events rarely find mention in our armed forces, but the powerful impact on the British *Sarkar* of these acts of great moral courage, must not be disparaged, belittled or forgotten.

The phase immediately post-Independence too, was extremely difficult for our fledgling republic. To forget the sterling role played by the armed forces during the violence and turbulence of partition, and in integrating the recalcitrant princely states would be an act of rank ingratitude. Over the years, as our glaring strategic naiveté repeatedly led to adventurism by our neighbours in 1947, 1962, 1965, and 1999, it was invariably the gallantry and patriotism of the armed forces which saved the nation from disintegration and dishonour. The victory of Indian arms in the 1971 Bangladesh War will remain a glorious episode in the dismal history of sub-continental conflicts.

This foray into the past was meant to dispel prevailing myths, and to bring home the crucial contribution of the armed forces to India's

freedom movement as well the post-independence stabilisation phase. With this as background this paper begins by examining some recent developments in the national security arena. Next the paper explains some of the major anomalies in higher defence management, and explains the impediments to reforms. Before concluding this paper analyzes the role of politicians in the entire process.

Recent Events

The years 2011 and 2012 will be long remembered for the trauma and turmoil that they inflicted, both on the armed forces fraternity, as well as the larger national security establishment in India. The huge predicament that faced the Ministry of Defence (MoD) towards end-2011 was, seemingly, precipitated by a sequence of impetuous and unorthodox actions of a single high-ranking individual. However, it served to expose, in detail, the shortcomings and lacunae in India's archaic system of Higher Defence Management (HDM) that the country has been grappling with, for many decades - with limited success.

A noteworthy feature of the *contretemps* was that the media not only indulged in intrusive commentary and debate on all aspects of the controversial issues raised, but also managed to precipitate the minor "crisis of confidence" mentioned earlier. Much of the farce that we saw enacted during this episode need not have occurred, had the HDM system functioned as it does in other major democracies. And herein lay a major irony - in the midst of all this a Task Force constituted by the Cabinet has been at work since July 2011 to recommend reform in the national security architecture. Its recommendations were recently submitted and await consideration of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS).

First intimations of the deep schism between the MoD and the armed forces came into the public domain in the year 1998, when a difference of opinion between a Service Chief and the Raksha Mantri (RM), snowballed rapidly into a confrontation. The result was the unprecedented and peremptory dismissal of Navy Chief Vishnu Bhagwat.

In contrast, the controversy that arose in 2011 seemed to unfold in slow-motion. The serving Army Chief progressively escalated his quest

for redressal of a personal grievance to the full extent of limits laid down by Service procedures. Not having received satisfaction, he then took the remarkable step of asking the Supreme Court to adjudicate on his plea.

The General was, no doubt, exercising the constitutional right of every citizen to approach a court of law for remedy; except that this represented an unprecedented and extreme action by a Service Chief against the very Government that he happened to serve. Following an adverse Supreme Court verdict, he made a series of dramatic and self-serving “disclosures” which provided further grist for sustained media speculation.

With a dozen TV channels hosting panel discussions day in and day out, emotion-charged anchors as well as putative “defence experts” undertook public dissection and analysis of many sensitive national security issues. More heat than light having been generated in TV studios, the citizenry, as well as rank and file of the armed forces, has been left confused, bewildered and considerably alarmed about the glaring breaches in the national security edifice that had been suddenly revealed to them.

The main issues which have attracted media focus and serious public concern in the recent past can be summarized as follows:

- The Army Chief’s grievance about the “incorrect” registration of his date of birth in army HQ records, and the dismal haplessness of the defence bureaucracy as well as the entire political leadership to resolve the issue in a discrete and judicious manner.
- The Army Chief’s media allegation about an attempt to bribe him, which focused attention on corruption engendered by the massive arms-import business, and India’s abject failure to indigenise and attain self sufficiency in defence systems.
- Leakage, to the media, of a classified letter written by the Army Chief to the Prime Minister conveying concern about operational deficiencies; raised questions about the tardy acquisition processes followed by the MoD, which create such voids.

- The sensational media report which blatantly suggested that apprehensions of a *coup d'état* are never far from the minds of some government functionaries, and insinuated a lack of trust in the armed forces at the highest levels of the GoI.

While dwelling on such matters of contemporary concern it is important to remember that, although brought to public notice by the media, they represent merely the symptoms of what is a deep malaise. The roots of most current debates lie buried in legacy issues going as far back as 1947. Regrettably, little has changed since then, because the diverse forces in favour of *status quo* have always had the upper hand over those feebly clamouring for change or reform. Rather than focussing narrowly on the four issues listed above, I intend undertaking a broad overview of some salient areas of long-standing concern which actually subsume the issues highlighted by recent events. These are matters which, in my opinion, should be keeping India's national security establishment awake at nights.

The MoD- Service HQ Equation

Two major factors have contributed to the systemic dysfunctionality that we see in the management of national security affairs. First is politician's detachment and indifference towards matters relating to national security, because this is not an issue that can win or lose votes. Since politicians have not considered it worthwhile establishing a close and cordial relations with the leadership of the armed forces, it is not surprising that when faced with a crisis or problem politicians finds themselves at a complete loss. A related factor is the total reliance that the politician places, for advice, decision-making and problem resolution, on transient, generalist MoD civil servants, drawn from diverse backgrounds. This, despite the Chiefs and the highly specialized Service HQ (SHQ) staffs being at his disposal for tendering advice in the management of national security.

It appears likely that the politician's attitude towards the Service Chiefs is based on the fact that as per current rules they have been accorded no *locus standi* in the structure of the GoI; so much so, that the Secretary DoD is deemed to represent the three Services in most forums. The genesis of this situation is to be found in two documents; the "Government of India Allocation of Business Rules" (AoB Rules),

and the “Government of India Transaction of Business Rules” (ToB Rules). Framed in 1961 under the constitutional powers of the President of India these documents are the virtual “Bibles” which guide the conduct of business by the Government of India.

The three SHQ, having been designated as “Attached Offices of the Department of Defence”, by these rules, are placed in a position subordinate to the DoD. It is significant that while the Service Chiefs find no mention in these rules, as per their 2nd Schedule, the Secretary Department of Defence is allocated the responsibilities for the following:

- (a) Defence of India and every part thereof including preparation for defence and all such acts as may be conducive in times of war to its prosecution and after its termination to effective Demobilisation.
- (b) The Armed Forces of the Union, namely, Army, Navy and Air Force.
- (c) Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence comprising of Army Headquarters, Naval Headquarters, Air Headquarters and Defence Staff Headquarters.

From the foregoing it becomes amply clear that the professional heads of the three Services, charged with the command of the armed forces, and responsible for national defence as well as conduct of war, have neither been accorded a status nor granted any powers in the edifice of the GoI.

This anomalous arrangement also raises some intriguing questions. For example; since the Service Chiefs find no mention in the Business Rules, what is their status and standing *vis-a-vis* the Secretary DoD who has, curiously, been made responsible for the “*Defence of India and every part thereof*”? What is the standing of the Chiefs in relation to Secretaries who head the other three Departments of the MoD and take decisions which have a lasting impact on national security? Is there an incongruity in the fact that while the Service Chiefs are in the Cabinet Secretary’s pay-grade, the organisations that they head have been banished to the status of a subaltern outlier - lowly Attached Offices?

While the Chiefs may “propose” it is the civil servant who has been empowered to “dispose” of all important matters. Other orders specify

that the SHQ are excluded from the apex structure and are to be only “associated” with the policy-formulation process. Whether by accident or by design, it is this exclusion of the armed forces from the decision-making fora, which seems to have set the tone for civil-military relations in the GoI. If this is where successive PMs and RMs have been taking their cue from, it not only explains past crises, but also presages many more in the future. There is no better example of the harm inflicted, by a negligent (or scheming?) Establishment, on the national security edifice, than the trivialisation of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and the reduction of its Chairman to a virtual non-entity.

Functioning of the Chiefs of Staff Committee

Under the current rules on retirement of the incumbent, the senior-most Chief is nominated to the post of Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, and he presides over this body till his own retirement. This system has resulted in tenures of Chairmen varying between one to twenty months, with hardly any incumbent approaching the two year mark.

The Chairman COSC happens to be a key functionary in the nuclear command chain, and his role will assume further criticality with the induction of weapon systems like the nuclear submarine INS *Arihant* (which will go on patrol with nuclear-tipped missiles) and the Agni-V ICBM. Given the gravity and magnitude of his responsibilities, and the time required to familiarize with them, tenure less than two years for a Chairman COSC makes little sense. Moreover, the adverse impact, both on organisational effectiveness as well as the credibility of the nuclear deterrent, due to rapid turn-over of incumbents can be imagined.

In this day and age, such are the demands of being the operational and administrative head of an armed force, that no Service Chief can devote more than a miniscule fraction of his time to the responsibilities of Chairman COSC (which include the Andaman & Nicobar and the Strategic Forces Command) without neglecting his own Service. Since the latter is an unlikely possibility, it is obvious that important national security issues will remain neglected.

A prime function of the Chairman COSC is to inculcate and implement the spirit of “Jointness” which comes through integration of, *inter alia*,

doctrine, logistics, and operations of the three armed forces. However, being merely “one amongst equals” in the COSC the Chairman’s authority to enforce any decisions of a substantive nature within the Committee remains severely circumscribed. For the same reason he is not taken seriously either by the MoD or GoI. Experience of the past 65 years has demonstrated that a part-time, rotational Chairman, devoid of any authority over fellow members of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, is ineffective, and remains a symbolic entity.

The PM and RM need to be kept informed on matters involving the interests of more than one Service, issues relating to nuclear deterrence, out-of-area contingencies, joint institutions and crisis response etc. Recent events have demonstrated dramatically that had the system reposed faith and trust in a “single point source of advice” to the Raksha Mantri (RM) such a functionary might have acted as a moderating influence as well as intermediary, possibly precluding the serial crisis that the MoD has been facing.

Force Modernisation Plans

The flawed and slow-moving processes that currently guide the functioning of the MoD impose lengthy delays on processing of cases; whether they relate to acquisition of hardware and ammunition or to infrastructure and manpower accretions. Adherence to these processes has not only thwarted force modernisation, in spite of recent reforms in procurement procedures, but also affected combat readiness.

Each case emanating from the SHQ is required to be steered through multiple layers of bureaucracy, that exist in four departments of the MoD as well as its Finance Wing, and finally in the Ministry of Finance. After this, some cases need approval of the Cabinet Committee on Security. Queries are sequential and often repetitive, and every file movement takes weeks, if not months. Allegations of corruption and consequent investigations have now brought apathy into the system and it is not surprising that past cases have taken as much as 10-20 years to fructify.

The armed forces emphatically attribute this to the following factors:

- In its current structure, the MoD is staffed exclusively by non-specialist and transient civil-servants, who join with little domain

knowledge, learn “on the job” and then move on to other ministries or parent cadres.

- The laid down charter of the MoD bureaucracy is to oversee and control the three SHQ. Since significant financial and administrative powers are vested only in the civil servants, the final decisions on all issues rest with them.
- While they wield the authority and financial powers, the MoD civilians are neither held responsible, nor accountable for meeting targets or deadlines.
- The MoD and SHQ, instead of working as a team, towards a common goal, are often at cross-purposes, because the bureaucracy sees itself in a supervisory role. This has resulted in an “us” versus “them” syndrome with predictable consequences for efficiency at the staff level and combat-readiness in the field.

There is a strong belief in the armed forces that the MoD is not only understaffed, but also suffers from a deficit of expertise relating to security issues. These factors combine to cause interminable delays in decision-making and contribute to the inability of the MoD to expend funds voted by Parliament for defence.

Maintaining requisite levels of war wastage reserves (WWR) of ammunition and other high consumption items is a prime responsibility of the SHQ. But since financial sanctions for procurement are to be accorded by the MoD, and take ages, most Chiefs find themselves in the frustrating position of being responsible for conduct of war without having the wherewithal to fight one.

The Indigenisation Voids

One of the most worrisome aspects of India’s national security scenario has been the sustained failure of India’s vast military industrial complex, consisting of a large pool of DRDO scientists and network of sophisticated laboratories, backed by advanced production facilities of the Defence PSUs (DPSU), to deliver badly-needed capabilities to the armed forces. This issue has two dimensions.

It is now evident that having signed licensed-production agreements with foreign firms, and having made heavy payments for “transfer of

technology” Indian DPSUs have been, incorrectly, claiming delivery of “indigenous” products. In actual fact all they have been doing is to merely undertake assembly of knocked-down kits imported from abroad using screwdriver technology. For example; the DPSUs have produced, under licence, over 4000 tanks of British and Russian origin, 3500 combat aircraft and as many aero-engines, and hundreds of missiles, radars and electronic systems. However, not one, “improved” or Mark II indigenous version of any product has been delivered to the armed forces so far. The current controversy over sustained import of heavy-duty Tatra trucks by the thousands, for the past 40 years, is yet another example where the failure of the DRDO and DPSUs to indigenize a vitally needed vehicle has invoked neither query nor punishment. As a matter of interest, reports indicate that even Pakistan has managed to reverse-engineer multi-axle heavy-duty vehicles for carrying ballistic missiles.

The DRDO seems to have distanced itself from efforts of the armed forces towards attaining self-sufficiency in operational capabilities because of its preoccupation with self-assigned “technology demonstration” missions, which are often of little immediate value to the armed forces. Many of the DRDO’s prize projects, so far, have been self-initiated and did not have a Service qualitative requirement (SQR) to back them. Many others have failed, or had to be foreclosed, leaving the armed forces in the lurch. On the other hand, DRDO shows scant interest in critical areas where the armed forces have been experiencing immediate operational capability gaps.

The underlying causes are attributable to some glaring lacunae in the current system. Firstly the end-users and main stake-holders in defence research – the three SHQs – are neither consulted nor permitted adequate say in decision-making. Secondly; the DRDO having been given complete freedom to spend its budget, dedicates it largely to exploration and demonstration of technologies, which often do not have a bearing on the capabilities urgently needed by today’s armed forces. And thirdly; no instrumentality has been created for independent vetting or review of scientific proposals, cross-checking exaggerated claims, or pinpointing failure to deliver weapon systems on time, cost and performance.

It is clear that heavy reliance for weapon-systems on foreign sources constitutes a “double-jeopardy” in national security terms. Not only does the cost of imported spare parts and ammunition (especially guided weapons) keep escalating at arbitrary and exorbitant rates, but even their availability remains unreliable and unpredictable.

India’s continuing dependence on foreign weapon systems, coupled with a flawed and languid acquisition process has heavily eroded the combat readiness of our armed forces. It has also sustained and encouraged a system of kick-backs and corruption at many levels which surfaces occasionally in the form of “scams”. The Army Chief’s report of attempted bribery represents only the tip of, what is possibly, a massive iceberg.

Paucity of Domain Knowledge in MoD

With budgets likely to dwindle, in real terms, there is a dire need for prioritizing the requirements of weapon systems and other hardware projected by the SHQ, so that funds can be channelized in the right direction at the right time. This prioritisation has to be based on an objective evaluation of the need/relevance for a particular capability projected by a Service, in the prevailing threat scenario, against fund availability. Such an exercise is required to be undertaken both for inter-Service and intra-Service prioritisation.

In the current system the generalist MoD civil-servants have neither the expertise nor the inclination to undertake studies of this nature. Nor is independent professional advice regarding force architecture and force-planning sought from elsewhere. Therefore no critical examination or cost-benefit analysis can possibly take place on the continuing relevance and/or requirement of many weapon-systems demanded by the Services.

Consequently all wish-lists from the Services become sacrosanct and, eventually, receive MoD approval. In the approaching era of dwindling defence budgets, the commitment of large amounts of money to weapon acquisition without due application of mind by domain experts would be unacceptable. It is obvious that the current “force modernisation” process consists of merely adding up the “wish lists” received from the three SHQ and forwarding them to the MoD.

With delayed decision-making on one hand, and a force-planning process which is never subjected to the rigours of either a critical analysis and examination or prioritisation, on the other, India is certainly not getting its money's worth of security from its colossal defence expenditure. There are two obvious ways out of this blind-alley. The short-term solution is to undertake cross-posting of civil-servants and Service personnel in the SHQ and MoD to provide specialist knowledge and bring transparency to the two domains - so far closed to each other. The long-term solution is to create a cadre of civil servants who specialize in national security, cost accounting, contracting and other acquisition-related processes.

Impediments to Reform

The most dramatic threat to India's security in recent times was the occupation of Kargil heights by Pakistan in 1999; which brought us face to face with nuclear blackmail, loss of vital territory and possible national dishonour. This grave situation could only be retrieved by deploying overwhelming military force, and accepting heavy casualties to recover lost ground under adverse conditions. The degree of alarm created by this episode was enough for the GoI to constitute the Kargil Review Committee which probed deeply into many areas of weakness in the system. The scathing indictments of this Committee's report prompted the government of the day to constitute a Group of Ministers (GoM) in 2000; tasked to undertake a review of national security.

This GoM, headed by the then Deputy Prime Minister, through the instrumentality of four dedicated Task Forces, undertook a comprehensive examination of shortcomings in national security. In February 2001 it rendered a report entitled, "*Reforming the National Security System*" which contained, *inter alia*, recommendations relating to Higher Defence Management.

Those, like the author, who participated in the proceedings of this body were struck by the similarity of biases and prejudices, as well as the level of parochialism that prevails in India when compared to what transpired in the US, prior to passing of the Goldwater-Nichols National Security Act of Congress; 1986. Virtually all the arguments were the same, and more or less everything that was said in the USA was repeated in India, with local variations.

The process of debate and discussion during the deliberations of the Task Forces in 1999 revealed that objections and impediments to changes or reform in the national security arena emerged from essentially from three or four sources. These sources have remained steadfast in their stance and have been instrumental in the maintenance of *status quo* over the decade that has elapsed since the GoM Report was placed in Parliament.

The underlying root of contention within the armed forces has been a subliminal but strong sense of insecurity in the Indian Air Force (IAF); possibly engendered by the fear that some of its roles, or even assets were coveted by the army and the navy. The air force has always viewed, with deep suspicion, any proposal which would subject its force-planning process and deployment plans to scrutiny, or place any of its forces under the command of the other two Services. It has thus stood firmly against all proposals related to inter-Service integration as well as the creation of a CDS and theatre commands.

Historically, the IAF apprehensions are not unfounded; because the navy had wrested control of Maritime Reconnaissance in 1976, and the army had taken away Air Observation Post (later re-designated Army Aviation) a decade later. Close air support versus counter-air operations, as well as tactical airlift and combat helicopter aviation continue to be hotly debated issues between the IAF and army. A simple palliative for this mutual suspicion and insecurity would be for the three Service Chiefs to follow the US example and sign a Memorandum of Understanding incorporating an agreed upon Charter of Aviation Roles and Missions.

The IAF also takes the stand that a CDS and theatre commands are pertinent only for nations contemplating expeditionary operations. Since the Indian armed forces, according to the IAF, are mandated only to defend national territory, such issues remain irrelevant. It has also been the IAF view that the Services are already sufficiently integrated, and any further attempts at enhancing Jointness should only follow the integration of the SHQ with the MoD.

The second source of resistance to change comes from the civil services. They feel seriously threatened by any thought of further autonomy for the SHQ, and by the creation of a CDS, since it would erode their

influence and authority in the MoD. They have firmly maintained that the status of Attached Offices for the SHQ is quite appropriate, because “civilian control” of the armed forces demands that decision-making must remain in the hands of civil-servants. They also maintain that there is already more than adequate consultation between the MoD and SHQ. Therefore, recognition of the Service Chiefs/Vice Chiefs by the Rules of business as GoI functionaries, or any further integration is considered neither necessary nor desirable. Cross-posting of officers between the MoD and SHQ does not find favour with the bureaucracy because they are quite clear that no IAS officer should ever have to serve under a uniformed superior. A similar logic is used to argue that the Service officers depute to MoD would either be sub-standard or not serve their civilian superiors “loyally”. The creation of a national security cadre, too, does not find favour since it would limit the utility and career prospects of bright IAS officers. The consensus is clearly in favour of *status quo*.

A third and recent source of impediment has, lately, emerged from the higher levels of the Service hierarchy. Up to a certain point in time, the senior leadership of the army and the navy saw eye to eye on issues relating to integration, jointness and the need for a CDS. It was implicit in this consensus that eventually the Chiefs would have to devolve their command/operational functions to the theatre commanders, and actually assume the role of Chiefs of Staff (which has been their designation since 1955). There have, obviously, been second thoughts on this issue and Chiefs, while expressing approval of the “concept” of a CDS, now laconically add that “the time is not yet ripe for it”. This has led to an overall dilution in the earlier enthusiasm for Jointness, and a clear manifestation is the visible erosion of support for the Andaman & Nicobar Command.

This brings me to the last and most significant impediment to reform in India’s national security structure; the political establishment.

The Political Outlook

Each threat and challenge to India’s national security in the past 65 years has arisen, not just due to the inability or unwillingness of the political leadership to learn from past mistakes, but also because they have clung to certain entrenched but invalid beliefs. Following a familiarly

depressing pattern, the same shortcomings have been emerging every time the country is faced with a security threat of serious proportions. Whether it is external aggression, internal insurgencies, terrorist strikes, hijackings or any other type of assault on India's sovereignty, we have (except in 1971) been caught in a state of unpreparedness. However, once the nation is aroused, the various organs of state respond with frenzied, fire-fighting measures which somehow cope with the situation eventually. A brief phase of national introspection, then, follows; accompanied by political recrimination. The state apparatus, thereafter, gradually relapses into its earlier torpor; till the next crisis.

The lack of adequate political involvement in national security issues, peculiar to India, is attributable to the high political stakes and sustained intensity of electoral politics of its evolving democracy. In spite of a deep-rooted urge to emphasize the principle of civil control over the armed forces, the Indian politician has never found the time or capacity to define national aims and objectives, issue strategic guidance or initiate defence White Papers. Due to this attention-deficit, many national security issues of vital importance have remained in limbo for decades; national security reform being one of them.

In order to create the time and capacity to devote to activities relating to constituency, party, Parliament and, of course, political survival, the politician has found it expedient to let the bureaucracy handle, what they see as, complex, tedious and time-consuming matters relating to national security. While the politician's comfort level with the civilian bureaucracy may be higher, the delegation of "civilian control" to them, while excluding the armed forces from these functions, amounts to dereliction of responsibility by the political establishment.

From the list of influential lobbies which (for different reasons) favour the maintenance of *status quo ante*, it is obvious that bringing about national security reform constitutes a formidable challenge. The only set of people influential enough to push through a reform agenda are India's political elite. However, it is obvious that a variety of factors tend to play on the politician's mind.

The Indian politician is intuitively aware that there are serious flaws in the national security structure, and these apprehensions have been repeatedly substantiated by criticism emanating from successive

Parliamentary Standing Committees on Defence (SCOD). Politicians are also aware that the best means of exercising civil authority over the armed forces is to subsume them within the edifice of the GoI.

At the same time he seems to succumb too readily to fears - possibly fuelled by the bureaucracy and the intelligence community - about the dangers of praetorian armed forces. A subliminal mistrust of the armed forces, amongst the political establishment, has been allowed to persist for 65 years - despite all empirical evidence to the contrary.

It is, possibly, for the reasons outlined above, that politicians have, conveniently, used the contrarian arguments and contradictions emerging from the bureaucracy and from within the three Services, to postpone reforms that seek to enhance the cohesion, jointness or unity of command of the armed forces - or indeed free them from bureaucratic strangleholds. Such an approach simply ignores the fact that the very same measures are badly needed to augment the efficiency and combat effectiveness of the armed forces, and enable them to prevail in a 21st century conflict; apart from eliminating redundancies and achieving economy.

Conclusion

Fierce opposition to reforms, both from the armed forces as well as the bureaucracy is a known phenomenon world-wide, mainly because each community sees itself as being a loser in some manner or the other. Historically, it is for this reason that defence reforms in all major democracies have, invariably, had to be imposed by the political establishment.

In a democracy like the USA, Representatives and Senators, deeply concerned about national security, have gone to great lengths to ensure that systemic reforms are legislated as laws through Acts of Congress, after a wide-ranging national debate and discussion. In the aftermath of WW II, the historic National Security Act of Congress 1947, created, amongst other things, the Department of Defence, the ministerial post of Secretary of Defence and the US Air Force as a separate Service. Four decades later, the Goldwater-Nichols Defence Reorganization Act 1986, made another set of sweeping changes to the Department of Defence and re-worked the entire command structure of the United States military.

Parliamentarians in India, with a few exceptions, remain, either indifferent to or, bemused by security matters. Opposition to change, obviously, comes from inadequate knowledge of the national security decision-making process elsewhere in the world. There is also an influential body of opinion which favours *status quo* on the grounds that “since the present system appears to have worked for over six decades, it is not necessary to tinker with it”. Apart from the obvious flaws of this simplistic view there is another factor to be borne in mind. The *status quo* approach may have worked as long as national security was not an electoral issue. Today, the average urban Indian is acutely aware of his personal vulnerability to violence emanating from various sources, and senses that something is seriously amiss in India’s approach to national security. This is bound to become a major issue in the next general election, and the politician needs to take note.

Thirteen years after the post-Kargil GoM a second round of proposals has already emerged from the Task Force on National Security Reform, also known as the Naresh Chandra Committee. From recent media coverage it is quite obvious that the issues and conundrums confronting this Task Force were not substantially different from those that were tackled by the earlier GoM. It is also likely that the attitudes of the *dramatis personae* may not have undergone major change. On the other hand, India’s body politic is more fractured now than in 2001, and far less capable of evolving a consensus - even on issues as crucial as national security.

At this juncture, it would be well to bear in mind, that India’s ability to successfully counter most post-independence security challenges has been attributable, not to outstanding statesmanship, diplomacy or strategic acumen but, to the unwavering courage and resolve of its armed forces. India’s strategic environment is progressively becoming more fraught with hazards. Threats to the nation’s security, even though diffused and camouflaged, are far more serious than in any time in the past. To take just one stark example; China’s steadily rising defence budget has crossed 100 billion US dollars, and is, at this rate, predicted to overtake that of the USA by 2025. Lacking the economic, military and nuclear wherewithal, as well as political cohesion to counter such a build-up, India may find itself helpless in the face of threats, coercion or even armed blackmail by China. The reassurance that we derive

from developments such as the addition of two nuclear-powered submarines to our inventory and the successful launch of Agni-V is quite illusory because the astute management of such systems requires a taut national security system which we do not, presently, have.

This is, perhaps, our last chance to “fix” a national security system that is archaic and borders on the dysfunctional, before it is too late. In this context the Naresh Chandra Committee report could not have come at a more opportune moment. We can ill-afford to waste any more time, and the GoI would be well-advised to take careful note of the findings and recommendations of this committee. It has been seen that reports of this nature, especially if they seek bold decision-making, are consigned, first, to limbo, and then to eventual oblivion. The proof of the government’s intent, in this case, will lie in the resolute and expeditious implementation of reforms which find approval of the CCS.

From recent Parliamentary debate and discussion it would appear that a broad consensus does exist, across party-lines, regarding the urgent need to implement reforms that will redress the huge existing lacunae in our national security. However, past experience has clearly demonstrated the ease with which it is possible for vested interests to delay or soft-pedal implementation of such reports so that the end result is a total dilution of attempted reforms. In view of this, it may be prudent to place the Naresh Chandra Committee Report, for examination, either before the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Defence or a specially empowered multi-party Parliamentary Commission. Assisted by a team of experts, the Commission could provide oversight as well as the legislative leverage to ensure speedy and resolute implementation of reforms. Such a Commission could also give serious consideration to the embodiment of certain important recommendations in the form of an Act of Parliament.

3

Higher Management of Defence and Defence Reforms: Towards Better Management Techniques

by General (Retd) V P Malik

“India has lacked an ability to formulate future-oriented defence policies, managing only because of short-term measures, blunders by its adversaries, and force superiority in its favor.

- K. Subrahmanyam²²

The structure of higher defence management in any country depends upon its strategic culture, awareness of its elite, strategic environment and the emerging trends in the nature of warfare. The test of such a structure is the attainment of national security interests ideally without going to war but, if necessary, through the use of force. India’s report card on matters pertaining to defence and security for the past six and a half decades has been more positive than negative. Despite reactive strategic policies, ad hoc defence planning, intelligence failures and strategic and tactical surprises, the armed forces have maintained India’s security and territorial integrity better than any other democratic, developing nation in the world. But the credit for these successes goes less to higher direction of war and more to those responsible for operational planning and its execution on the ground. Many a time, we have failed to convert hard-won operational achievements into long-term strategic successes.

India’s Weak Strategic Culture

One of the infirmities that India faces is its history of a weak strategic culture. Strategic culture may be defined as ‘the ability of the people

²² See K. Subrahmanyam, “India’s strategic challenges,” *Indian Express*, February 04, 2012.

and society to generate: to have the social will and ability for a full and effective employment of that power.’ Barring periods under the Mauryan, Gupta and Mughal kings, and under the British, our strategic culture has remained internalized, fixated upon curbing within rather than combating the external. During centuries of slavery and colonialism, the Indian leadership forgot all about Chanakya’s ‘Arthashastra’ and its lessons. Our vast diversity has made us culturally a strong soft power with a global philosophy of *Vasudhai Kutumbkam*-the world is one large family. Most of our political leaders grew up conjuring the idea of a morally superior India; professing peace and harmony in a world where nations indulge in cut-throat competition. Value-based politics is morally superior. But as we know, that does not reflect the international realism. The ability to generate hard power, and the will and the ability to make use of that, has not been our strong point.

At the time of independence, the strategic resource pool of thought, talent and specialists was non-existent. The institutions and outlook inherited were all colonial in nature, including the uneasy relationship between the political and military leadership. Realpolitik and strategic thinking, with one exception of integration of over 600 states within Indian nation and the use of military in Hyderabad, Junagadh, and after some dithering in J & K, was not a part of this matrix. Tragically, several successive events; Tibet, 1962 Sino-Indian war, return of Haji Pir Pass in 1965 and the repatriation of 93000 prisoners in 1971 (without adequate quid pro quo), precipitated out of the neglect of national security, did not act as sufficient impulse to place formulation and articulation of a security policy at a sufficiently high level of the national agenda. We dithered for 24 years between the testing of a nuclear device and becoming a nuclear weapons state. In 2002, we mobilized and deployed troops for 10 months without a clear political objective.

Lack of strategic culture and thinking continues to be a major infirmity in our higher defence management and direction of war. This will be overcome only when we have adequate awareness and consciousness about defence and security amongst policy makers, and we create suitable defence management structure and techniques.

Civil - Military Interface

It is a well known fact that after independence Indian political leaders viewed the Indian Army with considerable suspicion. They saw colonial

signs, and from neighborhood experience, a capacity to ‘take over’ the Government. They were quite happy to keep the military isolated, away from policy and influence. Prime Minister Nehru followed idealist foreign policies. His disdain and distrust of the military and neglect of defence planning is well known. Nehru’s attitude allowed the civilian bureaucracy, who did not want a rival with direct access to political leadership, to take over the strategic, financial and administrative control of the armed forces. The armed forces were kept outside the decision making loop except when military operations became necessary. Over the years, instead of maintaining political control over the military, as in all democracies, India managed to develop a unique system of bureaucratic control over the military through an all civilian Ministry of Defence. The consequential civil-military friction and communication gap became apparent in the 1962 war. Thereafter, a convention has been established whereby an operational directive is laid down by the political leadership and operational planning is left to the chiefs of staff. Strategic and defence planning remains a grey area as the military is kept outside the decision making loop.

Antiquated Structure for Higher Management of Defence

When India became independent, a Defence Department with a series of committees was established to ensure integrated functioning of its charter. Secretarial support for these Committees (including the Defence Committee of the Cabinet and the Defence Minister’s Committee) was provided by a Military Wing in the Cabinet Secretariat. The idea behind this wing in the Cabinet Secretariat was to facilitate prompt decision-making on defence issues, good coordination, and to provide direct interface between the military leaders and the highest political and executive authority of the Government.

In the next 55 years, there was no major change in the establishment or the committee system. But the role of the Defence Department, later re-designated as the Ministry of Defence (MOD), underwent radical changes. Instead of working jointly with Service Headquarters and then issuing directions, it became a higher entity, an exclusively higher civilian headquarter controlling the three armed forces. On the pretext of establishing civilian political supremacy over the military, the developed system gave civilian bureaucracy stifling control over the

armed forces. The committee system was undermined. The military got more and more isolated from policy, planning and decision-making process. This isolation kept increasing suspicions and friction between the civilian bureaucrats in the MOD and service headquarters. It began to affect military psyche, ethos and ability to interact, advice and perform.

Functional Problems

Let me narrate my experience of defence management as Army Chief (1997-2000) and Chairman, COSC (1998-2000) in peace time and during Kargil war. In peace time, most of the decision making is institutional. It involves the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Defence Minister's (DM) Morning Meetings, and Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) or the National Security Council (NSC), and other committees that I mentioned earlier. The weakness and difficulties of integrated policy initiatives in the COSC, the very informal discussions in the DM's Morning Meetings where no agendas or minutes are issued, and the Chiefs not being able to attend all meetings of the CCS and being in the loop when important security issues and defence preparedness are discussed, tends to make this process difficult, unbearably slow, and very often frustrating.

Proposals are initiated by Service HQs or in the MOD, briefly discussed in the committees mentioned earlier or in separate meetings, and then submitted on the file. This file, thereafter, goes through repeated examinations, and clarifications. The pace and the progress depend upon the mindset of the officers- the civilian and military bureaucrats- who have to give their comments. If someone likes the proposal, the file will continue to meander through the corridors. And if a person does not like the proposal, he or she can scuttle it; consign it to a deep hole in the cupboard, send it back with some frivolous query. The military staffs, when alert or alerted, try to keep a track of the file. When they fail, the matter is raised within the Service HQ. Almost 70-75 per cent of a Chief's time and tenure is spent in trying to pursue such issues. The disadvantages of such a process and its adverse impact on defence planning, modernisation and capabilities can be easily imagined. Five year defence plans are prepared but seldom approved by the CCS, and never get implemented in time or as per given priority because the financial control and negotiations for major procurements

rests entirely with the civil bureaucracy. Huge cost and time delays have to be accepted for equipment produced by Defence PSUs and Ordnance Factories, which are controlled by another civilian wing (Defence Production) of the MOD. This process also creates unnecessary tension between civil and military bureaucracies which is best described by Jaswant Singh:

“As there is no horizontal integration between the Service Headquarters and the Defence Ministry, and as early prejudices have got layered over by bureaucratic one-upmanship, a combative mentality has grown between the Service Headquarters and the Ministry. Such an attitude has its own damaging consequences; the Defence Ministry, in effect, becomes the principal destroyer of the cutting edge of the military’s morale; ironic considering that the very reverse of it is their responsibility. The sword arm of the State gets blunted by the State itself. So marked is resistance then to change here, and so deep the mutual suspicions, inertia and antipathy that all efforts at reforming the system have always floundered against a rock of ossified thought.”²³

The situation changes completely when there is a war on hand or a crisis situation involving military is envisaged. Every one has ears for the Chiefs and their principal staff. There is speed and energy in decision making, and very few queries. But the problem is that it is not possible to build or enhance defence capabilities when a conflict is suddenly thrust upon the nation. You have to fight with whatever you have and repair frictions to get on with the mission!

Let me give example of Kargil war. In the initial stages of the war when we had no information and were totally surprised, the approach was, ‘Nothing unusual. Go and throw out these infiltrators as we do every day in J & K.’ The COSC could not agree on the fuller employment of the Air Force and the CCS declined permission for this measure. The situation changed after I returned from abroad, got briefed in Udhampur and Srinagar, obtained a consensus in the COSC

²³ See Jaswant Singh, *Defending India* (New Delhi: Macmillan India Ltd, 1999), p. 105.

on an integrated military strategy, and then gave our assessment and recommendations to the CCS. Thereafter, every one was closely enmeshed in the politico-military decision-making process.

The CCS met on an almost daily basis till the second week of July 1999. Besides the Prime Minister and other CCS members, the meetings were attended by the National Security Advisor, the Cabinet Secretary, the three service chiefs, the secretaries of the Defence, Home, Finance and External Affairs ministries, heads of Intelligence Bureau and R&AW, and the Secretary, NSCS. Sometimes, for specific purposes, special invitees were called in. The Prime Minister would be flanked by other CCS members, the National Security Advisor and the Cabinet Secretary on one side of the table. I would sit opposite the Prime Minister along with my services colleagues, other secretaries and executive heads of departments. It was a refreshing change in the decision-making process, both at the political level as well as at the armed forces level: open and direct. The political leadership received views of the Service Chiefs first-hand. After discussions, the concerned executive authorities, including the three Chiefs, received directions from the Prime Minister. The National Security Advisor, who was always accessible and a very effective troubleshooter, facilitated this process creditably. All these developments led to an integrated approach to 'war management' with the political, economic, diplomatic, media and military aspects meshed cogently.

Post Kargil War Reforms

The impact of the limited Kargil war wherein Pakistani regular troops in the garb of Jehadi militants intruded into Indian Territory across the Line of Control but were subsequently forced to withdraw was immense. The war in its wake brought in many geo-political and geo-strategic changes on the subcontinent. Pakistani military embarrassment resulted in a military coup and change of polity. In India, the Government realized that the national security apparatus, particularly the higher defence control organisation, had become an embarrassment. The changes that the military, media, indeed all the intellectuals in the country had been screaming for decades became unavoidable. The Kargil Review Committee (KRC) Report brought out many grave deficiencies in India's security management system. It also drew attention to the fact that our national leadership had failed to keep up with the

complexities of national security management. The KRC recommendations led to setting up of a Group of Ministers (GOM) Committee to review the entire national security system and formulate specific proposals for implementation. The Group of Ministers (GOM) observed that:

“there is a marked difference in the perception and crisis of confidence among civil and military officials within the MOD and Services HQs regarding their respective roles and functions. There was also lack of synchronisation among and between the three departments in the MOD, including the relevant elements of Defence Finance. The concept of ‘attached offices’ as applicable to Service HQs; problems of inter-se relativities; multiple, duplicated, and complex procedures governing the exercise of administrative and financial powers, and the concept of ‘advice’ to the Minister; all these had contributed to these problems.”²⁴

The GOM also observed that the COSC had serious weaknesses in its ability to provide single point military advice to the Government, and to resolve substantive inter-service doctrinal, planning, policy and operational issues. This institution needed to be restructured to discharge its responsibilities efficiently, including the facilitation of ‘jointness’ and synergy. Some additional comments by the GOM are as follows:

- The defence planning process was handicapped by the absence of a national security doctrine. It suffered from lack of holistic approach. The planning was competitive and uneconomical.
- The system governing defence acquisitions suffered from lack of integrated planning, weaknesses in linkages between Plans and Budgets, cumbersome administrative, technical and financial evaluation procedures, and absence of a dedicated, professionally equipped common procurement structure within the MOD.

²⁴ See “Chapter VI: Management of Defence,” in *Reforming the National Security System: Report of the Group of Ministers on National Security* (New Delhi: Government of India, 2001), p. 97.

- There was no synergy between academic research and government's security policy requirements. Both functioned without any linkages.

The GOM recommended the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) to:

- (a) Provide single point military advice.
- (b) Hold administrative control over and manage strategic forces.
- (c) Ensure intra service and inter service prioritisation of ten and fifteen year 'perspective plans', and also the five-year defence plans.
- (d) To bring about improvement in the 'jointness' among various units of the armed forces.

In addition the CDS was also expected to work for the improvement in the uniformity of training in the three services and to reduce any 'overlap' and 'replication' in them. However, despite GOM recommendation, this post has not been created.

The COSC (past and present) consists of three Service Chiefs, with limited staff support, sitting together to discuss inter-service issues with no authority to adjudicate on any issue or provide a single point advice to the defence minister. In the absence of a CDS, the existing military structures continue to be based essentially on the concept of single service management. Each Service HQ does its own independent planning and management of matters relating to its own Service. Systems of co-ordination exist but there is limited, if any, joint or integrated planning in matters like military operations, intelligence, logistics, technology, and so on. On the same principle, each Service Chief represents his own Service and offers advice to the Government related to his own Service. There is no clear cut system of a single point advice preferred after joint discussion and deliberation.

The GOM Report had recommended that the Service HQ, which were considered as attached offices earlier, should be made a part of the Integrated Defence Headquarters. This new name for the MOD

was announced. But a mere change of name has little meaning unless the working procedures and processing of issues on the files are changed. The change must be in letter and spirit but this has not happened.

A decade after the approval of GOM Report by the CCS it can be stated unequivocally that due to non implementation of the main recommendation on the CDS appointment, vested interests in the Government have ensured that the our higher direction of war continues to be weak, less capable of strategic, defence and operational planning for any future conflict. The Government has created an Integrated Defence Staff but by keeping it headless, it has failed to provide an integrated and joint paradigm; much less give advice to the DM, PM or the CCS. The feedback so far shows that there has been no change in the responsibilities, accountability and procedures, or in the attitude of the officers posted in these establishment. Inter-services cooperation across the entire spectrum of military functions remains weak. The bureaucratic wall between the political executive and the professional service chiefs continues to convert the concept of 'civilian political control' into 'civil bureaucratic control'.

The recent episodes over the Army Chief's date of birth row, the incident of attempted bribe to the COAS, leakage of COAS' classified letter regarding defence preparedness to the media, and the deep suspicion with which movement of Army units near Delhi was looked at show that the friction and lack of trust between civil military relations in the MOD continues.

Changing Geopolitical and Strategic Environment

Over the last few decades, a distinctive feature of the strategic and security related environment has been the unprecedented and sheer dynamics of change in the concepts, paradigms and complexities of national, regional and global security. There are several reasons for these changes.

There is a new salience and awareness of the comprehensive nature of security which includes the traditional defence-related threats, but no less importantly, challenges in societal, political, economic, technological

and environmental dimensions as well. Globalisation, multilateralism, and regionalism are replacing bilateral international relations and a straitjacketed concept of sovereignty.

With greater focus on peace, development and cooperative security, there is a more liberal approach to security. Prevention of collateral damage during conflicts, laws of war, protocols on nuclear, biological and chemical weapons, have become matters of serious global concern.

Changing borders and regimes has become a difficult proposition because destruction of the enemy's military potential and occupation of large foreign territories are no longer attainable military objectives. We have seen that in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia. The security threat is less from large armies invading sovereign states across borders but more from border wars, insurgencies, domestic violence, and cross-border terrorism with increasingly high technology and lethality. Besides, few nations can afford large standing armies and equip them with the state-of-the-art weapons and equipment. The media has become more active. It is able to monitor warlike situations closely, which has made governments more responsible and accountable. However, that does not mean that any nation is prepared to compromise on its security or give up its efforts to become powerful.

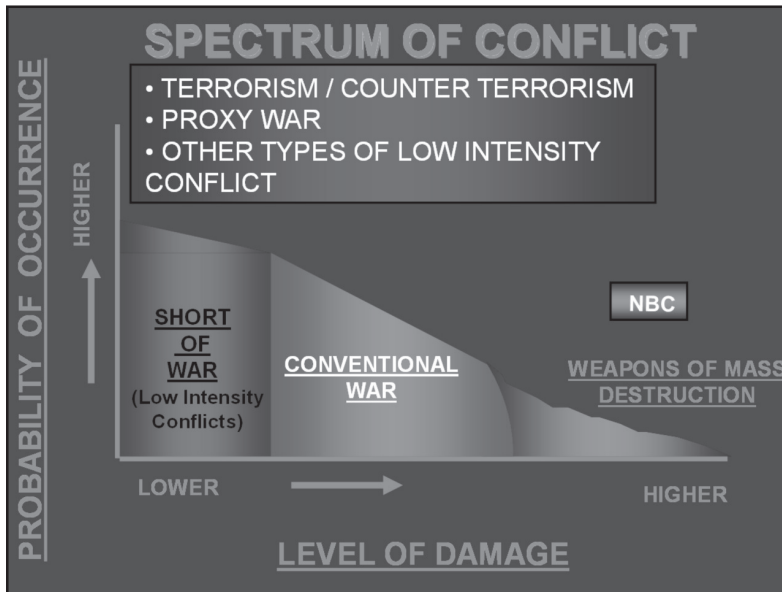
Likely Nature of Conflicts

The end of the cold war has led to a new era in global security and the nature of conflict and warfare. While conventional war as an instrument of foreign policy has become increasingly unviable due to very high costs, casualties, and international pressures, sub-conventional conflicts and armed violence have become more prevalent. Thus there is a greater likelihood of limited and unexpected conflicts and wars in future than that of all out or general wars.

Due to the horrendous destructive power of nuclear weapons and almost certain universal condemnation, the probability of their use in the current strategic environment would remain extremely low. However, as long as there are nuclear weapons around, the military has to be prepared to defend the country against their use or threat of

use by an adversary. Likely spectrum of conflict as per type, probability and damage is shown as per Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Likely Spectrum of Conflict



It may also be noted that in the current strategic environment, wars when they do occur, may no longer be taken to the logical conclusion of military victories, as was the case in the past. They would be conducted with the objective of achieving political successes rather than a military victory. Even the USA and multi-national forces could not achieve total victory in both Iraq wars, Kosovo or in Afghanistan. In Kargil war too, the political aim and term of reference prevented the military from escalating the conflict, or crossing the Line of Control. It is evident that the armed forces have a tougher job than ever before. They have to be prepared for an elongated spectrum of conflict and security, ranging from Aid to Civil Authority, peacekeeping, counter terrorism, limited wars to a war involving WMD. It requires careful prioritizing of its roles and missions. It requires greater versatility and flexibility. It has also to learn to synergize with other instruments of power and governance that have a role in the enlarged security matrix.

Emerging Trends and Functioning of the Military

There are many emerging trends in warfare which impact the conduct of warfare, security structures and decision-making apparatus. These are driven by technology as well as dynamic strategic considerations. However, four of them in particular are especially relevant to this discussion on higher defence management.

First, the separation between the tactical, operational and strategic levels of warfare is blurring. While there was always some degree of overlap between these levels, but with the increasingly pervasive influence of information technology on warfare, this overlap is increasing. Enhanced mobility, long reaches in targeting and effective command and control have obscured tactical and strategic boundaries. A small military action along the Line of Control, or a terrorists' act in the hinterland, tend to become issues for consideration and decision making at the strategic level. It is a situation wherein a junior military officer is expected to understand political considerations, and the political leader to know the tactical and operational considerations. Hence there is a need for closer integration and understanding between the two.

Secondly, on account of this blurring of distinction between the levels of warfare, the OODA (Observe, Orient, Decide, Act) loop needs to be traversed faster, while at the same time ensuring that the enemy cannot do so or has a slower loop. . In effect, we have to break the adversary's OODA cycle, get inside his loop, and ensure quick decision and actions while the enemy is still disoriented. We now need more effective and more integrated command and control systems for quick decision-making at all levels of command, from strategic to operational and tactical than ever before. The cycle of collection, collation, synthesis and dissemination of information needs to be speeded up, as also the subsequent actions and feedback.

Third, war-fighting has to be conducted in a more integrated and joint manner. We have to think more in terms of integrated capabilities so as to obtain the most optimum results. It has become necessary to achieve greater synergy through integration and jointness. Integration has two aspects: greater and faster politico-military interaction and coordination, and integration of three armed forces verticals at the top for the purpose of strategic planning, operational planning, defence

planning and force structuring, integrated advice, budgetary economy and for certain common personnel and logistic policies. This integration implies a joint doctrine, joint planning, joint commands and staffs, and joint training for greater synergy and effective utilisation of military power.

Fourth there is an increasing emphasis towards interoperability between the armed forces within and outside the countries. The backbone of such interoperability is a set of common interoperable standards and operating procedures. For internal security also, we need to ensure greater interoperability within the three Services and with civil police and para military forces in areas like surveillance, communications, intelligence and logistics.

Major political and military objectives, the likely duration of the war or the time available to the armed forces to execute their missions and achieve politico-military goals, would be crucial for their planning and conduct of operations. This is something on which there would have to be complete understanding between the political and military leadership. We can also expect fairly rigid political terms of reference as were given during the Kargil war. Some important challenges, which are likely to be encountered, are:

- The political definition of the goals and its translation into military objectives is always difficult. Sometimes it is uncertain and indirect. Yet its success is truly critical for the attainment of the political goals. The key military concepts pertaining to the desired end result such as decisive victory and success is fundamentally transformed to reflect a much heavier political emphasis and attributes.
- The successful outcome of such a war hinges on the ability to react rapidly to an evolving crisis, which often erupts with surprise. This is a major challenge for the military. For the military is expected to be able to react quickly to the changing circumstances to arrest the deterioration, enhance deterrence, and diminish incentives for escalation.
- Mobilizing and sustaining domestic and international political support for military operations would depend upon the ability of the military to operate in a manner that conforms to political

legitimacy e.g. avoidance of civilian and military casualties on both sides and minimisation of collateral damage. This will require careful and calibrated orchestration of military operations, diplomacy and domestic environment. Continuous control of the escalatory ladder will require much closer political-civil-military interaction.

- Militarily, the greatest challenge could be in the political reluctance to commit a pro-active engagement, and its insistence to retain the authority for approving not just key military moves, but also many operational decisions.
- There would be heavy reliance on intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) for target selection. Surgical strikes would be a common option. Airpower, precision guided weapons and standoff armaments would be the weapons of choice. Employment of ground forces across the borders could be discouraged, or delayed, due to fear of casualties and difficulty in disengagement at will.
- Information operation is important due to the growing transparency of the battlefield to the public via the media and the internet. The political requirements of the military operations, in order to achieve and retain the moral high ground and deny that to the adversary, would need a comprehensive and sophisticated media, public affairs and information campaign. This has to be fully integrated and synchronized with the planning and execution of the military operations.

Management of Nuclear Weapons

India has reiterated its commitment to what it terms a credible, minimum deterrent posture with ‘no first use’ condition for its nuclear arsenal. To make nuclear deterrence credible and effective, and respond in the event of its failure, the Executive Council of the National Command Authority, chaired by the National Security Advisor, is required to advise the Political Council, headed by the Prime Minister, on the use of nuclear weapons and then ensure that the orders are carried out. The operational arm for coordination, training and exercising administrative control over nuclear assets (warheads and

delivery systems) for this purpose is the tri-service Strategic Forces Command (SFC), whose Commander-in-Chief reports to the COSC.

In any future conflict with other nuclear armed states, India would have to adapt its existing strategic and tactical doctrines to meet a possible situation where its leaders may have to consider deterrence capability of nuclear weapons. To make its deterrent more credible and effective, the SFC requires capability to shift nuclear assets from peacetime deployment to fully employable forces in the shortest possible time. This may include an 'alert deployment' requiring political concurrence. As the size and complexity of India's nuclear arsenal increase, different kinds of complications may emerge. The armed forces would have to be included into a continuous politico-military decision-making loop.

It is obvious that in such a warlike scenario, politico-diplomatic factors will play an important role. Careful and calibrated orchestration of military operations, diplomacy, and domestic political environment is essential for its successful outcome. Continuous control of the 'escalatory ladder' requires much closer political oversight and politico-civil-military interaction. It is, therefore, essential to keep the military leadership in the security and strategic decision-making loop, and have a direct politico-military interface.

Also, the planning for all future conflict contingencies has to be done jointly and shall have to include all three armed forces even if anyone is not involved at the outset. The need to synergize armed forces' capabilities along with multi-dimensional national assets will ensure a holistic application of the war effort.

Military Advice, Required Structure and Processes: Points for further discussion

Every nation requires strategically effective (not just militarily effective) advice to civilian authorities who are representative of and answerable to the Parliament and a vibrant civil society. Before deciding on the future defence reforms and changes in Higher Defence Management and its processes, we need to ask ourselves:

- Have we evolved a comprehensive national security strategy to cover the entire spectrum of threats? Why has the

government not been able to give formal approval to the long-term integrated perspective plan (LTIPP 2007-22)? Why do our armed forces continue to suffer serious shortage of weapons and equipment? Why does India have to import over 70 per cent of its defence equipment from abroad?

- Do we have the correct civilian supremacy and oversight of the military or is it very substantially through a bureaucratic proxy? How can we eliminate civil military friction?
- Do our civilian authorities—executive and legislative—adequately demonstrate critical understanding of larger strategic issues, and implications of military employment and institutional conduct? Are they adequately conversant with military purposes, capabilities, constraints and effects?
- Does our military demonstrate critical, creative understanding of the strategic purposes? Does it contribute in strategic level discussions, and explain the consequences of military employment and institutional conduct? Is it giving such an advice regularly? Does it demonstrate a willingness to speak up (and, when necessary, speak out), especially in opposition to strategically flawed policies, initiatives and measures? Are we grooming our young and middle rank officers for the changed politico-military environment?

Recommendations

India missed a good opportunity to carry out proper defence reforms and reorganize its higher defence organisation when it failed to implement the GOM Report in letter and spirit. A decade later, there is greater urgency and the need to do so. This new effort must keep in view the changed strategic environment, the changing nature of conflict, defence policies and policy making aspects mentioned earlier. It would be unwise to recommend a detailed higher defence control organisational chart with responsibilities at each level in this brief paper. However, following recommendations for the future higher defence management framework and system are offered:

- Need for an articulated national security and defence policy, which should be updated every three years.

- The military's role in threat assessment and military acquisitions has been unduly restricted. Its thinking on nuclear weapons has never been sufficiently sought or discussed. There should be no insulation of military within the government. Military personnel, given their expertise, should staff defence ministry and NSC positions.
- There is need for greater politico-military consultative mechanism in the government. A CDS or a permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff must be appointed for single point advice to the DM and the CCS.
- Attendance of Service Chiefs in CCS/NSC meetings pertaining to defence issues, including procurement and acquisition issues, should be institutionalized. Appropriate interaction between senior Service officers and Standing Committee on Defence in the Parliament is necessary. Selected service officers need to be posted to External Affairs, Home and others ministries (where relevant) for immediate military advice and liaison. Armed forces should also be given opportunities to enlighten public opinion on defence policy, planning, and establishment matters.
- The MOD should be integrated and adequately resourced in letter and spirit. Service HQs should be given the status of lateral offices of the MOD, and not as attached offices. Civilian officers posted in the MOD should have adequate expertise on security issues. Rules of business between the Ministry and Service HQs must be modified. Secrecy within and trust deficit should be removed through greater transparency.
- It should be mandatory for the MOD to prepare and put up long and short term defence plans, and for the CCS to approve them on fixed time basis.
- There is a need to work towards tri-service integrated theatre command and control and in vital security areas like air space management, cyber-warfare, intelligence, satellite imagery and surveillance and common requirements of logistics. Jointness must be fully extended to strategic and operational planning and training.

- The syllabi of all military institutions should be reviewed keeping in view the changed political and operational strategic environment. Strategy should be taught at a much earlier stage than being done currently.
- There is an urgent need to reform defence industrialisation and procurement processes in accordance with global trends, sound management practices and pragmatic choices. We should separate defence production department (less DRDO) from the MOD to break the nexus between Ordnance Factory Board, Defence PSUs and bureaucracy. This has not only become a ‘monopoly’ issue but also of MOD officials forcing users to accept sub standard, over priced items from inefficient public sector establishments under their control. Private sector needs to be given a level playing ground to compete in defence industry.

Conclusion

Given today’s rapidly changing geo-strategic environment, it is imperative that we change our mindset and attitude and look beyond narrow boundaries defined by ‘turf’ and parochialism. Politico-military strategy is too vital a subject to be dealt within watertight compartments. We need to re-engineer our national security paradigm and defence management structure and processes to make it more holistic and broad based. It is only then, that, we can be fully prepared to take on the role that we see for ourselves in the global community.

4 Management and Delivery of Joint Military Capabilities

by Air Marshal BD Jayal

Nothing in the military domain arouses as much study, debate, comment and friction as the subject of jointness. The irony is that whilst many have attempted to define the precise content of this word, to the man or woman in uniform at the cutting edge and base of the military pyramid the core of its meaning is instinctively understood and not merely because one's life could depend on it! It is ironical therefore that the world over, rather than the concept actually flowing outwards from the military domain to wider areas of national security management, it is the upper echelon of the military pyramid that is perceived to pose the biggest hurdle to its true adoption.

This paper begins by describing the larger aspects involved in the management of defence and relates it with the concept of jointness. Next it briefly analyses some previous operations before describing current issues in jointness and higher defence organisations. After that it describes some of the changing dynamics in the character of warfare and concludes with some recommendations.

Civil-military relations

On civil-military relations in India, Anit Mukherjee concludes that the structure loosely translates into a system where according to late K. Subrahmanyam “politicians enjoy power without responsibility, bureaucrats wield power without any accountability and the military assumes responsibility without any direction.”²⁵

Neville Maxwell, describing post 1962 events refers to Nehru's letter to Bertrand Russell where he refers to “the danger of the military mentality spreading in India, and the power of the army increasing.”²⁶

²⁵ See Anit Mukherjee, “The Absent Dialogue,” *Seminar*, No.599, July 2009

²⁶ See Neville Maxwell, *India's China War* (Anchor Books, 1972). p. 82

This uneasy feeling, harboured by the political leadership ever since India became independent, is largely responsible for the historic trust deficit that exists between the political and military leadership as a result of which the civil service has occupied the arbiter's role.

In the US the National Security Act of 1947 and the Defence Reorganization Act of 1958 were followed by the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, which was necessitated to fix organisational and inter service rivalry problems that manifested themselves during Viet Nam and other operations.²⁷ Similar problems have long afflicted higher defence management in India, which in many areas is based on our colonial legacy. As the recent stress in civil-military relations has shown, glossing over them is not an option any more.

Concept of Jointness

The major obstacle towards jointness within the Indian national security domain originates not at the military level but at the political level, both legislative and executive, where defence and security issues generate interest only in crisis situations. Moreover defence is perceived to be sucking up resources which otherwise could be devoted to other socio-economic priorities. Defence versus development is hence a commonly heard refrain in our democratic polity- with few takers for the more rational defence and development option. In this climate it has become convenient for the civil service element of the national security managers to pretend that jointness is a phenomenon associated with only the uniformed fraternity, the corollary being that all will be well if only the armed forces get their act together.

This sentiment contrasts with the need of the modern battle space with its emphasis on integrated planning and operations. Moreover it is impossible to divide the concept of jointness into neat civil and military domains and such an attempt invariably leaves the whole less than the sum of its parts!

The pulls and pressures on resources for defence on the one hand and an indifferent and over bearing civilian security architecture on the other, have a natural fallout on the armed forces, which then withdraw into their shells to protect their respective turfs. Far from promoting jointness

amongst the services, the present system has created deep fissures among the Armed Forces and denied the nation the benefit of integrated and cost effective security solutions. Fuelled by the latent distrust of the military, this fragmented military model suits civil security managers.

Section I: Previous Operations

Op Cactus was mounted in 1988 to airlift a parachute battalion group to the remote Indian Ocean archipelago of Maldives in response to an urgent appeal from its government, which was under siege from a mercenary invasion. The joint IAF-Army response was swift and successful although planned against heavy odds. The Navy added by intercepting the fleeing mercenaries.

Unlike the surgical Op Cactus, Operation Pawan was the operation by Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF) from 1987 to 1990 to disarm the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) as part of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord. Of this three-year campaign, Maj. Gen. Ashok Mehta, a participant, writes:

“The organisation and command and control structure that was set up and evolved was *ad hoc* to the core. It was so acutely overloaded and cross-wired that the operational chain of command was blanketed by competing centres of power... That despite these macro sized shortcomings the IPKF helped implement a substantial portion of the (Indo-Sri Lanka Accord) ISLA, including weakening the LTTE, was no small achievement. But this has gone unnoticed and uncredited.”²⁸

Uncredited were also the operations where the IAF flew over 70,000 missions of transport and helicopters integral to the ground fighting providing suppressive fire, interdicting riverine traffic and movement

²⁷ The implementation of this both these Acts made tremendous changes in the overall management of defence in the US. For a good description see National Defense University Library, “Goldwater Nichols department of defense reorganization Act, 1986,” available at <http://www.ndu.edu/library/goldnich/goldnich.html>

²⁸ See Ashok Mehta, “Tackling the Tigers,” *Seminar*, No. 479, July 1999.

of troops, and the Navy transporting 200,000 men either way, 100,000 tonnes of stores and 8000 vehicles.²⁹

Kargil conflict in 1999 was the first of our conventional conflicts fought in the new information age with its attendant electronic media coverage. Even as events were unfolding, glaring weaknesses within the national security management system down to the operational levels were for the first time discussed in the public domain as our gallant soldiers fought Herculean battles. It was in the midst of this campaign, when the likely widening of this conflict was looming over the nation, that a sombre COAS stated in a press conference that ‘we will fight with what we have’ bringing back the ghost of 1962!

Lessons Emerging

Operation Cactus and Pawan were examples of how the field formations given even unconventional missions and tri-service resources and left to themselves, worked in true spirit of jointness and shorn of inter service parochialism evolved innovative operational and command solutions. To those that have seen such operations at close quarters (as indeed this writer did as Assistant Chief of Air Staff (Operation) spending time with the IPKF) it is clear that at the field level our forces will instinctively practice operational innovativeness and jointness to the hilt provided they are left to their devices. In a clear example of turf interests, the valuable lessons of joint army-IAF helicopter operations during Op Pawan have been glossed over and denied to future military planners.

In an earlier analysis of the Kargil operations this writer had examined integrated air-land operations. In light of its relevance this is quoted at length:

“The KRC has obviously chosen to avoid these crucial but sensitive issues not because of lack of awareness, but through design. Whatever be the compulsions, these omissions are

²⁹ For more about the Indian Air Force participation in these operations see: http://indianairforce.nic.in/show_page.php?pg_id=108 ; and for a description of the role of the Navy see: <http://indiannavy.nic.in/pawan.htm>

unfortunate, as are their obvious negative ramifications on the lessons that should have emerged.

This brings into serious question the very basis of integrated air-land operations in the Indian security context and the need to follow a Joint Chief concept responsible for planning and conduct of operations. Significantly, while the KRC recommendations under the heading 'National Security Management and Apex Decision Making' talk about the need to reorganize the entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and the interface between the MOD and Armed Forces HQ, they make no mention of a Joint Chief concept for integrated operational planning and execution. Possibly, another deliberate though unfortunate omission.

In an age where air power is driving strategic and tactical options and without which no worthwhile security calculus can even be contemplated, ignoring the role of the Air Force in managing a hostile LOC in peace time, and relegating it to the side lines while reviewing the post- Kargil lessons, merely indicates a national security mindset that remains frozen in the 1962 era! A mindset that still defers the use of air power to a later stage conferring on it the label of a quantum escalation of conflict.

In an era of sub- continental nuclear deterrence, the very survival of India will depend on how quickly and effectively such a mindset is reversed. By side stepping the role, missions and contributions that the IAF could have made in preventing Kargil and would make in preventing future Kargils (or indeed Hiroshimas), the KRC has diluted the impact of its review on the future of national security.”³⁰

Section II: Current Issues

This section examines three topics relevant to this paper—higher defence management, matters within the purview of the Service Headquarters and matters pertaining to operational performance.

³⁰ See Air Marshal B.D.Jayal (Retd), “The Kargil Review Committee Report: A Mindset Frozen in the 1962 Era,” *Indian Defence Review*, April-June 2000.

Higher Defence Management

The Kargil Review Committee brought out ‘many grave deficiencies in India’s security management system’ and while making recommendations cautioned that ‘the political, civil, military and intelligence establishments had developed a vested interest in the status quo’. This mindset ensures that each establishment glosses over lessons emerging from past experiences, which then has a debilitating effect on the evolution of security responses through a process of re-learning. Not declassifying lessons of past conflicts for study and research is another damaging consequence of this mindset.³¹

Today with the legislature largely uninterested in national security issues, legislative accountability that is the hallmark of our democratic system remains only in name. Even recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee on Defence remain on paper. The National Security Council that was set up in 1998 remains more or less dormant. According to B.S.Raghavan, “one of the very first projects undertaken by the NSC ought to have been the drawing up of a cogent and comprehensive national security doctrine for the country.”³² He concludes that it is strange that a country like India, which had gone through security crises of all hues, should still be practicing adhocism in managing its security imperatives.

In the absence of a National Security Doctrine individual services have chosen to formulate their own doctrines, which is anachronistic in the age of an integrated battle environment. Worse still, in the absence of an independent scientific and professional audit, it provides an avenue to individual services to widen their turfs across roles and missions subjectively and indiscriminately, thus deepening inter service rivalries.

Today the Service Headquarters are outside the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the latter exercises authority in matters as diverse as senior service promotions/appointments, force levels, procurement and how the service budget is used, but is devoid of specialists and not

³¹ For a good analysis of this issue see P.K. Gautam, “The need for renaissance of military history and modern war studies in India,” *IDSA Occasional Paper No. 21*, 2011.

³² See B.S. Raghavan, “National Security Doctrine for India,” *Business Line*, March 14, 2011.

accountable for the adverse consequences of exercising this authority. While civil service expertise is a vital component of managing national security, jointness suffers due to absence of a cadre dedicated to defence and security. Viewed from the military perspective there has been a gradual erosion of status and powers vested with the military leadership and indeed of parity with civil counterparts. Civilian control over the military, an essential element of a democracy, has been converted to control by the civil service. Not surprisingly the KRC had observed 'India is perhaps the only democracy where the armed forces headquarters are outside the apex government structure'.

The Service Headquarters

The institution of the Chiefs of Staff Committee has neither contributed to integrated operations nor succeeded in resolving inter-service professional differences as it works to a common minimum denominator. This leaves professional differences to be resolved at the civil service level that both lack expertise and tend to play favorites. The Chiefs of Staff wear both the Chief of Staff and operational Commander hats with limited financial and administrative authority. With strong parochial service interests, the three Services work largely in isolation resulting in wasteful duplication of scarce resources and unfocussed military capability. In such a milieu the Service Headquarters have become inflated bureaucracies. As a result neither are they allowed to play a positive role in national security policy formulation nor are they able to exercise effective operational control over fighting commands.

The decision-making process far exceeds tenures of service of Personal Staff Officers (PSOs) and Chiefs. In the command rather than collegiate form of decision-making, change in personalities can bring about sudden change in priorities and reversal of decisions, thus assisting the procrastination process or interfering with ongoing programmes.

Military personnel are subject to their respective Service Acts and have courts of their own that have judicial powers. Yet in matters of pay and other conditions they are bracketed along with civil services. A report by the Parliamentary Committee on Defence in August 2001, had taken serious view of the practice of down grading armed forces' officers both in the warrant of precedence and in their equivalence to

civilian counterparts and wanted terms and conditions of service of armed forces personnel to be considered in their own merit.³³ Nothing changed and a long pending need for a separate Armed Forces' Pay Commission remains unheeded.

Contrary to popular belief the resistance to jointness within the armed forces does not reside at the operational levels. It has its origins at the higher defence organisation, which pits the services against one another through battles for budgets and in formulating individual threat assessments and war doctrines aimed at preserving/expanding roles and missions. The latent trust deficit between the civil and military hierarchies further fuels this wasted effort.

Operational Aspects

While there are many issues pertaining to the operational aspects of jointness this paper analyses just two- roles and missions and the aspect of operational commands. The roles and missions of the individual services have been a source of controversy in almost all militaries. A number of countries have dealt with this through legislative action. Most prominently this path was adopted in the US. In a paper 'Unifying the Military Services-A Joint Challenge', the authors state that the US National Security Act of 1947 which restructured the security organisation was considered the most important piece of defence legislation since the US Constitution. Among its major provisions was the delineation of the principle functions, roles and missions of each of the services. Their study argues that:

“the end result is a Department of Defense composed of separate and distinct services organized around the traditional roles and missions that define these, all totally focused on the critical task of matching mission and jurisdictional control at the tactical level of war. This unity of effort will contribute in enhanced joint fighting effectiveness.”³⁴

³³ See Standing Committee on Defence, *12th Report: Manpower Planning and Management Policy in Defence* (Lok Sabha: New Delhi, August 2001).

³⁴ See Robert Durbin and Steven Raho, “Unifying the Military Services-A Joint Challenge,” *USAWC Fellowship Research Project* (Pennsylvania: US Army War College, 1996), p. 25.

The Indian armed forces are no strangers to the challenge described above. With no integrated defence planning and no scientific system/operational analysis studies the services induct new weapon systems expanding their arsenals on a subjective basis. Today each service can boast of surface- to- surface missiles, Remotely Piloted Vehicles (RPVs), air defence weapons systems, cruise missiles, airborne platforms, space and C4I resources. Without an integrated operational command and control structure and especially in a nuclear environment, this diversity is likely to become a liability rather than an asset. Apart from the operational consequences, this divided approach also denies us benefits of economies of scale and cost effectiveness by not rationalizing on roles, missions, training and support systems where possible.

Recently there has been a controversy in India over management of space among the three services. This turf war has not yet been resolved and this has created some bitterness and jealousy. Faced with a similar turf war in respect of space which is now an integral part of modern warfare, the US Congress again intervened and after due assessment, designated the USAF as the executive agent for space within the defence department with a separate budget.³⁵ Before further damage is done to the operational fabric of the armed forces it is time for similar legislative intervention in India to resolve the roles and missions turf war for good, based on scientific tools rather than subjective service claims.

Another issue pertaining to jointness that requires attention and deliberation is the location and functioning of operational commands. There are fourteen single service operational commands delineated on a geographical basis yet no two-command headquarters are located in the same place and their geographical areas of responsibility do not always coincide. Operational Commands that should have full authority to plan and conduct operations report to and receive even routine directions from their respective Service head quarters. Faced as the nation is with an unstable neighbourhood and nuclear adversaries, this command and control structure is unsound.

³⁵ See mine, "Doing It Together," *The Telegraph*, December 06, 2005.

To sum up, the analysis in this section is a sobering one. It surprises no one, but those that choose not to see, that the current arrangement is leading to a situation where in the forces are facing obsolescence, critical shortage of men and material and that personnel policies are coming under severe strain to the detriment of morale. All this is ultimately contributing to stresses in civil-military relations. These issues are also being played up by the media's hunger for 'breaking news' and thereby, unfortunately, the forces continue to feature in the news for all the wrong reasons.

Section III: Changing Dynamics

There are a number of factors that are challenging the status quo and hence make structural transformation and reforms even more important. Such changes are necessary not just to enhance jointness but also to create effective organisations. Some of these factors are described in this section.

Changing Nature of Warfare

Logic now dictates that in the sub continental context conventional wars will be of short duration, but with a nuclear over hang. However, threats at the sub conflict and non-conventional level now pose challenges of a unique nature. Kargil, Purulia arms drop and the Mumbai attacks are pointers to the future with WMDs adding to the complexity. In many of these areas the concept of jointness will need to expand well beyond traditional military and defence stakeholders to other para - military and civil agencies as well.

Technological Revolution (RMA)

Today vastly improved battle space knowledge can be shared in real time enabling operational decisions to be taken relatively quickly and culminating in long-range precision strikes. This seamless process could involve systems based on land, sea or air and space involving forces across the military spectrum. Long-range nature of engagement would transcend international air space involving international relations. In such an environment integrated operations hold the key to military effectiveness and dominance. As was demonstrated with the US President monitoring in real time the Navy Seals operation in Abbotabad, political leaderships can now get drawn closer to the battle space.

Cyber and Information Warfare

There are two new emerging domains of warfare—cyber and information warfare. On cyber warfare, “the Pentagon has formally recognized cyberspace as a new domain in warfare... (which) has become just as critical to military operations as land, sea, air and space.”³⁶ Since this is a type of war where the enemy who strikes may not even be known, it needs an integrated national response. Information is now considered a strategic asset. The Information Technology (IT) revolution also brings with it challenges of Information and Psychological warfare. A free press while being a pillar of democracy is driven commercially. Quoting Michael O’Neil, former President of the American Association of Newspaper Editors, Dr. Subhash Kapila says that the Indian media in relation to coverage, discussion and analysis of India’s national security matters has displayed a deplorable insensitivity to both national interests and national security interests.³⁷ He concludes that since India’s survival as a nation state is at stake both due to internal and external threats, Indian governments of any political hue should not permit trivializing or jeopardizing India’s national security issues by the media. Trivializing is precisely what a national daily did with alarmist insinuations of army flexing its muscles in the midst of the recent MOD-Army standoff, thus seriously blurring the line between journalism and information warfare.

Nuclear Issues

Having declared a doctrine of ‘credible minimum nuclear deterrence with no first use’, Indian security managers appear sanguine. But nuclear deterrence is a mind game whose logic is undecipherable. On nuclear deterrence General Lee Butler, one time Commander-in-Chief US Strategic Command and later a follower of nuclear disarmament, argued:

“Deterrence in the cold-war setting was fatally flawed at the most fundamental level of human psychology in its projection

³⁶ See William J. Lynn, “Defending a New Domain: The Pentagon’s Cyberstrategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 89 (September–October 2010).

³⁷ See Subhash Kapila, “National Security and the Indian Media-An Analysis,” *South Asia Analysis Group*, Paper No. 407, February 05, 2002.

of Western reason through the crazed lens of a paranoid foe...Deterrence was a dialogue of the blind with the deaf. In the final analysis it was largely a bargain we in the West made with ourselves.³⁸

One wonders what opportunities our paranoid foes see through their crazed lenses when they observe our fragmented national security institutions, in particular the armed forces?

Criteria of Affordability

It was the soldier statesman US President Eisenhower who famously said ‘the purpose is clear. It is safety with solvency. The country is interested in both’. Today more than ever this dictum runs true as nations across the world are grappling with this challenge. As the costs of research, development and production of technologically advanced weapons systems increase, they place tremendous demands on the economy of any country. With the financial crisis the defence budgets in most countries are shrinking. More than even then defence managers will have to be extra cautious about financial budgets and expenditure.

Through the sixties till the end of the Cold War, close Indo-USSR defence procurement and trade ties, assisted by Rupee payments and generous military credit terms, enabled the Indian armed forces to maintain healthy force levels and keep pace with modernisation even in the face of severe resource and foreign exchange constraints. With, changed conditions, it is not surprising that modernisation is now lagging significantly with equipment levels shrinking. While no government will ever admit it, budgetary constraints will always be a limiting factor and affordability must now become an important element of defence planning. Addressing the Combined Commanders Conference in October 2011, the Prime Minister while stating that the government will never fight shy of finding funds prodded the forces towards creation of common institutions. Yet some five months after the Prime Minister made the promise, Rs. 3055 crores from the Defence Capital budget was surrendered for FY 2011-12 at the Revised

³⁸ See General Lee Butler, “Death by Deterrence,” *Resurgence*, available at: http://dwij.org/forum/statesperson/general_lee_butler.htm

Estimates stage.³⁹ Reportedly this was prompted by acute fiscal distress and is the first such mid-year cut in recent memory.⁴⁰

Section IV: The way ahead and recommendations

The discussion so far suggests that that expecting the armed forces to practice the ideal of jointness in a framework of the existing higher defence organisation is a mirage. For defence reforms to have any meaning, they must cover the entire spectrum from the legislature down to the operational domain. Any efforts, to reform selectively, as has been the past practice-will only place us worse than we are today. In addition two points need emphasis. First the present system stands disfigured and rendered unfit for meaningful reconstruction and the only approach is to start afresh and second, due to the prevailing mindset of status quoism, a body from outside the mainstream security establishment must look at the problem and suggest meaningful change.

Six and a half decades after independence and with a vibrant democracy in being, the time has come for the political leadership of the country to shed being squeamish and untrustworthy of the armed forces and to share with the people the security challenges that confront the nation and plans to counter these. Fortunately, in matters of national security Indian Parliament remains united and it is this institution that must now step forward to take charge, before irreparable harm comes to the institution of the armed forces of the country. An India aspiring to take its rightful place on the international stage will need to take a call that needs not just political will and sagacity but a change in mindset across the national security landscape.

At the legislative level let the Parliament set up a Blue Ribbon Commission of members outside of the national security and administrative domains to look afresh at all aspects of how in modern context national security is best organized, managed and executed keeping India's unique cultural, democratic, socio economic and security

³⁹ See Laxman Behera, "India's Defence Budget 2012-13," *IDS Comment*, March 20, 2012.

⁴⁰ See Josy Joseph, "Cash-Strapped govt. to Cut Defence Spending?" *Times of India*, February 29, 2012.

climate in mind. Based on the findings, a National Defence Act needs to be promulgated defining the principle function, roles and missions of the respective armed forces, their place within the constitution, their chain of reporting and control and the place of India's Veterans. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence should play a proactive role in monitoring how national security is being managed, in endorsing of posts of Commanders and above by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet and in ensuring that its recommendations are implemented.

Besides much needed political intervention and greater involvement we also need other bureaucracies to play a proactive role. The National Security Council should provide necessary strategic vision taking into account unsettled border disputes, the nuclear dimension, anti terror issues and the entire gamut of non conventional threats. At specified intervals it should present a White Paper to Parliament based on which it will formulate a National Security Doctrine. The Cabinet Committee on Security should direct and coordinate actions by all agencies. It should codify roles and missions of each military service flowing from the legislation and rules of business for the MOD. Also codify roles for agencies outside of defence involved with security matters. It should formulate the National Security Strategy. Flowing from the National Security Strategy the Ministry of Defence should formulate the National Defence Directive.

For optimum national security output, expertise and strengths of both the civil and military are a prerequisite. To strengthen the commitment and jointness across the two, there is need for a dedicated cadre of civil service managers specializing in the national security sphere of governance.

In turn the Armed Forces will have to consciously work towards overcoming service parochialism. Understandably one of the vital factors in the mindset of the soldier, sailor and airmen are culture and loyalty to the service they belong to. But integrated war fighting in different coloured uniforms is not a contradiction, but actually a force multiplier-provided the rules of the game are cast in stone. The silver lining is that within the armed forces the inherent desire for jointness at the delivery level makes it easy to change mindsets once it is perceived that there is unity of purpose right up the chain of command extending

to the political domain along with legislated principle functions of each service and their respective roles and missions.

To achieve the desired level of military jointness both decision-making and execution need to be centralized at the professional level. This can be achieved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), which will consist of a Permanent Chairman, who will be first amongst equals along with the Service Chiefs and Vice Joint Chief of Staff. The role of the Chairman is to act as the highest professional military adviser to the Defence Minister, Prime Minister, the Cabinet Committee on Security and the National Security Council, being responsible for conduct of operations and aid to civil authorities. An Integrated Defence Staff, comprising of military and civil officials, will serve as the Secretariat. Flowing from the National Defence Directive, the JCS will formulate a Joint Military Doctrine, Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan, and Operational Directives to each command under its operational control.

Creating these new positions will necessarily result in changes in the Service Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence. The existing Service HQ can then form Departments of the MOD manned both by civil and military officials with the Chiefs of Staff as professional heads of their respective departments. The Service Chief will be responsible to manage their budgets, recruit, train, equip and support their respective forces in keeping with the overall operational plans evolved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The service chiefs will have access to defence minister and PM in respect of their services and to the President of India as Supreme Commander on matters relating to morale, welfare and ceremonials of their personnel

In addition, regional operational commands should be consolidated into two-Service/three-Service commands each responsible for a geographical area functionally reporting to the Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff. For technical and administrative support they will report to respective Service Departments. Commands will formulate their war plans based on Operational Directive of the JCS and will be responsible for its training and execution.

Functional Commands should fall into two categories, Operational and Support. In the former category are the Strategic, Space, Special Forces and Air Defence Commands and in the latter category can be

respective Training and System and Support Commands. Command and control of the Functional (Operational) Commands can remain similar to the Regional Operational Commands with one rider. Detailed studies will need to determine whether it will be operationally beneficial and cost effective to keep some of these as largely single service commands depending on the area of specialisation needed. Command and control of three Training Commands will rest with respective Services. Three System and Support Commands, one each for land, sea and air/space systems under the respective service department will be a cost effective way to manage the complex maintenance, engineering, repair, overhaul and logistics requirements. Moreover they can interface with the Public Sector Units (PSUs), Ordnance Factories (OFs), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the private sector for service requirements. One general principle ought to be that in areas of common weapon systems between two or more Services, the largest system user Service should establish common support facilities for all.

Other major organisations that are integral to national security and operate within the defence budget are the Defence PSUs/Ordnance Factories and the DRDO. The original concept of self-reliance has met with limited success while the Indian private sector is today competing internationally. The current state of affairs is totally unsatisfactory and needs a separate study to arrive at an optimum solution with far greater involvement of the private sector both national and international across research, development, production and support. This study must remain an integral part of the review by the proposed Commission.

Conclusion

As security challenges facing the country multiply and as technology continues its inevitable march with cost of weapon systems rapidly escalating, the nation is faced with acute security challenges across the entire security spectrum. Management of defence, however, remains frozen in time and there is institutional resistance to change. While it is too early to judge the adverse impact of the recent civil-military stand off and the more damaging media insinuations on the loyalty of the army, one conclusion is inevitable- change is now a security imperative and needs legislative backing. Only then will there be acceptance amongst

the various stake holders of the inevitability of change to meet the challenges of the integrated battlefield which demands forces to be joint intellectually, operationally, organisationally, doctrinally, and technically. The armed forces have the potential to be up to it, the question is whether the nation can gather the political and legislative will.

5

Next Generation Defence Reforms: A Roadmap

by Anit Mukherjee

The late K. Subrahmanyam, in one of his last interviews, had argued that “India’s political class is still not in a position to tackle the national security issues with the seriousness they deserve.”⁴¹ The papers in this monograph and many previous writings by other members of India’s strategic community support this sentiment. Given India’s steadily deteriorating external and internal security environment, the need for greater political interest and engagement in the process of defence reforms and higher defence management thus assumes greater salience. That is among the major recommendations and indeed a recurring theme throughout this volume.

The setting up of the Naresh Chandra Committee last year was a welcome development more so since it was done in the absence of a crisis—the usual trigger for introspection and change in India. The establishment of this committee was, perhaps, a tacit admission by the government that all was not well with the country’s higher defence management and civil-military relations. In fact the numerous controversies in the recent past have served to expose the considerable schism between civilians and the military and confirmed that all is not well in the higher management of defence. These are ominous portents for national security and need to be immediately addressed. Crucially, streamlining the functioning of the national security establishment, especially the Ministry of Defence along with its, putative, “Integrated Headquarters” and reforming deeply embedded bureaucratic processes must not be viewed along partisan lines. Hence the reform of national security institutions should not be politicised and instead should be viewed across party-lines as a matters of supreme national importance.

⁴¹ See “Report of the Kargil Review Committee: An Appraisal,” *CLAWS Journal*, Summer 2009, p.19.

While the public version and implementation of the Naresh Chandra Committee Report and is still awaited this chapter suggests a roadmap to usher in the next generation of defence reforms. This is not only necessary to plug existing deficiencies but also critically important for India to emerge as a major power. Policy makers today need to visualise the roles that they may need to discharge, and the kind of institutions that would facilitate them at least two decades from now. Only then will India be able to discharge the responsibilities that its stature will cast upon it. In turn this chapter borrows heavily from the three previous papers. While this is not an exhaustive list the following are some of the major recommendations to usher in the next generation of defence reforms:

- The government must accept, in principle, the need for greater parliamentary oversight and involvement in defence reforms, and especially the urgent need to re-examine the rubric of higher defence management. There is a growing consensus among India's strategic community that legislation is, possibly, the only way to bring about early reform. In this context, the passage of an Act of Parliament along the lines of the Goldwater Nichols Act of Congress 1986, enacted by the United States is the need of the hour. Parliamentarians must be up to this task and not shy away from this responsibility. In order to do this and as a follow up to the Naresh Chandra Committee a special parliamentary committee should be formed comprising distinguished parliamentarians. Such a committee should requisition the support of former military officers, Ministry of Defence bureaucrats, academicians and other qualified personnel to examine the complex issues surrounding civil-military relations, Ministry of Defence and Service Headquarters interaction, jointness, officer education and promotion policies and the overall rubric of higher defence management. In addition it should also examine inter-agency functions that involve different Ministries including Home and the National Security Council. This should then result in a proposed Act of Parliament to re-engineer our national security apparatus.
- Concurrent to this parliamentary initiative, the Service Headquarters should also launch a multi-year project on

defence reforms and higher defence management. This could be run at respective War Colleges and Service specific think tanks. The primary purpose of such an effort should be to get a variety of opinions, build consensus, influence and shape ideas for the future structure and direction of the Indian military. These projects should debate all issues honestly and present their ideas in the public domain. Ultimately, the best idea has to win and recommendations should not be based on parochial or turf interests.

- The Ministry of Defence needs to be re-structured and Government of India Rules of Business 1961 amended as necessary so that the role of the military in national defence is recognized, and the military hierarchy accorded recognition as an integral component of the governmental structure. Many recommendations have been debated to integrate the Ministry with the Service Headquarters. The entire structure, staffing and functions of the MOD needs to be dispassionately examined. Civilian control of the military is a *sine qua non* of India's democracy and no one contests that ultimately all national security decisions are to be taken by our democratically elected leaders. Moreover there is a necessary function to be performed by civilian bureaucrats in the Ministry of Defence. However their performance and efficiency can be enhanced by greater integration between the civilians and the military and by creating a cadre of specialist bureaucrats instead of the current system of generalists randomly shouldering onerous responsibilities. Towards that end we should study and emulate best practices from other countries. The British Ministry of Defence and the United States' Office of the Secretary of Defence (OSD) come readily to mind. We must also undertake a study of higher defence management in other major democracies. Ultimately, of course, we would have to fashion our own system but this should be informed by the experience of other countries.
- All these measures should ideally aim towards either replicating the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) concept with Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ), or installing a Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. There are some reports that the Naresh

Chandra Committee has recommended a full-time, “Permanent” Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee. Such an appointment, if it has been recommended, must not be a ceremonial figure and instead must exercise real powers. There is a need to find a clear division of responsibilities between this post and the Service Chiefs. Taking no action however is not an option. Some decision should be implemented which can be re-visited in a few years to validate its efficacy.

- Any restructuring of our national security agencies should be informed by ascertaining the views of our retired and serving community of politicians, bureaucrats and military officers. This should be documented and undertaken in a systematic manner and released, with limited security deletions, in the public domain. In addition, there should be in-depth research conducted into the files of the Service Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence. This would present an honest picture into the problems in inter-services organisations, inter-agency coordination and other internal processes. The purpose of this effort is to ensure that all changes are undertaken on the basis of research and not opinion.
- Currently there is a single service approach to operations, training and education. This is unhelpful for jointness. The current system of geographically separated operational commands does not help. We recommend a debate that ultimately leads to theatre commands. This is the way most modern militaries, even those with territorial disputes, operate and India’s exceptionalism makes little sense. Of course such commands should be suitably structured to reflect operational realities however turf consideration should not, as they currently do, win the day. Admittedly, this is easier said than done. However one manner of dealing with insecurities is to sign inter-services Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that freezes, for the medium term, roles and functions of different services.
- There is a distance between Indian society, academia, think tanks and the military. Part of the problem is an absence of primary sources that once analysed can hopefully trigger an

attitudinal shift towards national security. Accordingly we recommend that the Service Headquarters and the Ministry of Defence implement a mature and logical declassification procedure.

There are many other recommendations that have been made in these papers. Hopefully they will not be the last word of the subject and the intention of this monograph is to initiate an honest and respectful debate on an issue of national importance. Only then can we do justice to the demands and challenges of the future. Above all, ignoring the current deficiencies and deep malaises in our national security agencies would be an injustice not just to our men and women in uniform but also to those officials working on these issues. Taking this debate further is therefore the duty of our politicians, and of the citizens who elect them.

Contributors

Air Marshal B.D. Jayal, PVSM, AVSM, VSM joined the National Defence Academy (NDA) in 1952 and was commissioned as a fighter pilot in the IAF in 1955. He graduated as an experimental test pilot in 1965 from ETPS Farnborough. Operational career includes command of a MIG 21 squadron and Jaguar base and flight-testing both with the IAF Test establishment and HAL. He later commanded both Eastern and South Western Air Commands. His staff appointments in Air HQ include Director Air Staff Requirement, ACAS (Plans), ACAS (Operations) and Deputy Chief of Air Staff. He is a graduate of the National Defence College (NDC). Post retirement was member of Committee on setting up of the Indian NDU, writes on national security issues and is Honorary Chairman Raphael-Ryder Cheshire International Centre for Relief of Suffering.

General V. P. Malik, PVSM, AVSM was Chief of the Indian Army from 01 October 1997 to 30 September 2000. Concurrently, he served as Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee of India during last two years of his service. In 1999, he planned, coordinated and oversaw execution of Operation Vijay to successfully defeat Pakistan's attempted intrusion in the Kargil Sector. After retirement, he was appointed as member of the National Security Advisory Board for two years. Currently, he is an independent director/advisor on the board of some well-known private sector companies. He writes frequently for newspapers and magazines. He has authored *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory* (Harper Collins Publishers, India) and written several papers on defense planning and security issues.

Admiral Arun Prakash, PVSM, AVSM, VrC, VSM served as India's 20th Naval Chief, and concurrently, as Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee; retiring in end-2006. Commissioned into the Executive Branch in 1966, he specialized in aviation, and has flown 2500 hours on a variety of aircraft from ships and ashore. During a career spanning over 40 years, he has commanded warships, including the aircraft-carrier *Viraat*, as well as naval air squadrons and an air station. In flag

rank he commanded India's Eastern Fleet, the National Defence Academy and the Western Naval Command. In 2001 he became the first CINC of the Joint Andaman & Nicobar Command. He also served on the Naval Staff as the head of Naval Aviation, Chief of Personnel and Vice Chief. During his tenure as CNS, the navy saw many initiatives for formulation of doctrine and strategy, initiation of a transformational process and the vitalisation of foreign maritime cooperation. He is a graduate of the IAF Test Pilots School, the Defence Services Staff College and the US Naval War College. During the 1971 war he was decorated for gallantry in action while serving with an IAF fighter-bomber squadron in Punjab. He is a two-time member of India's National Security Advisory Board and, currently, serves on a National Task Force on Security Reforms.

Anit Mukherjee is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi. He earned his PhD from the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC. Earlier he did his MA in Strategic and South Asia Studies from the same University. He has previously conducted research at the Brookings Institution and as a Summer Associate at RAND Corporation. Prior to graduate school, he was a Major in the Indian Army and served in numerous command and staff appointments. He has published in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal (Asia)*, *RUSI Journal*, *Times of India* and *India Review*, among others. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy (NDA), Khadakwasla. In September 2012 he is joining the Center for the Advanced Study of India (CASI) as a post-doctoral fellow in the University of Pennsylvania.

This monograph examines higher defence management and defence reforms in India. It includes paper from Air Marshal BD Jayal, General VP Malik and Admiral Arun Prakash. Partly based on their experience and research these papers offer many insights and recommendations. Their main argument is two fold. First, the current system of higher defence management is defective and needs major reforms. Second, such reforms are only possible when politicians invest more of their time and efforts. There is an argument therefore for legislative intervention. In addition these papers examine other issues like the need for theatre commands, measures to enhance jointness and truly integrate the Ministry of Defence and the Service Headquarters. Anit Mukherjee introduces the papers and, in the last chapter, suggests a roadmap to usher in the next generation of defence reforms.

Air Marshal BD Jayal is a former Air Officer Commanding in Chief (AOC-in-C).

General VP Malik is a former Chief of Army Staff (COAS).

Dr. Anit Mukherjee is a Research Fellow at Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA).

Admiral Arun Prakash is a former Chief of Naval Staff (CNS).



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & 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 Website: <http://www.idsa.in>

