



Vivekananda International Foundation

# Restructuring the Armed Forces - Professionally Speaking

Brigadier V Mahalingam



VIF Brief | October 2019



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Published in October 2019 by  
Vivekananda International Foundation  
3, San Martin Marg | Chanakyapuri | New Delhi - 110021  
Tel: 011-24121764 | Fax: 011-66173415  
E-mail: [info@vifindia.org](mailto:info@vifindia.org)  
Website: [www.vifindia.org](http://www.vifindia.org)  
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## About The Author



**Brigadier V Mahalingam** (Retd), is a former commander of a Mountain Brigade and former Force Commander of the National Security Guard the country's elite Counter-terrorism Force. He is a highly regarded defence and strategic analyst and an author.

# Restructuring the Armed Forces – Professionally Speaking

## Two Different Operations?

Heard of Operations ‘Vijay’ and ‘Safed Sagar’? Anything striking? Yes, both these are code names for the same operation launched by the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force in Kargil in May 1999 with the solitary aim of evicting the Pakistani intruders who had violated the Line of Actual Control (LC) and had occupied heights dominating the National Highway NH1. Why two code names for the same operation? Obviously both the Services had their own plans for their respective operations perhaps with some coordination when it came to air support for ground operations. Considering that these operations were confined to the Kargil Sector with a mandate not to cross the LC, will such an arrangement work if the scope of the operations were to be enlarged either as a part of the overall strategy or if forced during the course of the operations due to circumstances?

## The Need for Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

The Indian Army’s request for air support during Kargil War was made on May 11, 1999<sup>1</sup> and the Government’s decision to employ the Indian Air Force came about on May 25, 1999 with a caveat that the Line of Control (LC) will not be violated. It took the Government 13 full days to take a call on the employment of the Indian Airforce.

Why 13 days? Evidently there was something wrong with the decision-making process and the structures available to the Government to take an informed decision. In this particular case probably the Army Chief and the Air Chief were giving two contradictory advices to the decision-making body. Can the country afford to have a situation where the decision-making body is confused at a critical movement and is unable to take a decision? It therefore emerges that what we need is a single point advice to enable the Government to take a call and in time.

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1 ‘OP SAFED SAGAR - UNDERSTANDING AIR OPERATIONS IN KARGIL’ INDIAN AIR FORCE AVAILABLE AT <http://indianairforce.nic.in/content/op-safed-sagar> accessed on July, 28, 2019.

The Indian Air Force, it seems, had its reservations and joined the war rather reluctantly. The Air Chief who was also performing the duties of the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) was of the opinion that use of air arm, including armed helicopters even in our side of the LC would escalate the situation to a total war between India and Pakistan. Consequently, the Air Headquarters refused to act on demands for armed helicopters made by Headquarters 15 Corps and Northern Army without Government sanction<sup>2</sup>.

These controversies which had cropped up in the midst of Pakistan's aggression into our territory delayed operations besides causing enormous casualties to our ground troops. We were unable to exploit the situation presented by Pakistan to our advantage and gain. Have we put in place the necessary structures to kill once and for all the very possibility of Services pulling in two different directions in the midst of a crisis on our borders? Under such circumstances who will take a professional call on how the operations are to be conducted and the manner in which the Services are to be employed? What if one of the Service Chiefs does not agree to the larger strategy, operational plan or has a different priority on the employment of his service? Are all the three Service Chiefs, as it happened during the Kargil operations, going to give their own advice to the Government on the operational strategy, their implications and the red lines to prevent escalation beyond military's handling capacity and our response to developments?

Under the present structures in place though the views of individual Service Chiefs will have to be heard and given due consideration in an operation where more than one service is involved, decisions, operational priorities and actions cannot be left to the choice of individual Service Chiefs or decided by voting especially in an informationised digital environment where speed of operations is vital to pre-empt enemy actions to gain the initiative.

Can the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC), the senior most Chief of Staff who is appointed to the post till he retires, meet the requirement? Seniority notwithstanding, a service officer with no stakes in the operations or who has no option but to take inputs from the Service Chiefs, paraphrase them and provide those as professional advice without comprehensive grasp of the larger picture of the operations will be disastrous. Even a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) if and when appointed will have to be involved in the operations with authority over the Service Chiefs to be able to provide realistic professional advice to the Government. CDS cannot be a mere figure head alongside the Service Chiefs.

A CDS at the apex with necessary authority over the Service Chiefs overseeing the conduct of military operations in various Theaters should be able to fill this vital gap in our existing military structure. He will have to be in the operational loop to be able to provide single point advice to the Government.

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2 Lt Gen (Dr) Mohan Bhandari (Retired), 'Kargil Controversy: Army trashes IAF perspective' Indian Defence Review, July 07, 2018 available at <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/kargil-controversy-army-trashes-iaf-perspective/> accessed on July 28, 2019.

He will be responsible to translate the political aim of the Government issued in the form of directives to the military, spell out military tasks to the Theaters, evolve broader strategy for the operations in consultation with Theater Commanders and decide on operational priorities and allocate resources. He should have the authority to decide on switching of forces from one theater to the other based on priorities and the prevailing operational situation. Other than operational logistics, all other issues including Human Resources Development (HRD), must be handled by the Service Chiefs and the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

## **Cutting down Manpower**

Terms like ‘cutting down the flab’, creating a ‘slim and trim’ force are clichés that sound very attractive but these measures cannot be attempted in isolation and such changes ought to dwell around war fighting based on the doctrine evolved. Restructuring armed forces are not attempted by individua

l Services in silos or without a War Doctrine. Changes are not brought about to reduce manpower, increase number of vacancies in higher ranks or for inducting some elements in the establishments just because someone wants it that way. Changes will have to be operations oriented, make organisations efficient and cutdown delays. Methodical restructuring will automatically bring about efficiency and strike down nonessentials.

Restructuring of China’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) which is still in progress is a good example of how the country managed to change the very shape of its army centric force into a balanced one, capable of fighting an ‘integrated joint operations’ under changed conditions and in the bargain reduced its manpower drastically. According to World Bank report<sup>3</sup>, the strength of PLA from 2993000 in 2014 had come down to 2695000 in 2017, that is before the country announced a cut of 300,000 troops in 2015. The strength of the PLA in 1950s was 6.3 million.

## **Restructuring Process**

Nations restructure their Armed Forces, an important facet of modernisation, when it becomes apparent that the existing structures of the fighting machine are inefficient, sluggish and cannot keep pace with the changed operational environment brought about by modern weapon systems, precision guided weapons, smart bombs, improved inflow of real time information, changes in enemy organisations and fighting methodologies. Such restructuring should take into account the outdated state of weapons and equipment of the forces, crisis in the defence budget and the disjointed state of the national security bureaucracy. In revamping the Armed Forces, it must be recognised that the primary impediment to progress on the path to the appointment of a CDS, the authority to be vested in him or the creation of joint structures will be the Service Headquarters which presently has both operational and administrative authority over their respective Services.

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3 Data Bank, ‘World Development Indicators’ Table available at <https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=2&series=MS.MIL.TOTL.P1&country=#> accessed on August 1, 2019.

Changes performance has to be in sync with the War Doctrine which will have to be worked out on the basis of the Government's directive issued in the form of National Security Strategy. This strategy broadly, in as far as the Armed Forces are concerned should be based on inputs from the country's intelligence agencies, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and others as relevant to the conduct and implications of military operations. It should include the changes in the environment in relation to our adversaries, their intentions, geopolitical developments which may affect the scope of our operations, the possibilities of use of weapons of mass destruction, governments aims and objectives, restrictions which it wishes to impose on the armed Forces in the conduct of war, the extent to which the army is expected to be committed in internal security situation and its effect on military operations, the need for troops employed in counter insurgency operations to be prepared for conventional operations or otherwise etc.

To be successful, the doctrine evolved will have to be owned by all and the highest authority who will be engaged in structuring the larger operational strategy and monitoring its execution being put in control of the overall operations and made accountable. The level at which the War Doctrine will be evolved and issued, such as joint or individual service strategies will depend on the type of operations that would win wars under the changed conditions. With China, our adversary having switched to 'integrated joint operations' as their operational strategy, India may have no option but to upgrade and change.

The war doctrine being evolved, besides other factors should take into consideration, enemy strategy and certain important aspects of their war fighting methodologies and adopt measures to counter them.

### **China's Military Strategy<sup>4</sup>**

In this context the Chinese doctrine 'Active Defence' which has been endorsed by the 'National Security Law of the People's Republic of China – 2015, Article 18'<sup>5</sup> is relevant. China believes, under hi-tech conditions in defensive operations, the strategy for gaining mastery over the enemy cannot allow the forces to wait passively for the enemy to strike before acting. The doctrine seeks to take the initiative and stay on the offensive from the conflict's earliest stages in order to bring the hostilities to a swift and a favourable conclusion. Accordingly, it places a premium on speed, surprise, pre-emption and indirect asymmetrical confrontation.

The Strategy takes a holistic view of simultaneous operations on land, maritime, airspace, electromagnetic, space and cyber battle space dimensions. Such operations will incorporate various entities of

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4 Full Text: China's Military Strategy, Source Xinhua, Ministry of National Defence, The People's Republic of China, May 26, 2015, available at [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2015-05/26/content\\_4586805.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2015-05/26/content_4586805.htm) accessed on August 27, 2019.

5 'National Security Law of the People's Republic of China' China Copyright and Media, July 01, 2015 available at <https://chinacopyrightandmedia.wordpress.com/2015/07/01/national-security-law-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china/> accessed on August 28, 2019.

war fighting such as missiles, armament support, and the three Services besides various battlefield systems which embraces intelligence, reconnaissance, communications, Electronic Warfare (EW), cyber, space etc. The strategy will treat each of these elements equally and in a participatory manner during planning and execution. Trans-regional mobility will be an essential part of the strategy to meet the requirement of resources in such fast-moving battle conditions. It focuses on anti-access and area-denial (A2/AD) strategies with capabilities and intentions to deter, prevent and complicate responses and interventions.

The strategy envisages launching an ‘information war’ to deny the enemy information, while making use of all available means to gain real time information it needs, to reap the initiative in its confrontation with the enemy. Based on inputs provided by the information systems, efforts to paralyse the enemy’s command and control system to make him dysfunctional will be made as a prelude to any operation being launched. It therefore follows, PLA’s operations will be fast moving simultaneously in all domains and will endeavour to seize the initiative right from the beginning paralysing own responses. Under such conditions the present time-consuming decision-making processes cannot be an option or delays in decision making overlooked or condoned. It will be catastrophic.

China’s Military Strategy document under the heading ‘Missions and Strategic Tasks of China’s Armed Forces’ specifies, “To maintain strategic deterrence and carry out nuclear counterattack” as a Strategic Task of its Armed Forces. Under its strategic concept of ‘Active Defence’ in place, will China wait passively for the enemy to carry out a nuclear strike before acting? In this context it may be desirable for India to revisit its ‘No First Use’ Nuclear policy.

### **The Need for Integrated Joint Operations**

This aspect will depend on the way operations under an informationised digitised environment is likely to take shape, the forces that may have to be employed, the need for quick and prompt actions to situations by employing elements of various Services and the time constraints which will dictate cutting down on the length of the chain of command to gain the initiative and maintain momentum of operations. Hence it is intended to explain the way the operations under changed conditions are likely to progress in brief as a prelude to the logic of Integrated Joint Operations.

In a digitised battlefield system<sup>6</sup>, consisting of net-worked command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) and counter C4ISR capabilities, a network interlinks weapon systems, aerial platforms, surveillance, and communications systems, allowing the exchange of vast amounts of real-time information of the enemy and the capability to communicate that information to all forces in near real time. The system provides the capability to

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6 V Mahalingam, ‘Digitised Battlefield and its Impact on War Fighting’ Centre for Land Warfare Studies, June 16, 2017, available at <https://www.claws.in/1755/digitised-battlefield-and-its-impact-on-war-fighting-v-mahalingam.html> accessed on August 31, 2019.



employ weapon systems mounted in various platforms of different Services with minimum delay. Any disruption to this link will render the enemy blind and paralysed.

With the availability of graduated real time information in visual form right from sub-unit commanders and operational commanders at various levels to the Theater Commanders and the CDS who will be in the operational loop, the race will always be to act before the enemy does and thus speed up the tempo of operations to outpace the enemy's decision-making cycle so as to gain and maintain the initiative while employing all available means to disrupt, stall and delay enemy actions. This, it must be understood will at all times be under conditions of threat and uncertainty of enemy blocking own sensors and communication systems depending on safeguards built in, in our own systems. It therefore follows that one has to act before the enemy does, work out alternatives and contingency plans and earmark troops and resources to meet such disruptions to information and communication.

The process of paralysing the enemy, which will have to be adopted to speed up operations and minimise own casualties will involve consolidated strikes on the opponent's critical platforms, and capabilities especially his C4ISR systems, communication centers, logistic centers, troop concentrations, forces on the move, widely separated echelons, cyber and space facilities and high psychological targets, to overwhelm and undermine opponent's will, right in the early stages of the conflict. Some of these actions may have to be precise and will be at short notice. Actions that may affect civilian facilities may have to be controlled at the level of CDS in consultation with the Government and the tools positioned forward depending on their reach.

Such wide-ranging tasks on a broad front will require the effort of all the Services simultaneously. Targets that come up while the operations are in progress will have to be dealt with instantaneously by allocating resources which are most appropriate considering the target and its location irrespective of who owns them. Networked weapon systems allow employment of weapons at the press of a button. The massing of fire power at the point of decision instead of forces, from widely separated weapon platforms and assets of all the fighting forces will be the norm of the future. This process may render the employment of enemy's counter bombardment resources on such widely separated weapon systems and sources difficult if not impossible besides giving these weapon platforms time to move to alternate positions. All these actions will be aimed at one single overall objective to turn the tide of the operations in our favour and by its very scope will require joint operations which are integrated and launched to precision timings to meet the requirements of the next move planned by the operational commander.

Alongside the process of stalling enemy operations, it will be necessary to launch a stunning opening phase, the timing of which will depend of the level of success achieved in blinding the enemy and degrading his command and control structures to take advantage of the dazed enemy and speedup own operations. Such operations will depend more on fire power as brought out earlier than infantry action. This change in concept of war fighting will pave the way for reduction in manpower besides war being fought with minimum casualties.

Speed and flexibility in the conduct of operations demand that the resources are placed at the disposal of the operational commander. Higher commanders in any case will be in the operational loop and will be in a position to veto actions by the operational commander if need be. These actions will necessarily have to be coordinated and launched with speed and cannot be left to await Government sanctions or that of individual service heads. Demands for support from different Services cannot be placed up the chain of command and orders awaited top down, to various Services and support elements. Once the initial breakthrough is made, the operations will have to be progressed further without delay.

In nutshell, operations in the said environment will be fast moving requiring the resources of all the Services including the non-contact war tools such as Electronic Counter Measures (ECM), Cyber and Space tools, to be employed in an integrated manner. Individual operational plans will require far too much of co-ordination at the operational level, delay deployments and will not mesh into the larger operational plan. The larger plan will involve employing different Services on varying tasks simultaneously, all aimed at achieving one single aim or objective in a theater or war zone. This will require various Services training together for better coordination and execution.

The need therefore is an Integrated Joint Operations which unlike Joint Operations accepts the theory that service divisions can be breached and command chains can be flat due to the advantages provided by digital command, control and sensor systems. In such operations, unlike in joint operations, command and control of the Services cannot be left to remain vertical but will have to be lateral and decentralised at the level of the Task Force Commander. Decentralisation, an imperative component of integrated operations will cut down on the time required for decision making, dissemination of orders and coordination thus benefiting from the advantages provided by the informationised digital environment. The aim is to act before the enemy could.

Joint training of operational commanders and the need for practical experience to be able to employ different arms in combat will be an important facet of restructuring. This aspect will take time and will have to be catered for.

### **Need for Theater Commands**

Can these operations be planned and executed at the level of the CDS with the Service Chiefs providing necessary inputs and advice? In a country like India, where the geographical extent is wide with varying terrain and the high seas surrounding the country on three sides, each theater requires a different strategy and resources. The need to keep abreast with the larger operational developments, evaluate the overall situation and initiate new courses of action including the need for trans-theater switching of forces to exploit an opportunity or modify the operational strategy will preclude the CDS getting involved in the handling of operations in individual theaters.

Besides that, the CDS will be engaged in planning and suitably stage forwarding forces to cater for contingencies when counter thrusts may have to be initiated and possibly launched sufficiently away

to divert enemy resources and attention as a part of the larger operational strategy. Under such circumstances neither the CDS nor individual Services chiefs can plan and execute these operations in different theaters.

CDS will also be engaged in the planning and the employment of nuclear and non-contact war tools which will have to be controlled at the Government level through him based on the larger war situation and other factors. As for their employment, for precision targeting, depending on the range, some of these elements may have to be located forward within theaters.

It therefore follows that the operations within theaters will have to be planned and executed by the Theater Commanders based on the larger strategy evolved at the level of the CDS keeping in mind the terms of reference and restrictions spelt out by the Government. In ‘integrated joint operations’, while structuring the larger military plan the CDS will be the sole authority to ensure that the plan evolved permits ending the operations well before the situation is allowed to escalate beyond control. Actions needed to stabilise the situation after the operations will also have to be thought through.

While transitioning from the present system of individual Services having their own Command Headquarters, Joint Theater Command structures created will primarily be oriented to improve inter-service operability. Components of Theater Commands will include resources of all the Services making it a joint force with a joint headquarters. Establishment of Joint Theater Command Headquarters will allow the scaling down on the presently functional 17 Command Headquarters of the three Services and other static Headquarters like the Area Headquarters etc. This will enable cutting down manpower drastically.

Allotment of resources to Theater Commands will have to be made ab-initio based on the terrain, the enemy threat and the operations envisaged in the theater. Due to constraints of resources, the Theater Headquarters and logistic services will have to be designed to cater for additional forces being inducted and also be prepared to shed some of the components for employment in other theaters at short notice. The authority to shift forces will rest with the CDS. The need for stage managing cross theater movement and training of troops on tasks that are likely to come up in other theaters will have to be taken note of and carried out in peace time under the directions of the CDS.

The Theater Commanders will be responsible for operations related integrated training and the operational logistics of the force under his command.

### **Headquarters of CDS, Services and Static Formations**

Restructuring of these establishments will have to start with defining the role and assignments of Theater Commands. Based on those, the need, shape and size of static Headquarters under the changed operational environment will need assessment and the restructuring of these organisations attempted. Though some of the Static Headquarters may be required for logistic purposes, the larger operational ethos and the role of static headquarters in supporting field formations will have to be kept in mind.

Keeping in view the tri-service ethos of jointness, these establishments, barring those dealing exclusively with the issues of troops belonging to individual Services like record offices, basic training etc., will have to be joint and manned by personnel of all the Services. With the establishment of Joint Static Formation Headquarters, the need for each service having their own will cease. The amalgamation of these organisations will reduce manpower and establishment costs.

With the operational responsibility along with operational logistics taken care of by the CDS and Theater Commanders, Service Headquarters will have to be tailored to meet the internal requirements of the Service which will include basic training, human resources policies and management, procurement, provisioning, repair and maintenance, medical care and others. In a joint force, HRD related policies will have to be common to all the Services.

## **MoD**

In a joint environment dealing with operations which are speed oriented, the MoD needs to be structured in a manner that the Ministry is capable of taking operations related decisions and handling them with speed. Presently, even during border standoffs, such as the Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) incident which took place in April 2013, as per media reports, the management of the stand-off was taken over by an ad hoc committee called the China Study Group (CSG)<sup>7</sup> consisting of the NSA, bureaucrats from other ministries and heads of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), suggesting lack of professional capability, clarity and self-confidence in dealing with such issues which are normal in an active border. 30-odd Chinese soldiers are too insignificant a number to derail the normal processes of Government functioning. In the changed environment the luxury of time to constitute an ad hoc committee, assembling it and deliberating on the issue to arrive at decisions for the security forces to act on, will not be available.

In matters relating HRD issues and management of equipment, files seeking clarifications on issues from the MoD and MoD (Finance), an arm of the ministry, keep moving back and forth delaying important decisions and consequent actions. The MoD therefore needs to be restructured to incorporate personnel from the Services and the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) at the decision-making level. This will also lead to war effort being supplemented with the resources available with the civil and under other ministries. Possessiveness of resources and effort will have to be shed, especially by civilian government agencies. To that end civil-military synergy is mandatory to win wars.

The need for the number of non-military organisations presently under the MoD and their role will have to be reassessed. A ministry which needs to take operational decisions cannot be allowed to be clogged with routine peacetime decisions or work.

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<sup>7</sup> Manan Kumar, 'dna Special: Government calls bluff on army's Ladakh manoeuvres' May 09, 2013 available at <https://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-dna-special-government-calls-bluff-on-army-s-ladakh-manoeuvres-1832258> accessed on August 29, 2019.

## **Work Culture**

Alongside these measures, the present outdated work culture of these establishments needs drastic changes to be brought in. The system of hand written notes on files, these files physically travelling from one office to the other for consultations and the consequent delays and some of the issues being forgotten over a period or suppressed by some vested interest has to go. Today the notes on files are handwritten by concerned officers while the files are linked with earlier cases and placed before the officers by civilian clerks. The need is for subject and sub-subject files being created which are accessible in the net with an efficient search engine and officers retrieving earlier cases themselves to put down their views and passing it on to the concerned for consultations. This system will enable everyone in the chain to monitor the progress and remind officers concerned if necessary. This apart from reducing the staff at these Headquarters significantly, will bring in transparency, end views of untrained office staff confusing officers and hijacking or delaying important cases. This will require an exclusive stand-alone portal being created for the purpose, and training of officers. These changes will have to be adopted in service establishments as also by the Integrated Ministry of Defence (MoD).

## **Border Management**

The present system of border guarding force working under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Defence Services which are tasked to defend the borders working under the MoD will not work during wars. The actions of border guarding forces have their limitations and they are not meant to guard every inch of ground or fight till the last man last round. By the very size and nature of their deployment, these forces can be bypassed. These forces, deployed well ahead of the main defences manned by the Army, will be required to delay the enemy trying to secure its lines of communication to provide logistic support to their troops that might have bypassed the border posts. They will also be required to provide information to the Army to be able to act in time. This will require necessary fire power being made available to these forces with suitable communication arrangements. The role of the border guarding forces is linked to the employment of Armed Forces at an appropriate time and in a manner the changeover is smooth and troops do not get involved in a running fight. That being so, the need for complete integration of the Border guarding force with the force manning the main defences including their communication, training, command and control cannot be dispensed with.

Restructuring the management of borders and the border guarding forces will have to be a part of the larger reforms of the Armed Forces.

## **Logistics Corps**

The present system of each Service having its own logistic arrangements and chain will need change. There is a need for a Logistic Corps to replace the present system with independent status like the other Services to manage logistics both in peace stations as well as in operational areas. It will be an integrated Service trained to meet the logistic requirements of all the Services. In this system, the procurement and movement forward from sources of procurement to the Theater Commands will have to

be taken on by a flexible integrated logistic setup manned by the Logistic Corps. Operational logistics forward of Theater right up to border posts will be the responsibility of Theater Commanders with manpower being provided by the Logistic Corps.

Since inventories of the Services, their requirements, locations of delivery are different and vary, such changes will take time and as such will have to be brought about gradually so as not to disrupt the present arrangements or create a logistic crisis. For example, China, though it started the modernisation process of its logistic system in 2002<sup>8</sup>, it established the Joint Logistic Support Force of the Central Military Commission (CMC) in Beijing on September 13, 2016<sup>9</sup> and is still in the process of fine tuning them. In peace stations where civilian arrangements such as repair of vehicles are available, these requirements should be outsourced. This subject need detailed study with participation of stake holders before any attempt.

## **Modelling Fighting Formations and Units**

Structuring Military formations and units including Air Force, Navy and other Services will have to confirm to the need to execute the war doctrine evolved and will have to take into consideration the digital environment and the manpower needs of high technology weapon systems, equipment that are in use presently and those that are expected to be added to the force. Every time a new equipment or a weapon system is introduced, the older one and the manpower authorised to man them should be shed to balance manpower.

Restructuring of units and formations of every single arm and service will have to be considered by a separate expert body in a time bound manner. Considering that the process of restructuring formations and units and validating the changes proposed will take time, this part of the restructuring should be delinked from the larger process of military reforms and implemented gradually.

In an informationised digital environment, in the case of large formations like Corps, enemy action to target own headquarters and communication centers, where the command and control arrangements are top down, the entire formation will be paralysed and as a result a large portion of the military force in the battle zone will be rendered ineffective at a crucial moment thus making it possible for the enemy to gain the initiative. Large formations and their movements also present very attractive targets.

It may therefore be prudent to structure smaller formations like Brigade Groups which are self-sufficient, have certain amount of built in reserves with capability to react fast with the ability, authority and the wherewithal to employ firepower resources of different arms and other Services. Tasks allotted to Brigades should however be limited in scope within the capability of the formation. While employing such smaller sized formations, there is a need for a headquarters which should monitor the prog-

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8 Captain David A Payne, 'Chinese Logistics Modernization', Army Logistician, August 08, 2008, available at [https://alu.army.mil/alog/issues/julaug08/chinese\\_log\\_mod.html](https://alu.army.mil/alog/issues/julaug08/chinese_log_mod.html) accessed on August 3, 2019.

9 Zhang Tao, 'China Establishes Joint Logistic Support Force', China Military.com, September 13, 2016, available at [http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-09/13/content\\_7256651.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/view/2016-09/13/content_7256651.htm) accessed on August 3, 2019.

ress of operations and stage forward fresh formations to take forward the advantages gained, as such actions will be beyond the command and control capabilities of the Theater Commands. Depending on the situation it may be possible to employ more than one Brigade group simultaneously at different locations to limit enemy reaction and to gain the initiative.

In the case of smaller formations, with the availability of fire power, it may be possible to earmark certain formations for pre-specified tasks such as bypassing enemy positions, capturing and holding dominating depth areas, capturing communication centers, headquarters, logistic centers, clearing border posts, carrying out raids on enemy camps especially those in the vicinity of enemy's peacetime locations, cut off enemy's lines of communication, etc. and these brigades can be grouped with necessary combat elements and trained specifically for the task. In all other cases due to paucity of resources at present, it may be preferable to allocate additional resources for specific tasks rather than making permanent allocations. However, joint training will have to be organised more frequently balancing the number of formations with which other arms and services are required to carry out joint training.

Formations in holding role where the frontages are large and the formations are employed on a counter-penetration role, a division sized formation may be desirable. Far too many smaller formations operating independently while fighting a defensive battle may pose problems of command and control, besides coordination. The long duration of stay and resultant familiarity with the terrain and the task will be advantageous in an informationised digital environment. The country however needs to have the ability to launch a counter offensive in an area well away from the battle zone besides the ability to launch a counter attack to evict the enemy from an area where he has gained ground.

Depending on the Government's political directive, it will always be desirable to take the battle into enemy territory rather than fighting in own soil. This will require change in the mindset of political leaders as well as military commanders. Under such conditions, the War Doctrine as well as the structures may have to be further refined.

The effect of new weapon systems introduced should be taken advantage of to cut down on traditional conventional military units. For example, with the introduction of S-400 air defence systems and ground to air missile systems, it may be possible to reshape the Air-Defence Artillery. S-400 Air Defence systems are being credited with the ability to defend the battle zone to relieve Air Force for other tasks including higher levels of ground support. This aspect needs careful study and evaluation before taking a decision. Every change that are intended to be made must be validated by training exercises and war games.

Lastly but not the least, while working out the manpower requirements of fighting units, authorities should not take an auditor-bureaucrat view. As has been experienced, during combat, additional manpower requirements crop up for foreseen but unpredicted rise of fighting contingencies, creating ammunition and water dumps etc. ahead, especially in mountains before and during the commencement of operations. Then there are the basic requirements of, load transfers between vehicles of different capacities, creating temporary and transitory fortifications, bringing up and distributing ammunition

to forward locations where vehicles cannot approach, evacuating casualties and wounded from inside minefields, evacuating, burial/cremation of dead, fetching and distributing cooked meals and drinking water from water points which are well away from the location of troops, and so on. It must be remembered that the administrative echelons located in rear areas require manpower to defend their areas besides collecting, preparing and sending forward requirements of food, ammunition, spares for weapons, clothing etc.

## **Conclusion**

It may be relevant to mention here that both in the US and in China operations are conducted by the concerned Theater Commanders and not by the Service Chiefs.

In US, Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) consists of Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (VCJCS), the Service Chiefs from the Army, Navy and Air Force, Commandant of the Marine Corps, besides the Chief of National Guard Bureau. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff is the principal military adviser to the President, Secretary of Defense, and the National Security Council (NSC). However, all JCS members are by law military advisers, and they may respond to a request or voluntarily submit, through the Chairman, advice or opinions to the President, the Secretary of Defense, or NSC<sup>10</sup>. Service Chiefs, in addition to their responsibilities under the JCS, work directly alongside the Secretary of the department concerned like Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force. Further reforms are under consideration.

In China, Chief of Joint Staff of the Central Military Commission (CMC) who heads the CMC's Joint Staff Department performs the duties of the advisor to the Chairman CMC.

It is time the Indian Armed Forces ceased preparing for the last war and concentrated on working towards undertaking military operations under modern conditions. Over a period of time, as the military infrastructure needed for contemporary warfare builds up and the fresh concepts seeps into the minds of military leadership, we need to graduate within a set time frame to acquire new competencies in conduct of modern warfare. Besides infrastructure short falls, budgetary constraints, lack of training to fight the war that is being envisaged demand that the changes be brought about in a gradual manner but within a scheduled timeframe.

The need for equipment and weapon systems to meet the challenges in the interim period cannot be ignored. It is for this reason the CDS needs to decide on the priorities for procurement based on unbiased professional considerations. Notwithstanding the interim requirements, procurements and changes being brought about must be futuristic, catering for the long-term requirement. If the Government intends to maintain military parity with countries of the region, it needs to increase the allocation for defence budget so that the requirements for meeting the present contests in the interim and those for the long term can be met in a phased manner within a set time frame.

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<sup>10</sup> 'About the Joint Chiefs of Staff', Joint Chiefs of Staff, available at <https://www.jcs.mil/About/> accessed on September 17, 2019.



Militaries are required to conservative by their culture. Owing to lack of professional military expertise, the political leadership of the country is taken in by pliable and extraneous arguments and they fail to realise that the bureaucracy and even some in the military are liable to divert the entire issue of restructuring with the intention of guarding their turf. In this respect militaries of US and China are no different from the Indian Armed Forces. Taking note of the inter-service rivalry that had cropped up during the Vietnam War and the difficulties in restructuring the US Armed Forces, President Regan brought in sweeping changes to the US Department of Defence by enacting the Goldwater–Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Similarly, in the Army-centric People’s Liberation Army (PLA), where the powerful PLA was resisting every effort to restructure the force from a land based one to an integrated joint force and thus stalling all progresses, President Xi Jinping personally led the restructuring exercise to bring about the changes that we are witnessing today. Similarly, India’s efforts to restructure our armed forces must be led by the Prime Minister, assisted by the CDS. Restructuring must be ratified by an act of the Parliament after due discussions.

The process of restructuring is likely to take anything between 15 to 20 years. This needs to be thought through and a realistic schedule drawn and monitored. To start with the CDS and his deputy need to be chosen for their vision and professional competence rather than for any preferences, and must be given a staggered minimum tenure of five years irrespective of their age or change in Government so as to ensure continuity.

The question is the Government prepared to bite the bullet or are our armed forces destined to become a modern version of armed constabulary?

*(The paper is the author’s individual scholastic articulation. The author certifies that the article/paper is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication/web upload elsewhere, and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed, and are believed to be correct).*

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### **VIVEKANANDA INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION**

3, San Martin Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi – 110021

Phone: +91-11-24121764, 24106698

Email: [info@vifindia.org](mailto:info@vifindia.org),

Website: <https://www.vifindia.org>

Follow us on [twitter@vifindia](https://twitter.com/vifindia)