

Civil Military Fusion for National Security

Lieutenant Colonel Saumya Ghatak®

Abstract

Civil-Military Fusion (CMF) optimises use of civil and military resources to achieve national objectives. Drawing lesson from China and US, the article discusses the fault lines with respect to CMF in India. The article puts forward few recommendations to increase and synergies CMF at national level. The article proposes greater CMF to be part of National Strategy. The civil-military equation is a complex and dynamic domain which has lineage not only in political science and sociology but also in many other fields including history, philosophy and psychology etc. This article attempts to examine some of these factors in order to, firstly obtain a better understanding of the nature of civil-military relations in India, including its fault-lines, and secondly to identify the outcomes of the existing discord. The prognosis contains some options and recommendations, for consideration of the decision-makers.

Introduction

Civil-Military Fusion (CMF) across the leading militaries of the world is gaining gravity and connotation in view of battlefields getting substantiated with state of art technologies in multiple domains. Indian Army has also come up manifolds when one talks about modern armies or technology driven militaries. Current approach to absorb and sustain such technologies and modern weapon systems in Indian Army has no dedicated Civil-Military organisation which accrue certain limitations. General Rawat had

®Lieutenant Colonel Saumya Ghatak is an alumnus of Indian Military Academy and was commissioned into 18th Battalion of The Madras Regiment in December 2009. He has served in Counter Insurgency operations at Assam and Jammu & Kashmir. The officer is an alumnus of Defence Service Staff College. He is presently posted as GSO-1 (Ops) at HQ 33 Corps.

Journal of the United Service Institution of India, Vol. CLIII, No. 632, April-June 2023.

said, “The existing segregated nature of defence and commercial industry ecosystems restricts our capabilities and capacities in making defence equipment.¹ Integrating civil and military technology efforts is the way forward towards for self-reliance”.² Hence a dedicated Civil-Military set up is the need of the hour for any military to be established as redoubtable, whose fundamental role will be two folds, first is to absorb, exploit and observe technological systems and second is to recover, repair and replace them. Such an organisation will form part of the bigger CMF at national level, and its authority will range from assimilation to sustenance of technology in the modern battlefield. At national level, an extensive national effort is the anchor of such a system where India’s civilian research and commercial sectors, and its military and defence industrial sectors will have to work in an integrated manner without impediments.

Fault Lines with Respect to CMF in India

Limited interaction between wings of the Armed Forces.

Prior to focussing on CMF, the dynamics of limited interaction within tri-Services needs to be dwelled upon. The present structure allows integration between tri-services at operational level only. Seamless integration at tactical level is the need of the hour. First step towards this initiative may be aligning the geographical boundaries of Command Headquarters of tri-Services and placing component of tri-services under Divisional Headquarters as applicable.

Lack of awareness among Civilian Counterparts about the functioning of Military. The armed forces and civil services are not aware of the challenges the other services face while performing their duties. The lack of basic understanding about the Indian Armed Forces in schools and educational institutions is a major challenge to be addressed by including basic knowledge about defence forces in the curriculum from high school onwards.

Lack of Mutual Trust. Lack of understanding results lack of mutual trust which would lead to distress between organisations and this should be addressed with participation by Civil-Military representatives from policy making stage till execution stage.

Management of Perception of Senior Leaders. Persons at influential positions in civil and military would be able to better align their perceptions provided they have a reasonable understanding of the functioning in both domains, civils as well as military.

India's CMF framework is skewed in favour of the Civilian Bureaucracy. Defence services, the key players in the national security matrix, are excluded from the decision-making process, the discourse is bound to be troubled. Since the defence services have a major venture, they should also have a licit say in matters of national security. There is a resentment against the uniformed and obstructionist bureaucracy by the military excessive control promotes a deep divide in the civil military relationship.

No Communication/ Interaction between Civilian, Research, Industrial, Commercial, Military and Defence Sectors. The most important factor in Civil Military Fusion is eliminating the barriers and establishing a linkage with multiple channels of communication. Breaking of barriers to achieve fusion and not just integration has to be the focus.

CMF Models

As a general principle, a fine balance needs to be created between the military and civilian administration. The CMF is not just about making militaries strong but about encouraging economies to make nations great. In case India wants to make the changeover to be a power of consequence, it has to undergo a focussed CMF process.

India need to eliminate the barriers between civilian, research, industrial, commercial, military, and defence sectors. CMF seeks to speedup military modernisation through integration of latest technologies with operational concepts, increased scientific research and personnel reforms. CMF infrastructure connects the military and civilian sectors to catalyse innovation, economic progress and advance dual-use technologies, especially those suited for Network Centric warfare.

The CMF system needs extensive linkages between various organisations and government entities. At the apex level, there are linkages between ministries (Defence, Foreign Affairs, Education, Science and Technology, Industry and Information

Technology etc.) and their subsidiary establishments. However the linkages should be dynamic with respect to their levels of hierarchy to ensure fusion in the following six facets:-

- Merger of defence and civil technology and industrial base.
- Science and technology creations be integrated and unified across military and civilian sectors.
- Military and civilian expertise and knowledge to be intermingled and talent to cultivate across the board.
- Civilian framework and construction to strengthen for military purposes by building them to military requirements and standards.
- Civilian services and logistics be used for military purposes.
- All aspects of society and economy to be used for mobilising resources for defence of the nation.

Chinese CMF Model

China studied the models of USA and other developed nations. Initially they sought 'Civilian-Military integration' by greater collaboration between the defence and civilian sectors. However, 'integration' did not make progress due to a lack of centralized control and organisational barriers between the party and state and their various organisations.

In 2007, China decided to replace 'integration' with 'fusion'. It started eliminating barriers to fusion through a 'whole of the nation' approach. CMF grew in scope and scale as China started viewing it as a means to bridge economic and social development besides security development. The result was national development.

In 2015, CMF was raised to a national-level strategy to build an 'integrated national strategic system and capabilities', to sustain the goal of national rejuvenation. The overall management and implementation of the CMF is monitored and managed by the Politburo, the State Council (including the National Development and Reform Commission), and the Civil Military Commission (CMC).

China's CMF model fuses its economic, social, and security development with a two fold objective. To fortify all instruments of

national power and to attain a world class military. It includes development and acquisition of advanced dual-use technology for military and civilian applications. It also includes reform of the national defence, science and technology industries to intermingle them into one.

All military organisations are related on the CMF platform. Provincial and local governments are also factored in right from inception stage. State-sponsored educational institutions, research centres, and key laboratories are part of CMF. Private companies that focus in unmanned systems, robotics, artificial intelligence, cyber security, and big data have been co-opted into CMF. These include Huawei and ZTE. CMF efforts involve partnerships between central, provincial, or city government entities with military district departments, PLA departments, academia, research entities, and companies. Provincial and local governments have CMF industrial plans and have launched 35 national-level CMF industrial zones. CMF-linked investment funds have been created by central and local governments and private investors.

Civil Military Fusion for India – Pointers

Chinese model is too autocratic for our democracy. However, the necessity of Civil Military Fusion for India is undoubtedly vital.³ Genuinely, in our country, it will well neigh be impossible to launch and sustain a mega model across the board like it happens in China. But the takeaways from Chinese model certainly needs to be drawn attention to albeit with some modifications as given below:-

- In India, Civil-Military Fusion has to be a mass approach and incrementally achieved.
- The first cluster could be of successful and key sectors of national importance. This cluster invariably should be of Defence, Space, Atomic Energy, Energy, and Communications and information technology.
- The second cluster should be based on disruptive and modern technologies like AI, Cyber, robotics, unmanned Systems, new materials and so on.
- The third cluster should be infrastructure and logistical in nature to include rail, roads, airports, ports, ware housing, freight services, transportation, housing, buildings and so on.

- The fourth cluster should be financial fusion.
- The fifth cluster should be related to conventional 'bread and butter' technology, goods and manufacturing where dual use can be exploited.

The span in each cluster should include concerned ministries, military departments, academia, PSUs, public sector industry, DRDO, CSIR labs, Science and Technological institutes of repute, Industry icons and more. Emphasis must be on key technologies, key products and key personnel. Talent capture and retention will be a major challenge in our system. We must pay sufficient attention to this aspect.

Way Ahead

If Defence has to be a function of diplomacy, military capabilities and above all the Political will, the structure needs to be cross attached at various tiers. Brigadiers/ Colonels and equivalents are a reasonable first level of cross postings. The tenures, however, need to be reasonably long, since it is in the interest of the Armed forces to have competent people to take care of their interests, there should be no problem with regards to the standard of the human resource. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) should similarly earmark a Secretary level post to a military officer to provide competence for strategic military balance with respect to our adversaries. The details can be worked out easily as long as the Higher Defence Structure concerns itself with the following areas:-

► Resource Optimisation.

- Resource provisioning including all aspects of finance, defence industry, manpower and other national infrastructural and industrial resources including those concerning space, cyber and atomic energy.
- Policy guidelines and long term planning to establish the structure, objectives and processes for resource allocation and utilisation. This should include prioritisation between competing demands and establishing linkages between trade and industry.

► **Qualitative Guidance and Monitoring.**

- Development of human skills in specialised areas like aeronautics, R&D, production engineering, identification of attributes for formulation of product specifications as also trials and testing.
- Formulation of Standard Operating Procedures to stipulate a five years compulsory contribution of IIT pass outs in defence production industry is a major step towards initiating the technology drive in Indian Army.
- Profiling of inventory to include aspects of interoperability, maintainability and sustainability. Commonality of equipment and technology.

► **Responsiveness.**

- Contingency planning based on a systems approach with a long term perspective. Increase of options and alternatives.
- Agility of structures and processes, Synergising all instruments of power through a whole Government approach.

► **Integration.**

- Linkage of military force application with national security objectives and perspective.⁴
- Development of Joint and integrated strategy in areas in contingencies of probability, possibility and improbability.
- Agility of policy modification and policy implementation.
- Ability to draw from common resource, multiple usages of single resource and drastic reduction in overheads.
- Strengthen civil-military interface and relationship.

Aggregation of Resources and Capacity. Qualitative aggregation of resources and capacity from both the civil and military domains is the cornerstone of CMF. The wall that exist between the silos of civil and military institutions must collapse in order to allow flawless infusion of talent and capacities in the military, civil services, scientific community, academia, industries, domain experts, technologists and entrepreneurs.

Top Down Approach. Civil-Military Fusion needs an empowered structure and a well-defined hierarchy to break these walls with a hammer. The structure has to be spearheaded by a clearheaded political leadership, an unshackled military and a bureaucracy which is prepared to shed its non performing lassitude.⁵ It has to be a top-down approach. In fact, the first step is Politico-Military-Bureaucratic fusion. If this can be achieved even in some measure, we will be on our way.

Integrated Efforts of Technology Board, Armed Forces, Scientific and Business Community. Example of technological prowess being embedded into statecraft is Selçuk Bayraktar who is the chief technology officer of the famed Turkish technology company. Baykar first started out as a student in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Subsequently, the topic of his Masters' thesis was "Aggressive Manoeuvring of Unmanned Systems". After returning to Turkey he developed the Bayraktar TB2 drones which are considered to be a game changer in drone technology. He cited the Turkish President Erdogan's statement in which he stated that the Bayraktar drone has bestowed Turkey with power projection capabilities to eliminate inimical threats at the source in Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Understanding the Challenges

- **Organise Training Capsules in Different Training Institutions.** The existing setup offers an insight into military functioning for the civil services. There can be a vice-versa arrangement for sending teams from defence training institutions to Indian Administrative Service, Indian Police Service and other training academies to provide an insight for the defence personnel about the bureaucracy setup.
- **Service Headquarters.** Officers at service HQ to enhance interaction and engage more with their civilian counterparts (Director and below) who have longer tenures in the office.
- **Lack of Basic Awareness About Armed Forces in Educational Institutions.** The lack of basic awareness about the Indian Armed Forces in schools and educational institutions is a major problem. School

curriculum should include information on the organisational structure of armed forces, ranks, arms and equipment, and services under the Social Science subject.

Conclusion

The implementation of CMF needs to be a plan spanning over a time period that encompasses its inclusion from national security strategy to the Long term perspective planning (LTPP) of Tri-services. While the actions at military level falls under the medium and short term goals, the fusion in its correct perspective would entail intervention of NSC to duly incorporate policy changes, organisation reforms and ensuing procurement directions to achieve a whole of nation approach.

Endnotes

¹ Civil Military Fusion: An Indian Necessity – MyIndMakers. <https://www.scribd.com/document/160050529/Civil-military-relations-in-India-An-appraisal>

² Indian armed forces – Maj Gen Harsha Kakar (Retd.) <https://harshakakararticles.com/2018/08/25/indian-armed-forces>

³ myind.net <https://myind.net/Home/viewArticle/civil-military-fusion-an-indian-necessity>

⁴ Core Concerns in Indian Defence and the Imperatives ... - IDSA https://idsa.in/system/files/book/Book_CoreConcernsinIndianDefence.pdf

⁵ Civil Military Fusion An Indian Necessity - MyIndMakers