



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power



DPG POLICY BRIEF

Promoting Jointness in the Indian Military

Author

Deependra Singh Hooda

Volume VII, Issue 43

October 16, 2022



Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003

www.delhipolicygroup.org



Delhi Policy Group

Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power

DPG Policy Brief Vol. VII, Issue 43

October 16, 2022

ABOUT US

Founded in 1994, the Delhi Policy Group (DPG) is among India's oldest think tanks with its primary focus on strategic and international issues of critical national interest. DPG is a non-partisan institution and is independently funded by a non-profit Trust. Over past decades, DPG has established itself in both domestic and international circles and is widely recognised today among the top security think tanks of India and of Asia's major powers.

Since 2016, in keeping with India's increasing global profile, DPG has expanded its focus areas to include India's regional and global role and its policies in the Indo-Pacific. In a realist environment, DPG remains mindful of the need to align India's ambitions with matching strategies and capabilities, from diplomatic initiatives to security policy and military modernisation.

At a time of disruptive change in the global order, DPG aims to deliver research based, relevant, reliable and realist policy perspectives to an actively engaged public, both at home and abroad. DPG is deeply committed to the growth of India's national power and purpose, the security and prosperity of the people of India and India's contributions to the global public good. We remain firmly anchored within these foundational principles which have defined DPG since its inception.

Author

Lt. Gen. Deependra Singh Hooda (Retd.), PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM & Bar, Senior Fellow for Military Strategy, Delhi Policy Group

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and should not be attributed to the Delhi Policy Group as an Institution.

Cover Photographs:

The CDS, General Anil Chauhan, along with the three Service Chiefs at the National War Memorial on 7 October 22. Source: National War Memorial

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Combined Commanders' Conference, March 2021. Source: Twitter

© 2022 by the Delhi Policy Group

Delhi Policy Group

Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre,
Lodhi Road, New Delhi- 110003
www.delhipolicygroup.org

Promoting Jointness in the Indian Military

by

Deependra Singh Hooda

Contents

Introduction	1
Role of the CDS	2
Achieving Jointness	3
Adopting Integrated Structures	4
Integrated Communications Infrastructure	5
Integrating Common Capabilities and Training.....	5
Integrated Theatre Commands.....	5
Integrated Logistics.....	6
Conclusion	6

Promoting Jointness in the Indian Military

by

Deependra Singh Hooda

Introduction

General Anil Chauhan has been appointed India's second Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and has assumed the responsibility on September 30, 2022. The delay of ten months in his appointment after the unfortunate demise of General Bipin Rawat had led to a slowdown in the military reform process, and bringing this back on track will be General Chauhan's priority.

General Rawat, as the first CDS, had an enormously challenging role and was instrumental in putting this newly created position on a firm footing. Not only was the appointment of the CDS a major defence reform, but also the creation of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) was equally significant in giving the military greater responsibility over its internal institutional affairs. General Rawat's tenure was marked by the stabilisation of the DMA and a push for jointness in the services that included planning for establishing Integrated Theatre Commands.



General Anil Chauhan inspects a tri-service guard of honour before assuming charge of CDS in New Delhi on September 30, 2022. Source: The Hindu

While much has been done, there are also lessons to be learned. Jointness remains incomplete, and the issue of Integrated Theatre Commands is mired in inter-service differences. Capability development is still service driven, with

little consideration of how deficiencies in another service could adversely impact the overall war fighting effort. While General Chauhan has many tasks to perform, his primary focus must be on achieving jointness, as this is the most needed reform that will drive the shape and character of the future Indian military.

Role of the CDS

It would be helpful to reiterate the main tasks with regard to jointness and integration that have been entrusted to the CDS. These have been listed as follows:

- To bring about jointness in operation, logistics, transport, training, support services, communications, repairs and maintenance, etc. of the three Services.
- To ensure optimal utilisation of infrastructure and rationalise it through jointness among the Services.
- To assign inter-services prioritisation to capital acquisition proposals based on the anticipated budget.
- To bring about reforms in the functioning of three Services with the aim to augment combat capabilities of the Armed Forces by reducing wasteful expenditure.

In addition, the mandate of the DMA includes “Facilitation of restructuring of Military Commands for optimal utilisation of resources by bringing about jointness in operations, including through establishment of joint/theatre commands.”

Much attention in the past has been on the setting up of Integrated Theatre Commands. Unfortunately, this focus has overshadowed the more critical issue of jointness in the three services. Jointness is a term that was coined by the U.S. military and is defined as "the integration of the strengths of at least two limbs of the military in a coordinated effort to achieve a common goal." As this operational integration is currently lacking, the services are unable to visualise the value of integrated structures for future war fighting.

Speaking about integrated commands, Air Force Chief Air Chief Marshal V. R. Chaudhari has said, “Each service has a doctrine. The doctrinal aspects of the IAF is what I am worried about, [it] should not in any way be compromised by this new structure.” This statement is a telling reminder that service-specific doctrines currently hold sway, and it is these silos that the CDS would have to

break. This brief will suggest an approach toward achieving greater jointness in the military, which could pave the way for adopting integrated structures.

Achieving Jointness

All three services profess the need for jointness and synergy, but little has been achieved beyond the establishment of three joint logistics nodes. In order to bring in a more structured approach to jointness, a three-step plan is recommended to be adopted, as follows:

- Prepare a joint military strategy.
- Develop joint war plans.
- Adopt integrated structures.

The first step is to prepare a joint military strategy. A 'Joint Doctrine: Indian Armed Forces' was released in 2017, and this should form the basis for developing a joint military strategy. The doctrine provides the building blocks and a theoretical construct, while the military strategy will bring a specific context on how to achieve stated military objectives.



Tri-service exercise, AMPHEX-21, conducted in Andaman & Nicobar group of islands, Jan 2021. Source: Twitter

The joint military strategy must enumerate how the three services will use their resources to meet India's external challenges on the western and northern borders and conduct sub-conventional operations. It would be preferable for the strategy to be written by an inter-service team specifically constituted for this purpose. This would ensure that all the services are equal stakeholders. The strategy-writing team must also comprise officers from the special operations, cyber, and space agencies, as these domains often do not get the required attention in strategic planning.

After the joint military strategy is finalised, the services must draw up joint war plans for different contingencies. These contingencies will cover the whole range of operations, from hybrid operations to deterrence, limited actions, and full-scale war. Again, domains that cut across the three services - information, cyber, and space - must be fully integrated with the war plans. There could be some resistance to preparing joint plans on grounds of secrecy, but this must be strongly put down by the CDS.

It would be reasonable to expect that after the three services sit together to evolve a joint strategy and draw up joint war plans, there would be a greater understanding on:

- How a combined military force is to be employed to achieve political and military objectives.
- How the assets of each service are to be employed in different operational contingencies.
- How the resources of one service can be utilised by other services, e.g. in areas of surveillance, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), electronic warfare, air defence, long range firepower, etc.
- Identification of areas where resource optimisation could be carried out.
- Resolving issues of command and control in fighting an integrated battle.

Once these important issues are clarified and codified in war plans, there could be a greater acceptance of integrated structures.

Adopting Integrated Structures

The adoption of integrated structures is essential not only for fighting a synergised battle but also for resource optimisation. The latter is extremely crucial if the military is to utilise the defence budget in the best possible manner. Therefore, the focus must not only be on Integrated Theatre Commands but also on integration in other areas.

Integrated Communications Infrastructure

The senior leadership in the Indian military continues to talk about net-centric warfare, but in practice, this net-centricity is only within service silos. The reason for this is that the three services have so restricted their individual communication networks that they are unable to communicate with each other seamlessly. For example, the Army and Air Force's air defence networks have been developed independently and cannot see each other's information picture.

There is an opportunity to correct this serious anomaly with the rollout of the 'Network for Spectrum,' which has an optical fibre backbone and is being established throughout India for the defence services. The DMA should take charge of this network to ensure that common applications are created that enable an integration of the sensors, shooters, and command and control networks of the three services.

Integrating Common Capabilities and Training

There are many areas where common capabilities exist, particularly between the army and the air force. Examples of this are attack helicopters, BrahMos missiles, air defence systems, and the Heron class of UAVs. Some of these capabilities could be combined under one service if there is a joint operational plan for utilising these assets that meets the requirement of all three services.

Training is another area where integration is feasible. For instance, training on helicopters and air defence equipment could be combined for the three services instead of the current practice of maintaining independent training establishments. The Higher Command courses of the services should be combined so that joint operational thinking is inculcated at the level of Colonels/equivalent, as these officers will subsequently go on to hold command and staff appointments in higher defence organisations. When the three services train together, they will also better understand each other's tactics and practices.

Integrated Theatre Commands

Once the building blocks are in place, and greater jointness has been achieved, some of the current resistance to the Integrated Theatre Commands could be overcome. The success with jointness would also enable more efficient planning of the organisational structure of the Theatre Commands and resolve issues of command and control over assets of the three services.

There are known reservations about the Theatre Commands, but these can be handled through quiet conversations within the military leadership led by the CDS. It must be clearly understood that if the military fails to come to a consensus, it is likely that the political leadership will force a solution that may be less than ideal.

Integrated Logistics

It may appear a little out of place that the establishment of integrated logistics has been mentioned at the end of the brief and after Integrated Theatre Commands. There is a reason for this. While we could set up joint logistics nodes that cater to a common supply of rations, fuel, general stores, spares, etc., this only scratches the surface. The actual integration of logistics will come in support of a joint operational plan and will involve the mobilisation of forces, a common logistics database, civil-military integration of facilities, and wartime effort to support the operations of Integrated Theatre Commands. This will require creating a dedicated logistics organisation for each of the Commands.

Conclusion

The new CDS has many challenges ahead of him as he looks to steer the military through some testing times. The external environment, particularly on the northern borders, remains troubled. The Russia-Ukraine war has brought India's dependence on defence imports into sharper focus, and a concerted push needs to be given to the Atmanirbhar (self-reliance) campaign. In addition, military modernisation and capability building is impacted by the rising revenue expenditure in the defence budget. While these issues cannot be ignored, the most crucial reform is to bring about jointness in the three services.

The current organisational structures and planning processes are archaic, wasteful, and, to put it mildly, unsuited for present-day wars. However, to cut through service-specific silos, it is essential to put in place a clearly defined process that leads to the achieving of jointness in the services. A suggested approach is to craft a joint military strategy, prepare joint operational plans, and ensure integration in communications, capabilities, and training. When this is successful, Integrated Theatre Commands are more likely to follow.



Delhi Policy Group
Core 5A, 1st Floor,
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road
New Delhi - 110003
India

www.delhipolicygroup.org