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Jointness and Theaterisation: Implementation Framework



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"I am convinced that if the rate of change inside an institution is less than the rate of change outside, the end is in sight".

-Jack Welch CEO, General Electric

Abstract

Jointness and Theaterisation have been widely discussed in strategic circles and think tanks ever since the government appointed the CDS. The discourse so far, in the public domain, is restricted to macro issues like the allocation of areas of responsibility to the proposed Joint Theatre Commands (JTC), their roles and designations. The immediate goals of defining the roles, geographical areas, force structures and synergistic command and control structures will have to be quickly followed up with functional aspects of theaterisation. A theatre command, in essence, will be a holistic entity with a common organisational culture and professional

Key Points

- Need for analysing the reforms from the prism of Organisational Structures Concepts, Systems Analysis and Change Management, to ensure Jointness at functional levels.
- Analysis of Organisational Structures within which the existing and proposed JTCs needs to get organised and application of these structures into the ground realities in the services.
- Analysis of Theaterisation of Key Components like Organisational Design, Human Resource, Training Philosophy and Weapons & Equipment management.
- Need to review age old organisational structures.
- Reorientation of training & HR policies for modern battlefield, technology and equipment.
- Government sanctions and budget allocations.

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ecosystem, which would be distinct from single service ethos. It will have more autonomy in operational (op) planning and less dependence on SHQs/ DMA vis-a-vis the existing service specific military commands. The new JTCs have to be supported by concomitant jointness and theaterisation of Human Resources, Training Doctrines/ Curriculums, capability development and Weapons & Equipment management philosophy.¹

At present, the three Services are like three bodies coming together and co-operating to achieve a goal. The proposed structures will comprise of sophisticated systems, with varied coordinating and controlling mechanisms which will provide a 'scalar chain' that transforms the three services into truly Joint structures. Achieving such transformational goals would need a 'holistic system' approach to theaterisation. The 2015-16 reforms of PLA is an example as to how the implementation of reforms of such magnitude should be analysed and thought through at all levels and then enforced in a top -down manner to obviate interservice rivalries and deep seeded biases.. The mandate of the CDS is a complex one which will need a holistic analysis and a well thought out plan involving Systems Analysis, Change Management and Organisational Structure concepts to arrive at an effective implementation framework.

Conceptual Framework

Organisational Structures are designed to cater for felt needs of the organisation. An ideal structure for Indian Defence Forces operating in a VUCA world, should be based on flexibility and adaptability.² These have to be supported by standardisation of skills and outputs, balanced centralisation, focused and non-regulating HR Management, communication (physical, verbal and virtual), parallel channels of reporting and coordinating mechanisms. Real jointness as against 'joined-ness' can be achieved only by creating joint structures and designs supported by a holistic analysis of the desired outcomes of theatre commands through a 'whole of the Armed Forces and Government approach'.

A **Systems' Analysis** of the Joint Theatre Commands as a System related to larger systems like Higher Defence Control Organisation, Organisation of service HQs and their synergy with IDS/ DMA and related command and control organisations, should be a precursor to the impending transformations.³ Creation of JTCs cannot be considered in isolation without considering the **concomitant reforms and transformations in multiple domains**. Change cannot be effected in one area without repercussions in others. Functional entities and their inter-linkages are key to maintaining organisational efficiency by way of 'Differentiation in Division of Work' and Integration in Outputs across all components of the System (The Armed Forces). A balance between differentiation versus Integration in **Division of Work**

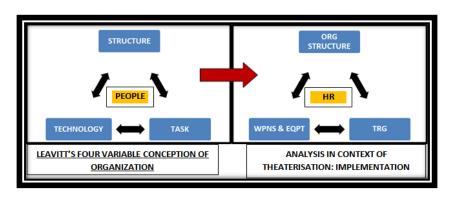




and coordination mechanism between services/ branches/ subordinate Joint HQs/ parallel organisations would have to be calibrated to suit the required organisational goals.⁴

A mix of evolutionary and revolutionary changes with a balanced approach, will be required for effective 'Change Management'. Transformational changes can only be achieved by a vibrant leadership at the apex, predicated on inter-/ intra- service consensus building with a vision of a modern organisation beyond the traditional mindset and parochial attitude. Research proves that 70% of change efforts fail because of failure to focus on people.⁵ The organisational designs will have to reconcile to flatter structures within JTCs for better organisational effectiveness. Recent developments in communication, IT, BPR and sophisticated automation processes enables Commanders (Cdrs) at different levels to handle and manage higher number of subordinate relationships (as per Graicuna's formula⁶). The current standard format of 1:3 (three subordinate HQs under a higher HQ) can be changed to 1: 5/6 implying a higher HQ having more than 3 subordinate HQs/ Units directly under it. This would enable flatter, more responsive and effective command & control and quick response.⁷

Major Components of Theaterised Organisation. So, what are the larger components of the Armed Forces Structure that we are looking at addressing for the impending change in wake of Jointness? As per Leavitt's 'four variable conception of organisation', the factors required to accomplish change are Structure, People, Task and Technology. These four elements are interconnected and interdependent. Any change in one of the elements will have a corresponding effect and change in all the other components. In the context of theaterisation of the Indian Armed Forces, the corresponding elements which need to form part of the implementation framework are Organisational Structures, Human Resource (HR), Training and Capability Development (Weapons & Equipment) (refer Figure 1).⁸





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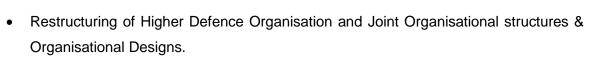


Perspective

Creation of Joint Theatre Commands and their effective operationalisation, are two distinct issues, which are equally important to achieve the desired outcome of jointness to win future wars. Their planning and execution have to be undertaken simultaneously to achieve the desired results. The budgetary constraints should not be detrimental to the implementation of key reforms that are required to support the joint structures. Theaterisation is not a panacea for all pending reforms in the Armed Forces⁹; but it certainly provides an opportunity to set in motion the process of administrative and policy reforms required for a modern military, of an emerging regional power, battling global challenges. A half-baked solution will only result in the new joint structures, having been created with great pomp and show, languishing for want of resources, policies and directions. It will further compromise our operational effectiveness instead of enhancing it.¹⁰

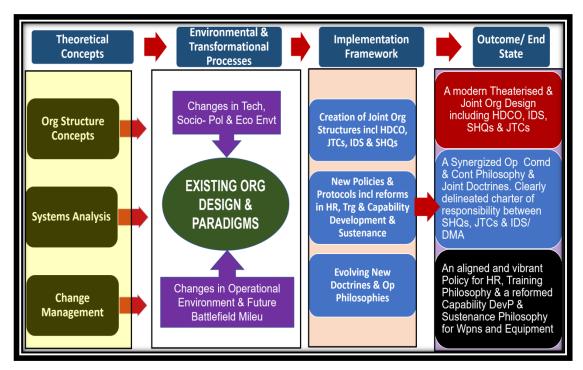
- Opportunities and Challenges. The current organisational structures and policies are largely of Pre-World War II vintage. We have linearly built over those foundations, created almost a century back, which have stood the test of time.¹¹ However, there is a need to have a fresh look at our organisational structures, policies, parameters, training philosophies and equipment management policies, in the milieu of fighting the modern wars in a joint environment. For example, there is no denying the fact that, in the age of specialisation and varied verticals, the old adage of "jack of all traits and master of none" needs to be replaced with "jack of all and master of some". Our HR policies and Training Philosophies need to churn out specialists who are not constrained by the burden of getting exposures in all appointments, training in all terrains, all fronts and working on all platforms. The modern equipment and IT needs specialists with varied education and training backgrounds to achieve the desired operational effectiveness. The realignment of such policies, parameters and technostructures, is implicit to the mandate of the CDS to create Joint Theatre Commands.
- Scope for Implementation Framework. Need for reforms and policy changes is necessitated by to a number of reasons— major shift in socio-economics dynamics, development in technology, innovations, proliferation of IT, AI & ML and a change in concepts of training, man management, equipment management etc. The 2015 PLA Reforms were driven by similar factors under the leadership and watch of Xi Jinping.¹² A holistic implementation framework as part of theatre reforms (refer Figure 2) can be categorised into four major areas as under[†]: -

[†] Operations and Intelligence aspects will also get reformed as part of Joint Org Structures. Same will be governed by Joint Op Doctrines which is not being covered in this paper



- Theaterisation of Human Resource into modern, vibrant, cohesive and professional tri -service fighting force.
- Theaterisation of Training Philosophy, Doctrines, Policies, Establishments and Curriculum in sync with HR intake & theatre specific operational requirements.
- Theaterised Capability Development and Sustenance Policies with theatre specific acquisitions, commonality of Repair Depots and interoperability.

Figure 2: Holistic Implementation Framework in Support of Organisational Reforms for Theaterisation and Jointness



Source: Annotated by Author

Restructuring of Higher Defence Organisation and Joint Organisational structures

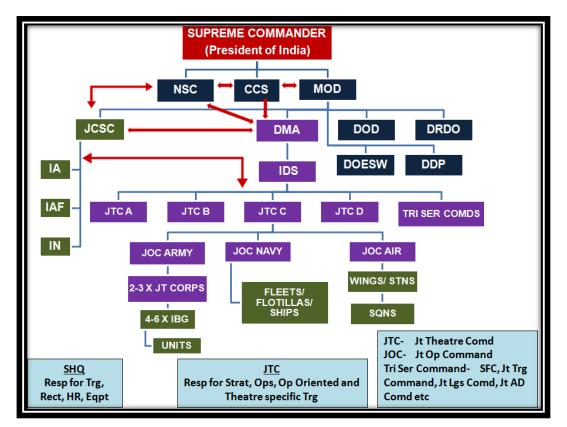
 Higher Defence Organisation Structure. Initially, the organisation of the Indian Armed Forces was based on a 'Matrix Organisation', having multiple strategic priorities with three services as three monolithic pyramids with separate organisational structures and designs within. The apex security structure comprising CCS, NSC, COSC/IDS and MoD, needs to be aligned with a theaterised concept with a tri-service operational command structure and a service specific control and coordination channel.





The proposed structure needs to integrate the combined elements of a professional bureaucracy (standardisation of skills and training), a divisionalised form (standardisation of outputs and limited vertical decentralisation) and to a lesser extent, a machine bureaucracy (external control, some job specialisation, functional grouping and limited horizontal decentralisation).¹³

The Theatre Commanders reports directly to the COSC/CDS/IDS on operational matters. The service HQs are responsible for service specific training, equipping, recruitment, HR management including postings and promotions and SD matters. The Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) acts as a collegiate committee of service chiefs headed by CDS with all Theatre Commanders as members for policy formulations on various issues. The JTC HQs are responsible for operational strategy and planning, theatre specific training & equipment profile and logistics. Various Tri-Service Command, Joint AD Command, are role-oriented organisations functioning directly under IDS/ DMA.¹⁴ These can be operationalised immediately with concomitant integration with IDS.





Source: Annotated by Author



Theatre Organisational Structure. The organisation of JTCs should facilitate • reducing chain of command by amalgamating Brigade/ Division/ Corps level HQs of the Army in sync with other services. The Theatre Commander will have service specific Joint Operational Commands, in line with existing Command HQs jointly staffed by all services. Each of these Commands will be orbatted with Operation Oriented Joint Corps/ Integrated Battle Groups/ Fleets/ Wings depending upon operational task, terrain and Area of Responsibility. The Joint Corps/ IBGs/ Fleets/ Wings will have Units/Wings/Ships/Platforms depending on the operational tasks to be undertaken (Figure 3). A scalar chain of command with single line authority will have to be maintained at all levels. Differentiation in work ethos will help in job/ domain specialisation, standardisation of skills, functional grouping, maintaining individual service identities and grant every service adequate latitude in matters specific to that service. Integration in functional ethos will lead to standardisation of outputs, Unity of Command, procedures and training to facilitate true jointness while working as part of a single entity towards desired outcomes.¹⁵

Theaterisation of Human Resource

- *Primacy of HR.* The primacy of HR is critical to primacy of operational effectiveness.¹⁶ The role of the 'man behind the machine' and the 'fingers behind the trigger' can never be over empahsised in any generation of warfare across the various spectrums, spanning the role of armed forces. The recent development in Afghanistan is a testimony to the importance of morale, leadership and expertise of the human factor. The Indian Armed Forces, in particular, have always prided themselves in a vibrant HR at grassroots level and junior leadership. The People in any organisation are always central to its structures, tasks and policies to ensure optimum organisational effectiveness.¹⁷
- Policies. The three services have their own organisational culture and value systems which are required to be nurtured and maintained even in a joint service environment. However, disparities arising out of relative domain specialisation, lack of interoperability, different cadre management policies and varied training standards need to be solved under an overarching umbrella of distributed policy formulations between SHQs & Theatre Commands. The uniqueness of different uniforms, drills and rank structures must be integrated by some form of integrating factors/ commonalities. HR

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policies are primarily a service domain, but the JTCs would have to be delegated and empowered to manage limited postings and profile/ cadre and career management of affiliated personnel.

- Postings/ Tenures. The short tenures in the Army particularly in higher ranks with different command and staff profiles, can be aligned to longer command tenures for greater stability. Theaterisation would fall short of its expectations if an officer is to be posted to a different theatre, with every posting or a Unit required move on inter- theatre SD move (Tenure Move) every two to three years. The officers on commissioning to various arms, streams, wings, services should be posted and permanently affiliated to a particular theatre command. The staff postings, Field/ Peace profile and command appointments, upto Unit Command, should be preferably managed within the same Joint Theatre with exposure to at least one of the other JTC/ SHQ/DMA. This would enable at least two/three postings for an officer within his own theatre, before proceeding outside to SHQ/ Field profile management postings on EREs. To cater for larger integration issues and flexibility, a 70:30 policy can be adopted for SD move of Units and posting of officers wherein 70% of all units/ officers/ men are always posted to their own affiliated JTC and 30% outside to other JTCs/ SHQ/DMA/ ERE etc. This would lead to greater domain specialisation and integration.
- SD Profile. The Army/ IAF/ Navy Units will continue to draw their manpower from existing Regimental Centres/ Category B training establishments and managed by line & Staff Duty directorates as being done hitherto fore. However, units should be permanently affiliated to a specific JTC within which it would serve its Peace and Field tenures. Such affiliation of the Units can be based on troop composition and proximity to catchment areas as far as possible. This would enable greater specialisation in a given terrain/ theatre/ enemy and help in an economical management of SD profiles. Staff Duty (SD) movements of Units & ERE postings of PBOR can be managed on a 70:30 formula as described earlier.
- Domain Specialisation. Managing SD movements and postings on a 70:30 formula is a way of achieving specialisation for theatre operations. The manpower in various streams needs to be further specialised in common trades across services in areas like Drivers, IT/ Computer operator,

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communication and other verticals, which are different from the mainstream trade of his specific arm/ service. The career management of officers also needs to be aligned along one or two specialised verticals only in their staff exposures. The command appointments should preferably be restricted to own JTCs up to the colonel rank. The overall cadre/ career management of officers should be aligned to the need for specialisation in specific terrain/ enemy/ domain. The manpower/personnel/human resource matters will continue to be dealt by respective SHQs. Staff exposure of officers would have to be aligned to specialisation in one or two verticals only up to Colonel level. The creation of Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) in the army will reduce the chain of command and make them more effective. The rank structures and command & staff appointments of officers beyond Unit Commanders will need to be aligned to new organisational structures and hierarchies. Sanctions of the Government of India for creation of additional 2 star and 4 star ranks as IBG and theatre Commanders and abolition of Brigadier Rank will have to be suitably aligned to the proposed reforms across all services and taken up for approval.

Theaterisation of Training

- Joint Training Establishments/ Infrastructure. Achieving jointness in training, is the key to achieve jointness in operations. Creation of a JTC may be considered by integrating existing training establishments. Each JTC needs to nominate at least one Joint Cat A Establishment and Two Joint Cat B Establishment by amalgamating existing resources for all kinds of operational training for all ranks. The existing theatre specific training establishment of JTCs, for example CIJW Training School can be merged with Cat A establishment t of Eastern JTC. All other single training institutes will remain under the Training Directorates of the respective services. Joint Training establishments vis. NDA, DSSC, NDC etc. would be either under DMA or Jointt Training Command, if established. A Joint War College needs to be established under the IDS.¹⁸
- **Curriculum.** All Regimental Centres will continue to impart Basic Military Training (BMT) as hitherto fore. The recruits, after getting enrolled, may report to the Joint Cat B establishments of affiliated JTCs for Advance Military

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Training (AMT). On successful completion of AMT, the recruit joins his Unit in same JTC. In case of officers, all Pre-Commission Training (PCT) for Permanent Commission should be done in Joint Training establishments like NDA and PCT and for Short Service Commission (SSC), in service specific Cat A establishments. On commissioning, a PC officer joins his Unit directly in the affiliated JTC whereas a SSC officer gets attached to the Cat A establishment in JTC for a short capsule course before joining his Unit. The joint training establishments would be entrusted with conducting various courses that are considered necessary to promote jointness & joint war fighting. The training of the Young Officers (YOs) will be conducted in service specific training establishments, as is being currently done. This will be followed by an orientation course in the form of Advanced Young Officers (YOs) in JTC training establishments. A suggested & illustrative model for training is as under:-

	Joint Training	Service Training	JTC Training
	Establishment	Establishment	Establishment
Control	DMA/ IDS	Respective SHQ	Respective JTC HQ
Establishment	INDU, NDA, NDC	IMA, NA, AFA, Regt	1 x Cat A establishments
/ Infra	DSSC, Armed Forces	Centres, Service	2 x Cat B establishments
	Joint War College	specific Establishments	
	(CDM/ HC equiv	and all other institutes	
	courses, Joint JC	not including in JTC	
	Course)		
Courses	PCT for PC, DSSC,	BMT for rects, Weapons	Theatre specific warfare,
	DTSC, HDMC/ HC/	Training and all other	PCT Orientation of SS
	NHC/HAC; IT,	courses as required	Officers, Adv YOs , Tac,
	Management,		Terrain & En related
	Leadership, Tech		courses, Language courses
	graduation		etc

Table 1: Suggested Model for Training

Source: Prepared by Author

Theaterised Capability Development and Sustenance Philosophy

Concept. The desired Ends of JTCs (operational effectiveness) will be met through Joint Operational Doctrines which will act as ways and the means being the real capability in terms of Battleships, Battalions, Aerial Missions, their Weapons/ Equipment, platforms





employed in various roles in concert with each other. The Indian Armed Forces have struggled with imported weapons and equipments and shortages due to huge financial outgo in defence acquisitions. However, the recent defence Industrial Ecosystem is rejuvenated and, in another decade, it will be able to support most of the needs of the Armed Forces indigenously. The armed forces have huge opportunity and time to synchronise their modernisation programs with theaterisation initiatives on one hand and a budding defence industry and indigenisation on the other hand.

- Weapon/ Equipment Management Philosophy. Each service has unique operational roles and tasks within the overall framework of theatre strategy and plans. Therefore, the weapons and equipment employed will be different depending on their primary roles, adversary, terrain and the dominant service in that theatre. The individual services will continue to follow existing acquisition procedures as applicable. However, theaterisation will enable formulation of theatre specific acquisition plans and terrain specific equipment. Theaterisation of Weapons/ Equipments/ Platforms will facilitate Integration of our actions for desired outcomes.¹⁹ These will encompass the following aspects:-
 - A joint Equipment Management Philosophy and JTC Equipment Management policy based on specific operational roles and type of equipment, terrain and other peculiarities.
 - Promote greater understanding of each other's capability and interoperability at different levels amongst all services.
 - The Joint Theatre Commands will generally conform to a single enemy and a common terrain, thus necessitating theatre specific acquisition plans through Capital and Revenue routes.
 - Common Repair & Maintenance Philosophy, encompassing a differentiation at Field & Intermediate levels and an Integration at Base level, by amalgamating all resources in a geographical area.

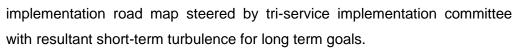
Way Ahead

An implementation framework needs to be carved out by a **multifaceted approach involving analysis, studies, war gaming, policy formulations, budgetary allocations, government sanctions and top-down implementation** in a time bound manner. ²⁰The creation of JTCs and achieving jointness, is also a clarion call to implement pathbreaking reforms for 21st century Armed Forces, which India aspires for as a regional power.²¹ The



Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 was enacted in US to implement the mandate of the government.²² The way ahead can be summarised as under:

- **Creation of an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee.** The government must immediately create an inter-ministerial steering committee to put in place the requisite statutory provisions, financial allocations, amendment to AOB rules, TOB and create a framework for long term government sanctions required to implement the creation of new organisational designs and functional entities.
- *Inter- Service Study Groups.* Evolve an implementation framework based on an Inter-Service Study Group under DMA with a systems approach to organise restructuring as term of reference. It needs to be concurrently followed up with three study groups for HR, Training & Capability Development (Weapon/ Equipment) policies, to work out associated restructuring, infrastructure development and integration of the three services along these verticals. These can be steered by CDM, civil/ private consultancy management groups and academia including IIMs and major think tanks.²³
- **Building Consensus and Collaboration.** The apex leadership in DMA and Service HQs, must work towards a consensus and collaboration based approach towards implementation of the mandate of the government of India on theaterisation and jointness. The short-term turbulence and uncertainties must be accepted as a necessary evil to effect pathbreaking transformational changes towards achieving jointness.
- Issue of Road Map for Implementation. The DMA must shun piecemeal linear changes and issue a roadmap for implementation of the government mandate in a time bound manner. This should clearly spell out and delineate unambiguous charter and division of work/ responsibility between SHQs/ DMA/ IDS and JTCs with concomitant policy changes.
- Creation of Policy Task Forces. The Policy Task Forces on HR management, Training Philosophy, Weapon and Equipment Management and Creation of Organisational Structures must be formulated to formulate policies with implementation guidelines and timelines.
- Tri-Service Implementation Committee. Once formulated, implementation to be achieved through a top-down approach that is through an



• **Government Sanctions.** Various ministries of the government, MoD and CCS must be kept in loop at all times for budgetary implications and other sanctions required to be taken for the proposed structures to be formalised.

Creation of the CDS and DMA has put the ball of modernisation and transformation of the Armed Forces on the side of military leadership. The Change can be effected only if the leadership sheds the prism of traditional mindsets and looks at it afresh with the vision of a modern organisation. A political push for implementation of a political mandate will only dilute the stature of the Forces and Jointness in the long term. However, if required it must be resorted to. The military leadership will do well to exploit the opportunity for transformation by responding to the clarion call through cooperation, collaboration and consensus.²⁴

End Notes

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