

# Jointmanship: The Way Ahead

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## **Abstract**

*The Indian Armed Forces are undergoing a profound transformation, embracing jointness and integration as key pillars for future readiness. Inspired by Heraclitus's assertion that 'Change is the only constant', these reforms aim to modernise and unify India's defence capabilities. This article explores the ongoing efforts to enhance cross-service cooperation through jointness, a concept fundamental to the restructuring of military operations. It examines the creation of theatre commands, the evolution of military tactics from single to multi-domain operations, and the convergence of traditional and emerging warfare domains. The integration initiatives, guided by a clear vision for the future, reflect a strategic shift in India's military approach, emphasising the importance of a joint culture that transcends service-specific traditions. As the Indian Armed Forces adapt to a rapidly changing global security environment, the focus on jointness and integration will be critical in maintaining an agile and effective defence posture, ensuring that the forces are equipped to meet the challenges of modern warfare.*

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## Introduction

**H**eraclitus (A Greek philosopher) is often quoted as saying that 'Change is the only constant in life'. It is transnational and inevitable; for instance, how the Indian defence ecosystem is on the path towards major revolutionary reforms. These include the *Atmanirbharta* (Self-reliance) drive in defence manufacturing and procurement; the *Agnipath* scheme, which does the same for the recruitment process; the creation of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) for the purposes of theaterisation. The reforms envisaged in the Indian Armed Forces, encompass organisational to structural and from conceptual to cultural. Jointness and jointmanship, is the basic foundation on which all other changes shall rest.

In his seminal work, 'Origin of Species', Charles Darwin states that it can be proved that 'Inheritance, variation, adaptation, selection, and timing' are important for any species to survive. Evolution through natural selection applies to both organisms as well as organisations. Hence, discarding the old to prepare for the future, is a must. Therefore, in today's world, change is not only a manifestation of a natural process but a necessity. In the context of the Indian Armed Forces, the current geopolitical events present new challenges to nation states, the flux in the world order is forcing nations to review their security strategies. The rapid and unbridled march of technology is transforming the way future wars will be fought. Evolving geopolitics and technological advancements are following a non-linear and unpredictable path.

Therefore, it becomes of utmost importance to understand what Jointness and Jointmanship entail; and how the armed forces are to forward with the goal of achieving the same.

### Jointness: Some Basics

The Cabinet Note that approved the creation of the post of CDS and the creation of DMA in the Ministry of Defence states that one of the aims and objectives of reforms in the Higher Defence Management in India is 'To bring about jointness' between the Indian Armed Forces. Also, the mandate of the DMA, is to 'Promote jointness in procurement, training, staffing through joint planning and integration of the requirements. Clearly, two distinct activities are envisaged in the Cabinet Note, one being a tangible and

physical activity of bringing jointness, and other of promoting jointness.

‘Jointness’ can be described as ‘Cross service cooperation’ in all stages of military processes, from research through procurement and on to operations. The word ‘Joint’ is prefixed with a number of activities, products and processes such as joint planning, joint capabilities, joint training, joint operations, joint doctrines, joint directives, etc.

These ‘Joint’ activities are predicated on a mindset of jointness prevailing in the environment for that activity, process, or product to achieve its desired aims and objectives. Clearly, jointness lies in a psychological or non-physical domain, a bonding with something that is intangible and abstract. The subject of ‘Reforms in the Higher Defence Organisation’, can hence include an enabling environment, a spirit to work together, creates an atmosphere of trust, generating bonhomie adding to the congenial environment and providing openness so that one can share ideas without prejudice.

Jointness is the *sine qua non* (necessary condition) for ‘Integration’ which can be described as a physical activity. The two activities of ‘Jointness and Integration’, together are considered as important pre-requisites for creation of joint operational structures including theatre commands.

### **Theatre Commands**

The concept of theatre commands aims to separate the ‘Operational’ functions from the ‘Raise-Train-Sustain’ and other administrative functions, and thereby allowing greater focus for the operational commander to matters of security. ‘Force Generation’ and ‘Force Application’, will be two distinct fields, with the forces undergoing re-structuring for achieving the same.

While some may conclude that the establishment of integrated theatre commands is likely the end state of the reforms being attempted, the creation of such commands can be said to mark the beginning of another set of reforms. The theatre commands lay the foundation for catapulting the Indian Armed Forces into the next orbit of military preparedness and warfighting; hence, they are not an end state, it is the beginning of the future for the forces.

The armed forces are in stage of changing tactics from single to multi-domain operations. The tactics, techniques and procedures, the concepts of information flow and linkages will also need to change. Additionally, there is a drive to fuse the emerging domains of space and cyberspace into the traditional domains of land, air, and water. As in the future, the initial engagements of any conflict will involve the control of the emerging domains from the ground. Third, information is also an important reform which is being built from the ground-up. The digitisation of battlefield information and visualisation will lead to overhaul and streamlining of staff work and processes and decision making which hone the capability of the forces to conduct warfare. The digitisation of the same enables the Indian Armed Forces to move from a 'Net-Centric' approach to a 'Data-Centric' approach which entails shifting from information dominance to decision dominance, with artificial intelligence, machine learning, and big data becoming integral parts of the battlefield support structure. The next level of integration involves logistics. At present, there is a program to introduce Joint Logistics Nodes which will ensure a common logistics architecture allowing for inventory to 'Speak' to each other and integrate maintenance.

Modern warfare is increasingly characterised by the convergence of various domains, strategies, and technologies, leading to a complex and multi-dimensional battlefield. The integration of data-centric, celerity-centric, and cognitive-centric approaches emphasises the importance of data-driven decision-making, rapid operational agility, and psychological influence in shaping outcomes. The traditional boundaries between kinetic and non-kinetic methods are blurring, with cognitive strategies playing a crucial role in influencing adversaries' perceptions and decision-making. Simultaneously, the convergence of time and space, driven by emerging and disruptive technologies, is reshaping how operations are conducted, allowing for real-time actions across vast distances. This evolving landscape necessitates a seamless integration of tactics, operational art, and strategic objectives, ensuring that actions on the ground are aligned with broader military goals. As developed nations enter the next Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), the focus in the cognitive domain will intensify, with theatre commanders prioritising influence operations, information warfare, and perception management. To remain future-ready, militaries must embrace emerging concepts like manned-unmanned teaming, while also implementing organisational changes at lower

echelons, such as separating operations from Repair, Supply, and Transport functions currently managed by Service Headquarters.

The next critical step in this evolution is the absorption of the third Revolution in Military Affairs, which can be termed 'Convergence Warfare'. This phase will be adopted once the theatre commands become operational, marking a significant shift in military strategy. Convergence Warfare will integrate the principles of the first RMA, which focused on manoeuvre warfare, with those of the second RMA, which emphasised net-centric warfare. By combining these previous advancements, Convergence Warfare will create a more unified and sophisticated approach, leveraging both physical manoeuvrability and advanced networked operations to achieve strategic objectives in a highly integrated manner. These developments reflect the intricate and dynamic nature of modern warfare, where technological advancements, cognitive strategies, and integrated operations are increasingly pivotal.

### **History of Jointness**

The need for jointness among the three services was recognised by the political and military leadership of newly independent India very early on and a Joint Services Wing was created at Clement Town, Dehradun, a precursor to the National Defence Academy (NDA) that came up at Khadakwasla, Pune. These formative years were the bedrock of jointness. However, in the absence of any further efforts towards achieving the same, a vacuum began to form with this empty space being filled with doubt and distrust. The divide between the services increased as officers of each service grew in a closed environment within their respective service, imbibing a culture of their own, which is natural as officers are motivated to join a particular service for various reasons, ranging from a distinct uniform to love for their historical or battle accounts or the traditions and work environment that a particular service offers. The differences at the apex level gradually permeated to the rank and file of each service.

### **Strategy to Promote Jointness**

**Presenting the bigger picture.** Organisations, especially hierarchical and tradition-bound organisations, are status quoist by nature and resist change. When faced with the prospect of change, people consider what they will lose individually rather

than what they will gain collectively. Hence, presenting the bigger picture is one of the most important strategies to promote jointness.

**Vision.** The next important issue was mapping the route to an end state, which was achieved through formalising and enunciating a clear vision for the armed forces. 'The Vision 2047', which was laid down for the Indian Armed Forces is: 'To be an integrated, all domain force, dynamic and self-reliant in capabilities and thought, ready to respond across the full spectrum of conflict to protect our national interests, in concert with all elements of national power'.

**Guiding Coalition.** The building of broad consensus among what John Paul Kotter, a leading management guru, speaks about forming a 'Guiding Coalition', that will steer the change, was the next step. It comprised the CDS, the three Chiefs and the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee. To create the right environment and atmosphere even within the Guiding Coalition, one went back to armed forces' roots. The 1<sup>st</sup> Conference on creation of Theatre Commands at NDA was held with the CDS in chair. The participants laid wreaths at the Hut of Remembrance and walked together to the Sudan Block Conference Hall. The atmosphere evoked and aroused the latent spirit of jointness, breaking barriers in the process.

**Creating a Sense of Urgency.** One of the strategies behind all these actions was to present a bigger challenge than the change being enforced, which helped create a sense of urgency. It compelled people to act with passion and purpose, a momentum that excites people to pursue the vision of the future together. It is necessary for individuals to realise the importance of the change and usher it in themselves, in the interest of their continued capability towards national security.

**Increased Interaction.** The next step was to build the necessary momentum through increased interaction. This was achieved by the CDS through interacting with officers at all levels – Commanders, to middle rung officers and to even young officers. The intention was to build the necessary drive in the environment so that each officer can become a catalyst in this change.

**Interaction at Tri-Service Level.** The heads of all tri-service training institutions, the Andaman and Nicobar and Strategic Forces Command and the three agencies met on the platform provided

by 'Parivartan Chintan-I', with the aim of deliberating on initiatives that can propel jointness. The focus of 'Parivartan Chintan-I' was jointness rather than integration.

**Unstructured Interactions.** There were unstructured interactions which were undertaken at formation level as well. It took place in the form of numerous joint wargames and joint exercises which gave an opportunity to larger number of officers to meet and interact. Most of these were spontaneous without any written directives/instructions being issued by the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff or the DMA. These were done at the Command Headquarter (HQ) level by interaction between the Commander-in-Chiefs directly. Tri Shakti Prahaar of Southern Command was one such initiative. The elements of all the three services were incorporated in Exercise Dweep Shakti of Andaman and Nicobar Command as also Exercise Vayu Shakti, the fire power demonstration of the Indian Air Force (IAF). Gagan Shakti exercise of the IAF also invited participation and observers of other two services.

**Tri-Service Demonstration.** They were also able to organise a national-level tri-service demonstration of their operational capabilities during Bharat Shakti. It not only showcased 'Made in India' weapon and ammunition systems but also highlighted integration.

## **Jointness 2.0 – The Way Ahead**

Jointness 2.0 is about developing 'Joint Culture' in the armed forces. There are service-specific cultures and even in joint service organisations, officers often come with the baggage of their individual service.

In the IAF, there is a culture of professionalism since they are training for combat every day. This is an excellent virtue; however, the skill of flying is sometimes regarded as so important that broader aspects of national security and professional can be neglected.

The officers of the Indian Navy have a strategic perspective because of the nature of their service. They feel that they are 'Sailor Diplomats' because the attributes of Navy's employment have diplomacy embedded into it.

The Indian Army feels that metrics of victory will always be measured by the number of boots on ground. This large monolithic organisation is so steeped into customs and traditions that it takes time for even information to percolate down through multiple filters, both organisational and cultural.

### **Joint Culture**

Culture is a way of life for a group of people. It is a sum total of their beliefs and values, and it manifests in a particular pattern of behaviour. Developing a culture takes time and it is essential for it to be passed down to successive generations for it to survive and grow. There is a need to create a fourth culture in the armed forces, a joint culture which is crucial as one moves toward establishing joint operational structures. Symbology and rituals are important tools for people to associate with a particular tradition or belief. It helps promoting the creation of a new culture.

Some initiatives that are being processed towards the creation of a joint culture through symbology and rituals:

- Tri-Service participation in national events by inclusion of a tableau and a flypast at the Republic Day Parade.
- A tri-service song and marching tune which is being composed at Army Education Corps Training College and Centre, Pachmarhi, Madhya Pradesh.
- An audio-visual film on jointness and integration.
- The Owl magazine of Defence Services Staff College (DSSC) to become a true representative and spokesperson for development of joint Culture, jointmanship etc.

**Joint Staff Course.** Jointness in training at the DSSC has been enhanced by the establishment of a Joint Training Team. A Joint Division is being established as a pilot project for the next course, i.e., the 80<sup>th</sup> Staff Course commencing in Jun 2024, wherein, 44 officers will be subjected to an enhanced joint curriculum with the aim of preparing staff officers for joint staff appointments.

**Ingredients of a Joint Culture.** The Joint culture while distinct from service-specific Culture, needs to respect the uniqueness of each service. One must be able to distil the best of each service,



and incorporate the highest common factor, rather than settle for the lowest common denominator. It must promote:

- **Original Thinking.** Since officers in joint organisations, with sufficient maturity, will be evolving new concepts, doctrines, tactics etc., they must give a new approach and direction to traditional or old concepts.
- **Non Hierarchal Staff Work.** A mode of operation within an organisation where decision-making and task delegation are not strictly based on a hierarchical structure.
- **4 Is.** Innovative, Inventive, Imaginative and Indigenous.
- **Sharing of Knowledge.**
  - Power is not for hoarding information but sharing it.
  - Seamless sharing of knowledge and ideas both vertically and horizontally must be a signpost of joint culture.
  - The discouragement of the tendency of protecting the 'Knowledge Turf' as this may lead to loss of perceived power and credit.
  - Instead, a culture of openness must not only be encouraged but also incentivised.
- **Receptivity**
  - Be open to ideas about your service from an officer of different service.
  - Resistance to change in a top-down force is inherent. Therefore, it must be rejected if true jointness is to be achieved.
  - What is being said is important than who has said it. In the armed forces, it can become a matter of contention for senior officers, if and when, a junior contradicts them. Or if a member of a different force provides their opinion which might go against the one shared by a superior of a different force. Such instances must be discouraged for achieving true jointness.

- **Future Warfare.** In future Indian warfare, hybrid threats, technological advancements, and multi-domain operations pose challenges. Strategic partnerships are crucial against asymmetric challenges, emphasising border security and modernisation for defence preparedness. Civil-military integration may need to be increased to address non-traditional security issues.

## Integration 2.0

The conjoining or bringing together of two diverse entities or organisations can be called integration. It is a physical activity that is apparent, visible and objectively measured. Integration is a prerequisite for the creation of theatre commands and lies between the amorphous state of Jointness to an end state of a functional Theatre Command. In 2023, a number of one-time activities and events were planned.

Some of such initiatives included:

- Operational utilisation of the Indian Navy MiG29K for Operational Readiness Plan duties in coordination with IAF during aircraft carrier maintenance schedule periods.
- Cross postings of few officers.
- Single advertisements calling on the citizens to join the Indian Armed Forces.
- Some unstructured exercises.

In 2024, there has been a need to give them an enduring character by making these activities flow out of a policy or an instruction or an order. It is envisaged that number of joint instructions, joint orders and joint policies/directives would be issued in coming times. These will be arrived at through a consultative process for implementation.

- **Joint Instructions.** Joint Instructions will have financial and legal implications like conditions of service (Joint Staff), pay and allowances, scaling of equipment, financial powers and procedures etc. These would be issued post approval of Secretary DMA.

- **Joint Orders.** Joint Orders would have legal implications and would be issued by the CDS. These orders will be applicable for all joint service organisations and three services. Joint Orders if issued by the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee under the aegis of HQ IDS would be applicable for Tri-service organisations/establishments only.

- **Joint Policies/Directives.** Joint Policies/Directives would not have the authority of an order but would be required to be implemented by sector/brigade HQ. These would be issued at the level of DMA or HQ IDS, as applicable. For instance, a joint exercises policy has been promulgated by HQ IDS.

Overall, the integration initiatives have been classified under nine verticals. The verticals, in the order of priority, which have been identified and considered essential for integration before the establishment of theatre commands are, operations, operational logistics, capability development, intelligence communication and IT, training, maintenance and support services, human resources and administration and legal.

The integration initiatives are being taken to meet specific objectives. A total of 122 initiatives are being addressed under a two-timeline schedule of Phase I and II which is related to establishment of theatre commands. 65 integration initiatives form part of Phase 1 (as pre-requisites for the creation of joint structures), of which some have already been completed and rest are at advanced stages of implementation.

Adoption of a common operational planning process by all services, interlinking of air defence networks, common standard operating procedures for all in-service missiles, setting up of a joint communication architecture, the notification of the Inter Services Organisation Bill, depot level repair of small arms of the Indian Navy and the IAF being undertaken by the Indian Army, to save time for repair and for sharing expertise, are some of the completed initiatives, to name a few.

**Civil-Military Fusion.** Integration as an effort should not be limited within military. It should be expanded in a manner to even involve Central Armed Police Forces, and Coast Guard. While efforts of the military are primarily focused towards ensuring a secure nation,

efforts should also be made to magnify outcomes in other fields based on a 'Whole of Nation' approach. Fields like exploration of rare earth materials, extending logistic services, space cooperation, flexible use of airspace, dual use of airfields, ammunition management, development of a core equipment/material related to military as well as civil aircraft are few such examples where imaginative and innovative thinking under a fused civil-military approach would benefit the nation as a whole.

## **Conclusion**

The ongoing transformation of the Indian Armed Forces reflects a dynamic shift towards embracing jointness and integration as essential components for future readiness. The creation of theatre commands, alongside other significant reforms, marks not just an organisational change but a cultural and strategic evolution. These efforts are geared towards enhancing operational efficiency, fostering a joint culture, and ensuring that the armed forces are equipped to meet the challenges of modern warfare.

Jointness and jointmanship require an innovative approach and collaborative effort. There are no limits to the levels of jointness, nor is it a graph with a guaranteed upward trajectory; fluctuations may occur based on circumstances or personalities, which must be guarded against. Creating something new often necessitates discarding the old, a challenging task due to emotional attachments. The concept of 'Creative Destruction' is particularly relevant here, where creativity is infused even into the process of destruction to make it an attractive and necessary step toward progress.

As India navigates the complexities of an evolving global security environment, the emphasis on jointness and integration will be pivotal in maintaining a robust and agile defence posture. The journey towards achieving these goals is not merely about structural adjustments but about cultivating a mindset that values cooperation, adaptability, and forward-thinking. The future of India's defence lies in the successful absorption of these reforms, which will enable the armed forces to operate seamlessly across domains, ensuring national security in an increasingly interconnected and unpredictable world.