

The Management of Defence

Some ideas in the Indian context

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BACKGROUND

The Ministry of Defence has undergone some very substantial expansion in all its component parts since the 1950's when it took its existing shape and structure. It is now one of the largest spenders, employers, industrial complexes, and, scientific establishments in the world. The MOD also owns huge tracts of urban and rural land and is responsible for the welfare of one of the largest retired pensionary populations. In short, this Ministry has become an extremely complicated and complex management structure.

Simultaneously, and somewhat paradoxically, although the numbers and 'rank' of the people involved have also expanded, there has not been any really innovative or even significant change in the way that problems are analysed or handled and the concept of 'tradition' has been used to circumvent the obvious need for change with the honourable exception of the DRDO which is now beginning to have a meaningful impact.

This paper attempts to put forward some ideas for change- not by any means as a postulated 'final solution' but more in the nature of stimulating discussion among those who have been and are closely involved in this most vital aspect of national endeavour. Some attempt will be made to examine different aspects of the MOD's working but this does not purport to be a completely exhaustive analysis and 'E & OE' applies.

RESTRUCTURING PROPOSALS

At the Apex there is a clear need to formalise a 'National Defence Committee' (NDC) to be chaired by the Raksha Mantri with the three Service Chiefs and the Defence Secretary as permanent members and the option of including the junior Ministers and Secretaries DRDO and DP as members. This would formalise the present 'Monday Meeting'. Consequent upon this formalisation, and as a vital component of it, the NDC should be provided with a standing staff. The ideal body to provide this staff support, without which the NDC would serve no meaningful purpose, would be a reorganised and expanded Defence Planning Staff (DPS). The DG-DPS

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should be an officer of the rank of Army Commander who will report directly to RM and the post can be held by rotation among the three services. DPS will be tasked to examine specific problems and papers presented by them can be circulated in advance among members of the NDC who can prepare their own views using their own staffs for the purpose. Where necessary the RM can direct DPS to obtain the views of other Ministries or Departments outside the MOD and representatives of those bodies can be invited to the relevant NDC meet.

In order to fulfil this role optimally, DPS should be revitalised both in quality and quantity. Great care must be taken to ensure that personnel selected should come from a wide variety of backgrounds- the three services, IAS, IFS, IA&AS, R&D, IPS etc- and should have proven intellectual potential and experience in analysis and problem solving. The intermingling of military and civilian personnel will provide a sound base for a more comprehensive analysis of Defence related problems.

Once the NDC has studied a problem and arrived at a considered view, the RM can submit that view to the National leadership in the form of the CCPA or any such group. This view will thus represent the distilled perceptions after taking note of all sections of the Ministry - political, military, civilian and scientific - and the views of others who may be involved in that particular problem.

THE SERVICES

Headquarters: The three Services have a clear hierarchical structure, but, to a considerable extent, the reporting systems and management approaches continue to follow the concepts laid down in the early post - Independence days. Taking account of the very substantial changes that have taken place in the internal and external environments, in the force mix and in the tasks assigned, it is necessary to review existing organisations. While doing so one must bear in mind the traditions that form the backbone of our Services and the known deficiencies of other 'integration models' that have been applied elsewhere.

The three Chiefs in committee form the primary means of achieving inter - Service coordination. While there are many arguments for and against this rather 'loose' structural approach, for the present it can be made to function far more efficiently. One way of achieving such an improvement would be to provide the COSC with more adequate staff support in the following specific areas.

- *Intelligence:* The present Intelligence structure of the three Services is grossly inadequate when a holistic approach to this vital component is essential. A Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) should be created under a three - Star officer. The DIA will be responsible for the collation and analysis of all Defence related Intelligence emanating from whatever source and the DG will be responsible both for tasking the individual Service Directorates and for presenting a comprehensive analysis to the COSC.

- *Operations:* There is plenty of evidence both from within and outside to suggest that individual Service interests sometimes take priority over the 'common good' in Operations Planning. In many cases a solution of this has been attempted by integrating command structures. An alternative approach may be to integrate the staff function through the creation of a Joint Operations Staff (JOS). The JOS would not take over the detailed Ops Planning process of each Service but would serve as the 'eyes & ears' of the COSC so ensuring that inter - Service difference in perceptions and approaches are brought and aired before the COSC for resolution. The JOS can be a small and select body composed of officers with adequate command and staff experience.

- *Communications:* Massive foul ups have been known to take place even in the most 'advanced' military operations because of the lack of a common approach to COMTECH. Since this is a field in which we are in the process of making significant technological advances, now is the time to set up a Defence Communications Agency (DCA) which will take the responsibility for ensuring standardisation and integration of Milcom with the civil network.

- *Combat Support:* Another fast developing field where the benefits of integration will have a force multiplier effect relates to the entire gamut of Recovery and secure traversing system for helicopters (RAST) and EW. A Defence Combat Support Agency (DCSA) can be created to deal with this.

- *Logistics:* Enormous sums of money are being spent (and often wasted) on maintaining individual logistics support in 'common' items among the three Services and also in developing management approaches (including computerisation). A Defence Logistics Support Agency could be set up to standardise and integrate to the extent feasible.

The five DG's will report to the Chairman COSC and there will be a large number of consequential changes in the individual HQ's. A great degree of fairly ruthless streamlining and cutting down of staff is possible in each HQ and this should be taken on as a priority task by the COSC.

Field Commands: Some of our 'senior citizens' will be more in the picture about the reasons underlying the change of designation for the Chiefs in the '50's from C's in C to COS. To my mind, the latter is a misnomer for the Chiefs are and have always been line commanders. I would like to see a reversion to the original designation with the present Vice Chiefs being redesignated as COS. Given this or even continuing with the present designations, some proposals for restructuring Field Commands are as follows:

a) *The Army:* The COAS has far too wide a span of control in terms of officers reporting directly to him. In these circumstances he cannot participate adequately in the COSC coordination and given the massive environmental changes in strategic terms, with the likely nuclearisation of our immediate environment, he cannot be an adequate 'military adviser' to the civilian Government. I therefore recommend that the field commands be restructured as follows. One Theatre Commander (Army) each for the Western and Eastern Theatres. The former would be responsible for all activities from Indira Col to Kutch and the latter from the Karakoram Pass to Calcutta along the land borders. These two men would be four star officers and would be Army Group Commanders. the present Central Command would be abolished and Southern Command altered to look after Peninsular India, the island territories and new commitments in Sri Lanka, the Maldives etc. This Command would continue under a three star officer. The Vice Chief would also be a four star officer and all HQ personnel would report through him including the PSO's). The present Army HQ reserve formations would be re-allocated with many being redesignated as Theatre Reserves. The COAS (CinC) would have the right to switch formations from one theatre to another.

b) *The Air Force:* The same comments hold good for CAS and recommendations in respect of Theatre Commanders are identical. I believe the CAS should continue to be directly in command of Training Command with an AOC in C to assist him but Maintenance Command could report through the four-star Vice Chief. The question of reserve formations is more tricky since air assets are far more flexible in deployment potential and this would need a careful examination. It is also time the IAF started thinking about an Aerospace Command given the 'Agni' capability.

c) *The Navy:* The smallest albeit 'senior' service is a step ahead of the others having designated one officer each for the Western and Eastern seaboard respectively. These two and VCNS should be given the same status as their counterparts and Southern Command, which is also

responsible for all training, would continue to report to CNS through a three-star officer.

These changes will naturally have a significant impact on the present structures and this can provide a fine opportunity for 'fat trimming' particularly in HQ's. I strongly believe that the Services should use this opportunity to undo some of the wildly extravagant and often ludicrous impacts of the notorious 2nd Cadre Review including the voluntary surrender of some posts particularly at the more senior levels.

THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE

The DOD is a vital component of the Defence structure providing an alternative 'civilian' viewpoint to the political authority. Both in concept and in practice this system of checks and balances is a necessity in a Parliamentary Democracy. However, having said that, the passage of time has seen a growing tendency for the 'checks' to overwhelm the balances. Much of the workload in DOD, given the rather anomalous 'single file' idea now involves duplicating entire thinking processes. Thus a very fine set of intellects and experience in the form of middle and senior civil servants are spending an inordinate amount of time in relatively wasteful activity. The DOD has some vital functions to perform:

- to control financial outlays and to minimise waste
- to handle the civil - military interface in respect of both Central and State Govts including the work involved in land acquisitions, Cantonments, pensions and other ex-Servicemen benefits et al.
- to provide the interface between the Ministry and Parliament in respect of areas under the Department.
- to provide the Raksha Mantri with an experienced 'alternative' viewpoint taking note of the civilian structure of the State and such tricky questions as the ubiquitous 'relativity'. Since the financial and budgetary control mechanisms are becoming more important by the day the DOD should consider shifting from the present budgetary mechanisms to a system of pre-Budget scrutiny whereby a proposed expenditure is scrutinised before it is included as a budget proposal and where after the actual 'right to spend' is delegated to the concerned entity with specific authority to shift between budget heads etc. This concept of pre-budget scrutiny would also necessitate the shifting to a 'project management and control' system in which individual DOD officers would be responsible for individual projects. This should lead to meaningful delegation, faster decision making and less acrimony all round. Services

personnel should be attached to the project teams and it will not be necessary to mix civilian and defence personnel in the DOD because the cultures are so very different that such mixing will probably prove negative. Nonetheless, all civil servants including Finance officers, particularly at Director level and above should be selected from among those who have attended DSSC or NDC courses. The FA-DS should be appointed as Secy Def Ex and should have full control over the Ministry's expenditure with Ministry of Finance being an independent second check where necessary.

In making these proposals I have considered only the political, military and civil components of the Department of Defence, ignoring the Departments of Defence Research and Defence Production. Similar evaluations of the interaction between these entities and the Ministry as a whole is also a crying need.

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