

Defense News Conclave

Stories of U.S. - India Defense Partnership

Defence Reforms in India

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With the constant change in warfare and newer technologies that are evolving the battlefields, defence reforms are helping India establish a strong foothold on the larger geopolitical landmass. Significant steps in this direction have been taken in the past decade.

Reforming the national security apparatus is a complex task for most countries, especially India, to overcome the entrenched bureaucratic rivalries, reallocate logistics, and amend the established procedures. However, the *status quo* is not an option for India in the current shifting global strategic scenario where national and extranational actors encounter challenges.

Need for Defence Reforms

Reforms are suitable for adapting to a changing environment to avoid the gradual depletion of capability. The threat formulation is related to India's defence capabilities. For instance, the border stand-off between India and China has intensified in the last few years, influencing the maritime region, where India has the upper hand. However, these advantages will last for a short period. Chinese defence progress, [cumulative military modernisation](#) and their augmenting defence partnership with Pakistan challenge India's position in the region and mount possibilities of a two-front war.

The evolving national security threats demand that India go in for advanced resource mobilisation and restructuring military approach to maintain the status quo in the region. The defence reforms wheel India's regional and global aspirations, as having a rigid military structure is inevitable. Therefore, India needs to

pursue modernisation initiatives in the defence sector to sustain the varying security challenges and circumstances, maintain strategic autonomy, remain a preferred security partner, and achieve its national aspirations.

The defence structure of nations rests on service, bureaucratic and political pillars, and convergence among them is crucial to streamlining the defence reforms. The elements of bifurcations had been influencing the reforms, keeping the defence framework in old bottles.

To reduce that, concord, trust, and understandings among the political leadership and military personnel on decision-making are vital that play a significant role in reducing the inertia. The absence of formal military participation was considered one of the elements of deficiency at the defence apex level, from promulgating national security strategy to perpetuating a disjointed military force structure. In that vein, establishing the office of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Department for

Military Affairs (DMA) envisaged bringing political and military consciousness convergence.

Committees for Defence Modernisation

The defence consciousness in the Indian debate circles always addresses the flaws and challenges in the system, even though the process for reforms remains tardy. A significant discussion of defence reforms occurred at the suggestion of the [Kargil Review Committee of 1999](#) under the leadership of the late *K Subrahmanyam* and the subsequent acceptance of the reforms suggested in the report by the Group of Ministers (GoM).

The report holistically examined the flaws of national security and commented on organisational structure and processes for security decision-making at the apex level. The initiatives included reforming defence intelligence, border-related intelligentsia, and budget reforms and recommended the upgradation of nuclear weapons and counter-insurgency capabilities.

Various structural and organisational lacunas persist in the defence system, leading to the appointment of various committees to address these issues. One such reform-related Committee is the *Naresh Chandra Committee*, appointed in 2011. It recommended changes in the national security decision-making process to meet the adversaries on the border. The *Dhirendra Singh Committee*'s recommendation replaced the DPP 2013 with DPP 2016 (Defence Procurement Procedure) and recommended a 'Strategic Partnership Model'. The *Shekatkar* committee, chaired by Lt. Gen (Retd.) DB Shekatkar, on enhancing the combat capability and rebalance,

was appointed and gave its recommendations about the defence reforms and modernisation.

Other committees, such as the *Rama Rao* and *Kelkar* committees, have prioritised major defence procurements, building manufacturing bases, and modernisation plans to eliminate structural deficiencies. These committees recommended rebalancing budget expenditures on capability enhancement in addition to enhancing combat readiness.

The findings and recommendations of these committees are reflected in the government policies. The influence of these committees was also demonstrated in domestic policies like *the Agneepath scheme* and DAP, 2020, for reducing personnel expenditures for acquiring military equipment and thrust provided on the indigenous building.

More importantly, these committees stressed on the formation of the CDS post as a single-point military advisor and theaterisation of commands. The former influences the strategic and structural system, which caters to integrating bureaucracy, services, and cognitive responsibilities. The latter impacts the operational level by integrating Tri-forces under a single command to enhance interoperability and unity of command, which leads to cost-cutting and combat effectiveness as the world moves towards realising multi-domain warfare.

The Structural Reforms for better Civil-Military Relations

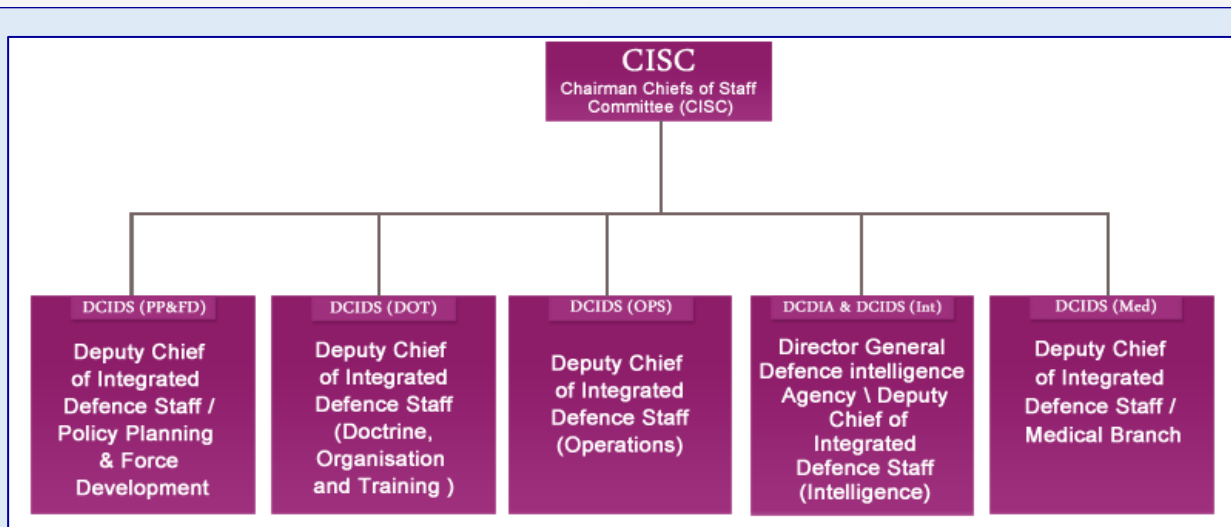
The country's Higher Defence Organisation (HDO) looks after national security, national strategy, synergy among the armed forces, Civil-Military Integration (CMI), financial support, and modernisation, etc. The HDO comprises representatives of veterans, bureaucratic

representatives, policy experts, military persons and legislators. It seeks to provide a structure for India's defence perceptions by incorporating an adequate response to national, regional, and global crises. The model is a reworked version of the central British stronghold.

Since independence, the higher defence reforms have been debated due to the contentious turf between civilian and military stakeholders. Since the bureaucracy poses a layer between the political leadership and military establishment, the lack of adequate military knowledge compels political authority to depend on the bureaucracy for advice and guidance on complex issues related to the defence sector, which elevates bureaucracies' voice in defence decisions.

In contrast, the bureaucracy argues that they carry the complexities of file procedures, follow line decision-making and diplomatic functions and tend to follow a well-established standard operating procedure, which may not come in handy in times of war and emergency. These inconsistencies in HDO resulting from civil-military turfs are considered the major obstacle in implementing the recommendations of various committees and other defence reforms.

The government has formed the Integrated Headquarters (HQ IDs) as a significant structural reform to reduce the ingrained silos culture of the system. The HQ IDS is an interface between the services and the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Its primary responsibility is capability



A structured Long-Term Defence Planning (LTDP) process can guarantee its safety against volatile and hybrid security threats. However, the planning process is tedious and subject to multiple influences as various branches of civil-military are involved. Having a designated formal national security strategy could facilitate the planning process and provide the basis for long-term planning with a clear vision for planning and avoiding faulty plans. In October 2022, the executive branch of the Biden- Harris administration rolled out National Security Strategy. The U.S. has been periodically preparing the NSS document since the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defence Reorganization Act, of 1986.

development for a modern, technologically-empowered, and logistically-endowed armed force. In pursuit of this, HQ IDS undertakes the formulation of long-term policy, planning, force development, capital acquisition plans, procurement, and other critical operational directives.

However, when the position of a full-time head at the HQ IDS is vacant, it affects the achievement of the objectives of HQ IDS. It is reflected in the impact of HQ IDS, which was marginal on resource optimisation and enhancing combat capability. Even though the Defence Planning Committee (DPC) was established in 2018 and has facilitated the resolution of several vexed security issues, the demand for a permanent Chairman and CDS was prevalent. In the absence of VCDS (Vice Chief of Defence Staff), IDS failed to prioritise collaborative inter-services needs.

Eventually, the appointment of the VCDS and CDS, along with the DMA, is trying to improve the environment and carry out suggestions to reconstruct the defence structures. IDS acts as the intersection organisation for jointmanship in the MoD and works towards cultivating better civil-military relations.

As a solution, the government introduced the DPC in 2018 to facilitate comprehensive and integrated strategic planning for defence matters. It creates a structure and process for planning that would facilitate proper integration in operations, sharing economies in training, and effective inter-services prioritisation in procurement. This will ensure greater objectivity in defining future capabilities, assessing capabilities, and determining capability deficits.

The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)

This Committee is the highest decision-making body on all national security matters, including defence expenditure, structure and policies. The Hon'ble Prime Minister heads it and the National Security Advisor (NSA) is the permanent invitee, with service chiefs invited on a requirement and/or *ad-hoc* basis. Since this committee witnesses the civil-military engagement at the highest level, it must include the Chiefs of the services and the CDS, who is also appointed as the ex-officio secretary of the DMA as permanent invitees just like the NSA and not on an ad-hoc basis as presently.

The National Security Council

As a pyramid structure with the Prime Minister at the top has the support of the Strategic Policy Group (SPG). This group provides necessary insights and inputs and has members from the military, such as the chiefs of services and CDS, along with other secretaries looking after the internal and external security of the nation. With the Vice-Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS) becoming a part of the SPG, the CDS should be invited to become a part of the National Security Council (NSC), which has all the existing legislative members of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) and none of the defence or service personnel permanently.

As the agenda of the NSC includes a wide range of security-related issues such as the conventional and non-conventional defence systems, space and emerging technologies, along with counter-insurgency and security concerns within the country, it would be for a larger good and towards better civil-military relations to include the service personnel and/or the CDS as part of the council.

Integrated Chief of the Three Wings of Defence



The American post of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) is a similar level post to the Indian post of the CDS. This post of CJCS was established by the landmark Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defence Reorganization Act, 1986, which was a major command restructuring act since the establishment of the Department of Defence in 1947. General Mark A. Milley is the 20th CJCS, making him the nation's highest-ranking military officer. He is the principal military advisor to the president, secretary of defence and national security council. He chairs and convenes the joint chiefs of staff Committee). General Anil Chauhan - The Chief of Defence Staff of the Indian Armed Forces is the professional head and Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee of the Indian Armed Forces. He also functions as Secretary to the Government of India, Department of Military Affairs.

The [creation of the Chief of Defence Staff](#) (CDS) as the head of the [Department of Military Affairs](#) and the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee post in 2019 ushered in a new era in the higher defence

system, which intended to develop symmetry in the military-bureaucracy-political relationship. The CDS tends to also function as the ex-officio secretary of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA).

The appointment of the CDS is imperative for providing impartial advice to the political leadership on issues like the current accumulation of strategic and foreign matters on the border. A single-point military advisor for the government is essential when the country encounters multi-domain of threats. The emerging challenges demonstrate the demand for the simultaneous involvement of defence services.

The CDS obviates another anomaly of operational accountability resting with the service Chiefs, but responsibility for equipping the armed forces rests with the MoD. The CDS facilitates the involvement of the military brain and perspectives in the decision-making process, and the position does not exercise any military command.

The CDS enhances the jointness and synergy between services, assists HDO in reaching its maximum potential, and gradually paves the way for the integration and theatre of commands. Moreover, the CDS is responsible for strengthening combat capabilities, ensuring weapon acquisitions and optimum utilisation of resources, promoting indigenisation, and formulating tactics and defence planning, which the office of DMA facilitates achieving.

Vice CDS and Deputy CDS

The Vice Chief of Defence Staff. In one of the committee's recommendations, CDS and VCDS cannot be from the same service. The Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the

Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee was constituted. He is the head of the Integrated Defence Staff which acts as the point organisation for joint manship in the MoD.

Reforms in the Department of Military Affairs

The DMA, an integrated department, achieves better results at all levels through effective coordination between the Armed Forces and the Civil Services, separating military affairs from the defence. As the head of DMA, CDS assists in reducing the role of bureaucracy in military matters that catalyses the initiatives for reviewing obsolete policies, traditions, and practices, revitalising the procurement process, optimising human, technological and resource power, and restructuring and integrating the existing defence framework.

The DMA strives for a single-service approach to integrating planning and execution by overcoming bureaucratic scepticism. The prevalence of the military approach in decision-making enhances the integration of the services for joint planning, operations, and procurement, thereby ensuring the optimum use of resources, avoiding wasteful expenditures, and strengthening combat capabilities. Besides, the DMA revamps the logistics structures to enhance the supply chains and promotes indigenisation for self-reliance in defence equipment.

Operational Reforms: Budget Allocation

An adequate defence budget to match the requirements is essential for credible deterrence. India's defence budget currently highlights the mismatch in the projected requirements and

allocation, which is getting widened with each release. The defence budget allocations depend on economic stability, and it is not advisable to outweigh the defence budget in comparison to the socio-economic needs of the country. This means India requires to lay higher emphasis on socio-economic development.

Moreover, after all the obligatory dispersal, like personnel expenditures with ex-military pensions having a huge chunk of it, the remaining budget is insufficient to meet the research and development and offsets procurement. Therefore, resource management has become one of the essential verticals of budgetary allocations.

For that, revenue and personnel expenditures must be monitored, restricted and reduced for a substantial increase in the capital procurement of budgetary allotment. The management of the defence budget is not merely limited to financial accounting and procurement policies, checks and procedures also bring results.

In that way, policies such as the *Agneepath* and Make-in-India, relying less on imports, reduce the revenue share of the defence budget as over 50 per cent of the defence acquisition budget goes directly towards imports.

On the other hand, completing any significant project usually involves extensive delays due to convoluted decision-making and repetitive due diligence issues. It creates committed liability and overturns the cost, which swallows a share of the capital budget that hinders the new procurement. Moreover, the services are struggling to procure defence deals with significant finances hampered due to their reluctance to sign bigger financial contracts, political attention, budget issues, and lack of knowledge. Integrating financial management

with the planning process can avoid this acquisition situation.

Besides, synergies and jointness between services must identify their shortfall and address them as a priority in the acquisition. The introduction of CDS and DMA enhances the services' jointness and ensures better coordination between the budget allotting authority, the planning committee, and the executioner.

Reforms in Defence Acquisition and Manufacturing

The government is shifting its policy approaches by combining economic aspirations with security and defence requisites. The government encourages defence manufacturing in India through policies like Make-in-India, driven by the vision of *Atmanirbhar Bharat*, ensuring self-reliance and generating profits through exports. India's current import orientation with the significant expenses for maintenance, refurbishment, and upgradation affects the optimum management of resources.

Therefore, developing a domestic defence industrial base seems essential. The present policies and the magnitude of our foreseeable needs are ripe for providing a solid ground for rapid defence industrialisation. The requirement for state-led manufacturing defence corridors to be set up would further boost the export target set by the incumbent government.

At least 11-14 states are in pursuit of setting up such corridors, which would not only provide a manufacturing base but also create skilled and semi-skilled jobs, which would benefit the economy overall. The reforms are supplemented by various initiatives and visions, such as setting a target of US\$5bn worth of exports by 2025.

This would turn the nation into a major defence exporter. With two industrial corridors already set up in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, other states must pursue this route as the nation would want to boost an overhaul defence ecosystem.

The Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020 has revamped prioritised procurement categories by [enhancing](#) the required 'indigenous content' to boost the country's manufacturing capacity. It encourages the private sector to collaborate with Indian Defence PSUs with a majority stake and manufacture the required weapons system. In addition, DAP has introduced a new procurement category, "Buy global and manufacture in India", which is meant to [incentivise](#) foreign companies to manufacture in India and also allows for installing Maintenance, Repair and Operations (MRO) facilities in India.

Additionally, the DAP 2020 changed the Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP) into Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP) for ten years and Defence Capability Development Plan (DCAP) for five years, which is expected to provide [sanctity](#) to the long-term plan document.

Similarly, the new policy has referred to a positive list of indigenisation that bans the import of listed products for enhancing indigenous manufacturing by assuring domestic manufacturers of the future potential in the defence sector. The government also increased the FDI cap in the defence sector from 49 per cent to 74 per cent. The new FDI norms are to attract the Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) in India. However, higher FDI does not apply to all, it is limited to a few procurements to [protect the interest of the domestic industry](#). This would provide the domestic

market with assurance for sustaining in the manufacturing market.

Likewise, [the government](#) transformed the production units of Ordnance Factory Boards (OFB) into seven new defence companies to enhance functional autonomy and efficiency and unleash new growth potential and innovation. These factories were once deemed as the fourth arm of the defence sector, but they had received criticism for their performance, quality of the products, and accountability. Because of this, demands were reached to the government to improve the structure of OFBs to be better and more efficient and instil a sense of competition to bolster innovation.

The new framework incentives led these firms to become more competitive and explore new opportunities in the market, including exports. These companies hold a more significant role in the countries' import substitution initiatives in line with the *Atmanirbharata*. The Ministry of Defence's statement indicates an effective transformation of all the newly converted companies having registered professional profits and a turnover of more than M8,400 crore till June 2022.

As mentioned briefly above, the government established defence industrial corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu as of October 2022 to serve as an engine of economic development and growth of defence industrial bases in the country. Besides, they launched the [Innovations for Defence Excellence](#) (iDEX) to foster innovation and technology development in the defence and aerospace industries.

Also, the government introduced the [strategic partnership](#) model, which enables Indian entities to join hands with foreign OEMs, creating an opportunity to co-produce, co-develop and

transfer the technology to Indian defence establishments.

Tri-service Command Restructuring

India has a complex security dilemma with threats emerging from both state and non-state actors, and the mode of warfare ranges from conventional to hybrid to multi-domain. To say the least, the overall security situation is full of strategic unpredictability. In the given scenario, synergy among the different elements of national power is important. Indian Military planning has been dominated by the land-centric approach that heavily relies on the Army.

In the Kargil conflict in 1999, the lack of coordination between the services was apparent and subsequently highlighted in various committees to streamline the interface among the three services. In the current scenario, joint warfighting, planning, and training are vital for secure and quick execution during times of emergency and war.

In addition, a robust military force is critical when the government articulates strategies beyond geographical borders to pursue Out-of-Area Contingency (OOAC) operations. Here, the creation of theatre commands/joint commands and logistic commands, driven by a comprehensive NSS, becomes even more essential.

Need for Reforms in Integration of Commands

Presently, 17 military commands are located in different geographical locations in India. For instance, the eastern commands of Naval, Air and Army are located in Visakhapatnam, Shillong, and Kolkata, respectively. Situated in

distant places may create barriers in their coordinated action at the time of war.

Of late, extensive debates have been taking place on the jointness and integration of the forces. Jointness implies synergised use of the resources of the services in a seamless manner for a better result in a short time, ensuring optimum use of resources. Under jointness, the services function together but progress and develop independently in their respective spheres.

Under integration, different services are under a single command with dedicated manpower and logistics. The integration is a step ahead of the jointness of services. In the former, jointness of services, the consent from the parent services affects the reactionary time, and the

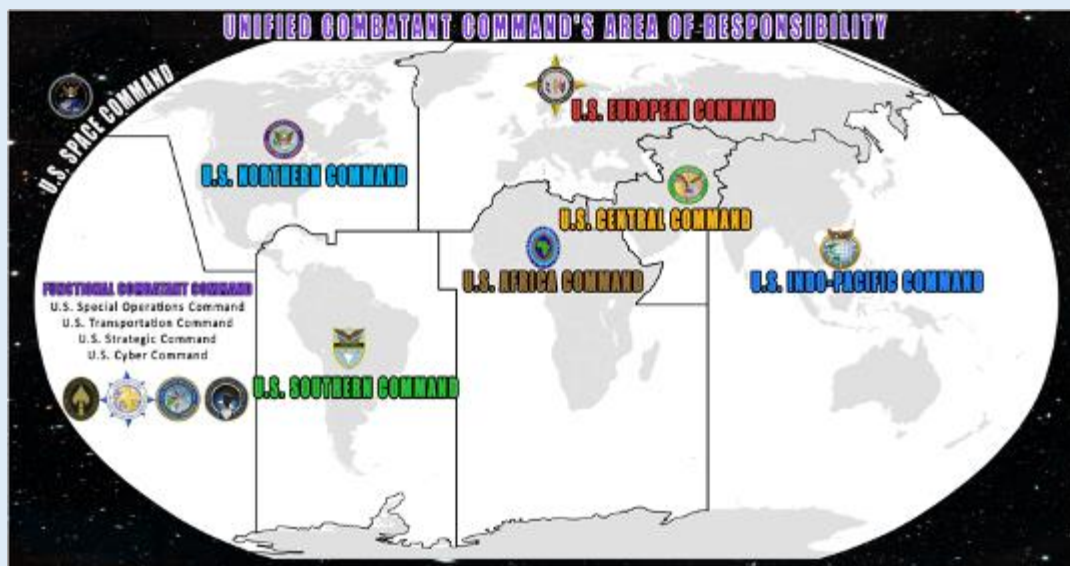
friction that may arise between/among the services affects the forces' collective reaction or response time, resulting in delaying of decision and swift action.

Integrating these separate entities into a single command also confronts complex challenges. There are differences in the organising principles, operational ability, and forces' procedures. These polarities, like the dimension of theatre, allocation of resources, etc., develop difficulties at the operational level and in formulating commands.

However, India aims to integrate service commands rather than propagating jointness between different arms of the service like that in the U.S. The former and the incumbent CDS have intensified the discussions for creating the

Theaterisation of the Commands

The U.S. Model: Unified Combatant Command's Area of Responsibility



Theatres are generally interpreted as regions beyond the national boundaries with military significance. Theaterisation of commands implies supporting diplomacy and maintaining an understanding of its progress that may impinge on national security. Recently, the idea has remerged in referring to theatre as integrated military structures within the national boundary to improve operational efficiency under the theatre commander.

Integrated Theatre of Commands (ITCs) and even proposed [five](#) operational and two services ITCs. It has been realised that the current or past war strategies cannot suffix the emerging challenges or the challenges in the coming times.

Andaman and Nicobar Commands (ANC) – The first and only Tri-services of Indian Armed forces

The ANC, which presently operates and comes under the HQ Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) might get subsumed under a larger Maritime Theatre Command (MTC). Giving impetus to the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and India’s commitment to a safe, secure and open Indo-Pacific region, MTC would play a crucial role in the maritime domain and maintaining strategic autonomy. It would be vital for encompassing operations on the western and eastern plank of India’s coast.



The ITCs are more than jointness. There are about quick decision-making, procuring multi-domain capabilities, and executing operations simultaneously and in shortened time frames. The formulation of ITC may require revamping the institutional procedures and significantly impact planning and procurement. This process would affect structures, personnel, equipment, and weapons systems across the entire range of combat arms and branches, as well as combat support and combat service support.

Consequently, different opinions from various experts are prevalent about the formation of ITCs. Primary concerns are the lack of adequate resources and their allocation to different theatres. The proposed ITC has divided the mainland into different theatres, which is considered unnecessary as India is not as large as the U.S.

In addition, a lack of consensus among the services is lacking. Therefore, [experts](#) suggest that as an ab-initio step, the military needs to prioritise enhancing the jointness among the military and build an interface among the services, their composition, and operational tasks.

On the other hand, creating ITCs should not be an exercise for the reallocation and distribution of logistics rather than transforming the force structure into the modern era. Besides, the ITCs must be unique to our geography, threat perception, national interests, and future objectives, rather than being replicas of another country. Currently, the idea has met mixed opinions, some experts believe that with clarity of vision and a focussed approach, ITCs would also cater to the overhaul development of a National Security Strategy, which has been discussed below in greater detail.

Reforms in Functional Commands

The proposal for the ITCs also includes some functional theatre commands, one is for Logistics and another one for Training and Doctrine. Each service caters to its logistics, which might lead to duplications and massive wastages. Creating a logistics command will pave opportunities for logistics integration and optimum use of resources, effectively addressing all requirements.

The training and doctrine command would enhance the jointness and understanding between the forces and enable coordination of defence planning and joint warfare strategy. Hybrid warfare and multi-domain wars have also raised the question of having a missile command, as a separate functional command. This is being currently worked upon and taken into consideration by the MoD.

Need for a National Security Strategy

The rapidly shifting geopolitical environment highlights the strategic lacuna persisting in Indian Military-diplomacy. The prevalent notion is that India's diplomatic engagements reflect a reactionary approach on an *ad-hoc* basis rather than a systematic, consistent, and coherent manner. But now, the rising economic capabilities, geopolitical outreaches, uncertain neighbourhoods, internal security issues, and non-traditional security challenges necessitate a comprehensive National Security Strategy (NSS).

The NSS does not imply using government coercive powers to counter domestic and external threats. Instead, it combines the country's hard and soft power to realise smart power, as suggested by Joseph Nye, against challenges across several domains to eliminate or

ameliorate the situation. The absence of a formal NSS has raised serious questions about India's strategic priorities and effectiveness to the rising national threats. This encloses India into a loop of uncertainty on national and international security issues.

An NSS, which entails LTP (Long-term Planning), has become necessary in a time of growing uncertainty to break the practice of services working in silos. For instance, there are Paramilitary Forces, which primarily look after internal threats and security matters. Sometimes the situation escalates beyond their control, requiring the armed forces to step in and take charge of the situation. Situations like these further complement the need for an NSS, which would have Paramilitary Forces as an integral part of the NSS. An integrated national-level plan or strategy, including paramilitary and armed forces, would require the CDS or the NSA to take charge and formulate a national-level strategy by heading it. Defence services must be given adequate participation in formulating national strategy and national security issues.

The lack of national security policy, strategy and objectives handicap defence planning teams which often resort to subjective interpretations of higher officials' statements and speeches. This reflects in civil-military relations, long-term and medium-term defence planning, procurement, and inter-service prioritisation. Formulating and promulgating NSS will help in consensus-building, facilitate a coordinated approach to national security among the political-bureaucratic-service cycles, and have a sound basis for defence planning. NSS is imperative for warfare in the current unstable geopolitical scenario and times to come.

Evolving Military Diplomacy and Expanding Its Scope

Military diplomacy plays a significant role in achieving the national interest globally. The trajectory of India-US bilateral ties in defence by procuring military platforms, technological assistance and ensuring logistical support have a transformable and effective impact on the defence modernisation in India and have largely assisted in carrying much-required reforms. The recent evolution in offset policies, guidelines, technology acquisition, and mutual logistics exchanges can be read along these lines.

In addition, the defence reform initiatives reflect India's diplomatic responses to the geopolitical challenges and multilateral alliance. Most importantly, 'defence' has become a significant element of India's foreign policy approach. India is pursuing a vibrant arms export market by exporting goods and services to many countries, and this is a vital strategic point in nurturing closer ties with these countries. As mentioned earlier, India should follow its strategic autonomy and decide upon its restructuring and reforming of the armed forces.

However, this does not mean alienation from the defence reforms of other nations but a careful look at defence reforms and practices by other nations. This should be done by merely imitating and adopting the reforms with Indian or native ethos. As military diplomacy has a share in a nation's hard power, it can also subdue the enemy at war fronts without actually fighting.

Boost to Research and Development

Focused and intensified Research and Development (R&D) is significant for India to achieve its objectives of self-reliance, emerging as a leader in critical technologies, advancing its capabilities of manufacturing and exports, and turning India into a defence superpower.

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has contributed significantly to India in achieving strategic capabilities, though some programmes under DRDO have suffered from considerable delays and cost overruns. With the 'Make-in-India' initiative welcoming private players to chip in, the private industry may reap the benefits of the R&D and investments by the GoI. The public sector should look at harnessing the abundant human resources, skills and technology available in the private sector.

The government is taking several steps to boost the national R&D base by involving the private sector and start-ups. On that note, the government allocated a budget for private defence sectors for their R&D efforts. Besides, the government is strengthening partnerships with other countries on defence R&D ecosystems and innovative funding mechanisms to expand defence industrial capabilities.

Similarly, the government has also harnessed the start-up ecosystem through its iDEX programme. Increasing R&D spending and encouraging the private sector to take up flagship tech development projects could reduce India's reliance on importing critical technologies, boost innovation, help curb unemployment, and bridge the civil-military gap.

Instead of boosting exports and defence production, the government has suggested the creation of the [Defence Minister's Council on Production \(DMCP\)](#), with its membership drawn not only from the top leadership of the defence establishment but also from other high-end science and technology ministries/departments as well as local industry, this is a step towards bridging the gap between the civil-military gap.

Way Forward

To secure national interests, adequate capabilities must be developed to counter a wide spectrum of threats. The reforms and restructuring of Indian armed forces have to be considered and given the top priority if India seeks to become a net security provider and a major defence player. Instead of the same, defence procurements also have to be seen in the light of budgetary constraints, as currently dealt with. To become a truly *Atmanirbhar* nation, a major defence manufacturing hub and exporter, it needs to walk on a path of defence reforms and restructuring.

The recent initiatives demonstrate state recognition of the significance of reforms to address the emerging complex and multi-disciplinary challenges. Yet, the current system is insufficient to address the ongoing threats. Various reforms are long due and many are resurfacing, such as the incumbent CDS reiterating the need for an ITC that could bring all the services together in times of war.

Besides, it is expected that the reforms would bring the defence system into new, unfamiliar situations and inevitable scenarios. This would bring the current structural order out of its comfort zone. Though it enhances the jointness and combat capabilities of the force, which is

inevitable for the current tenure and the foreseen future, it would make the future nation combat-ready. The appointment of CDS has cleared the way for those who suggested structural and operational reforms by committees appointed for prospectus reforms in various periods. However, structural reforms, like changes in the apex body, are not as complicated as the prospectus reforms at the operational level like the ITC.

The suggestions of committees such as the *Naresh Chandra* committee and the *Kargil Review* committee echo the restructuring of the Indian Military System. Reforming the system needs to be proactive and recommendations by the expert committees should be adhered to and applied.

The recent skirmishes at the LAC and flexing of military muscles by hawkish states only provide the loopholes to be checked, reforms have been in place since the Burma re-conquest of 1946. Optimally, managing the military budget and regular appointment of CDS should be the short-term reforms, and NSS and a functional missile command formulation should be considered short-term reforms.

As India has a large industrial base and with the right policy initiatives and their implementation, India could achieve indigenously designed, developed and manufactured arms and ammunition. This way India would achieve self-sufficiency. Policy initiatives such as Make-in-India, *Atmanirbhar Bharat* and a focus on R&D would be a way forward in the mid-term. The formation of the ITC and having a conducive financial framework should form the basis of short- mid-term goals.

The long-term goal should entail having a combined civil-military doctrine at the services' core. This will lead to faster commissioning, procuring and quick decision-making and

prepare the Indian armed forces for 21st-century warfare post-2047, the year India celebrates 100 years of independence. India needs to develop a Defence Acquisition University (DAU), like that in the U.S., which would facilitate faster procurement and acquisition of defence products without getting caught in bureaucratic red tape. Integrated and combined institutions and a concrete NSS for the nation beyond 2047 are to be laid out in a long-term plan.

The recommendation of the *Rama Rao* committee to have a dedicated defence technology university and to [revamp DRDO](#) on the lines of [DARPA](#) (Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency) could also be looked

at as we progress to warfare which will be highly technical and the use of critical and emerging technologies will be an essential requirement to withstand the war.

The recent hallmark policies of “Make in India” and *Atmanirbharta* in defence manufacturing are crucial for effective defence capability, maintaining the second-largest armed forces and achieving long-term national interests in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond. The recommendations of various expert committees and reforming the defence forces along the lines of India’s geopolitical and socio-economic realities are the way forward.

This Briefing Paper has been researched and written by Purushendra Singh, Research Associate, CUTS International.

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