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HIGHER DEFENCE MANAGEMENT

The appointment of the CDS was a long-awaited one. On 01 Jan 2020, General Bipin Rawat, PVSM UYSM AVSM YSM SM VSM ADC, took charge as India's first Chief of Defence Staff following his relinquishing charge of the Chief of Army Staff on 31 Dec 2019.

The demand for this appointment had reached a crescendo even as the Government turned a deaf ear for years. The Government's creation of the position is recognition that the Armed Forces' affairs needed better coordination and understanding than was the case with generalist bureaucrats staffing the Ministry of Defence. That the renaming the Forces Headquarters as Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence (Army, Navy or AF) did not do much to the ground situation was no secret either. The Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff that has been in operation for some time also added another bureaucratic layer and resulted in no greater efficiency.

The CDS, it was hoped, would descend onto the scene and, with a fell swoop, slice away our strategic despondency and organisational inefficiency.

An article published in 2016 provided solutions for some significant aspects of higher defence management, specifically related to organisation and responsibilities for quick and effective decision making of which the CDS was one appointment. This article appeared in the Forces Magazine of May 2016 and was later reproduced in the CASS Journal Vol 6, No 2 Quarter 4 of 2018-19.

The Department of Military Affairs created as the Headquarters of the CDS (with Secretary status), and responsibilities aspects of higher defence and security management, as envisaged in the article, it is hoped will be fulfilled filling a void.

The said article is reproduced below. Comments and views are welcome.

-----**The Article**-----

HIGHER DEFENCE AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT AND THE NUCLEAR COMMAND STRUCTURE

Prem Nair

General

1. The recent terrorist strike at the Pathankot Airbase and the response of the Indian Internal Security Apparatus left the average thinking Indian with a sinking feeling and

raised questions on our ability to handle such situations at the National level. The sense the fourth estate conveyed was that the Internal Security Agencies comprising the Central and State Police, the Investigating Agencies, and the limited elements of Defence Forces operating within the country were unsure of what next. While things may have been under control, as explained by the COAS to a news channel subsequently, the citizens saw the Government in a tizzy.

2. This tizzy mode that the governing machinery switches to every time 'two men and a dog' violate our borders reflects the lack of an organised holistic hierarchical system of command and control at the political level. The National Security Council as established by the Cabinet Resolution of 16 Apr 1999, is an example of how not to do things. It also has to do with, in smaller measure of the empires within the Indian Government machinery coupled with our inability to take hard decisions. Another aspect is the absence of provisions in the law on the use of Armed Forces within the country for combat operations at short notice.
3. In the parliamentary system, the political leadership is often novice and needs permanent and formalised advisory bodies that will enable them to make decisions, albeit influenced by their political philosophy. While human aspects cannot be eliminated, they can be cut to the minimum by systems. The solution is to have an organisational structure from the top down that is simple in structure; flexible to cater for eventualities; bears clear cut responsibilities; is invested with authority and composed of professionals to cover all situations including external; internal; nuclear, biological, chemical, space and any other form of threats.
4. Decision making at the National level, therefore, needs two things at the least, to begin with:
 - (a) The first is a permanent set-up that enables decision making with defined responsibility and the authority to execute the decisions in all situations.
 - (b) The second is a set of people to provide advice to the decision-makers at each necessary level and formulate policy.

Higher Defence and Security Management

5. The current system is a labyrinth of committees, councils and boards; some hierarchical and some lateral. It comprises of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), The National Security Council (NSC) with three advisory bodies [the Strategic Policy Group (SPG), the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and the Joint Intelligence Committee/National Security Council Sectt (JIC/NSCS); and the Nuclear (National) Command Authority with a Political Council and an Executive Council. In practice, all of these bodies comprise of more or less the same appointments. Further, the numerous bodies result in a lack of clarity in the chain of command, the responsibilities and accountability of each.
6. The NSA, irrespective of the individual in the chair, is saddled with responsibilities well beyond an individual's ability and scope. The appointment is conceived as a

strategic superman of sorts, being an analyser, solution provider, advisor and executor for all the Nation's intelligence, defence and security needs.

7. Today defence cannot be separated from internal security. Thus to enable quick collation of intelligence, seamless dissemination of information, and coordinated execution by Defence and Internal Security Forces both Central and State a simplified version of what we have today is necessary.

8. The USA had made significant changes in their Higher Defence Management through the Goldwater–Nichols Department of Defence Reorganization Act of 1986. We need something similar now to define our higher Defence and security management structure for decision making, advice and execution to cover all situations.

Recommended Future Higher Defence and Security Management Structure

9. **The Reorganised National Security Council.** The need is for one political authority, with one set of advisors and one secretariat for all Defence and Internal Security situations. Additional responsibilities can be added to these bodies as the need arises. Broadly the NSC will have the same three bodies, namely; the decision making authority, the advisory authority (in two levels) and a non-governmental expert body but with significant tweaks. The recommended organisation is shown in Figure 1 and is as follows.

10. **Cabinet Committee on Defence and Security (CCDS).** This is primarily the present CCS. It is the highest decision making political and executive authority body of the country for Defence, Internal Security and Foreign Policy. It is also the National (Nuclear) Command Authority. As all Defence and Security situations will be addressed by the CCDS, no new bodies need to be created in future; only possible situations and responsibilities need to be identified and its charter reviewed.

11. **National Defence and Security Advisory Authority (NDSAA).** This is essentially the advisory element of the NSC as modified.

(a) **Level 1: Strategic Advisory Authority (SAA).** This is the core advisory group to the CCSD and will include the CDS, the NSA, the National Intelligence Advisor (NIA) and the National Foreign Policy Advisor (NFPA) and the Cabinet Secretary (Cab Secy). It will replace the single NSA as of today. The broad roles of these appointments are discussed later.

Figure 1

(Changes to the present system are shown in blue)

HIGHER DEFENCE AND SECURITY MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDED STRUCTURE

INDIAN NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

Body	Composition		Remarks
CCDS			
Chairman		<ul style="list-style-type: none">PM	Highest Political and Executive Body. It is also the Political Council of the NCA.
Mandatory Members		<ul style="list-style-type: none">HMDMFMMEA	

National Defence and Security Advisory Authority			
Level 1 Strategic Advisory Authority (SAA)	Mandatory Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDS NSA NIA NFPA Cab Secy 	Independent Advisors to the CCDS. No single chairman.
Level 2 Strategic Policy Authority (SPA)	Joint Chairmen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CDS NSA 	Heads of all Execution Agencies. Coterminous with the Executive Council of the NCA. Additional members are called, on an as desired basis.
	Mandatory Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Level 1 Members COAS CNS CAS Dir IB Secy RAW Home Secy Finance Secy Foreign Secy (when different from NFPA) 	
	Additional Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gov RBI Secy DDPS Secy Revenue Secy DAE Secy Dept of Space PSA to GOI. Chairman SAC-PM SA to RM Others 	

Figure 1 (contd)

National Defence and Security Advisory Board			
	Convenor	Nominated	Duties as

	Members	Non-Governmental Experts in the fields of:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defence • External Security • Internal Security • Foreign Affairs • Strategic Analysis • Armed Forces • Science and Technology • Economics • Other Areas 	hitherto fore. There is no NSAB in operation currently since 15 Jan.
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(b) **Level 2: Strategic Policy Authority (SPA).** This is the present Strategic Policy Group with the same composition as existing. Level 2 will include all appointments in Level 1 also and will be chaired by the CDS and NSA jointly. This is the primary policy formulation group. It will have a set of permanent members and additional members whose attendance is need-based to enable the principle of the need to know.

12. **National Defence and Security Advisory Board.** This is the present National Security Advisory Board with the same need-based composition. It will continue to have the same advisory role to the CCDS and NDSAA as the NSAB had before.

Defence Security Foreign Policy Intelligence

13. The main areas related to the protection of the Nation are External Security, Defence, Internal Security, Foreign Policy and Intelligence. Each of these needs a national-level agency with the head of each being the Level 1 Advisor to the CCDS. These agencies will function under the CCDS and report to it.

(a) **External Security (Defence)/Chief of Defence Staff.** He will be the primary Advisor to the Government on all Defence matters. However, the command of the three Services the Army, Navy and Air Force will be with the three Service Chiefs and with the Prime Minister through the Defence Minister; the command may be routed through the CDS to keep the CDS in the decision and execution loop when necessary particularly where joint services operations are conceived. The three Service Chiefs would be at liberty to offer any advice or present their views at any time as members of the SPA. They are also in direct communication with their Ministers.

(b) **National Security Agency/Advisor.** This agency will be responsible for all Security aspects of the country both internal and external. The National Security Advisor will head this Agency and has to work in close coordination with the other three members. This agency will also coordinate the efforts of all the Police Forces

in India, both Central and State. The command of each Force will remain with the DGs and the Home Ministers of the Centre and State. He is part of the PMO.

(c) **National Foreign Affairs Agency/Advisor.** The National Foreign Affairs Advisor will be the advisor to the Government on all foreign policy and diplomatic issues. He can be the Foreign Secretary, but it may be profitable to consider whether a separate appointment divorced from the executive department of the Foreign Office is necessary for a more balanced perspective. To begin with, the National Foreign Affairs Agency can be the MEA.

(d) **National Intelligence Agency/Advisor.** The Joint Intelligence Committee must be upgraded as the National Intelligence Agency and its Head as the National Intelligence Advisor. This agency will coordinate and collate information from all the Intelligence Agencies both Defence and Civilian and disseminate intelligence that is actionable or otherwise. This body however may not have any intelligence agency under its direct command or control (to begin with); the command of each Agency continuing to remain with the respective Ministries of the Centre or State as hitherto fore. This Agency will report to the CCDS.

Cabinet Secretariat

14. The Cabinet Secretariat coordinates the functioning of the Cabinet Committees, and the NSC is nothing but a function of the CCDS; it also coordinates work between all Ministries; it is, therefore, axiomatic that the Cab Sectt would coordinate the functioning of all the bodies of the NSC, maintain the documentation and provide staff and secretarial support to them. The JIC (now upgraded to NIA) would be absolved of this responsibility.

CDS

14. The CDS will provide holistic input on defence matters to the CCDS and be responsible for the management, equipping and training of the three services. The operational aspects will be handled by the Service Chiefs; who will report to the DM and in turn to the PM. This arrangement will leave the services free to concentrate on the conduct of operations. This will also enable the future conversion of the Commands into Joint Force Commands or Armies.

15. This arrangement will also remove the concern of the civil dispensation that the CDS will be a super commander of the Forces.

Armed Forces

16. In addition to these changes at the political level, the Forces have to be reorganised into lean Armies divested of management and training roles and self-contained for operations in India and overseas. Some major changes necessary are:-

- (a) The operational commands of the three services must have similar if the not same area of interest and responsibility geographically to enable coordinated operations and to enable conversion to joint services commands (armies) later with little distress.
- (b) The management, equipping, and training roles must be transferred to the CDS leaving the Service HQs and commands free for planning operations.
- (c) A legal framework for the Defence of the Nation and for the forces to operate against the enemy on foreign soil or within the country is required.

Administrative Services

17. The bureaucracy also needs to be transformed into a merit-based service composed of domain specialists in the Central Govt. This is a matter for another discussion.

National (Nuclear) Command Authority (NCA)

18. The NCA, with its Political and Executive Council, are coterminous with the NSC; thus, a separate NCA for NBC situations is unnecessary. The recommended structure of the NSC with the joint chairmanship of the Strategic Policy Authority by the NSA and the CDS will adequately address the problem of the nuclear chain of command and the integration of the defence forces into the doctrinal, strategic and nuclear decision-making process.

Current Lacunae

19. Today the National Security Advisor is the immediate and only source of advice to the PM and the CCS on Intelligence Internal Security and Defence Matters. The NSA is a single person, and so far, he has been a retired bureaucrat or police. Irrespective of the personality, the appointment is saddled with a responsibility way beyond any single person's ability and scope.

20. The military has also been deliberately kept out of the loop in decision making, thus denying the CCS a wider counsel and the necessary redundancy on which strategic visions of large nations depend. Often it has resulted in a pacifist and naive approach in foreign policy, particularly where military considerations are necessary to be taken into account as well. This has, without exception, left the military holding the baby when things go wrong, as in 1948, 1962 and the post 65 and post 71 largesse to Pakistan.

21. So far, the role of the Armed Forces is also not defined in any law. There is also no law that defines the enemy and the actions that can be taken to defend the Nation on foreign soil or within the country. The only laws under which the Armed Forces can act

are the CrPC 130-132 and the AFSPA, both for the use of the Armed Forces against their own citizens. The primary task of the Forces is therefore left legally unsupported.

Advantages of the Recommended System

22. The recommended structure of the NSC takes into account the first two aspects, while the third is a matter of legislation. It is simple, flexible and caters for all situations, thus ensuring clarity in responsibilities, speed in decision making and coordinated execution.

23. The specific advantages are:-

- (a) There is one highest political and executive authority for all situations; the CCDS.
- (b) There is one advisory authority with two levels for all situations; the NDSAA with SAA and SPA.
- (c) The core advisory authority, the SAA, has four advisors against the one advisor, the NSA, now.
- (d) Within the advisory authority, views on each aspect are available from two sources; first, the SAA, which has taken a holistic view and the second the SPA, which consist of the heads of the executing agencies; i.e. the Service Chiefs and the Secretaries of each department who will opine on the execution aspects.
- (e) The responsibility for defence and security gets wider and is not restricted to the PMOs office and the NSA.
- (f) The reorganisation of existing resources to create agencies for internal security, intelligence, and foreign policy will provide a wider base of independent and holistic inputs on each aspect to the CCDS.
- (g) The new National Intelligence Agency/Advisor will significantly reduce the gaps in intelligence collation, analysis and dissemination of information.
- (h) The CDS will separate management, training and execution from operations, bringing in greater efficiency and economy. He will provide a holistic view of defence matters.

Conclusion

24. These are simple and obvious recommendations that should have been implemented long ago; however empire-building, coterie creation has taken priority over national interests. The Indian Governments stock answer to cross border offensive actions towards India has been '*agli baar dikhaoonga*' (you do it again, and

we will show you) and is in the danger of remaining so unless it breaks out of its auto-created comfort zone.
