

CDS AND OTHER REFORMS: A MID WAY MILESTONE

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The government's decision to institute the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and create the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is not a day too soon. By this decision the government has attempted to empower the military by giving it a 'voice' at the decision making forums. However, the government's decision comes with riders regarding the authority, responsibility and accountability of the CDS. The extent of the command and administrative responsibility entrusted in the CDS is among the most critical decisions the government has taken in the reform process. This has been a subject of great deliberation and debate. How much power and authority must be entrusted in the appointment of the CDS? The answer to this question lies in two conflicting yet complementary requirements, unity of command and checks and balances over the appointment. Unity of command is a time tested and accepted military principle of organizing military hierarchy. The application of this principle without moderation will confer the CDS with authority, which perhaps may not be in the larger interest of the defence establishment. The authority of the CDS has to be tempered with prudent checks and balances to achieve a desired state of equilibrium between the military, the civil bureaucracy and the elected representatives, a necessary pre-condition to achieve operational efficiency and administrative effectiveness.

As per the amended Allocation of Business Rules the Defence Secretary has been made responsible for the making defence of policies and capital procurement. This has the potential to cause functional discord in the MoD. The CDS would be expected to operate under the limits of the approved policy of the government and subject to the

resources allocated. The Defence Secretary will play a lead role in policy formulation and resource allocation, although the CDS would be expected to provide inputs on the subject. This to some may seem like the dominance of the Defence Secretary and his staff, necessitating deliberation by the decision makers. As the defence policy would be dealt by the Defence Secretary the key policy advisory committees will be either chaired by the Defence Secretary or his representatives. It is also likely that the agenda of the committees will also be set and controlled by the civil bureaucracy. In all possibility, the RM is likely to get involved in the process of policy making towards the very end and it is possible that all the issues of disagreement may not be put up to him, by the concerned appointments, in the manner desired by the Services. Moreover, the minister may not have the time or inclination to study all aspects of disagreement. All these are issues which require deliberation before the reforms are finalized.

Introduction

On 15 August 2019, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi surprised the strategic community by his announcement of government's decision to institute the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS). His Independence Day announcement ushered in one of the most significant defence reforms since the Kargil war. Instituting the appointment of the CDS and the integration of the three Service Headquarters (HQ) with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) have been long pending demands of the defence community, but were not implemented for a variety of reasons.¹ On 24 December 2019, acting on the PM's

¹ Since the 1950s various committees have recommended some well-meaning defence reforms. Among the earliest, the Public Accounts Committee Report of 1958 was highly critical of the

announcement, the Cabinet Committee of Security (CCS) approved the creation of the appointment of the CDS. The CDS will head the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) in the MoD. The CCS has also approved the report of a committee, headed by the National Security Advisor (NSA), Ajit Doval, detailing the responsibilities and the enabling frame work of the CDS and the associated establishment.

The debate surrounding the appointment of the CDS and the integration of Service HQs with the MoD has been extremely vibrant and lively and at times even vitriolic. The various arguments concerning the two issues have been the subject of study by many committees constituted for the purpose by the government, besides being debated publicly. This paper would attempt to analyse all the assorted issues pertaining to the above mentioned decision of the

duplication of effort between the Service HQs and the MoD and of the proposals emanating from senior level at Service HQs being examined by junior officials in the ministry, lacking necessary expert knowledge. In 1967, two committees on defence, one presided over by Nawab Ali Yawar Jang and other by Shri SN Mishra had reviewed the higher defence organisation, and had made recommendations to integrate the MoD and the Service HQs. The committee headed by Ali Yawar Jang supported the concept of the CDS. See Anand, Vinod (2008), "Management of Defence: Towards an Integrated and Joint Vision", *Strategic Analysis*, 24(11), pp 1975-1976. The last serious attempt at defence reforms was made in the wake of the Kargil war. The Group of Ministers (GoM) constituted to review the national security system and to formulate specific proposals for implementation, recommended instituting the appointment of the CDS and integration of the Service HQs with the MoD, besides many other recommendations. However, both these recommendations did not find favour either with the elected representatives or the bureaucrats and at times even the Services.

government, including whether the announcement has met the expectations of the larger strategic community. It is also the case of the paper that defence reform is a work in progress, therefore, the paper would attempt to define the margins of the ground that has been covered thus far and would endeavour to articulate the way forward for an appropriate model that would harmonise with India's unique security requirements.

Before proceeding with the subject proper it would be appropriate to recapitulate the various facets of India's Higher Defence Organisation (HDO) and Higher Defence Management (HDM) system inherited at the time of independence and the ensuing attempts to reform the defence establishment. This would help develop necessary context for the analysis.

Historical Context

Ismay's Model. The Indian HDO and HDM are the legacy of the system designed at the time of independence in 1947. Lord Mountbatten, the last British Governor General, had invited 'Pug' Ismay² to be his Chief of Staff and to help restructure the Indian HDO. Ismay's system and the design architecture provided for the control of the three Services by the political dispensation of the time and made certain that the political leaders receive uncorrupted military advice first hand from the Service Chiefs. The

² Hastings Lionel "Pug" Ismay, was a British Indian Army officer and a diplomat. He was Winston Churchill's chief military assistant during World War II and the first Secretary General of NATO. He is remembered in India primarily for his contribution in designing the Indian HDO at the time of independence.

system also supported coordination among the three Services. Ismay's system was a pragmatic option, considering the upheavals that were taking place in the country and in the governance setup at the time. This defence management model was meant to 'evolve and change as per the needs' of the country. The Indian HDM, however, remained in a 'time-warp since independence, and thus become outdated and dysfunctional'.³

Kargil Review Committee. Ever since the 1950s a need was felt to reform India's defence establishment. However, it was in the wake of the Kargil conflict a realisation dawned of the urgent need to reform the country's outdated defence architecture and its management practices. A committee headed by K. Subramanyam, was constituted by the government on 24 July 1999, to review the events leading to Pakistan's aggression in the Kargil district of Jammu & Kashmir and to recommend such measures as were considered necessary to safeguard national security against such armed intrusions.⁴ The Kargil Review Committee (KRC) report was submitted on 15 December 1999 and an

³ See Arun Prakash (2012), "National Security Reforms: Ten Years after the Kargil Committee Report", from the text of the lecture delivered on 5 Dec 2012 at the USI: New Delhi, [Online: web] Accessed 14 August 2013, URL: <http://usiofindia.org/Article/?pub=Journal&pubno=590&ano=1384>.

⁴ The Government of India constituted a committee on 24 July 1999 to look into the episode of Pakistan's aggression in the Kargil Sector. The committee comprised of four members, namely K. Subrahmanyam (Chairman), Lieutenant General (retd.) K. K. Hazari, B.G. Verghese and Satish Chandra, Secretary, National Security Council Secretariat, Member Secretary.

unclassified version of the report with security-based deletions was tabled in both Houses of the Parliament on 28 February 2000.⁵ The KRC brought to fore several grave deficiencies in the areas of intelligence, border management and defence management. It also highlighted the fact that India's security scenario had witnessed drastic changes since 1947, yet Ismay's model of HDM had by and large remained unchanged. The KRC had urged for a thorough and expeditious review of the national security system in its entirety.

Group of Ministers. Consequent to the submission of the KRC Report, the government set up a Group of Ministers (GoM) on 17 April 2000 to review the National Security

⁵ Mr K Subrahmanyam in his interview to the team from the Centre for Land Warfare Studies had the following to say, "except for a few deletions, most of which I consider unjustified, the report was published as it is and has not been censored, which was a positive development. However, on the flip side, although the report was placed in the Parliament, it was never discussed by the Parliament primarily owing to partisan politics and evidenced lack of adequate interest in national security issues. This was very unfortunate. In addition, even though the government of the day took the report seriously enough to appoint a GoM to go through the findings and recommendations of the committee and come up with their own proposals on reforming the framework of national security, however, yet again, the recommendations of the GoM were published but not discussed in the Parliament". See Subrahmanyam, K (2009), "Report of the Kargil Review Committee: An Appraisal", personal interview to Gurmeet Kanwal and Monika Chansoria published in *CLAWS Journal*, Summer 2009 [Online: web] Accessed 08 July 2015, http://www.claws.in/images/journals_doc/1400824637Report%20of%20the%20Kargil%20Review%20Committee%20%20CJ%20SSummer%202009.pdf.

System in its entirety and in particular, to consider the recommendations of the KRC and formulate specific proposals for implementation.⁶ The KRC Report was a severe critique of the national security system and led to the formation of a GoM to examine the reforms needed in the national security system. The GoM had a much wider mandate compared to the KRC which had not considered matters concerning internal security. As a result the GoM set up four task forces.⁷ Mr Arun Singh,⁸ former Minister of

⁶ The GoM consisted of L.K. Advani, Minister of Home Affairs, George Fernandes, Minister of Defence, Jaswant Singh, Minister of External Affairs, Yashwant Sinha, Minister of Finance. Brajesh Mishra, National Security Adviser, was Special Invitee for the meetings of the Group.

⁷ To facilitate its work, the GoM set up four Task Forces, one each on Intelligence Apparatus, Internal Security, Border Management and Management of Defence. In view of its comparatively more limited scope, the KRC naturally did not address matters concerning internal security. The GoM, however, considered it necessary to do so in the light of the problems posed by insurgencies, narco-terrorism, collapse of law and order machinery in certain states, violence by left-wing extremists, degradation of the efficacy of the Central Para Military Forces (CPMFs) and the State police forces etc. Accordingly, the GoM set up a separate Task Force for issues concerning Internal Security. See Ministry of Defence (2007), Government of India, *Review of Implementation Status of Group of Ministers (GoMs) Report on Reforming National Security System in Pursuance to Kargil Review Committee Report—A Special Reference to Management of Defence*, 17 July, pp 1-3.

⁸ Arun Singh, according to Adm Arun Prakash, “had a great deal of administrative experience, but also intimate knowledge of the armed forces, coupled with India’s Higher Defence Organisation concern about the extant national security situation”. See Prakash, Arun (2007), “India’s Higher Defence Organisation: Implications for

State for Defence headed the Task Force on Management of Defence.

The Task Forces submitted their report to the GoM after deliberating for five months. The GoM finalised its report and submitted it to the government in February 2001. The report was classified as “Secret”. The CCS considered and approved the report except the recommendations pertaining to the institution of CDS, on which it was decided that the Government would take a view after consulting various political parties.

The Task Force identified a number of problems with the HDM. Some of the problems which are of interest included⁹:

“...a visible 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 applied to Services Headquarters; 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, have all contributed to problems in the management of Defence. This situation requires to

National Security and Jointness”, *Journal of Defence Studies*, 1(1), [Online: web] Accessed 14 August 2012, URL: http://www.idsa.in/jds/1_1_2007_IndiasHigherDefenceOrganization_aprakash, pp. 20.

⁹ See Government of India (2000), *Report of the Group of Ministers on National Security*, New Delhi: Cabinet Secretariat, pp 97-99.

be rectified, to promote improved understanding and efficient functioning of the Ministry.”

The GoM was also of the opinion that there are serious flaws in the functioning of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) since it is unable to provide single point military advice to the government, resolve inter Service issues. The GoM report also highlighted lack of integrated approach in defence acquisition, weaknesses in linkages between plans and budgets and an absence of a dedicated, professionally equipped procurement structure within the MoD.¹⁰

The GoM Report on Management of Defence contains 75 recommendations. The salient recommendations of the GoM of interest to the subject of this paper are mentioned below:¹¹

- In order to remove the impression that Service HQ do not participate in policy formation and were outside the government they were to be designated as ‘Integrated HQ’ instead of Attached Offices.
- In order to expedite decision making and enhance efficiency, financial and administrative powers were to be delegated to Service HQs and lower formations.

¹⁰ Government of India 2000, op. cit. pp. 97-99.

¹¹ See Government of India 2000, ibid. pp. 100-103 and Prakash 2007, op.cit. 23-24.

- The GoM recommended the appointment of the CDS and the Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS). The CDS once appointed would be single point military advisor to the government. He would be responsible for the administrative control of the Strategic Forces and for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning process through intra and inter-Service prioritisation. The CDS when appointed would be required to ensure “jointness” in the armed forces.
- The CDS when appointed would be a four star officer from one of the three Services in rotation and would function as the Permanent Chairman of the COSC. The VCDS would be the Member Secretary. The CDS would rank *primus inter pares* in the COSC and function as the “Principal Military Adviser” to the Defence Minister. The GoM envisaged the appointment of the CDS as a first step in a series of structural reforms to be implemented incrementally. With time and experience further refinements and changes in HDO and systems and processes were expected to follow. For this the report recommended that a committee headed by the Defence Secretary would look into the delegation of administrative powers and to finalise the details of such restructuring. The Chiefs were to recommend restructuring of the respective Service HQs to the Raksha Mantri (RM).
- The GoM was mindful of the important role the Defence Secretary is expected to play in the HDO.

Accordingly, the report recommended that there should be no dilution in his role as “Principal Defence Adviser” to the RM. The report recommended that the Defence Secretary should be responsible to the RM for policy advice, supervising the DoD, co-ordinating the functioning of all departments in the MoD, co-ordinating the finalisation of the complete MoD Long Term Defence Perspective Plan, five year plan, and the annual budget for approval by the RM. He is also expected to advise the RM on all matters relating to Parliament, Central Government and State Governments, in addition to advice generated by individual departments, and co-ordinating all matters relating to personnel policies, terms and conditions of Service, foreign postings and the like, with cadre controlling authorities in the MoD and with the Department of Personnel and Training (DoP&T) when required.

Naresh Chandra Committee. Following the acceptance of GoM’s report by the government many of its recommendations were implemented.¹² However, in the

¹² The Ministry of Defence Standing Committee Report of 2006-2007 mentions that the Chapter of GoM Report on Management of Defence contains 75 recommendations. By 2007 the MoD had completed action on 59 recommendations. Action on six recommendations was pending and ongoing on two recommendations. Eight recommendations of the chapter relating to the appointment of CDS were also pending for decision after consultation with political parties. See Ministry of Defence Standing Committee of Defence 2006-2007, pp. 5.

decade following the submission of the KRC and the GoM reports there was little move forward on the defence reforms. Many analysts, especially the Service officers, were of the opinion that the reforms post Kargil conflict had failed to meet the expectations and that much ground still needed to be covered. In June 2011 the government instituted the Naresh Chandra Committee (NCC)¹³ to revisit the defence reforms process.¹⁴ The committee submitted its report to the government in May 2012, however, the contents of the report has not been made public by the government.

According to Manoj Joshi¹⁵ the purpose of the committee was to “undertake a review of challenges to national security, and recommend measures that will improve our ability to deal with them.” Joshi further highlighted the intention of the committee saying it was to “examine the processes and procedures related to national

¹³ Naresh Chandra was an Indian Civil Servant who has served as the Cabinet Secretary (1990–92), and the Indian Ambassador to the US (1996–2001). He was awarded India's second highest civil award, the Padma Vibhushan, for his Service, in 2007.

¹⁴ 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. See B. D. Jayal (2012), “Management and Delivery of Joint Military Capabilities”, in Anit Mukherjee (ed.) *A Call for Change: Higher Defence Management in India*, New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses.

¹⁵ Manoj Joshi, an eminent journalist and security analyst, was a member of the 2001 Task Force on Management of Defence and of the 2011 NCC.

security in India and come up with recommendations to fix the problems and plug any gaps that emerged”.¹⁶ The committee was also expected to examine why some of the crucial recommendations relating to border management and restructuring the apex command structure in the armed forces had not been implemented.¹⁷

The 14 member committee headed by Naresh Chandra had members who were former military commanders, intelligence chiefs, diplomats and strategic analysts.¹⁸ The committee submitted its report and like many before was not made public by the government. Immediately following the submission of the report there was a sense of anticipation regarding the government’s action on the recommendations. Even though the

¹⁶ Manoj Joshi (2013), “Shutting his ears to change”, *Mail Today*, New Delhi, 22 November 2013.

¹⁷ Unlike the KRC, the NCC functioned in near-total secrecy and it was not entirely clear to others in the strategic community its scope and mandate. Jayal 2012, op. cit.

¹⁸ The NCC had intelligence experts like PC Haldar, former chief of Intelligence Bureau, KC Verma, former chief of Research and Analysis Wing, and former National Investigation Agency chief Radha Vinod Raju. It also had former defence officers like Admiral Arun Prakash, Air Chief Marshal S Krishnaswamy, and former Director General of Military Operations Lt Gen VR Raghavan, apart from bureaucrats like Brajeshwar Singh and Vinod K Duggal. Suman K Berry, director, National Council of Applied Economic Research, senior journalist Manoj Joshi, former Mumbai police commissioner D Sivanandan, former diplomat G Parthasarathy, former chief of Atomic Energy Commission Anil Kakodkar were also part of the Task Force. B Raman, strategic expert and former intelligence officer with R&AW, was advisor to Naresh Chandra.

government did not make the report public, the media had reported some of the recommendations made by the committee, based on their conversation with some of the members. Foremost amongst the recommendations of the NCC was one concerning the appointment of the permanent Chairman of the COSC from among the three Service Chiefs, allowing India to have four four-star generals. There was no mention of the CDS in the report. The Chairman was recommended to be the head of the Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC) and the three Services Chiefs were to continue to lead their respective Services. The NCC also recommended the integration of the Service HQ and the MoD by allowing more cross postings and also recommended the creation of separate Special Operations Command, the Aerospace Command and the Cyberspace Command.¹⁹

Shortcomings of the Defence Establishment

The paper thus far has reviewed some of the serious attempts made to reform the defence establishment. In order to contextualize the recent announcement of the government regarding the appointment of the CDS and the establishment of the DMA, it would be pertinent to

¹⁹ See Nitin Gokhale (2013), "Supremacy of Civil Over Military: The Indian Version", *News Warrior*, Blogspot, 15 June 2013, [Online: web] Accessed 28 June 2013, [URL: http://nitinagokhale.blogspot.in/2013/06/supremacy-of-civil-over-militaryindian.html](http://nitinagokhale.blogspot.in/2013/06/supremacy-of-civil-over-militaryindian.html). Also see Gurmeet Kanwal (2012), *Defense Reforms in India: Slow but Steady Progress*, Issue Perspective, Washington D.C.: Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

highlight the problems associated with the functioning of the COSC and due to non-integration of Service HQ with the MoD.

The Chiefs of Staff Committee. The COSC is a forum for the discussion on tri-Services issues of joint nature and matters of national importance which require ministerial and or CCS consideration. The functioning of the COSC has come under severe criticism from within the Services and outside. In its present form, many feel, the COSC cannot contribute substantially on issues which involve two or more Services. The role of the Chairman of the COSC has also been criticised by many former Chairmen themselves as they feel justice is neither possible nor is being done by the incumbents. It is a common understanding in the Services that the functioning of the COSC and the appointment of the Chairman can be made more effective subject to recommended reforms being implemented.

Non Integration of Service HQ with MoD. The security architecture designed by Ismay provided the MoD with the controlling, directing and oversight authority over the Service HQs. The Service HQs function as entities separate from the MoD with largely operational role. Over the years even though the spirit and the design of Ismay's security architecture have remained the same, subtle though significant changes have been introduced in the functioning of the MoD wherein "instead of working jointly with Service HQ(s) and then issuing directions, [MoD] became a higher entity, an exclusively higher civilian HQ controlling

the three armed forces”.²⁰ This malaise was identified as far back as in 1958;²¹ and also by the KRC and the GoM in their report wherein the need for integration was reiterated to “promote improved understanding and efficient functioning of the ministry”.²² The recommendations of KRC and GoM led to a very perfunctory reform in the change in nomenclature of the Service HQ to ‘Integrated HQ of MoD’ with no change in status or the manner of functioning or even cross staffing of Service officers and civilian bureaucrats.²³ Despite the recommendations of various committees including the very high powered GoM, requisite integration or cross staffing of senior Service officers in the MoD did not taken place perhaps indicating MoD was not very keen to involve Service officers in decision making at that level.

²⁰ V. P. Malik (2012), “Higher Management of Defence and Defence Reforms: Towards Better Management Techniques”, in Anit Mukherjee (ed.) *A Call for Change: Higher Defence Management in India*, New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, pp. 38-39.

²¹ See Note 1.

²² Ministry of Defence (2009), Government of India, *Action Taken Report on the recommendations/observations of the Committee contained in the Thirty-sixth Report (Fourteenth Lok Sabha) on ‘Status of implementation of Unified Command for Armed Forces’*, 16 December, pp. 3.

²³ The delay in implementation of the recommendation of the KRC and the GoM was noted by the Parliamentary Committee of the 14th Lok Sabha which had strongly recommended that the “staffing pattern in the MoD be suitably changed and the Armed Forces personnel of requisite expertise at the level of Joint Secretary and/or Additional Secretary should be appointed so that the Armed Forces Headquarters are intrinsically involved in national security management and apex decision making processes”. See Ministry of Defence 2009 *ibid.*, pp. 3.

Defence Reforms 2019: CDS and its Enabling Frame Work

The PM's announcement of 15 August 2019 and the alacrity with which the government machinery has moved to implement the reforms are indeed welcome. The news media have reported in varying details about the role and the responsibilities of the CDS and of the newly created DMA. Some of the news items have been corroborated by the government announcements. The analysis of the subject, hereafter, is based on these sources.²⁴

Role and Responsibilities of the CDS

- Act as the 'Principal Military Advisor' to the Raksha Mantri (RM) on tri-Services matters. The three Chiefs will continue to advise RM on matters concerning their respective Services. He will also be the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. In this role he will be assisted by the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS). The three Chiefs will continue to advise RM on matters exclusively concerning their respective Services.
- The CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three Service Chiefs.

²⁴ Nitin A. Gokhale (2019), "Explained: What Chief of Defence Staff Means to India", *Bharat Shakti*, 24 December 2019, [Online: web] Accessed 24 December 2019, URL: <https://bharatshakti.in/explained-what-chief-of-defence-staff-means-to-india/>.

- CDS will administer tri-Services organisation. Their military command will be with the Chief of the duly notified Service, which has the predominant role in the effective functioning of the organisation.
- CDS will be the member of the Defence Acquisition Council and Defence Planning Committee.
- Bring about jointness in operations, logistics, transport, training, support services, communication, repairs and maintenance, etc. of the three Services within three years of the first CDS assuming office.
- Ensure optimal utilization of infrastructure and rationalize it.
- Enhance the share of indigenous equipment.
- Evaluate plans for out of area contingencies, as well as other contingencies such as humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.
- Implement five year Defence Capital Acquisition Plans, and two year roll-on Annual Acquisition Plans, as follow-up of Integrated Capability Development Plans.
- Assign inter-Services priority to capital acquisition proposals based on anticipated budget.
- Prepare strategy papers on military matters for consideration of the competent authority.

- Bring about reforms in the functioning of the three Services aimed at augmenting the combat capabilities of the armed forces.
- Function as the military advisor to the Nuclear Command Authority.

Department of Military Affairs

- A new department, DMA will be created within the MoD.
- It will work exclusively pertaining to military matters, while the Department of Defence (DoD) will deal with larger issues dealing with the defence of the country.
- Armed forces will fall in the ambit of DMA, which will have appropriate expertise to manage military affairs.
- CDS will head DMA.
- DMA will have appropriate mix of civilian and military officers at every level.
- The department will promote jointness in procurement, training and staffing for the Services. Facilitate restructuring of the military commands for optimal utilization of the resources by bringing jointness in the operations, including through establishment of joint/theatre commands. Promoting use of indigenous equipment by the Services.

The government has also promulgated orders to the effect that the CDS can serve up to the age of 65 years.

CDS

Two important lessons of World War II that have been reiterated during the later wars and conflict situations, as also during peace time administrative activities, are the need to centralise policy and decision making authority in the highest echelons of the defence establishment and enhancement of jointness among the three Services. India inherited a HDO model at the time of independence which did not keep pace with the developments in the security environment and has been criticised for being archaic and regressive to the requirements of the security forces. The policy making authority for most of the peace time activities of the three Services have been centralised in the MoD which has negligible presence of uniformed persons to represent their case in the final decision making forums. On the other hand, the planning and conduct of operations have been largely delegated to Service HQ, with very few mechanisms for oversight by the elected representatives. The government, by instituting the appointment of the CDS and creating the DMA, has attempted to rectify this anomaly by making certain the presence of senior most military officer of the country in the MoD. This will empower the military by providing it with a 'voice' in decision making forums. The reforms will also assist the RM to exercise his oversight authority over the Services during the planning and conduct of operations.

It is not as if the government has given the CDS a *carte blanche*. Instructions have been included to limit his

authority over the three Services. The paper will analyse whether the CDS will be able to successfully deliver on the government's intent, given the checks and balances to his authority.

Authority, Responsibility and Accountability

The government has directed that the CDS will not exercise military command over the three Services. He will 'administer' tri-Services organisations which will continue to be commanded as hitherto fore by one of the Service chiefs. The tri-Services agencies, viz. Cyber Agency and Space Agency will, however, be commanded by the CDS. The extent of the command and administrative responsibility entrusted in the CDS is among the most critical decisions the government has taken in the reform process. This has been a subject of great deliberation and debate. How much power and authority must be entrusted in the appointment of the CDS? The answer to this question lies in two conflicting yet complementary requirements, unity of command and checks and balances over the appointment. Unity of command is a time tested and accepted military principle of organizing military hierarchy. The application of this principle without moderation will confer the CDS with authority, which perhaps may not be in the larger interest of the defence establishment. The authority of the CDS has to be tempered with prudent checks and balances to achieve a desired state of equilibrium between the military, the civil bureaucracy and the elected representatives, a necessary precondition to achieve operational efficiency and administrative effectiveness. Indian HDO has to be appropriately designed and the systems and processes put in place to balance authority and responsibility with

accountability. The extent of command responsibility, in some detail, has been articulated in the government orders available in the open domain. The DMA, headed by the CDS, would facilitate restructuring of the military commands for optimal utilization of the resources by bringing in jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/theatre commands. This instruction is suggestive of the vision of the government which envisages establishment of theatre commands, leading to enhanced role of the CDS at the expense of the Service Chiefs.

Planning and Conduct of Joint Operations. The ‘Surgical Strikes’ of 2016 and the ‘Balakot Air Strike’ of 2019 were joint operations, so will be the case with all future cross border operations. As a result, the CDS and two or more Service Chiefs will get involved in the planning and the conduct of operations. The present tri-Service organisations, the ANC, the SFC, the Cyber and Space Agencies and the Special Operations Division by themselves cannot launch operations. Two or more Services will be part of operations, with one of them possibly being the lead Service. From the information that is available, the CDS is likely to have an advisory role and the responsibility to ensure jointness during operations, but has no command of troops. The Services Chiefs have operational and administrative command over their respective Service but limited lien over other Service and agencies. This is a dichotomous situation which is best avoided. Militaries do not launch operations with amorphous and diffused command responsibilities. Even during the transition period it has to be ensured that ‘unity of command must run in a

sybiotic thread from the highest (HQ) down into the commands'. While deciding on the command structure an issue that needs consideration is that the 'person who makes the plan, executes the plan'. The decision makers should also be mindful of the fact that the power to advice and the responsibility to implement the advice normally should not be divorced in two different appointments. The present 'consensus way' of working is the bane of the COSC system. There is a need to formalize the operational and administrative chain of command at the earliest, as also settle the issue as to who holds the veto, in case of professional differences in planning of joint operations. All these issues assume salience in view of the fact that India is fighting Pakistan sponsored proxy war and the requirement of launching operations cannot be predicted.

Enhancement of Jointness and Its Implications

The broad contours of the jointness among the three Services were defined in the GoM's report which led to the establishment of HQ IDS, the ANC and the SFC. The missing links in the reforms were the CDS and the integration of Service HQ with the MoD. Now with the CDS in place and DMA in the process of being established and the government has articulated its vision to have theatre commands in the future, where does it leave the Chiefs? Although the aim of the reforms is to have a HDO which is suited for India's unique requirements, yet there are certain fundamental principles which cannot be overlooked.

Chiefs as Capability Managers. The appointment of the CDS is the beginning of the reduction of the role and responsibilities of the Service Chiefs as operational

commanders. Whatever be the form and shape of India's HDO in future, the responsibilities of the Service Chiefs will in some manner change. As the reforms agenda is implemented it is likely that the role of the Chiefs in planning and conduct of operations would reduce and they will be more involved in raising and sustaining their respective Service. In the coming days there will be greater centralisation of policy making functions, authority for allocation of resources and control of operations in the office of the CDS. This will be a direct outcome of the review of responsibilities as a result of government's decision for reforms. The Chiefs are likely to become capability managers for their Service, a marked contrast to the situation in 1965 when the Army Chief alone could plan and get sanction from the government for waging war without keeping his naval and air force counterpart in picture.²⁵

²⁵ General J. N. Chaudhuri while delivering the National Security Lecture organised by the USI, New Delhi informed the audience that he had obtained the sanction of the government for the war plans but neither he nor the RM informed the other two Service Chiefs of this vital decision. It was only later when the crisis developed in the Chhamb sector that the COAS sought the RM's intervention to ensure that the Air Force provide assistance to the ground troops. Gen Chaudhuri further informed that after the Rann-of-Kutch skirmishes with Pakistani forces in the spring of 1965, he had held several discussions with the Prime Minister (Shastri) and the Defence Minister (Chavan) about the possibility of a full scale war with Pakistan – and the 'the necessary sanction was obtained', presumably meaning that he had obtained government's approval of war plans; but neither he nor the Minister thought to keep the other two Service chiefs informed. Gen Chaudhuri by-passed the Chiefs of Staff Committee, the JPC and the JIC and decided to act entirely on his own.

Personality and Jointmanship. The Indian roadmap for jointmanship has been unique. It started with the formation of the COSC and was furthered with the establishment of the Advance HQs of the Indian Air Force (IAF), co-located with the army HQ commands. In the wake of Kargil war jointness was attempted and experimented with the establishment of the ANC, the SFC and HQ IDS with mixed results. The future milestones are the DMA, Special Forces Division and the Cyber and Space Agencies. The journey will culminate with the establishment of theatre commands and the CDS having a coordinating role. It would be desirable to recall the two predominant models of jointmanship followed by most of the advanced militaries. The ‘CDS model’ of the UK which delegates full command responsibilities to the CDS and the ‘Permanent Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) model’ of the US which caters for the advisory role for Chairman and the command responsibility delegated to the Combatant Commanders. The operational and the administrative chains of command in the US model synchronize in the office of the JCS.

The British system has greater clarity in the context of authority and accountability; however, it bestows tremendous influence in the appointment of the CDS. The US model, on the other hand, has advisory role for the Permanent Chairman but has a certain amount of functional ambiguity which needs to be deliberated upon before lessons are drawn for the Indian system. Personalities play a major role in decision making. Even a system created with the best of intentions can be subverted by the force of

personality. This aspect is amply highlighted in Colin Powell's interaction with Norman Schwarzkopf during Operation Desert Storm.²⁶

The proximity of the CDS to the elected representatives will give tremendous power, authority and influence to the CDS. This is partly by design to improve the quality of advice to the government and help CDS perform his role as the 'principal military advisor'. The authority of the CDS, when exercised by a strong personality with political backing, has the potential to weaken the system within the military organisation, by weakening the checks and balances. This can give the Indian CDS, powers very similar to the British CDS which perhaps is not the intent of the reforms.

²⁶ One of the highlights of Powell's tenure as the Chairman was Operation Desert Storm launched in 1990 when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. A study of Powell's actions during the period gives an insight into the functioning of the Chairman during a war like situation. Powell seems to have 'ordered' and 'instructed' more than just 'co-ordinated' during the war. An aspect which 'forced / assisted' Powell to perhaps overstep his brief as a Chairman during the war was the poor standing of Norman Schwarzkopf, Commander, Central Command (CENTCOM), in the higher echelons of then decision making structure. The NCA was in large measure beholden to Powell because he was a military expert and because they had a certain amount of distrust in Schwarzkopf. They depended on him to make sure that Schwarzkopf did not make any terrible or catastrophic mistakes. On the other hand, Schwarzkopf, knowing that his standing in Washington was not particularly high, was also beholden to Colin Powell and therefore never challenged him. See Bernard Trainor in Desch, Michael C. and Weiner, Sharon K. ed. (1995), *"Colin Powell as JCS Chairman: A Panel Discussion on American Civil-Military Relations"*, Working Paper No 1, The John M. Olin Institute: Washington, DC.

In the initial stages of the reforms when the HDO and the system are still evolving, in order to ensure operational effectiveness, the DMA should 'resist the temptation to do more'. It should avoid micro-managing the business of command, since it will undermine the accountability of the Chiefs which is so very essential for the success of the model. It is true for operational contingencies as also for peace time administrative activities.

The final design of the Indian HDO should have necessary checks and balances over the CDS, who as Permanent Chairman of the COSC would be *primus inter pares* among the three Chiefs, so that the COSC does not become an inert organisation. This would be possible by ensuring active participation of the Chiefs in the decision making process and by having provisions of allowing the dissenting views of the Chiefs, if any, to be necessarily presented in the higher decision making forums.

Principal Military Advisor

One of the key reasons for creating the appointment of the CDS and designating him as the 'principal military advisor' is to improve the quality of military advice to the government. This would necessitate that the views of the military are projected to the elected representatives in the manner desired by the Services, without the fear of corruption at intermediate levels. As is the practice now, the Defence Secretary represents the Services in most of the forums, especially those concerning peace time administrative activities. The Services find this blameworthy for many of the ills plaguing the HDO, particularly shortfalls in defence preparedness. In the government

orders the CDS has been designated as the ‘principal military advisor’ to the RM. It is important that the CDS is the ‘principal military advisor’ to the *government* and presents the views of the Services in all forums, the CCS, the National Security Council (NSC) etc. Quality of advise to the government will improve by lending the military leadership with voice in the right forums. Presence of the CDS in the forums mentioned will help achieve the government’s objective.

The CDS as the ‘principal military advisor’ will be expected to present all shades of opinions of the three Services, consensus and dissent. He will also be expected to present these views duly annotated with his independent assessment. This would require the office of the CDS to undertake independent research and study. With the creation of theatre commands there will be a requirement of additional staff officers. Besides posting in additional staff officers it is also important that the channels of communication of the CDS and his staff with the elected representatives, important appointments in the MoD and with the Service HQ and with the General Officers Commanding-in-Chief (GOsC-in-C) of the three Services be defined as soon as possible. The opening of channels of communication between the CDS and the GOsC-in-C is considered important as it will enable the office of the CDS to form independent opinion and not get biased by the views of the Chiefs. Designing the architecture of the channels of communication requires deliberation since this design would determine the hierarchy of command—operational and administrative. It would be prudent to deliberate on the command and communication channels

which cater for India's unique bureaucratic requirements and security environment yet tempers the authority of the CDS as desired by the government.

Handling of information and the manner in which it is presented to the decision makers have a bearing on the outcome of deliberations, hence it needs to be handled with prudence. Till date the final filters were in the MoD, where the civil bureaucrats funneled and filtered the information which was provided to the elected representatives for decision. The CDS will now be able to do this with respect to his charter of duties. The decision makers cannot be overloaded with information, yet the system should ensure that they are provided with necessary information for the best outcome. This is possible through appropriately designed HDO and well thought of systems and processes. In addition, many of the issues at the highest level of the government are resolved through good interpersonal relations.²⁷

²⁷ In this context it is important to recall how the enhanced powers of the Permanent Chairman in the US armed forces, post promulgation of Goldwater Nichols Act, affected his decision making. In 1994 the East European block was fast disintegrating. Consequently a decision was taken in the US to reduce its military. Colin Powell, then Chairman, writes in his biography, 'My American Journey' that it was he who initiated the proposal for reduction. He mentions that he did take the Service Chiefs into confidence and discussed the reduction with them. However, when it came to final decision from the President, he went ahead and presented his plan, "Strategic Overview – 1994". The presentation to the President had specifics of the proposal about which he had not consulted the Chiefs. Powell accepts that he had blindsided the Chiefs, a mistake he intended not to repeat again in the future. The provision of the Act makes the Chairman the principal military advisor to the elected

Miscellaneous Issues

Preparation of Strategy Papers. One of the tasks that the CDS has been entrusted with is preparation of strategy papers on military matters for consideration of the competent authority. The present practice of selection of political and military objectives for operations, perspective planning and budgeting assessments is vague and ambiguous, resulting in inadequate resource planning and capacity building. The CDS will be able to do justice to his task if he is provided with written government policy guidance as also political and strategic hypotheses and assumptions, as is the practice in some of the matured democracies. One of the positive outcomes of this recommendation is that the RM would involve himself early in the planning process ensuring an effective civilian control over the activities of the military.

Change in Civil-Military Relations. The appointment of the CDS will change the nature of civil-military relations in India. As on date the Service HQ present the military's view points while the MoD negotiates from the stand point of 'defence' or other sundry considerations. With the appointment of the CDS the RM will now have an important ally in him. MoD and RM will now be freed from

representatives. He is not duty bound by the Act to present the consensus view of the JCS; however, he is required to present dissenting view if any. In this case the Chairman did not go through the motion of discussing the reduction of forces plan in totality with the Chiefs. See Rajneesh Singh (2014), *United States Reforms to its Higher Defence Organisation: Lessons for India*, New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, pp. 43-44.

the necessity of negotiating with the Service Chiefs. The debates will no longer be civil-military in nature as RM will no longer confront the Chiefs alone. This will change the manner in which the Services' viewpoints will be deliberated and decisions announced. All stakeholders; military, bureaucracy and the elected representatives, will now have to rethink the manner in which their respective arguments are framed and narratives built for the information of the citizens.

DMA

The objective of establishing the DMA is to enhance jointness in operations, training and capacity building. It will also provide necessary vision and direction to the Services to restructure commands and establish joint/theatre commands. The DMA is going to be an important cog in the functioning of the MoD and has an important role in achieving the government's objectives of defence reforms. It is, therefore, imperative that there is clarity about its role and tasking from its early days of existence. This will set the pace for all other reforms and subsequent functioning of the HDO. The DMA should have strategic outlook, make policies, provide strategic direction, and be responsible for oversight and hold to account those under its operational and administrative command. The DMA should not be made responsible to manage programmes, as far as possible, as it would have a negative impact on its oversight role.

The DMA along with HQ IDS would assist the CDS in his functioning. The DMA should be capable of independent strategic planning and not compile and circulate the work of Service HQ or any other agency. In

order to do so the staffing of the DMA and its communication linkages, discussed earlier, would be important determinants of its capacity to form independent opinion.

COSC

The COSC by virtue of its membership of the three Chiefs is a repository of tremendous individual and inherited experience and deserves to be taken seriously. Any study proposal and recommendation processed by the committee must be given due consideration. However, due to certain intrinsic inadequacies the body has been found to be ineffective. The oft repeated inadequacy of the COSC is that it is ineffective to resolve inter-Service professional differences and more often than not it only works on issues where the Services do not have serious differences. Whenever the Services do have differences, they are mostly resolved at the level of the MoD, which has no expertise to do so. This also increases the reliance of the RM on civil bureaucracy. The ineffectiveness of the COSC gets more pronounced since its advice is only recommendatory in nature and it has no authority to enforce them even in conflict situations. If any Chief unilaterally determines that his Service should take sole cognizance of a given administrative or operational issue, then he may refer the matter to the MoD without reference to the COSC or any other inter Service committees. The COSC suffers from other deficiencies as well, “there is an unwritten convention that disagreement between members of the COSC will not be displayed in public” as a result “very few issues of substance are ever discussed in the COSC meetings, and much of its agenda consists of trivialities.” Given that the

institution has reduced itself to discussing issues of non-serious nature its functioning is not taken very seriously by the MoD, which may or may not refer matters of inter-Service implications to COSC and even if the matter is referred to the COSC its recommendations “may or may not be given the weightage and recognition which is rightly due to the head of the highest inter-Service body”.²⁸

One of the reasons to appoint the CDS is to obviate the inherent weaknesses of the COSC system. The challenge before the CDS will be to make the COSC effective in resolving contentious issues and work towards enhancing jointness. Establishment of theatre commands will be his most challenging assignment in the foreseeable future. The appointment of the CDS and the Permanent Chairman is not reason enough for the three Chiefs to evolve consensus on issues. Each Chief is the head and representative of his Service and his Service looks up to him to protect its interest. The Service would expect the Chief to guard its turf and for this reason alone they are likely to continue speaking in different voices and ‘defence’ and jointness is unlikely to be on top of their agenda.

The RM places great reliance on civil bureaucracy because COSC deals with non-contentious issues. For all other issues MoD arbitrates despite lack of expertise. Now CDS and COSC will have to come up with solutions to

²⁸ Arun Prakash (2007), “India’s Higher Defence Organisation: Implications for National Security and Jointness”, *Journal of Defence Studies*, 1(1), [Online: web] Accessed 14 August 2012, URL: http://www.idsa.in/jds/1_1_2007_IndiasHigherDefenceOrganization_aprakash, pp. 27 .

such issues. The CDS, as Permanent Chairman, will be expected to achieve consensus in the COSC, if not, then identify points of divergence and their consequences and present the whole spectrum of opinions along with his assessment which has been harmonised with the government's political objective.

The CDS in pursuance of his duties may at times have to go against the popular political opinion because of military considerations. He will require the support of his Chiefs in the COSC if his advice has to carry weight with the elected representatives. Without this support base the CDS will become another bureaucratic appointment subject to manipulations.

The composition of the COSC in the UK may be of interest to the strategic thinkers in India. In addition to the CDS, VCDS and the Chiefs, the Permanent Under Secretary (PUS) is a co-opted member of the committee and he does attend some of its proceedings. This guarantees tacit concurrence of the PUS to the decisions taken in the committee thereby ensuring smooth passage of the case in higher forums. In addition the meetings are routinely attended by other relevant senior MoD officials and other specialist advisors, including representatives from the Cabinet Office, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Department for International Development, and the security and intelligence agencies.²⁹

²⁹ Rajneesh Singh (2014), *British Reforms to its Higher Defence Organisation: Lessons for India*, New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, pp. 58.

Military and Civil Bureaucracy

Many security analysts are of the view that the concept of civilian supremacy has been distorted in India, in favour of civil bureaucracy, which they believe has had an adverse impact on India's military preparedness. K. Subrahmanyam, who has had vast experience of working in the government, had even opined that the civil bureaucracy seems to enjoy authority and responsibility without corresponding accountability.³⁰ Due to the hierarchal structure of the Indian HDO, and the Service HQ being outside of the MoD, many senior Service officers believe that the elected representatives are not as easily accessible as they would prefer. The problem has been further aggravated by the rules of business of the government, whereby the Defence Secretary has been made responsible for the defence of India and advises the RM on most matters concerning defence policy and for management of defence resources.³¹

³⁰ K. Subrahmanyam, doyen of strategic thinking in independent India and a bureaucrat, in many of his writings highlighted the issues concerning the HDO, the ills and the possible solutions to those problems. He once described Indian HDO as one where 'politicians enjoy power without any responsibility, bureaucrats wield power without any accountability and the military assumes responsibility without any direction'. See Anit Mukherjee, 'Civil–Military Relations in Crisis', Center for Advanced Study of India, 24 September 2012, available at <http://casi.ssc.upenn.edu/iit/mukherjee>, accessed on 3 October 2012.

³¹ See Cabinet Secretariat, GoI (1961), *The Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules*, [Online: web] Accessed 19 July 2015, URL: http://cabsec.nic.in/allocation_order.php. The businesses of the GoI are transacted based on the provisions of Allocation of Business Rules (AOB) and Transaction of Business Rules (TOB). "Manual of Office Procedures" provides necessary elaboration and explanations. In the 2nd Schedule of the AOB is given the charter of the DoD and

The Defence Secretary has a privileged access to the minister and to the information flowing to and from the RM. He represents the Services in all important forums and within the MoD the civil bureaucracy sets the agenda for most of the committee meetings. The civil bureaucracy wields enormous influence on matters concerning resource control and policy decisions. The Services represented by the Chiefs, although they can theoretically approach the RM and the PM, are bound by Service protocols and norms of the governance. Therefore, at times they feel constrained and as such their cases are weakly presented in the decision making forums. These issues have a negative impact on the operational preparedness of the Services and on management functions and this state of affairs has been variously described, even termed as imbalance in civil military equilibrium.³² This state of imbalance in civil-military equilibrium is being attempted to be rectified.

by implication the responsibility of the Defence Secretary. Of all the duties mentioned in the AOB and TOB Rules the three responsibilities which have supposedly disturbed the equilibrium between the Services and bureaucracy are:

- 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.
- The Armed Forces of the Union, namely, Army, Navy and Air Force.
- Integrated Headquarters of the MoD comprising of Army HQ, Naval HQ, Air HQ and Defence Staff HQ.

³² See Rajneesh Singh (2016), "Equilibrium in Higher Defence Organisation and the Need for Restructuring", *Journal of Defence Studies*, 10(2), 19-37.

Meeting Ground — CDS and the Defence Secretary.

The recently announced reforms attempt to rectify the civil-military imbalance and bring equilibrium in their relationship. It is the case of this paper that the relationship between the two appointments should be so defined that it harnesses the complementary abilities of the two Services, the military and the civil bureaucracy, to achieve the desired objectives of the government. The reforms should enhance the operational efficiency and reduce bureaucratic controls. The paper recommends that the reforms should be attempted in two ways. To start with the CDS will have to be empowered. He will derive his strength from the membership of the various committees and the ability to set agendas and influence decisions. It is in this direction that the reforms will have to focus. Second, the CDS and the Defence Secretary should have equal access to the RM and to the various decision making bodies of the government, the CCS, the NSC etc.

As per the AOB Rules of 1961 the “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 demobilization” was the responsibility of the Defence Secretary. The government has amended the charter of the Defence Secretary to specifically include making of “defence policy” alongside his primary responsibility of “defence of India”, while carving out a new Department of Military Affairs (DMA) to be headed by the country’s first CDS. In a gazette order dated December 30, 2019, the government amended its relevant Rules of Business to remove four specific responsibilities from the Raksha

Vibhag (Department of Defence), headed by the Defence Secretary, to bring them under the DMA but at the same time specified his primacy on policy matters and big ticket capital acquisition. “Defence of India and every part thereof including defence policy and 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,” states Entry 1 of the amended charter for the *Raksha Vibhaag*.³³

Planning and preparing for the defence of the country is a complex process and demarcation of responsibilities at the level of the CDS and the Defence Secretary will be difficult. Issues such as preparation of defence strategy, force structuring, procurement, planning and allocation of resources and budgeting are intricately linked and would require the contribution of both the appointments. The decision makers will have to debate on the need for demarcation of responsibilities between the appointments. UK, when faced with similar situation, decided against it since it would have created extra interfaces and risk incoherence and conflict between the two appointments.³⁴ There is on the other hand a contrary

³³ See Pranab Dhal Samanta (2020), “Bipin Rawat is the new CDS, but defence secretary still in the picture”, *The Economic Times*, 6 January 2020, [Online: web] Accessed 17 January 2020, URL: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/73053525.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

³⁴ The challenge before the Head Office is to synchronise the two disparate duties of the CDS and the PUS, without undermining any of them. During its deliberations the Levene Committee had considered organizationally separating the ‘Department of the State’ and the

argument; greater clarity of tasking between the CDS and Defence Secretary will strengthen individual accountability. Lack of clarity over who is responsible and accountable for taking decisions or attempting to reach decisions through consensus in the committees has been the bane of Indian system and all attempts must be made now to not repeat the same mistakes.

Indian decision makers will have to come out with a balanced approach whereby there is a clarity regarding the role and responsibilities of the two appointments yet, when required, the two appointments can be made jointly responsible for some of the tasks discussed above, which require their joint attention. While functioning jointly it is recommended that the two appointments have equal and similar access to the RM above and to the staff below them. This recommendation has the potential for dissent from the vested interest groups and may require the personal intervention of the RM.

‘Armed Forces’ but did not recommend it since in their opinion though this would have created clear demarcation of responsibilities but it would have ‘introduced extra interfaces and risked incoherence and conflict between the two’. See Ministry of Defence, (1998), UK Government, *Defence Reform An independent report into the structure and management of the Ministry of Defence*, The Stationery Office Ltd., London, 15, [Online: Web] Accessed January 30, 2013), URL : https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27408/defence_reform_report_struct_mgt_mod_27june2011.pdf, pp. 4.

Likely Areas of Discord.³⁵ As per recently published media reports the government has “shifted administrative and revenue procurement matters of the armed Services to the newly created military affairs department led by Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, but any important matter related to defence policy will be dealt by the defence secretary.”³⁶ This division has the potential to cause discord between the civil bureaucracy and the military.

The government notification quoted in the media says, “Any matter which has an import on the defence policy has to be dealt by DoD”. The CDS as the representative of the military would be expected to operate under the limits of the approved policy of the government and subject to the resources allocated. The Defence Secretary is likely to play a lead role in policy formulation and resource allocation although the CDS would be expected to provide inputs on the subject. This to some

³⁵ The author of this paper had cautioned, in an article published in CLAWS Journal, on the likely areas of discord between the bureaucracy and the military while deciding on the distribution of responsibility. In view of the media reports regarding the ‘division of work’ between the CDS and the Defence Secretary the issues raised in the article have become all the more relevant and are being reiterated in this paper. See Rajneesh Singh (2017), “Harmonising Military Bureaucracy Relations in Defence Ministry: Some Thoughts”, *CLAWS Journal Summer 2017*, pp. 116-118.

³⁶ Manu Pubby (2020), “Work divided for Rawat-led dept of military affairs”, *The Economic Times*, 18 Jan 20, [Online: web] Accessed 18 Jan 20, URL: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/work-divided-for-rawat-led-dept-of-military-affairs/articleshow/73346897.cms?utm_source=twitter_pwa&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=socialsharebuttons&from=mdr

may seem like the dominance of the Defence Secretary and his staff necessitating deliberation by the decision makers.

As the defence policy would be dealt by the Defence Secretary the key policy advisory committees will be either chaired by the Defence Secretary or his representatives. It is also likely that the agenda of the committees will also be set and controlled by the civil bureaucracy. In all possibility, the RM is likely to get involved in the process of policy making towards the very end and all the issues of disagreement may not be put up to him, by the concerned appointments, in the manner desired by the Services. Moreover, the minister may not have the time or inclination to study all aspects of disagreement. All these are issues which require deliberation before the reforms are finalized.

Reforms Process

Implementation of decision is as important as decision to reform. The government may consider creating a 'reforms committee' headed by the CDS and overseen by the RM. The committee may consider recommending an evolutionary approach in implementing reforms. There should be no hesitation in using 'trial and error' method so long as these proceed from minor innovation towards larger and more radical objectives in final result.³⁷

³⁷ Eisenhower had a word of advice for implementing defence reforms in democracies. "Democracies permit dissensions resulting in the slow pace of reforms. Evolutionary approach also is a consequence of the desire to incorporate divergent views. To overcome such like delays Eisenhower in his farewell memorandum to Secretary of Defence James Forrestal reminded of the need for an evolutionary approach to the provisions of the NSA. In the context of

Defence reforms will result in bureaucratic winners and losers; hence there is always a sense of anticipation and excitement among the vested interests in the organisation. These stakeholders and interest groups will endeavor to guard their turf passionately. Decision makers must have clarity of vision with regards to the final outcome of reforms and the ability to incorporate dissenting ideas. The 'trial and error' method is being recommended as reforms of this magnitude will not have a tried and tested answer to issues which are likely to crop up along the way. An understanding that any new system that is being designed will have problems that can always be rectified with experience will help the decision makers to take bold steps. The security threats to any country are dynamic and subject to indefinable factors, many of which are beyond anyone's control. This also demands a flexible approach to designing the HDO which can cater to any future requirements.

Another reason for a reform programme to be flexible is that it is likely to be a compromise solution as it may not have all the desired provisions. The reasons for this could be either lack of consensus among the stakeholders or possibly that the provisions may have not been considered important or even considered at all at the time of deciding about the various provisions of the reforms. Hence an idea

enacting NSA he suggested, there should be no hesitancy in using the 'trial and error' method so long as these proceed from minor innovation toward larger and more radical objectives in final result." See David Jablonsky (2000), "Ike and the Birth of the CINCS: The Continuity of Unity of Command", in Stuart, Douglas T. (ed.) *Organising For National Security*, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, pp. 41-42.

of a flexible reform to cater for future security challenges would make it easy to undertake reforms, if required. At the same time it is important that the reforms should not lend themselves susceptible to changes for frivolous reasons as some measure of continuity is desirable in government functioning.³⁸

Implementation Planning. Implementation of reforms has to start with planning, which will involve preparing a detailed project plan and an implementation schedule. The project plan must include details of the implementation process, the risk analysis and the risk management strategies. The planning phase is thus extremely critical to the success of the reform process in order to ensure that the implementation achieves the desired result. Careful planning for implementation of reforms is essential to ensure there is no disruption of defence capabilities during the implementation stage. The planning must include detailed framework for the introduction and sequencing of new structures, enunciation of precise role and responsibilities of the critical appointments and inter-relationship between them.

Monitoring the Reforms. Monitoring the implementation of reform process is an essential command and staff function of the MoD. It is recommended that a 'reforms committee' be constituted under the direct supervision of the CDS and is overseen by the RM. In order to effectively monitor the reforms process clear accountabilities will have

³⁸ Rajneesh Singh (2014), *United States Reforms to its Higher Defence Organisation: Lessons for India*, New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, pp. 71.

to be assigned to committee and sub-committees and individuals. The staff will have to articulate in unambiguous terms the measures and milestones to be achieved as also the time lines which will assist in monitoring process. The committee detailed to oversee the reform process will have to monitor the progress against the laid out yardstick and also that they will be able to achieve the intent of the reforms. Any unintended consequence of reforms will have to be prevented and course correction taken at the earliest to prevent damage. The reform measures deliberated above will be difficult for any government to implement. The changes would result in an organisational overhaul and result in bureaucratic winners and losers. These reforms would enable tighter checks over the military, greater oversight on the functioning of the organisations and the appointments, and the establishment will have to function as per the agenda set by the government. The civil bureaucracy will lose some of its privileged authority, hence the reforms will be resisted by all interest groups. However, since the reforms concern the security of the country it is time for the government to take bold steps and implement its directions.

Conclusion

Ever since the 1950s there has existed an understanding in the strategic community that the country's apex defence structure needed reforms. The requirement of a 'principal military' advisor to the government and the integration of the Service HQ with the MoD have been articulated by various committees and study reports constituted for the purpose. But for reasons not officially made public by the various governments, these recommendations were never

implemented and the country continued with the archaic system with sub-optimal results. Despite the recommendations of the high powered GoM for appointing the CDS and integration of the Service HQ with the MoD it was never done, indicating that MoD was not very keen to involve Service officers in decision making.

Even a superficial study of defence reforms in major democracies will suggest that reforms of this nature have always been resisted by stakeholders for parochial reasons. It is only those countries where the government has instituted top driven approach have the reforms been implemented. It is worth taking note that studies conducted post implementation of the reforms have highlighted the advantages accrued because of them. This further strengthens the case for Indian reforms.

The government's decision of defence reforms is most welcome and in all probability will enhance the operational efficiency and administrative effectiveness of India's armed forces. The reforms should aim to simplify procedures, fix accountability and bring greater cohesion among the three Services. In the complex security environment of today where the costs of defence equipments are exorbitant defence management becomes an extremely complex task and cannot be reduced to normal bureaucratic process. Decision makers require the advice of 'specialists'. The CDS will be able to fill in the void which exists in the Indian HDO today. Going by the media reports the role of the CDS is largely as articulated in the GoM Report. The GoM had also considered that the CDS was to be the first step in a series of structural reforms to be implemented incrementally. It is expected that the

government will follow up with more reforms. At the same time necessary checks and balances have to be instituted to ensure that the CDS does not become a power centre. Greater participation of the Chiefs concerning their domain would mitigate some of these concerns.

The Defence Secretary has an important role in the higher defence management. Recognizing this the government has maintained the centrality of his role in the reformed HDO. The ‘reforms committee’ must, however, deliberate and define the functionality between the CDS and the Defence Secretary and bring greater clarity regarding their respective roles and the manner they will function in pursuance of the tasks for which both of them will be responsible collectively.

The way ahead for India is to design a model which caters for India’s unique security challenges and resource availability. The Indian HDO should ensure military efficiency without loss of political control; maintain a balance between authority, responsibility and accountability and between policy and management functions. Work ethos and sensibilities of its principal constituents, viz. the elected representatives, civil bureaucracy and the Services also influence the architecture of the HDO and must be accommodated in the design.

Addendum by Editorial Team

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had ushered one of the most significant defence reforms of independent India by announcing the decision to institute the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff on 15 August 2019. The Cabinet Committee of Security approved the appointment of the CDS on 24 Dec 2019. The CCS also approved

the report of a high-level committee, headed by National Security Advisor Shri Ajit Doval, which finalised responsibilities and the enabling framework for the CDS. In addition to appointing the CDS, the government has also created the Department of Military Affairs which will go a long way in integrating the three Services with the Ministry of Defence.

By mid-January 2020 clarity emerged regarding the organisation of the DMA. The DMA will have a secretariat staffed by a Military Advisor to the CDS, a Joint Secretary rank officer, and three Deputy Defence Advisors. The secretariat will be responsible for the promotions and postings of all officers of the rank of brigadier and above of the three Services. There will be two secretaries in DMA – one Secretary DMA and another Secretary (Transformation and Coordination). Secretary DMA would be CDS and Secretary (Transformation and Coordination) would be Chief of Integrated Defence Staff. Secretary (Transformation and Coordination) would also be known as Vice CDS. The DMA would be staffed by five joint secretary officers; three from Services and two from Indian bureaucracy. Each Joint Secretary would be assisted by Deputy Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries.

One of the principle reasons for defence reforms is to enhance operational efficiency of the three services. Creation of theatre commands is the way forward. It is expected that the studies to implement reforms will be completed by 2021 and the work on implementing the directions will commence by 2022. A Directive concerning the creation of Air Defence Command was among the initial ones issued by the CDS. HQ IDS is expected to submit a proposal for the same by June 30. It is expected that the air defence assets of the three Services will be integrated and the Indian Air Force will be the nodal service to oversee the functioning of the Command.

Enhancement of jointness and synergy by creation of common logistics support pools in stations where two or more services have their presence is also high on the priority of the CDS as is creation of a Joint Logistics Command (The Economic Times, Feb 04, 2020). Tri Service agencies viz. Special Forces Division (SFOD) and Cyber and Space agencies will be under HQ Integrated Defence Staff as existing.

Various models to amalgamate the existing 19 commands of the three services are under consideration. The two existing joint commands, the Andaman & Nicobar Command and the Strategic Forces Command would continue to function as hitherto fore. The balance 17 commands would in some manner be reorganized and restructured and some of the assets would be relocated to enhance operational efficiency of the armed forces. As per The Times of India, (Feb, 04, 2020) the CDS has spoken about the present Western and Eastern Naval Commands being amalgamated into a Naval Peninsula Command. The CDS has also said that there are also plans to reorganise the existing commands to present an effective deterrence in the North of the country against China and Pakistan. India will have two to five theatre commands along the borders with Pakistan and China, On the Pakistan front, the CDS has stated there was a plan to have a separate command for J&K. The other could be on the border south of Jammu. How many Theatre Commands will guard the border with China is not yet decided. (The Economic Times, Feb 18, 2020). The exact modalities including the division of areas of responsibilities would become clearer with the passage of time.

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has been a military observer in Congo for a year. His staff experience includes tenure in the Military Operations Directorate and in Military Secretary's Branch. The officer has also been an instructor at the NDA, Khadakwasla and at DSSC, Wellington. Col Rajneesh Singh has earned his Doctorate in Strategic Studies from the JNU, New Delhi.