

Restructuring and Integration of the Ministry of Defence with the Three Service Headquarters

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Introduction

In a parliamentary democracy like ours it is inevitable that when governments change, there are some modifications to policy. However, in so far as the country's policies on national security and external affairs are concerned, there should be a degree of consistency and bipartisanship. If that be so, there should be institutional arrangements that ensure the involvement of at least the major opposition party or parties, in the formulation of such policies. Such an arrangement would largely eliminate the scope for important policy decisions on these two vital ingredients of the nation's destiny, being overturned or "brushed under the carpet" when political change takes place.

When the deliberations for the formation of a National Security Council were being examined over a decade ago by a Group of Ministers (GoM) and other experts, I recall having been asked to inter-act with the group. Among other aspects, in so far as the composition was concerned, I had then suggested that the National Security Council core group should comprise the Prime Minister, Defence Minister, Minister of External Affairs, Home Minister, Finance Minister, the National Security Adviser and the "Leader of

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the Opposition". The worthy interlocutors nearly fell off their chairs and laughed away the suggestion about the "Leader of the Opposition", on the grounds (in the words of one of the eminent members who had been a Minister in earlier cabinets) that "in our system that sort of arrangement cannot work". I found the basis for rejection of my suggestion rather illogical, and made the point of saying so; by reminding the worthies that, as it happened, the Leader of the Opposition at that time was a person who had held the portfolio of the Defence Minister of the Republic of India in the administration that preceded the one then in power. It is indeed a reflection of the insecurity and possibly arrogance of our political leadership, that on aspects of national security and foreign policy, we cannot evolve a bipartisan approach.

To a large extent, it is this arrogance, insecurity and indifference on these two issues of national importance, that is at the root of the inability of the political leadership to pursue with some vigour, the vital and, I dare say, the already long delayed, decisions on the integration and restructuring of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) with the Indian Armed Forces, as also the measures for promotion of "jointness" and "integration within and between the Armed Forces".

In order to place the subject matter of the paper under consideration in perspective, it is essential that India's security commitments into the 21st Century be first briefly reviewed.

A Brief Review of India's Security Commitments Into the 21st Century Military Conflicts with Other Countries

As things stand, together with the perennial scope for conflict with Pakistan, scope for conflict in the foreseeable future exists with only one other power, a major power at that. Whereas there is scope for difference of opinion or clash of views, one cannot perceive any reason for military conflict with the USA, Russia, the European Union or Japan. However, with the People's Republic of China, scope for military conflict exists in context of bilateral contentious issues like the unresolved boundary question, the presence of the Dalai Lama and his followers in India, China's continued support to Pakistan's nuclear and sub-regional ambitions, and the competition between the two countries for space in Asia on trade and economy. Notwithstanding this adversarial relationship, in context of the imperative of focusing on the

economic growth of the country, it is important that our political and diplomatic efforts be directed at precluding military conflict with China. But let us be quite clear: this will only be possible if India is politically, economically and militarily strong. The Chinese (like any great civilisation) recognise and respect strength and demonstrated performance. To that extent, while we continue to engage with China at the political level and build on our economic and trade relations to the mutual benefit of our people, it is imperative that we:-

- (a) Modernise our Armed Forces to maintain a credible deterrent military capability.
- (b) Address the long-neglected infra-structure in the border areas of the North and Northeast.
- (c) Consolidate our strategic assets in all three dimensions to provide deterrence capability.

In so far as Pakistan is concerned, besides maintaining the appropriate force structures, we need to put in place capacities for punitive action should Pakistan undertake any military adventure against us in Jammu and Kashmir directly, or by proxy.

Other Roles for the Military

Looking into the foreseeable future, there appears to be little doubt that our military is likely to be increasingly applied in roles other than conventional warfare. Foremost among these tasks is that of dealing with terrorism and insurgency in one form or another, whether it is against ethnic or religious groups seeking secession, terrorists promoting such activity or drug traffickers. This is a form of conflict that will require significant readjustment of basic attitudes towards soldiering in the classic sense, modifications in equipment requirements and training. The Indian military has been at it for over five decades; but more recently, to a much greater extent. In this form of conflict, the military is subjected to considerably greater pressures than in regular warfare for which they are trained, because more often than not, the soldier is required to deal with the terrorist or insurgent with at least one hand (if not both) tied behind his back. In the sense that unlike classic combat operations where he can engage the enemy without reservations or inhibitions, in counter terrorism and counter insurgency operations, the soldier is inhibited by the imperative that he should not cause casualties

to innocent civilians or inflict collateral damage that would cause resentment in the local population and outrage in the international community. It is invariably part of the military's mandate to win over the 'hearts and minds' of the local populace who may be genuinely alienated, or under threat from the terrorists.

Dealing with Terrorism

Terrorism attacks the values that lie at the heart of the Charter of the United Nations: namely, respect for human rights; the rule of law; rules of war that protect civilians; tolerance among peoples and nations; and the peaceful resolution of conflict. It is generally believed that terrorism flourishes in environments of despair, humiliation, poverty, political oppression, extremism and human rights abuse; and that it profits from weak state capacity to maintain law and order. In so far as India is concerned it is important to emphasise that notwithstanding all the initiatives under discussion and implementation at present at the international plane and the recommendations made, our fight against terrorism on the sub-continent will, for some time yet, have to be undertaken by us on our own. Without doubt we may be able to count on the active support of some countries that are similarly affected, and the sympathy of some of the other countries favourably disposed towards us. However, it is difficult to foresee any sections of the international community assisting us materially in the process. Not that we should be looking for any direct assistance in this regard. Hence we need to continue dealing with the menace as best as we can by mobilising and organising our capacities accordingly.

A major threat India faces today internally is that of terrorism sponsored and directed by Pakistan based terrorist organisations like the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HUM) etc with varying degrees of collusion and assistance by some local groups. Whatever the international community may wish to assume about the involvement of sections of the Pakistani establishment, particularly the Pakistan Army and the ISI, we should have no doubts on this score. And in that context there should be no inhibitions about the measures we need to put in place. We have been the target of such terrorism for many years now, long before countries like the USA and the UK woke up to the seriousness of the threat after the attacks in the US mainland on 09 September 2001.

In pursuing its agenda the Pakistani establishment including the ISI, is obviously using all its influence within Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and possibly even Sri Lanka, as also in Saudi Arabia and some of the Gulf Countries like the UAE, to facilitate the movement of terrorists and their weapons and equipment, and as a conduit for the infusion of counterfeit currency into India.

In evaluating our responses for dealing with such terrorist activity, it is important we rid ourselves of the following fallacious assumptions: —

- (a) That the Pakistani establishment has very little control over non-state actors operating from its territory. It most certainly has.
- (b) That the so-called “*soft attitude and double standards of the West on Pakistan*” will change. They will not and we must factor that into our responses.
- (c) That *linkages with Jammu & Kashmir and Afghanistan (and now Baluchistan)*, will disappear; they will not.
- (d) That the USA, Saudi Arabia, China and some others, will cut off economic and military aid to Pakistan unless it produces results in the operations against the Taliban. That will not happen.

Given the increased dimensions of the threat, it is imperative that effective counter terrorism mechanisms are immediately put in place. The time for commissions, task forces, and so on is long past. Rhetoric and symbolism must be replaced by implementation action without further delay. The prime focus should be on “Prevention” in as much as we must invest all our efforts on preventing terrorist attacks from being launched against us. We should remove any thoughts about the inevitability about terrorist attacks.

To effectively complement our ‘Prevention’ strategy it is imperative that we formulate a credible and clearly articulated ‘Pre-emption’ strategy. Any comparisons with what Israel does in this context are invidious because we are not in the same league; the USA will never stand by us as they do for Israel. Development of covert capability is essential but not a subject that can be discussed; one would hope that this is being developed as it takes

decades to bear fruit. "Surgical strikes" across the border/Line of Control (LC) are a feasible and even legitimate option under the terms of the UN Charter when the country is attacked or under imminent threat of attack. The provocation has to be severe; as for instance when the Kargil intrusion took place, or when Parliament was attacked. We should not bluff ourselves into believing that the international community will support us in case we respond with strikes across the border/LC to a Mumbai type attack. But respond we must. And if we are to respond with surgical strikes, we should prepare ourselves to deal with international disapproval when it comes; and more importantly, be prepared for escalation to war with Pakistan.

Left Wing Extremism (LWE)

LWE is today as serious an internal threat as Pakistani sponsored terrorism, the difference being that it is largely indigenous with possibly some marginal connections with the movement in Nepal. That however does not detract from the possibility that our regional adversaries may well be exploiting the phenomenon by provision of weapons and equipment, as also sanctuary. Unfortunately the threat has assumed its present dimension because of neglect, indifference, poor governance, lethargy and sheer incompetence by the political leadership and civilian bureaucracy. It is ironic that in claiming to recognise the seriousness of the threat, the Indian establishment is glossing over its own failings and inadequacies, and suggesting that the remedy lies purely in robust offensive operations against the armed cadres and those who support them. In the process of determining the measures required for countering the threat, the movement must be placed in perspective. The point regarding poor governance and associated deficiencies has already been made. What needs to be evaluated in greater detail is the fact that whereas there is no doubt some individuals are pursuing the activities for ideological reasons and have a dedicated cadre, large numbers of the so-called 'revolutionaries' are in the game purely for exploitation for personal benefit that derives from the possession of the gun. They have the advantage of working up anger and antagonism against the State to their advantage.

As in the case of dealing with Pakistan sponsored terrorism, we must fully exploit available technological capability to our advantage in terms of monitoring and surveillance of areas under LWE dominance, tracking of the movements of their armed cadres,

using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), monitoring of their communications, etc. There can be little doubt that LWE cadres would have access to 'state-of-the-art' equipment under the auspices of forces inimical to India.

The main aspect that needs to be stressed is that the process of restoring state control over the areas impacted by LWE will be slow and painstaking; block by block; moving from one block to the next only after re-establishing effective and credible governance structures. There can be no "quick fix" solutions, given the fact that the situation has been allowed to go out of control for so long.

One observes that there are calls for a *"military approach"*. Whereas some sections of the political leadership and the bureaucracy may not have any compunction about launching military operations against our own citizens who have been deprived of the rights and privileges accorded to them under the Constitution, it may not be unreasonable to hope that the military leadership will be able to resist the pressures of launching operations against our own people. Use of the military should be restricted to provision of training and equipment, together with advice and logistic support where necessary.

In this context, the recommendation made in the GoM Report of February 2001, for the lateral induction of trained Armed Forces personnel into State Police, Central Police Forces and Para Military Forces like the Assam Rifles, Sashastra Seema Bal and the Coast Guard should be pursued with some vigour. In particular context of the directions of the Standing Committee on Defence, implementation has been stalled over the years by vested interests that should not be allowed to call the shots any longer. Its implementation will not only bring in *"some Armed Forces ethos and culture into the police forces, but also conserve state resources on training. Laterally inducted Armed Forces personnel will benefit by serving longer and in many cases within their own state. The Armed Forces will benefit significantly by retaining a younger age profile"*.

Peace Operations

The end of the Cold War and the relative success of Operation Desert Storm in 1991, had induced a sense of euphoria that the international community was geared to deal with threats to

international peace and security in a more effective manner than before. However, the experiences of Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Liberia, Angola, Rwanda, and those in some of the former republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union, quickly dispelled these expectations, and in fact, induced a sense of retrenchment in regard to UN peacekeeping operations for some time. In recent years however there has been an ever increasing demand for UN peacekeeping particularly for dealing with the conflicts in Africa. Today, almost 115,000 personnel are deployed on 15 UN missions; with about 113 countries contributing troops; and the budget for 2012-13 is over 7.5 billion US dollars. There is every indication that the demand for this form of application of militaries is likely to continue, together with the increasing deployment of civilian police and humanitarian aid personnel in mission areas. UN forces are being increasingly mandated with provisions of Chapter VII of the UN Charter that call for the use of force to deal with belligerents. Ironically, countries that have the best capability in terms of equipment and training, namely the developed Western world, are shying away from participation in UN operations, preferring to be part of operations undertaken under the aegis of military alliances like NATO, or regional organisations like the EU.

Intervention Operations

There is little doubt that in this day and age, with the reach of the electronic media and greater awareness even in the most backward of societies, it is well-nigh impossible for countries to insulate themselves from the global community. Hence, whereas national sovereignty will continue to be the bedrock of international relations, the days are gone when under that rigid façade, governments are able to persecute their populations without drawing reaction from the international community. In fact, if oppression of the people and suppression of human aspirations goes beyond a point, a state itself may break up from within. The international community does therefore have a responsibility towards people and societies. And this has been recognised by the adoption of the "Responsibility to Protect" recommendation at the 2005 World Summit in New York. A concept subsequently endorsed by UN member states in the General Assembly in 2010. *Even so, it is inconceivable and unacceptable that a decision to intervene militarily in a sovereign nation's affairs should be the prerogative of a group of countries of the Western world led by the USA, who set themselves up as 'judge', 'jury' and 'executioner'.*

The interventions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo in the 1990s, Iraq in 2003, and Libya in 2012, were in the perception of many in the developing world, induced by the pressures generated on the societies of Western Europe by the media focus on the problems and by the influx of refugees fleeing civil war. What then is the answer to situations that call for the attention of the international community? In the first place, efforts must be directed sub-regionally, regionally, and globally, towards conflict prevention, diplomacy and negotiations. Military intervention must be a last resort. And when essential, undertaken with the endorsement of the United Nations Security Council or by a majority vote at the General Assembly. If existing practices need revision efforts must be made to do the needful. Maybe, not permitting a veto in the Security Council on such issues, but allowing a majority decision; or some other appropriate mechanism.

The bottom line is, we must recognise that there may be occasions on which military intervention for humanitarian purposes is required, but it must not be a unilateral decision taken and acted upon by a group of nations outside the umbrella of the United Nations. Needless to say, considering the circumstances and setting in which such operations are undertaken, the operative principles of International Humanitarian Law must apply in terms of the use of military force. The United Nations does not have an 'enemy'. Hence only minimum essential military force must be applied and unarmed civilian populations must not be placed at risk.

Given India's established expertise and military capability, there is little doubt that we may well be called upon by the international community (represented by the UN or by regional organisations or by our neighbours on a bilateral or multilateral basis) to deploy our military, together with others in a multi-national force, and possibly take a lead role, for dealing with what are perceived as threats to regional or international peace and security. This is an aspect we need to start deliberating and focusing on. To study in detail and evolve a concept: for command & control; coordination; operational compatibility etc together with other like minded countries in the region and beyond.

Recommendations of the GoM on “Reforming the National Security System” made in February 2001 in the Wake of the Kargil Review Committee Report

While there have been many writings and sporadic discussion since Independence on the subject of “Higher Defence Management”, a detailed exercise on the subject was undertaken in the wake of the 1999 Kargil conflict. It is to the credit of The Kargil Review Committee (KRC) that was convened under the chairmanship of the late Shri K Subrahmanyam (a former civilian bureaucrat who had served as Secretary in the Ministry of Defence and was one of our foremost strategic analysts), that India’s security commitments into the 21st Century briefly set out in preceding paragraphs, were taken into account while compiling and submitting a report that brought to light many grave deficiencies in India’s security management apparatus particularly in the areas of intelligence, border management and *the higher defence organisation*. The report noted that notwithstanding the fact that the country had fought five wars, grappled with a plethora of insurgent movements, been subjected to a proxy war through externally sponsored terrorism, buffeted by far-reaching developments brought about by the dramatic changes in the “world order” following the end of the Cold War, subjected to the “Revolution in Military Affairs” and other such technological developments, and the increased nuclearisation of the neighbourhood, *the original structure of India’s national security system had, by and large, remained unchanged*.

The Committee urged a thorough and expeditious review of the national security apparatus in its entirety. It strongly made the point that such a review should not be undertaken by an “over-burdened” bureaucracy, but by an independent body of credible experts, through one or more task forces, or other such mechanisms. Towards this end, in April 2000, the then Prime Minister constituted a GoM comprising the Ministers of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs and Finance. Which in turn set up four separate task forces on ‘Intelligence Apparatus’, ‘Internal Security’, ‘Border Management’ and ‘Management of Defence’, comprising distinguished individuals with acknowledged expertise (most of them then no longer serving in Government). These task forces inter-acted and conducted discussions and deliberations with organisations and key actors within and outside the

establishment, including field visits, and submitted their reports in August/September 2000. The reports of the task forces were circulated to concerned ministries and processed in several inter-ministerial group meetings. The GoM itself held detailed discussions with the heads of the various organisations and agencies to get a clear understanding and evolve the rationale for some of the recommendations.

On 19 February 2001, the GoM submitted its report and recommendations, which were subsequently placed in the public domain, with deletion of selected portions on grounds of national security. In so far as the theme of this paper is concerned, namely *“Restructuring and Integration of the Ministry of Defence with the Three Service Headquarters”*, there are a host of observations and recommendations that were to have been implemented. However, a few major recommendations of the KRC and GoM report that merit particular scrutiny in context of this paper are set out in succeeding paragraphs for purposes of recapitulation.

“Armed Forces Headquarters are outside the apex governmental structure. This has led to many negative results and it is felt that the Services Headquarters should be located within the Government. The entire gamut of national security management and apex decision making and the structure & interface between the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces’ headquarters, should be comprehensively studied and organised”.

(Para 16 of Appendix B to the GoM Report)

“Establishment of a civil-military liaison mechanism at various levels from Command Headquarters to operative formations at the ground level is essential to smoothen the relationship during times of stress and to prevent friction and alienation of the local population”.

(Para 21 of Appendix B to the GoM Report)

“In view of our dynamic and rapidly changing security environment, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) needs to be suitably restructured and strengthened. Far reaching changes in the structures, processes, and procedures in Defence Management would be required to make the

system more efficient, resilient and responsive. This would also ensure the maximisation of our resources, potential, and establishment of synergy among the Armed Forces”.

(Para 6.2 of the GoM Report)

“There is a marked difference in the perception of civil and military officials regarding their respective roles and functions. There has also been on occasions, 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 be rectified, to promote improved understanding and efficient functioning of the Ministry”.

(Para 6.4 of the GoM Report)

“The functioning of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) has, to date, revealed serious weaknesses in its ability to provide single point military advice to the government, and resolve substantive inter-service doctrinal, planning, policy and operational issues adequately. This institution needs to be appropriately revamped to discharge its responsibilities efficiently and effectively, including the facilitation of ‘jointness’ and synergy among the Defence Services”.

(Para 6.5 of the GoM Report)

“In the organisational setup of the Government, as it exists now, besides ministries and departments, there are either ‘Attached Offices’ or ‘Subordinate Offices’. For merely administrative reasons and not as a management device, the Service Headquarters are referred to as ‘Attached Offices’ of the Government. Consequently, there is sometimes the erroneous perception that the

*Armed Forces Headquarters do not participate in policy formulation and are outside the apex Governmental structure. In order to remove this impression, the Service Headquarters may be designated as 'Integrated Headquarters' of the MoD. **In order to give effect to this arrangement, the 'Transaction of Business Rules and Standing Orders' should be appropriately amended and issued.***"

(Para 6.14 of the GoM report)

"The Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) has not been effective in fulfilling its mandate. It needs to be strengthened by the addition of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and a Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS). The CDS is required to be established for the following reasons: to provide single-point advice to the Government; to administer the strategic forces; to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning process through intra and inter-Service prioritisation; to ensure the required 'jointness' in the Armed Forces."

(Para 6.18 of the GoM report)

"The CDS may be a 4-star officer drawn from one of the three Services in rotation. He shall function as a permanent Chairman of the COSC with the VCDS as member secretary. Accordingly he should rank primus inter pares in the COSC and function as the principal military adviser to the Defence Minister. It is essential that no CDS ever reverts to his original Service after a tenure as CDS....."

(Para 6.19 of the GoM report)

*Towards enhancement of **jointness** in the Armed Forces, the GoM report suggests that: "The appointment of the CDS/VCDS with designated defence staff and the cross-posting of officers in the operations, intelligence and plans directorates in the Service Headquarters would be the first major step in establishing synergy and jointness among the Armed Forces.." **(Para 6.29 of the GoM report)**. The report goes on to stress the need "to*

*optimise the use of **training resources and other facilities...** to avoid replication of similar training facilities in the individual Services and the CDS/COSC should therefore arrange for joint training of the three Services at the earliest possible time...."*

(Para 6.30 of the GoM report)

"It is extremely important that there is no dilution in the role of the Defence Secretary as the Principal Defence Adviser to the Defence Minister. He should be officially designated in standing orders as such and rank primus inter pares among secretaries in the MoD. Standing orders need to be promulgated specifying that the Defence Secretary has the primary responsibility for advising the Defence Minister on all policy matters and for the management of the Department, including financial management....."

(Para 6.26 of the GoM report)

The GoM report makes a number of other detailed recommendations pertaining to defence intelligence, financial management, defence budgeting, procurement procedures, defence research and development organisation (DRDO), inventory management, quality control, and so on.

Implementation of the GoM Report Recommendations

An attempt has been made to assess the implementation of the recommendations made by the GoM. In that context, the last available document that the author has been able to access is the 32nd Report of the Standing Committee on Defence that was presented to the Lok Sabha on 18 December 2008 and laid in the Rajya Sabha the same day. It dealt with action taken by the Government on the recommendations contained in the 22nd Report of the Committee (to the Fourteenth Lok Sabha) on "review of implementation status of GoM Report on reforming national security system in pursuance of the KRC Report – a special reference to Management of Defence. This Action Taken Report (ATR) is available on the net and can be accessed by those interested in detail. In context of the theme of this paper, a few extracts are set out in succeeding paragraphs to highlight the fact that notwithstanding the observations of an important constitutional body

like the Standing Committee on Defence and its directions for initiation of action, the bureaucratic establishment of the MoD has found it expedient to either ignore the observations and directions, or indulge in lethargy and indifference.

Upgradation of the Post of Defence Secretary - Recommendation (Para Nos. 2.20, 2.25 and 2.26)

In their earlier Report, the Standing Committee had observed that the unequal status being enjoyed by the Chiefs of Staff vis-à-vis the Defence Secretary had been causing lack of coordination and synergy in the functional relationship between the Ministry of Defence and the Service Headquarters. The Committee had accordingly, desired that post of Defence Secretary should be upgraded to the level of Cabinet Secretary or equivalent to the Chief of Service in order to enable him to synergise the functioning of the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces and to promote improved understanding and efficient functioning of the Ministry as a whole.

In the statement on the Implementation Status of 22nd Report of the Standing Committee on Defence made by Raksha Mantri in Lok Sabha in October, 2008 he had stated: 'The roles of Civilian and Military officers are defined. However, on such issues wherein there is a requirement of clarifying roles between the Civilians and Military officers, the same is resolved through mutual consultations. With regard to the question of upgradation of the post of Defence Secretary to the level of Cabinet Secretary or equivalent to the Chief of Service, it is reiterated that the recommendations may not be accepted at present as the same is premature at this stage.'

Although the Committee had made the specific recommendation for upgradation of the post of Defence Secretary to the level of Cabinet Secretary or equivalent to the Chief of Service with the precise objectives of promoting efficient functioning of the Ministry of Defence as a whole and to bring about effective synergy amongst the three Services and the Ministry, nothing was mentioned in the reply as to what factors have weighed with the Ministry in coming to the conclusion that this recommendation may not be accepted at present being premature at this stage. The Committee had then expressed a desire to know the precise reasons for considering their recommendation as "premature" at present. *The Committee do not expect the Ministry of Defence to*

be apathetic to the present situation of lack of coordination and synergy in the functional relationship between the Ministry and the Service Headquarters and they strongly feel that reply of the Ministry clearly shows their intentions of avoiding responsibilities. They, therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation that the post of Defence Secretary should be upgraded at the earliest.

Synergy amongst the Three Services - Recommendation (Para No. 2.21)

The Committee had observed that although the Government had taken a number of steps to bring synergy amongst the three Services like planning and formulation of Long Term and Five Year Plans, tri-Service Commands like the Andaman and Nicobar Theatre Command (ANC) etc., the desired level of synergy in such commands was missing and there was no jointness of Command and Control. The Committee accordingly, pointed out that it was a very serious lacuna and earnest efforts should be made to correct it immediately. The Committee also stressed that Coast Guard Services might also be inter-connected with the jointness of Command and Control of the three Services.

The MoD in providing the Implementation Status on the 22nd Report of the Standing Committee on Defence subsequently made by Raksha Mantri in Lok Sabha in October, 2008 on the subject, stated: "The present system is working well with all the joint aspects being coordinated by HQ ANC where staff from all the Services is posted at each branch as per requirement. Respective Component Commanders take instructions from the joint staff of HQ ANC and execute the given task as only they are competent to carry out the Service specific operations and it is not advisable to allow outside interference in their specialised fields/ service. ANC, as a tri Service organisation, is relatively young. Issues relating to allocation of additional resources and upgradation of infrastructure are being addressed, based on threat perception. The integration of communication within components of the Army, Navy and Air Force in ANC and from HQ IDS / Service HQ to ANC is in progress as a recent initiative, to further improve and streamline interoperability.

The personnel Branch of HQ IDS, along with representatives of the JAG Department, are examining the aspects of amendments required to Army, Navy and IAF Acts for devolution of disciplinary

powers to Commander-in-Chief, Andaman & Nicobar Theatre Command (CINCAN) in respect of personnel of different services posted to ANC, to re-emphasise single point authority / responsibility. Coast Guard is a service under MoD and a system of their deputation to joint command during peacetime needs to be resolved for further integration.”

The Committee underscored its understanding that due to lack of authority and power, the present system of Unified Command is neither very effective nor able to achieve its intended objectives as the aspects relating to single point authority/ responsibility are still being examined with a view to bringing in requisite amendments in the Army, Navy and Indian Air Force Acts. The Committee expressed its anguish over the routine nature of reply in the instant case and strongly recommended that the requisite amendments in the relevant Act should be carried out expeditiously. The Committee also observed that the reply of the Ministry is silent on the aspect of connectivity of Coast Guard Services with Jointness of Command and Control of the Services. *The Committee, therefore, desired that urgent and concrete steps be taken to ensure that the Unified Command is vested with adequate powers to discharge its responsibilities. Steps should also be taken to resolve the issues connected with integration of Coast Guard Services with the jointness of Command and Control of the Services.*

Restructuring of MoD and Service Headquarters - Recommendation (Para Nos. 2.30, 2.31 and 2.32.)

Taking note of the fact that the GoM had recommended restructuring of MoD and Service Headquarters and desired that a committee headed by the Defence Secretary should look into the delegation of administrative powers and such restructuring, the Standing Committee on Defence had expressed the view that there was an urgent need to review the working of all these organisations set-up by the MoD on the basis of recommendations made by GoM.

The MoD, in their reply, had stated: “That in pursuance of these recommendations, a number of institutions like Integrated Defence Staff, tri-Service bodies like the Defence Intelligence Agency, the Strategic Forces Command and ANC had been established. In addition to these, Defence Acquisition Council, Defence Procurement Board, Defence Production Board and

Defence Research and Development Board had also been established. That it was considered that the efficacy of these institutions and organisations needed to be reviewed by MoD since some of these organisations are chaired by the Hon'ble Raksha Mantri and Defence Secretary."

Given the fact that a number of institutions/organisations had been established by the Government in pursuance of the recommendations made in the GoMs' Report, the Standing Committee on Defence had made a specific recommendation that a team of experts should examine the actual working of these organisations to ensure their efficient working and to have synergy. The Committee therefore expressed surprise at the reply of the Ministry that the Government considered that the efficacy of these institutions might be reviewed by the MoD since some of these organisations are chaired by Hon'ble Raksha Mantri and Defence Secretary.

The Committee pointed out that their recommendations did not call for any review by the Ministry of Defence and what they intended was a review of the functioning of these institutions by an independent expert body in order to strengthen their functioning and ensure synergy amongst them. The Committee expressed a hope that the MoD would now move in the right direction and take appropriate steps to implement their recommendation in letter and spirit. At the same time, the Committee also found that the reply of the MoD was completely silent on the aspect of giving adequate flexibility to these organisations. The Committee asked to be apprised of the precise measures taken by the Ministry in this regard.

Lack of Synergy Among the Services - Recommendation (Para No. 2.19)

The Standing Committee on Defence noted that it was the lack of synergy among the three Services which caused difficulties to the Armed Forces during the Kargil War. The Chief of Staff assumed the role of operational Commander to the respective forces rather than that of Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister and Defence Minister. This led to a number of negative results and protocol problems. The Committee understands that in pursuance of the observations and recommendations of KRC, the GoM had felt seriously the need for creation of the post of CDS in order to boost synergy among the three Services of Armed Forces and to provide a single

point military advice to Prime Minister and Defence Minister. The Committee also noted the observations of GoM that the functioning of COSC has revealed serious weaknesses in its ability to provide single point military advice to the Government.

The reply of the Government was that based on recommendation of the GoM, HQ IDS was created on 01st October 2001, and that in the last few years much had been achieved by HQ IDS towards greater integration and in promoting synergy and jointness between the three Services. Some of the achievements summarised were that: Military advice to the Government continues to be provided by the COSC; a tiered system of decision making has been adopted amongst the three Services to address joint issues; the COSC is assisted by a number of tri-Service committees; in order to address inter-Service doctrinal, planning, policy and operational issues adequately. HQ IDS had a number of achievements like those on disaster management, revitalisation of the Integrated Space Cell, and coordination of C4I2 concept, induction to technology and joint systems interaction.

The conclusion arrived at by the Ministry was that a lot of action has been initiated by the HQ IDS with regard to streamlining COSC functioning and improving its effectiveness. The process cannot be deemed as complete, nonetheless it is an incremental process that would take both time and efforts and that is being pursued by the Services and MoD in right earnest.

The Committee, in their earlier report had recommended the creation of the post of CDS. In view of this, the Committee, therefore, reiterated that the Government should take the GoM's recommendations as well as the Committee's concern in this matter seriously and take the final decision on CDS at the earliest and till the final decision on CDS is taken, the functioning of COSC should be seriously streamlined and positively made effective.

Lateral Entry of Armed Forces Personnel and Induction of Ex-Servicemen in various Para-Military Services - Recommendation (Para Nos. 2.72, 2.73, 2.74, 2.75, 2.97 and 3.28)

With a view to ensuring proper resettlement of Service personnel being retired to keep younger age profile of the Armed Forces, the Standing Committee on Defence had desired that such Ex-servicemen should be given lateral entry into various Para Military,

Border Security Force, Central Police Forces as well as in State Police Forces and other such forces, as they were fully trained in handling arms and ammunitions and had the first hand experience of handling infiltrators and insurgents, etc. The Committee also expressed the view that induction of Ex-servicemen into the para-military and other such forces would lead to huge reduction in pension and other retirement benefits bill of the Government.

In the statement made in Lok Sabha in October 2008 on the implementation status of the 22nd Report of the Committee on the subject, the Raksha Mantri stated: "The GOM, appointed in pursuance of the KRC, had recommended lateral transfer of Indian Armed Forces personnel to para military organisations in their report on 'Reforming the National Security System' with the primary aim of keeping a young profile of the Army in peak combat effective state, capable of meeting the challenges of future conflict. Based on the recommendations of the GOM report, an Apex Committee consisting of Cabinet Secretary, Chief of the Army Staff, Defence Secretary, Home Secretary and Secretary Expenditure was constituted to look into the terms of engagement of soldiers and their lateral entry into other organisations. In addition, a Working Group under the Chairmanship of Adjutant General, Army Headquarters with Joint Secretary (Police), Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), representatives of Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Central Industrial Security Force and National Security Council Secretariat as Members, was constituted to carry out a detailed study of various issues, and, work out modalities for lateral transfer. The Working Group, after in depth deliberations submitted its report in March 2002. The recommendations of the Working Group envisages Long Term and Short Term lateral transfer of Armed Forces personnel into Central Para Military Forces (CPMFs). Since then, a number of meetings at various levels including with the Cabinet Secretary and Home Secretary have been held. The following issues largely remained contentious and intractable : –

- (a) Fixing the inter-se seniority of the transferees vis-à-vis original inductees of CPMFs without adversely affecting the latter's promotion prospects.
- (b) Disparities in the pay and allowances and perks of CPMF personnel and Armed Forces transferees.
- (c) Issue of reservation for backward classes.

“A meeting was taken by the Home Secretary on 2nd November, 2006. As per the decision taken in the meeting, a Committee under the Chairmanship of Director General, Border Security Force has been constituted to work out the modalities. RM had also written to Home Minister in this regard to solve the impasse on lateral transfer of Army Personnel to Central Para Military Forces. Home Minister had earlier informed that further action in this matter will be taken after receiving the report of the Committee under the Chairmanship of DG, BSF. Ministry of Home Affairs have recently intimated that the said committee has had deliberations and that their report may be awaited.”

The Committee are not satisfied with the replies given by the MoD that the issue of lateral entry of Armed Forces personnel remains contentious and intractable due to factors relating to fixation of inter-se seniority and disparity of pay and allowances between transferees vis-à-vis original inductees in the CPMFs. Yet another issue stated to be contentious is reservation for backward classes. Although the Working Group constituted by the Government for the purpose had submitted its report way back in March, 2002, the Committee find it distressing that the issues remain unresolved and precious time has been lost in deliberations without arriving at a final decision. Considering the fact that even Sixth Central Pay Commission, in their report, have recommended for a scheme of lateral transfer of Defence personnel to Central Police Organisations etc., the Committee would impress upon the Government to make concerted efforts to arrive at positive conclusions without any further loss of time.

The Committee find it rather strange that the MoD have termed induction of Ex-servicemen in the CPMFs as a complex issue. In the light of the fact that retirement age in Central Police Forces is higher than that in the Armed Forces, the Committee are unable to comprehend the plea now put forth by the Ministry that Central Police Forces are also experiencing adverse fall out of higher age profile in the case of large number of battalions raised in recent years. Astonishingly, the Ministry have also tried to explain away that there are certain other factors like no reservation for SC, ST, OBCs in the Army which has constitutional implications; need to modify recruitment rules; promotion avenues of CPF personnel etc., which need to be considered for coming to a decision. The Committee are not inclined to accept these reasons as convincing

enough for the delay in settling this issue. The Committee feel that rather than finding excuses, the Government should examine this issue in its entirety and take concrete steps in the right direction in a time bound manner.

Developing Capacities within the Defence Establishment for Meeting Future Demands

Relevant extracts of the KRC report, the GoM report and observations of the Standing Committee of Defence have been set out in the preceding paragraphs primarily for the information of those readers who either have not accessed these documents, or have not worked up the time or inclination to go through them in detail. It would be evident from a quick perusal, that the inadequacies and infirmities of the present structure of our higher defence organisation and the MoD (that have been the subject of much discussion and comment in the years since Independence, but not acted upon) have been fully recognised, identified and serious recommendations made at the senior political level for remedial action in the GoM report of February 2001. It is another matter altogether that, twelve years on, while some action on a few recommendations of the GoM report like the setting up of a Headquarters IDS, the ANC, and the Strategic Forces Command have been initiated, action on the more substantive aspects pertaining to the higher management of defence, such as the restructuring of the MoD and its integration with the Armed Forces Headquarters, appointment of a CDS, and institutional measures for promotion of "jointness" between the three Services, has either not been pursued or deliberately delayed by the machinations of a bureaucracy that has cleverly bypassed or ignored the directions of even the political establishment.

It is indeed a telling reflection of the bankruptcy of our system that decisions taken by the political leadership are, where considered to their disadvantage by the bureaucratic machinery, referred for deliberation to bodies or committees constituted of members of the civilian bureaucracy or representatives decided upon by them, in order to either stymie implementation or delay the process indefinitely.

Transaction of Business Rules and Standing Orders

It is probably best to start an analysis of the aspect of higher defence management to meet the emerging demands on the

country, by addressing the very first recommendation made by the GoM in para 6.14 of its report that states: "In order to give effect to this arrangement, the 'Transaction of Business Rules and Standing Orders' should be appropriately amended and issued". One is given to understand that these "Business Rules" that form the basis for the conduct of business by the Government of India are to be found in two volumes issued under the constitutional powers of the President of India in 1961. According to this set of rules, *"the responsibility for the defence of India, and every part thereof, including preparation for defence, and for the armed forces of the Union, namely Army, Navy and Air Force has been vested in the Defence Secretary"*.

The most charitable explanation one can possibly put forward for such a ridiculous arrangement which would have been laughable if it was not so serious, is that when the "Business Rules" were drafted soon after we proclaimed ourselves a Republic, those entrusted with the task, without doubt from the civil services, would have, as is more often than not the case, got hold of our colonial masters' documents on the subject, and gone about doing a "cut and paste" job to fit what they would have considered were our requirements. It is therefore more than likely that in so far as the higher management of defence was concerned, the portion on the responsibility for the defence of the country would have been copied verbatim from the British document. Not allowing for the fact (deliberately or otherwise), that in the British system, then as is even now, the Defence Secretary is a political appointee, a member of the cabinet nominated by the Prime Minister to hold the charge of the defence portfolio, and not the senior-most civilian bureaucrat, who in the British system is the permanent under secretary for defence. In our case, the provisions in the draft would have served our civilian bureaucracy well in terms of denying the military leadership in the persons of the Commanders-in-Chief or later the Chiefs of Staff, a role in government. Whether the political leadership of the time or even the military leadership, saw through the fallacy of the arrangement, can only be a matter of conjecture. However the important point at issue is, that in so far as one can ascertain, no attempt has been made to implement this first and most important recommendation given in the GoM report of 2001.

It is therefore time that we put in place an institutionalised arrangement that ensures that the responsibility for oversight and direction of military operations is vested, not in the civilian bureaucracy, but in the political leadership, represented in our case by the Defence Minister, with the assistance of a CDS (when that appointment is made) and the Service Chiefs, and through him to the Cabinet Committee on Security headed by the Prime Minister. To that end, steps should be taken without any further delay to amend the Government Business Rules to the effect that *“the responsibility for the defence of India, and every part thereof, including preparation for defence, and for the armed forces of the Union, namely Army, Navy and Air Force is vested in the Defence Minister (Raksha Mantri)”*.

Once this is implemented, most of the other recommendations made in the GoM report will fall into place, as the political leadership would become better aware of their responsibilities in regard to the management and control of the defence apparatus. In this context it may be prudent that the Government of the day accords greater attention to the deliberations and observations of the Standing Committee on Defence.

Restructuring of the Ministry of Defence and Integration with Services

A major observation the GoM makes in Paragraph 6.2 of the report is that: “In view of our dynamic and rapidly changing security environment, the MoD needs to be suitably restructured and strengthened. Far reaching changes in the structures, processes, and procedures in defence management would be required to make the system more efficient, resilient and responsive”.

Restructuring of the MoD really implies review of its manning policies to ensure that there is inbuilt capacity for understanding operational commitments, equipment requirements, and administrative needs of the Armed Forces. With all the right intentions, the current arrangement of generalist IAS officers moving into the Ministry and back to their state cadres, or out to other central government ministries, is barely workable, leading to periodic tensions in relations between the military and the civilian components; not quite the arrangement for such a vital organisation responsible for the security of the nation. Regrettably what has been done in the last twelve years since the release of the GoM report has been largely cosmetic and most unconvincing.

The best arrangement for manning the MoD is without doubt having civil service officers from a dedicated national security cadre, who could move around within the security apparatus at the central government such as within the Home Ministry, as also to similar offices at state government level. Obviously supplemented and complemented by induction of officers from the two organisations so closely involved with the evolution of policies on national security and their implementation, the Armed Forces and the Foreign Service.

Till such an arrangement is put in place (which will probably take some years yet even if pursued) it should be possible, with some political will and purpose, to institute the following measures:

- (a) It should be made mandatory for IAS officers deputed to the MoD to have done professional courses at Service institutions; as for instance those posted to Director level appointments should have attended the course at the Defence Services Staff College Wellington; and those posted to appointments at joint secretary and above should have attended the National Defence College course.
- (b) Suitably qualified Service officers at the rank of lieutenant colonel equivalent and above should be inducted into selected appointments within the MoD for fixed tenures of two to three years.
- (c) As should officers from the Indian Foreign Service into selected appointments within the MoD.

Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)

The need to have a CDS within the Indian higher defence structure has been the subject of discussion in earlier years from time to time without any real moves towards fruition. However, the KRC and GoM reports have quite categorically asserted that it is time for the institution of this office together with a Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS) and an integrated headquarters in order to provide single point military advice to the Government, exercise control over India's strategic forces, enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning process through intra and inter Service prioritisation, and promote required jointness in the Armed Forces. It is indeed a matter of some irony that despite the recommendations of the GoM and the prodding of the Standing Committee on Defence, there has been no progress on this issue.

This is a decision to be taken by the political leadership on its own merit. It is indeed unfortunate and a sad reflection of the knowledge of matters military, and the capacity for taking decisions, that despite the recommendations made by the GoM in their report, successive Governments have not been able to muster the will to 'bite the bullet' as it were. To the best of one's knowledge, the reasons put forward for not being able to arrive at a decision is the lack of consensus within the three Services. This is a contention that needs to be placed in the right perspective. In the last few decades, nowhere in the world has such an arrangement been put in place with the agreement and consensus of the various components of the armed forces. The decision has, in every case, been taken by the political authorities, and implementation ordered through acts of Parliament or Congress or whatever. The service chiefs were directed to implement the decision and do so without question, even where they were not necessarily fully in agreement with it. Those in the military hierarchy who felt strongly enough about their disagreement with the political decision, were allowed to leave with grace and dignity, and leave its implementation to others down the line.

Jointness and Integration

By all indications, there is absolutely no difference of opinion within the Armed Forces, other sections of the governing establishment, and the strategic community, that 'jointness' and 'integration' are key to success in operations in the emerging environment. The debate really appears to be only on how this is best achieved. The arrangements that served us in the past, not always to the desired degree, are just not robust or resilient enough to withstand the rigours of the demands on our forces in the future. And in that context, it is pertinent to suggest that restructuring, jointness and integration cannot be complete without taking the following major steps : –

- (a) Dismantling of many if not most, existing single service organisations and establishments to provide for integrated ones for engineering skills, communications, logistics, repair and recovery, ordnance back-up, transport other than specialised, etc and a number of training facilities that have duplicating or common features. Not only would all this contribute to jointness, but it would also ensure savings in

finances and manpower. Needless to say, some "empires" would stand demolished; but to the good of the establishment. This is an aspect that hardly merits further discussion if we are talking about jointness and integration.

(b) In context of the changes that have, and are, taking place at the geo-strategic plane, and the possible demands that we are likely to be faced with, it is no longer possible for single service chiefs to oversee the conduct of operations. One will not try to make a case in regard to the other two Services, but as a person who served as Additional Director General and then Director General of Military Operations at Army Headquarters in New Delhi from mid-1989 to March 1992, when we were handling the final stages of the IPKF operations in Sri Lanka, coping with terrorist activity in Punjab, dealing with the explosive situation that had emerged in the Kashmir Valley, and had begun to be drawn into dealing with the emerging threat from the ULFA in Assam, besides the ongoing insurgencies in Nagaland and Manipur, permit me to state with some authority, without treading on the ego of the personalities of that time, that there were better ways of handling them. And it is no doubt important to stress that one is not yet talking of a war situation; one-front, one-and-a-half-front or two-front.

Operational Control of Forces

There is therefore little doubt that if we are to undertake future operational commitments effectively, as important as the case for the creation of the post of a "Chief of the Defence Staff", is the compelling requirement for divesting the Service Chiefs of the responsibility for the oversight and conduct of operations on our Western, North-Western, Northern and North-Eastern borders, as also maritime operations off our Eastern and Western sea-boards and beyond, by the establishment of "Theatre Commands". Theatre commanders would then be directly responsible on operational matters to the Defence Minister and the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) through the CDS. Such an arrangement cannot and should not be put off any longer. Instituting such a dramatic change will without doubt be resisted by the current and prospective Service Chiefs. To arrive at a realistic and pragmatic decision on

the subject, it would make sense to elicit opinions confidentially from Corps Commanders and selected Division Commanders and their equivalents in the other two Services, of the desirability or otherwise of instituting the theatre command concept. Simultaneously, in context of the fact that allocations for defence needs will invariably impose considerable strain on national resources and therefore be more and more difficult to come by, every effort must be made to save on avoidable expenditure. To that end it is imperative that we take immediate measures to remove duplication and triplication of personnel requirements and infrastructure on training and logistics, by pooling the resources of all three Services, and maybe even of para-military organisations like the Coast Guard, to a common joint Services grid. In order to manage such an arrangement it would be appropriate to also set up "Functional Commands" that complement the "Theatre Command" concept.

A possible framework of such a concept has been the subject of discussion at a number of fora in the last few years and many useful and pragmatic suggestions are on the table. One such set of suggestions was presented at a National Security Seminar at the United Service Institution of India a few years back by an enterprising and imaginative serving participant. The view he presented did not obviously have official sanction or approval, but provides a basic template around which the concept may be developed, and is set out below as a basis for detailed consideration:

(a) Integrated Theatre Commands

- (i) Northern, Western, Central and North Eastern Commands based pre-dominantly on land forces with air support; to be commanded by Army C-in-Cs.
- (ii) Indian Ocean West, Indian Ocean East and Southern Commands based pre-dominantly on naval assets together with land forces components and air force support; to be commanded by Navy C-in-Cs.
- (iii) South Western Command based on land forces and air force assets together with some naval component; to be commanded by Air Force C-in-C.

(b) Integrated Functional Commands

- (i) Strategic Forces Command; to be commanded by Air Force C-in-C
- (ii) Air Defence Command; to be commanded by Air Force C-in-C
- (iii) Joint Training Command; by rotation
- (iv) Joint Operational Logistics Command; by rotation
- (v) Communications and Information Warfare Command; by rotation
- (vi) Cyber Space Command; by rotation
- (vii) Out of Area Contingency Operations Command; by rotation
- (viii) Internal Security and Disaster Relief Command; by rotation
- (ix) Joint Special Forces Command; by rotation

Apex Level Control

Directives to theatre commanders for the planning and conduct of operations within the framework of a National Security Strategy approved by the National Security Council (NSC) should be provided by the CCS through the Defence Minister and the CDS. Apex level operational control over theatre commands would also be best exercised by the CCS through the Defence Minister and CDS/CJCS.

Lateral Induction of Armed Forces Personnel and Selective National Service

Both the KRC and the GoM as also the Standing Committee on Defence have stressed the need for immediate implementation of the recommendation for "lateral movement" of Armed Forces personnel into the para military, central and state police forces.

In making a case for better understanding of matters military within the governing establishment, it may be appropriate to go a few steps further by putting in place institutional arrangements to ensure that all entry into Central and State Government employment

including into public sector undertakings, be made contingent on two/ three years of compulsory service in the Armed Forces; a "selective national service" concept. This recommendation includes induction of personnel into the IAS, IFS, IPS, etc, as well as entry at lower levels including into the state police, CPOs, the para-military and public sector undertakings. Such a measure will not only address the shortage of officers in units of the Armed Forces at the junior level but also ensure ready availability of trained manpower to deal with internal security situations that often call for coordinated 'muscular' response.

Conclusion

Most established democracies in the world have retained firm civilian control over their armed forces. This has also been the case with India since Independence primarily because of the sense of responsibility and vision of the senior military leadership that the country was fortunate to have at the time. Even so, few militaries have been subjected to the kind of overwhelming civilian bureaucratic dominance that the military in India has endured. It is therefore not surprising that the civilian bureaucracy in India is hardly enthusiastic about providing greater room for the military in the conduct of national security and diplomacy. It is time for the country's political leadership to assert itself and draw the military into the national security decision making process by restructuring the MoD and putting in place institutionalised arrangements for military advice and conduct of military operations. To that extent, it is probably relevant to state that the countries that have drawn the military into the national security apparatus in an institutionalised manner are in a position to review current arrangements for modification in a graduated manner. In so far as India is concerned, a radical overhaul is called for. The basis for this has been provided by the recommendations of the GoM in their Report of February 2001. It needs political will for implementation in context of the analysis provided in this paper.