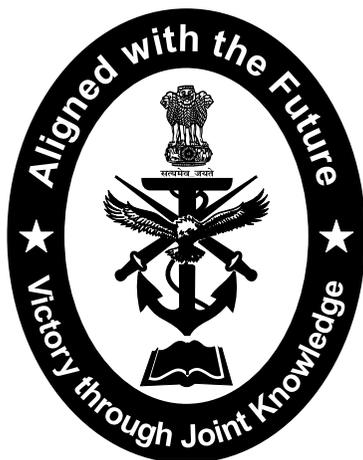


**REFORMING AND
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OF INDIA**

REFORMING AND RESTRUCTURING : HIGHER DEFENCE ORGANIZATION OF INDIA

By

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ABSTRACT

The Higher Defence Organization of India is a legacy of the British but its evolution over last 70 years has been reactive, amateurish in nature and based on adhocism. While our political leaders and the elite visualize India as a 'Great Power' among the comity of nations but their efforts are not adequate to turn this vision into reality, particularly in terms of Military Power. The Military not only needs to be equipped and modernized at a faster pace, though that also remains unsatisfactory but the military hierarchy is isolated from Policy-making and is confined to only carrying out directives. This results in Political leadership at the helm getting second-hand advice, filtered through bureaucrats. In a democracy, civilian control over the military is essential but that implies political control and not bureaucratic control, especially over operational issues, and that is the norm in all other democratic powers. There is a need to synergise the efforts of political executives, military leaders and bureaucracy towards the common goal of evolving a holistic national security strategy and suitable organization to implement it. Another aspect is the emerging future battlefield milieu spread over land, sea, air, space and cyber domain. Any delay in preparing ourselves for facing the threats and challenges in any of these domains will be detrimental to our national security. Keeping in step with our rising 'economic power' and 'smart power', our military capability is in urgent need of 'Comprehensive Reforms and Restructuring'.

Introduction

“In time of war, the military commander should be given a seat in the Cabinet. He should not, however, have unlimited power. His judgement and counsel should merely ensure that statesmen reached the correct decisions.”

- Carl von Clausewitz¹

The clear-cut demarcation between the ‘state of war’ and ‘state of peace’ among nations which existed in the pre-1945 era, has gradually eroded with the role of force in international relations having undergone revolutionary changes. The disintegration of Soviet Union has not only brought an end to the Cold War but it has called into question some aspects of the Clausewitzian formulations of the role of force. The militarist notion that a single purely military victory can affect a permanent political settlement is among the most dangerous and most persistent delusions. War of the future is not a mere matter of armies but of entire nations dedicating themselves to the task of survival. Not lightning victories in the field but the physical, moral and economic exhaustion of a nation through multifarious means other than war would ultimately decide the conflict. The “Use of force without War” either through Proxy war or demonstrative and deterrent employment of force has come into vogue in recent years and is going to stay.

The constricted view of treating national defence as synonymous with national security is no longer valid. National security encompasses a much broader spectrum of challenges, threats and responses in a vast arena, where national defence - in other words military security essentially from external threats - is a sub-set of national security in its comprehensive framework.² This national security framework would involve political, social, economic, technological and military factors each interacting on one another, which in other words are the essential ingredients of a country’s comprehensive national power (CNP)³.

The Higher Direction of Defence with its organization in a country ensures the optimum utilization of its CNP and seamless coordination between the people, the government and the armed forces. This is achieved through a synergistic effort between the political, civil and military elements. In today's environment of 'coercive diplomacy', diplomacy is conducted by civil governments and coercion is the business of armed forces. Hence the continuous projection of the image of armed forces capabilities in the international arena is a necessity, while diplomacy is conducted to avoid adverse consequences to our security and interests without having to use these capabilities.⁴ It is apparent that India's present higher defence organization and civil-military equation is woefully inadequate to meet the requirements of today and challenges of the future. And the worst is, the chiefs of staff are independent entities outside the framework of the government. In all other democratic polities, they are part and parcel of the government machinery.

The aim of this paper is to study the higher direction of defence and its organisation in India and assess its suitability to meet the requirements of national security. To achieve that aim, this paper addresses the subject in following sequence:

First, Historical Ethos and the British Legacy.

Second, Evolution of Higher Defence Organization in India.

Third, An Appraisal of Higher Defence Organization of Major Powers.

Fourth, Faultlines in India's Higher Defence Structure.

Fifth, Reforming and Restructuring: Inescapability of Integrated Theatre Commands/ Specified Commands and Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS).

Historical Ethos and the British Legacy

The concept of Nation State, which was brought into being by the French Revolution in the West, was prevalent in our country over two millenniums ago during the days of Chanakya, and the Mauryan Empire under King Chandragupta had all the attributes of a modern higher defence organization. According to Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador in the court of Chandragupta, the Mauryan War Office had Commander-in-Chief at the apex with six boards each of five officers for Cavalry, Chariots, Elephants, Infantry, Commissariat and Admiralty. This War Office catered for the defence of a country of continental dimension from Kabul to Kamrup and Kashmir to Karnataka, looking after the largest standing Army of its time: 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 elephants, 8,000 war chariots and an unspecified number of naval ships. The most significant aspect is that it was a combined headquarters for both the Army and the Navy and there was a common Chief for the two Services, which in modern parlance could be called 'Chief of the Defence Staff'⁵ (See Annexure 1). But like all other ancient civilisations, we also reached at the pinnacle of glory and power and then declined. Instead of basking in the glory of our ancient past, let this act as a source of inspiration for improving our present organization. The present higher defence organization in India is a corollary to the legacy left by the British which has undergone certain modifications.

In the Nineteenth Century, on the one hand, the Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C) as it is evident from the designation, was the Commander of Armed Forces while on the other hand, the Military Member, (an officer in the rank of Major General and junior to the C-in-C) was the channel through whom all the proposals and recommendations of the C-in-C were being put up to the Viceroy and all orders of the Viceroy communicated to the Army. The famous Curzon-Kitchener dispute was not a case of the Army questioning the superiority of the Civil but Lord Kitchener, the C-in-C of the Armed Forces in India,

argued that the office of the Military Member was “detrimental to military efficiency”. He proposed the unification of the offices of the Military Member and the C-in-C into one position. The British government decided in favour of Kitchener, which led to resignation of Curzon. Consequently, the post of Military Member was abolished and the C-in-C became the only member of the Viceroy’s Executive Council. A Major General was appointed as the Army Secretary and became the head of the Army Department. He had to work under the C-in-C. A General Staff Branch was introduced in the Army Headquarters with Chief of General Staff (CGS) becoming the Principal Staff Officer (PSO) of the C-in-C. Later from 1921 onwards, designation of Army Secretary was changed to Defence Secretary and officers of the Indian Civil Service were given this appointment following the advice of Lord Esher. In the early thirties, a Chiefs of Staff Committee was also established which was presided over by the CGS with FOC-in-C Navy and AOC Air Force as members. The latter two were provided direct access to the C-in-C and the Viceroy in the event of any major differences in the Committee.⁶

This so called higher defence organization had supposedly stood the test of time in the two World Wars but the fact must not be lost sight of that national decisions for India were taken in WhiteHall, London and the British Indian C-in-C was not even the equivalent of a Chief of Staff of modern democratic polity who has the responsibility for overall national defence planning and for making recommendations on that basis to the Cabinet.

Evolution of Higher Defence Organization in India

On 24 September 1947, Lord Ismay, the Chief of Staff to Lord Mountbatten, Governor General of India, had recommended a three-tier Higher Defence Organization, to Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru, at his request. This was based on his experience as the Secretary to the Chief of Staff Committee in the UK, being the Principal Staff Officer of Sir Winston Churchill

and after the World War II, he had been to the United States to help the Americans in reorganising their higher defence setup. Based on his recommendations, three committees were formed:

- The Defence Committee of the Cabinet (DCC) chaired by the Prime Minister.
- The Defence Minister's Committee (DMC) chaired by the Defence Minister.
- The Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) as part of the Military Wing of the Cabinet Secretariat. The chairmanship was made rotational with the Service Chief longest in the Committee becoming the Chairman.

This arrangement functioned well till the mid 1950s despite the C-in-C being only an invitee to the DCC and not a member. The designation of the C-in-C of the three services was changed to Chiefs of Staff in 1955, and subsequent to the appointment of V K Krishna Menon as the Defence Minister in 1957, the DCC began to lose its relevance as he had direct access to the PM. After the 1962 debacle, the DCC was first changed to Emergency Committee of the Cabinet and then to Cabinet Committee of Political Affairs (CCPA). The 1961 Allocation of Business (AOB)/Transaction of Business (TOB) Rules were promulgated and the three services ceased to be a part of the Ministry of Defence and became attached offices. Thereafter, the Military Wing was moved out of the Cabinet Secretariat thereby creating a vacuum between the political and the military hierarchy.⁷ If India could manage the hurdles of wars in 1965 and 1971, it was more to the credit of the then prime ministers, who gave direct access to the Service Chiefs and abided by their advice. The management of national security by CCPA remained inept due to following fundamental weaknesses:

- This august body had little independent expertise of its own.

- Its very designation entailed that neither it was intended to deal with national security on an exclusive basis nor it was supposed to monitor the national security scene on a continuous basis.
- It merely dealt with issues raised by the Ministry of Defence which itself was ill-equipped to encompass the whole gamut of national security issues.
- Service Chiefs were not members of CCPA. They were only occasionally asked to be in attendance.⁸

The CCPA was later renamed as the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). There were other committees too like the Joint Planning Committee, Joint Intelligence Committee, Joint Training Committee, Inter-Service Equipment Policy Committee etc., which were formed, based on the recommendations of Lord Ismay and have continued to this day with some modifications. It may be worth mentioning that the spirit behind the higher defence organization proposed by Ismay for providing direct interaction between the political executive and the Defence Services and minimising bureaucratic control have thoroughly got subverted.⁹ Later in the mid 1980s for defence planning, two organizations - the Defence Coordination and Implementation Committee and the Defence Planning Staff (DPS) were also formed. The former meets only on a need-based manner while the latter wound up within a few years.

As regards, Ministry of Defence (MoD), it is manned exclusively by civil officials and is organised as four departments: departments of defence, defence production, defence research and development, and Ex-servicemen's Welfare. Each department is headed by a secretary. The Defence Secretary besides heading the Department of Defence, is additionally responsible for coordinating the activities of the four departments in the Ministry. In addition, there is a Defence (Finance) division that deals with all matters having financial implications and performs an advisory role for the MoD.

Service headquarters is the last component of India's higher defence structure. Having been degraded to a lowly status of "**attached offices**" in 1961, Service Headquarters are not an integral part of the Government of India - a unique framework which no other country has! The nomenclature was changed to "**associate headquarters**" in 2001, but it was only a change of phrase, devoid of anything substantial. Once again, nomenclature of the Service headquarters was changed as "**Integrated Headquarters of MoD (Army), (Navy) and (Airforce)**" - a meaningless exercise of semantics without any empowerment or integration of the three Services.¹⁰

- **National Security Council**: A policy advisory committee, which was in a way the counterpart of National Security Council in the United States, Defence and Overseas Policy Committee in UK or Committee of National Defence in France, was set up in 1986 under the Chairmanship of Mr. G. Parthasarthy with four ministers and five civil servants as its members while Service Chiefs were excluded from its membership. Whereas in USA, UK and France, there are only ministers and military officers in such committees and not a single civil servant. Main objective of this committee was to take a view of long term options of foreign policy and national security. However, the Committee proved to be a non-starter because Mr Parthasarthy could not provide a pragmatic solution for Sri Lanka and two of the ministers fell from political grace. This Committee was soon wound up.¹¹

National Security Council (NSC) was set up in August 1990 but it never got into its stride and remained dormant for a few years. However, it was revived towards end 1998 with a National Security Advisor (NSA). Since then, there have been five incumbents so far for this appointment - three were retired diplomats and two, including the present one are retired intelligence officers.

The NSA has a Secretariat which is headed by a Deputy NSA. This appointment too has been held either by retired diplomats, bureaucrats or intelligence officers. The highly experienced military officers, who have been groomed in this profession throughout their entire career, have not been considered for any of the above appointments. The Secretariat is also filled with officers of various ranks holding senior, middle level and junior staff appointments, with armed forces represented by a few middle level officers.

The NSC and NSA work parallel to the CCS. The NSC comprises a Strategic Policy Group (SPG), a National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and a Secretariat. The SPG is responsible for inter-ministerial coordination and comprises the Cabinet Secretary, three Service Chiefs and Secretaries of core ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, Home, Finance, Atomic Energy and Space besides the heads of the intelligence agencies and the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. The NSAB consists mainly of a large body numbering nearly 20 of retired officials, of which only three are from the armed force.¹²

Organizational structures of India's Higher Defence Organization from British Period to its evolution till today are illustrated in Annexures 2 to 5.

An Appraisal of Higher Defence Organizations of Major Powers

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clarion call for India to assume ***"a 'leading role', rather than [as] just a balancing force, globally"***¹³ in fact signifies his larger vision of envisaging India to become a traditional great power. India will only acquire this status when its economic foundations, its state institutions, and its military capabilities are truly robust.¹⁴ The organizational strength of its national security structure should

be able to leverage the comprehensive national power of the country. To evaluate the effectiveness of National Security structure including the Higher Defence Organization of India, it is imperative that contemporary organizations of major nations be studied to draw useful lessons.

- **Higher Defence Organization in the United States.**

The President of the United States is according to the Constitution, the Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces. The Secretary of Defence is the “Principal Assistant to the President in all matters relating to the Department of Defense”, and is vested with statutory authority to lead the Department and all of its component agencies, including military command authority second only to the President. On behalf of the President, the Secretary Defense is responsible for formulating policies related to the Armed Forces.¹⁵ The Secretary of Defense exercises control by a ‘Defence Planning Guidance’ (DPG) document that includes national security objectives, policies, priorities of military missions and the resources likely to be made available for the projected period. The DPG is prepared in consultation with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) and is instrumental in initiating the Department of Defense Planning Programme and Budgeting System. The Contingency Planning Guidance (CPG) is another document, prepared in consultation with the CJCS, based on which contingency plans are drawn up by the military that are then vetted by the NSC, before final approval by the President. The DPG and CPG, therefore, ensure that overall civil control (not control by civil servants) is maintained in the entire planning process.¹⁶

The elements of the United States Higher Defence Organization are (For Organizational Structure see Annexure 6):-

- **National Security Council (NSC)**: Located in the office of the President, the NSC is under the chairmanship of the President; its statutory members include the Secretaries of State, Defense and the Treasury, the Vice-President, the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (also known as the National Security Advisor), the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Director of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Director National Intelligence (DNI). The Secretary of State has primary responsibility for foreign policy and the Secretary of Defense oversees decision-making in relation to US defence policy; the CJCS acts as military advisor to the Council, while the Director CIA is its intelligence advisor.

The National Security Advisor plays two roles in the decision-making process; both as the President's adviser on national security matters and as the senior government official responsible for managing senior-level discussions of national security issues. In these tasks, the Advisor is supported by the NSC staff, comprised of civil servants lent out by other agencies, political appointees, and other personnel.

The NSC is stipulated as a statutory body in US legislation, and is sanctioned by an Act of Congress. Specifically, its role is to manage and coordinate foreign and defence policies, and to reconcile diplomatic and military commitments and requirements. It seeks to ensure that the President has adequate information on which to make his decisions, although it does not have an implementation role.¹⁷

- **Department of Defence (DoD)**. The Department of Defense is composed of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Office of the Inspector General, the Combatant Commands, the Military Departments (Army, Navy, Air Force),

the Defense Agencies and Department of Defense Field Activities, the National Guard Bureau and other agencies.

- **Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)**. It consists of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as its head, who is the senior most ranking military officer having served as chief of any service; Vice Chairman, always from a different service; the Military Service Chiefs from the Army, Marine Corps, Navy and Air Force, in addition to the Chief of National Guard Bureau.
- **Combatant Commands (Unified/Specified)**. The United States currently has nine Combatant Commands, organised either on a geographical basis or on a global, functional basis. Troops from the various departments (i.e. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines) are placed under the operational command of unified/specified commanders.
- **Military Departments**. The Military Departments are each headed by their own secretary (i.e. Secretary of the Army, Secretary of the Navy and Secretary of the Air Force). The Secretaries of the Military Departments, in turn, normally exercise authority over their forces by delegation through their respective Service Chiefs.¹⁸

Consequent to the Goldwater-Nichols Act (GNA) of 1986, the US Military has adopted a command and control (C2) structure in which the authority flows from the President and Secretary of Defense to the commanders of the regional Unified Combatant Commands, who lead joint forces within their respective theatres. Service Chiefs do not possess operational command authority over US troops but they are tasked solely with “the training, provision of equipment and administration of troops”.¹⁹

- **Higher Defence Organization of the UK** In 1963, the three independent service ministries (Admiralty,

War Office and Air Ministry) were merged to form the present Ministry of Defence (MoD) in UK. The UK MoD, headed by the Secretary State for Defence, is a unified and integrated organization which functions both as a Department of Government and as a military headquarters. The Secretary of State for defence is assisted by two advisers, one a civilian and the other a senior military officer (For Organizational Structure see Annexure 7):

- **Permanent Under Secretary of State (PUS)**. The PUS is responsible for policy, finance and administration and as the MoD's Principal Accounting Officer he is personally responsible to Parliament for the expenditure of all public money voted to the MoD for Defence purposes.
- **Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)**. The CDS acts as the professional head of the Armed Forces and he is the principal military adviser to both the Secretary of State and to the Government.

Defence Committees. In general terms defence is managed through a number of major committees that provide corporate leadership and strategic direction:

- **Defence Council (DC)**. The DC is the senior committee which provides the legal basis for conduct and administration of defence and this council is chaired by the Secretary of State for Defence. There are 15 other members in this committee who are also responsible for implementing the defence policy, which the body formulates.
- **Chiefs of Staff Committee**. This committee is chaired by the CDS and is the MoD's senior committee that allows the CDS to gather information and advice from the single service chiefs of staff on operational matters and the preparation and conduct of military operations.

- **Single Service Boards**. There are three single service boards: Navy Board, Army Board and the Air Force Board all of which are chaired by the Secretary of State for Defence. In general the purpose of the boards is the administration and monitoring of single service performance. Each of these three boards has an executive committee chaired by the single service chief of staff.²⁰

National Security Council (NSC). The British NSC, established in May 2010, is a Cabinet Committee tasked with overseeing all issues related to national security, intelligence coordination and defence strategy. It is chaired by the Prime Minister and its permanent members are the Deputy Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Defence, Energy and Climate Change, Foreign Affairs, Home and International Development Secretaries. CDS, or his deputy, Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee and heads of intelligence agencies also attend regularly. A National Security Advisor (a civil servant), acts as the secretary of the NSC and heads a team of staff officers, called the NSC Secretariat and located in the Cabinet office.²¹

The UK has a fully integrated Higher Defence Organization, wherein the Prime Minister and the Cabinet jointly provide political direction. The Secretary of State for Defence exercises actual control of armed forces through Permanent Under Secretary of State and the CDS. The CDS is the highest military representative, who commands and coordinates the activities of three services through the Vice CDS and the three service chiefs.

- **Higher Defence Organization of the People's Republic of China** (For Organizational structure see Annexure 8). As part of the on-going reforms in the PLA, which began in September 2015, previous seven Military Regions have been replaced by five new "theatre commands". The theatres are aligned against land

and, where applicable, maritime security challenges in their respective geographic areas; for instance Eastern Theatre Command covers the Taiwan Strait and East China Sea while the Southern Theatre Command covers the South China Sea. These are integrated commands as they draw units from individual services. The Central Military Commission (CMC) has been reorganised with a New Joint Staff Department (JSD) performing the command & control (C2) functions. The PLA has adopted a distinct operational chain of command from CMC to theatre commands and administrative chain of control from CMC to services, akin to the US C2 structure. Accordingly, the service chiefs have only the responsibility to 'organize, train and equip' the troops. However, the PLA still retains its soviet orientation, with Political Commissars and Party Committees playing a role in all key decisions. Therefore, the western analysts describe the new PLA C2 structure as "Goldwater Nichols with Chinese characteristics."²²

Faultlines in India's Higher Defence Structure

Faultlines in our organizational structure need to be identified and seen in the context of contemporary organizations of other countries so that useful lessons are imbibed while restructuring and strengthening our own system. These faultlines can be traced right back from the evolution of our current organization:

- **Commander-in-Chief to Chief of Staff: Transformation without Change of Role.** In 1955, when the designation of the then commanders-in-chief of the three services was changed to chiefs of staff, the Army, Navy and Air Force acts were just amended to replace the wording 'Commander-in-Chief' wherever it occurred in the Acts by the term 'Chief of Staff' of the relevant service. By very definition of the concept of 'Chief of Staff', they should have become the chiefs of the Armed Forces Headquarters Staff and thereby the

principal professional advisers of the defence minister and the Prime Minister as it is prevalent in other democratic polities like the U.S. and the UK. On the contrary, with such amendment, the chiefs of staff in India became separate entities outside the government structure, and began functioning as the sole commander of the entire force.²³

- **Dual Responsibility: Detrimental to Long Term National Security Planning.** The Chiefs of Staff have to perform two divergent and diametrically opposite roles in their capacity as the principal advisers to the Defence Minister in national security planning and at the same time functioning as commanders of their respective forces. As commanders, their primary aim is to keep the forces combat ready through operational and logistical planning and ensuring availability of appropriate weapons, equipment and infrastructure for operations likely in the near future. While as principal professional advisers to the government, they have to strike a balance between near-term and long-term future and concentrate on preparing the nation to face the future challenges. Professionalism in national security policy management and planning is different from that in respect of fighting battles at divisional and corps level. Diplomatic manoeuvring requires different skills, knowledge and background than fighting wars at various level of violence. Similarly assessment of likely threats to our security and interests of technological developments, economic constraints on our potential, adversaries etc., also require professional skills of a high order and these are different from professional skills for fighting wars.²⁴ This resulted in the absence of national security planning in the country till 1964, when for the first time a five-year Defence Plan was formulated. The plan was updated in 1966 and in 1969 once again on an adhoc basis. Subsequently it became the rolling plan to be updated every year. Sound planning cannot

result from a mere compilation of forces, facilities and equipment requirements but it has to be done on the basis of strategic objectives and long-term intelligence estimates both of which were conspicuously lacking then.²⁵ Formulation of Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP) under the aegis of Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, started much later, is a step in the right direction but its implementation and execution is a big question.

- **Lack of Integrated Functioning.** Our Parliamentary democracy and the administrative structures are the derivatives of British legacy but the organization evolved for Ministry of Defence and its functioning is one of its own kind having no parallels in any other democracies of the world. In UK, the Ministry of Defence is a unified and integrated organization, which functions both as a Department of Government and as a military headquarters. It is headed by the Secretary of State for defence who is assisted by two advisers: Permanent Under Secretary of State and CDS, both co-equals and experts in their respective fields. Further the organization comprises of civil servants, military officers, scientists and procurement executive, each working in his respective sphere and working collectively, and none having any superior functional status. They take joint decisions, where required. In India, the system is entirely different. Ministry of Defence is an entirely separate entity from the Service Headquarters and is staffed exclusively by civil servants. In 1961, three services ceased to be a part of the Ministry of Defence and became attached offices. Further, there is Ministry of Finance (Defence), yet another separate entity. Each of the three entities Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Finance (Defence) and Service Headquarters tend to examine issues in isolation of each other, resulting in triplication of efforts and causing considerable delay.²⁶

The style of functioning of Indian higher defence organization has been criticised by many eminent authorities and committees for the obvious flaws:

- Duplication of efforts between Service Headquarters and Ministry of Defence, causing waste in terms of finance, talent and time.
- Proposals emanating from senior level at Service Headquarters being examined by junior officials in the Ministry lacking the necessary expert knowledge.
- Subordination of the military to the civil power should be in political and not bureaucratic terms.²⁷
- In fact, a Parliamentary Sub Committee in 1978 urged the Government to evolve an integrated set up amalgamating Service Headquarters, Ministry of Defence and Financial Adviser so that they may work in complete cohesion.²⁸

But all these observations are of no avail as the all powerful Indian bureaucracy has successfully blocked all attempts towards integration.

- **Bureaucratic Dominance and Continued Degradation of Service Chiefs' Status.** Based on the recommendations of Lord Esher when officer from Indian Civil Service replaced the military officer (a Major General) and assumed the new appointment of Defence Secretary in 1921, he was subordinate of the Commander-in-Chief. At the time of independence, control over Ministry of Defence had passed from the Commander-in-Chief to the Defence Minister. It had happened when the Interim Government came to power in 1946. However, the role of the Ministry was limited and the protocol status of the Defence Secretary (who had been subordinate of the Chief) still ranked junior to all the Principal Staff Officers at Army Headquarters.²⁹

In 1947, a committee of three senior Indian Civil Service (ICS) officers had suggested structuring of the Defence Ministry on the lines of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and in the process, had also aimed at lowering the status of the military officers much in the same way as that of the police officers in relation to the ICS. Fortunately, Lord Mountbatten being the Governor General at that time, he ensured that the Service Chiefs retained their higher status over the Defence Secretary.³⁰ In 1948, after the departure of Lord Mountbatten, another attempt was made by setting up Defence Secretary's Committees for the Army, Navy and Air Force and bringing in Services Chiefs as members under the Chairmanship of Defence Secretary. Service Chiefs being senior in status to the Defence Secretary, they never attended and these committees remained non-starters. Ultimately, the civil servants succeeded in establishing their dominance when fifteen years later in 1963, Cabinet Secretary was given higher protocol status than Service Chiefs. Bureaucratic dominance over the higher defence mechanism progressed further- when the DCC was first changed to Emergency Committee of the Cabinet and then to CCPA, attendance of Service Chiefs was not considered necessary at all its meetings. Rather, the Defence Secretary started representing the Defence Services at the crucial meetings. The process of isolating the Defence Services from decision making appeared to have reached its climax when Service Chiefs were excluded from the membership of Policy Advisory Committee formed in 1986 - a precursor to the National Security Council.³¹ In 1999, when NSC was established, Service Chiefs or Chairman Chief of Staff Committee were not considered important enough to be member of this council but were placed in Strategic Core Group - another means of extending bureaucratic dominance over the national security apparatus. The

NSC in the United States and UK have Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff and Chief of the Defence Staff as statutory members respectively with other ministers under the chairmanship of the head of the state. There are no civil servants in this council except for NSA who is assistant to the Head of the State for National Security Affairs and acts as Secretary, providing the secretarial support to the council through his staff.

- **Lack of a True Joint Warfighting Capability.** A full spectrum high intensity war covering land, sea, air, space, information and cyber domain is likely to be the future battlefield milieu over the coming decades. To achieve victory in this milieu, integrated theatre operations would be imperative. Presently a semblance of tri-service integration is being achieved through the Chief of Staff Committee (COSC), a British legacy, having been established in India in the early Thirties. Beside the functional inefficiency, the extant inter-service rivalry in the system is highly counter-productive. On the other hand, having been inspired by the U.S. military's successful joint operations during the first Gulf War, China had closely followed the command & control structure adopted by the U.S. military consequent to the "Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986" and have set up their own command & control structure. In fact in 2013, China's President Xi Jinping himself noted, "***establishing a CMC and theatre command joint command & control system requires urgency and should not be delayed.***"³² In our case, while the current political leadership is giving due importance to the modernization of armed forces and wants the Indian Armed Forces to emerge as a reckonable force but no urgency has been shown for the restructuring of higher defence organization - a prerequisite for achieving "Jointness" and "Integrated Approach" towards warfighting.

- **Outmoded Concept of Financial Management.** The financial management system, which is still in vogue, was introduced in 1906 to act as a curb on the authority of the Commander-in-Chief.³³ The present arrangement of over centralised financial control is unhealthy and leads to unnecessary delays, not only causing huge loss on account of the escalation factor but severely impacts on the operational readiness of the armed forces. Service Chiefs have no authority or financial powers to carry out even repairs or maintenance of their arsenal. Admiral Joshi, former Chief of Naval Staff wrote ***“While professional competence, accountability, responsibility is with the service, that is not the case with authority....For example, change of submarine batteries, which are available indigenously or for commencing refits and repairs of ships, aircraft, submarines in Indian yards, the service (Navy) does not have that empowerment.”***³⁴ The peculiarity of present system is that the Financial Advisers tend to become Financial Controllers, and instead of becoming an integral part of decision-making they tend to play the role of decision blocking. If the responsibility and accountability rests with the Service Chief then the financial authority or empowerment must also be vested in him. Therefore, the Defence set up needs to have integrated Finance, rather than the present Associate Finance who exercises authority without any responsibility or accountability.

Reforming and Restructuring: Inescapability of Integrated Theatre Commands/Specified Commands and Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS)

India is likely to emerge as the third largest economy by 2028, behind the United States and China.³⁵ To ensure that high rate of economic development continues unimpeded, an atmosphere of peace and stability is required which can only

be assured by a sound military capability. The military power should be competent to protect not only the territorial assets against external and internal threats but also the energy routes, sea lanes of communication and economic assets located abroad. Compared to other great powers of the world, India's Higher Defence Organization is not adequately structured to comprehensively neutralise all types of threats against its national security.

We were inordinately late in taking decision in respect of our economy. In 1973, when Deng Xiaoping put China on the path of modernization, its economy was smaller than India's. India liberalised its economy 13 years afterwards. In three and half decades, China's economy not only overtook India's but its GDP is now Five and half times that of India's³⁶ - a large gap which is very difficult to bridge, if not impossible. Slow growth of economy affects the power potential of a nation indirectly but any laxity in defence preparedness can result in loss of morale of its people and be very humiliating e.g. 1962 debacle against China. China has been closely watching developments in the U.S. military since 1986 but ultimately it was their charismatic leader President Xi Jinping who launched the comprehensive reforms of PLA in September 2015 (a gap of almost 20 years) and the process is scheduled for completion by 2020.³⁷

In case of India, our renowned strategic thinker Shri K Subrahmanyam and soldier-statesman Lt Gen S K Sinha and many others had been recommending creation of Integrated theatre commands and other related reorganisation/reform since late 1980s but their brilliant endeavours have been lost in the maize of various bureaucratic committees ordered from time to time. Any delay in restructuring of our higher defence organization will be detrimental to national security. Acquisition of modern weapons and technology alone from friendly foreign countries in bits and pieces is not good enough unless organization at the apex is capable to provide: long-term integrated future-oriented planning, doctrine for effective

employment of forces with their armaments, jointness of three services in planning as well as execution of operations and so on. Akin to People's Republic of China, India also needs comprehensive reform of its higher defence structure urgently and it can be achieved only through the direct intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who has proven his acumen of taking bold initiatives. The bureaucracy will continue to place hurdles on the path of reform as they have been doing since 1947 and even before. Their behaviour can best be described in the words of renowned sociologist Morris Janowitz, ***“The intimate social solidarity of the military profession is both envied and resented by civilians”***.³⁸

Having identified the faultlines in India's higher defence organization and the impediments which prevent its evolution, the edifice of the organization needs to be restructured and reformed, essentially involving: Creation of Integrated Theatre Commands and Specified Commands; Redefining the chain of command and control; creation of Chief of the Defence Staff or equivalent.

- **Integrated Theatre Commands and Specified Commands**. Modern war requires jointness, interoperability and close integration between the three services not only for planning at the national level but also for execution at the theatre level. Necessity of close integration was established during the Second World War itself when Field Marshal Montgomery had moved the supporting Air Force Headquarters from Alexandria and located it adjacent to Eighth Army Headquarters at El Alamein. In Korea, General Walton Walker and General Matthew Ridgeway, commanders of the Eighth Army, met almost daily with General Earle Partridge, who commanded the Fifth Air Force. Similarly in Italy during World War II, the Fifth US Army and the XIIth Air Support Command enjoyed co-located command posts. But these lessons seemed to have

been forgotten during Operation 'Desert Storm' and it was felt that the command relations between the USAF and the US Army could have been better.³⁹ In India, the command headquarters of services are not co-located e.g. the Army's Eastern Command is located at Kolkata and its supporting Eastern Air Command is at Shillong. Western and Northern Commands of the Army are at Chandimandir and Udhampur respectively, whereas their supporting Western Air Command is at Delhi. Army's Southern Command is at Pune while the Air Force South Western Command is at Jodhpur. Same way the Navy's operational commands and their supporting Air Force commands are geographically segregated. A semblance of coordination is being achieved by co-locating Advanced Headquarters of Air Force Commands alongside Army and Navy Commands, they are supporting. That is not good enough. To achieve true integration and synergy, we need to create integrated theatre commands which are strategically oriented and unified to meet the emerging threats:

- **Integrated Western Theatre Command (Under Army GOC-in-C)**: facing Pakistan from the plains of Punjab, through Thar Desert of Rajasthan to Rann of Kachchh in Gujarat. Has under its command all Army & Air force formations covering the Area of responsibility (AOR) of existing Western, South-Western and Southern Commands.
- **Integrated Northern Theatre Command (under Army GOC-in-C)**: facing Pakistan and China in the mountainous regions of J&K and Ladakh. Has under its command all Army & Air Force formations covering the AOR of existing Northern Command.

- **Integrated Eastern Theatre Command (under Army GOC-in-C)**. facing China in the Northeast. Has under its command all Army & Air Force formations covering the AOR of existing Eastern Command.
- **Integrated Southern Theatre Command (under Naval Admiral)**. Has under command the maritime fleets and air assets deployed for defence of Western, Eastern and Southern seaboard. Andaman and Nicobar Command shall also come under it.
- **Integrated Aerospace Command (under Air Force Air Marshal)**. Responsible for Air defence of the country including Ballistic Missile Defence and strategic air offensive.
- **Integrated Logistics Command**. Responsible for organizing and coordinating movement of men and material from one theatre to another within the country as also to overseas theatre of operations using air, land and sea transportation.

In addition, the emerging threats necessitate raising of three specified commands:

- **Strategic Forces Command (SFC)**. Already existing for command and control and employment of complete nuclear assets under triad.
- **Special Operations Command**. On the lines of the US structure to counter the asymmetric threats. It has been proposed by Naresh Chandra Committee in 2011.
- **Cyber Command**. For defending national interests against attacks that may occur in cyberspace, the so-called 'Fifth Domain' of warfare.

- **Redefining the Chain of Command and Control.** Having realised that Integrated Theatre Commands and specified commands are essential for fighting and winning wars in the future battlefield milieu, the existing command and control setup has to undergo a complete metamorphosis. With the armed forces having moved into areas of longer reach weapons and synergy between the three services required to achieve force-multiplier effect in the battlefield, the present concept of chiefs of staff being the overall commander of all forces of his service is no more practicable. There has to be two distinct chains of command and control: Chiefs of Staff being the heads of their respective services should be responsible for organising, training and equipping their forces; Formulating operational plans and conduct of operations by Integrated Theatre Commands/specified commands should be the responsibility of the Chief of the Defence Staff or equivalent.
- **Chief of the Defence Staff or Equivalent.** The necessity of a Supreme Commander at the theatre level was realised and got fully established during the Second World War. After the war, this concept was adopted into the Defence organization at the national level, with the United States instituting Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff under the National Security Act of 1947 and the UK establishing Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) in 1958. Many countries of the world follow this arrangement in one form or the other.

Probably, India is the only country in the world, where the Secretary Department of Defence - a generalist civil servant drawn from diverse background and who serves in the Ministry of Defence for a fixed tenure - has been made responsible for "***the Defence of India and every part thereof including preparation for defence***" according to the Government of India AOB/

TOB Rules.⁴⁰ Does it mean that a bureaucrat heading the Ministry will formulate the operational plans for war fighting and Chiefs of Staff will execute it. If that was an anomaly then it should have been rectified by now. But this neglect is either due to politicians' detachment and indifference towards matters relating to defence forces or alternatively, it serves the purpose of bureaucrats bossing over the military brass. This situation can best be explained in the words of Late Shri K Subrahmanyam, ***“Politicians enjoy power without responsibility, bureaucrats wield power without accountability, and the military assumes responsibility without direction.”***⁴¹

Shri K Subrahmanyam, who was earlier (in 1987) vehemently opposed to the idea of CDS,⁴² while heading the Kargil Review Committee agreed to the creation of the post of CDS. Subsequently, Group of Ministers (GoM) led by the then Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani also recommended the same. More than a decade elapsed but the post of CDS remained elusive. In June 2011, another high level committee was ordered under former Cabinet Secretary Naresh Chandra who submitted its detailed report to the Prime Minister in mid-2012.⁴³ It is reported that the Committee has recommended appointment of a Permanent Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Rather than handling the necessity of CDS in a piecemeal manner as an issue where Armed Forces are shown seeking appointment of an all powerful Four-star General, it is high time that the urgency of a single point Military Adviser responsible for drawing up operational plans of Integrated Theatre and specified commands, akin to the CJCS of the US, be brought to the notice of Political Executives. Name of the post is immaterial - whether it is CDS, Permanent Chairman COSC or any

other synonym, but his role and responsibility must be categorically defined:

- He will be the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister.
- He will be responsible for formulating operational plans for Integrated Theatre Commands and exercise operational control 'only' over all field formations and provides inputs to Defence Minister, Prime Minister and CCS on all operational issues.
- He will have no operational command authority neither individually nor collectively as the chain of operational command will go from the Prime Minister to the Defence Minister and from the Defence Minister to the Integrated Theatre Commands/ Specified Commands.
- He will advise the Prime Minister and the CCS regarding selection of nuclear targets along with detailed technical, tactical and strategic analysis.
- He should be a permanent member of the CCS chaired by the Prime Minister, as also of NSC.
- HQ Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) and 'Directorate General of Operations' of three services will function under him to enable him to perform his role and responsibilities.
- He will be the Chairman of the COSC (JCS), with individual Service Chiefs having a right of direct access to the Defence Minister and the Prime Minister. Present format of the COSC may have to be changed because of its obvious disadvantages.

The very basis and the functioning of COSC has some serious flaws: First, the longest serving Chief of Staff in office becomes the Chairman of the Committee, ensuring rotation of

Chairmanship amongst the three Services. Since, the Chairman continues to head his own Service, loyalties do get divided at critical junctures; Second, with a maximum permissible tenure of three years for a Service Chief, the better portion is passed before one becomes “the longest Serving Chief” to head the COSC. Thus, usually a Chairman gets a tenure of about one year or so and that is too short a period to achieve meaningful formulation, initiation and direction of any long-term policy; Third, the most importantly, the Committee is not supported by any permanent joint staff to sustain such endeavours; Fourth, the Chairman has not been bestowed with any elevated status therefore the quality of coordination is greatly dependent upon the personality equation; Fifth, with a view to ensure a functional harmony within the Committee, hard decisions are possibly avoided and compromises arrived at; Lastly, COSC continues to remain an entity outside the Government.⁴⁴

With the role and responsibility envisaged for the CDS, COSC in the form in which it is functioning is not a worthwhile organisation to continue with. Ideally, it should be a Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as part of the CDS Secretariat, properly equipped and staffed from where he can coordinate, integrate and synergise efforts with three Service Chiefs. If this new organisation is acceptable then it may not be sacrosanct to adhere to the nomenclature of CDS or Permanent Chairman COSC. Rather, it will give an opportunity to the present Government to create the appointment of ‘Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff’ as it is being followed in the US and bestow a status upon the senior-most General of the Indian Military so that he can stand as ‘one among equals’.

Fear psychosis created in the minds of political leadership about the attendant risk of a military coup by concentrating too much authority in a man in uniform has no rationale if one studies the responsibilities of the CDS explained as above and his hierarchical position in the chain of command and control. In fact, it is the bureaucrats’ fear of losing grip over the

Services that they give vent to such feelings. Another aspect that introduction of this system, will lead to domination of the Army over other two services is also not valid because Army predominance is common in almost every country and firstly there is little reason to doubt the integrity of such a senior officer toward the greater interest of the nation as a whole and secondly this controversy can be avoided by making this appointment rotational between the three services.

To enable these reforms and organisational restructuring to be effectively implemented and our military power to emerge as a potent war winning force, complete integration of MoD and services headquarters needs to be carried out. Therefore services headquarters should form part of Ministry of Defence and ceased to be 'attached offices'. Then, the services headquarters should accept foreign service, IAS, intelligence and defence science officers as well as professional economists. Further, 'Military Wing' needs to be recreated in the Cabinet Secretariat by locating the CDS office over there.

The Defence Secretary, being the civilian adviser to the Defence Minister, will be responsible for policy, budget, financial control, accounting and administration in the Ministry of Defence.⁴⁵ There shall not be requirement of a separate Financial Adviser (Defence), thereby avoiding duplication or rather triplication of efforts within the Ministry of Defence. Once the CDS becomes a Permanent Member of the NSC, he will be able to provide considered advice based on detailed analysis carried out by his staff. Hence the requirement of SPG and NSAB may become superfluous and can be dispensed with.

- **Options Available.** Likely options available to achieve reform and restructuring of India's Higher Defence Organisation are:-
 - **Option 1.** Based purely on merit-cum-experience, select and appoint CDS/CJCS forthwith from any of the three Services. He should be entrusted with

the responsibility to set up his own headquarters, establish Chain of Command and Control and formalise setting up of Integrated Theatre Commands and create specified Commands within a timeframe of two-three years.

- **Option 2.** Create Integrated Theatre Commands forthwith by co-locating assets of Army/Navy/AF at the designated headquarters location based on availability of infrastructure and appoint their GOsC-in-Cs from respective service, based on role/tasks of the Command. Allow these commands minimum two-three years to integrate and synergise their war fighting doctrines through training/discussions and live exercises. In the meantime, select and appoint CDS/CJCS based on merit-cum-experience who will setup his own headquarters and establish functioning parameters with both up and down the Chain of Command.

- **Option 3.** Comprehensive reform and restructuring of India's Higher Defence Organisation should be accepted and approved by the Cabinet with timelines drawn for establishment of Integrated Theatre Commands, Specified Commands, appointment of CDS/CJCS and chain of operational command and operational control. Since, it is a prestigious enhancement of India's Comprehensive National Power and the world powers should take note of it, the Prime Minister should launch the 'Reform and Restructuring' in a grandiose manner, giving a strict timeframe for its completion.

The bureaucrats will always come out with a different option to delay and probably obviate the complete process so that their own power is not diluted. But if the nation has to emerge as a great power, then the Prime Minister should take the initiative by adopting Option 3.

The proposed restructured 'Higher Defence Organization' of India is shown in Annexure 9.

Conclusion

India's Higher Defence Organization needs to undergo a major transformation to meet the threats and challenges of the emerging global security environment. To achieve a great power status among the comity of nations, the growing economic power must be supported by a matching military capability because comprehensiveness is the key to power. For example, in 1985, the Soviet Union's GDP was only \$741.9 billion compared to Japan's \$1,220 billion. But while Japan was an economic lion, it was a military mouse. The impoverished Soviet Union, on the other hand, had a military machine on par with the USA's. Hence, the comprehensive power of the Soviet Union was of the superpower-level, while Japan was merely a major power.⁴⁶

The US military commenced its transformation in the late 1980s consequent to Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 and over three decades its reorganised structure has matured through training and real war fighting. In case of China, it had been keenly observing the successful conduct of operations by the US military and the underlying basis for their success but ultimately it was the bold initiative of its paramount leader Xi Jinping, who launched comprehensive reforms and restructuring of PLA in November 2015 to be completed by 2020.

In case of India, the greatest damage to its 'Higher Defence Organization' was done in 1961 when its military was moved out from the MoD and the Services Headquarters were made 'attached offices'. This resulted in the political leadership receiving second-hand advice through bureaucrats and the consequences were the disastrous military defeat of 1962. In 1971, when there was direct interaction between the Prime Minister Late Mrs Indira Gandhi and General (later FM) Sam Manekshaw and operations were launched in conformity with

the advice of the latter, Indian Armed Forces wrote a glorious chapter of its unprecedented victory over Pakistan. Rather than evolution for betterment, the organizational damage remained buried and over these 55 years the role and importance of military hierarchy further got diluted by the bureaucratic onslaught. The role of military is not confined to only carrying out directives but it must render advice and closely interact with the decision makers so that realistic directives can be formulated. Therefore the interaction between the military hierarchy and political executives must be direct and intimate but due to lack of acumen and inclination with the political leadership, their role has been usurped by the civilian bureaucracy.

The situation can be retrieved and organizational strength of India's Higher Defence can be restored only by a leader like Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has the strength of his own conviction and has the ability to take bold initiatives. He had said, ***"his foreign policy does not believe in cowering to or staring at other nations' but looking into their eyes with confidence"***.⁴⁷ The confidence of a nation must be supported by its 'comprehensive national power' of which the military power is the most important ingredient. To place our priorities in correct perspective, it is high time that the fighting potential of India's armed forces must be enhanced by organising it into 'Integrated Theatre Commands and specified commands' and develop a joint command and control system as it is functioning in the US and also being followed by China. It must be remembered that as an economic power, a nation can compete with others by acquiring first, second, third positions and so on but ***'In war there are no runners up'***.

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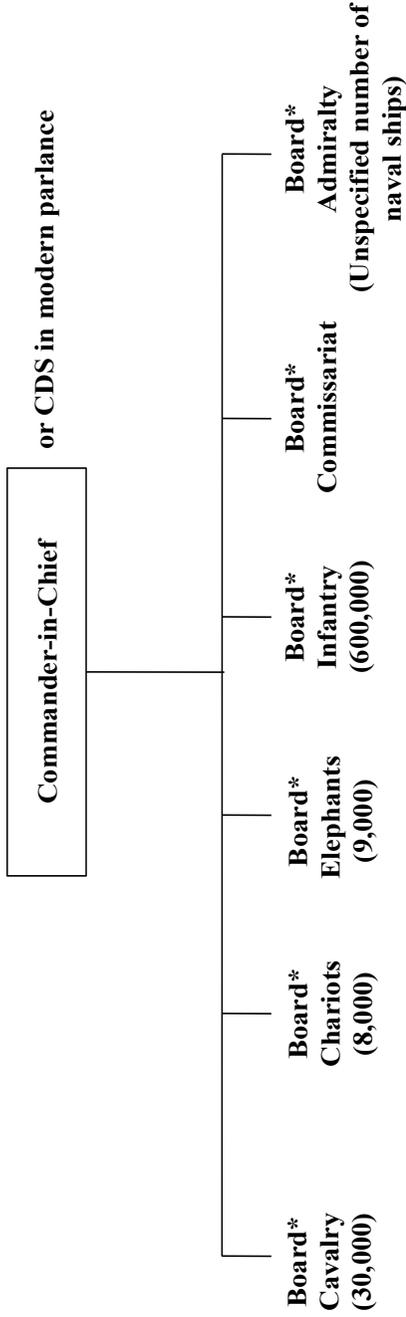
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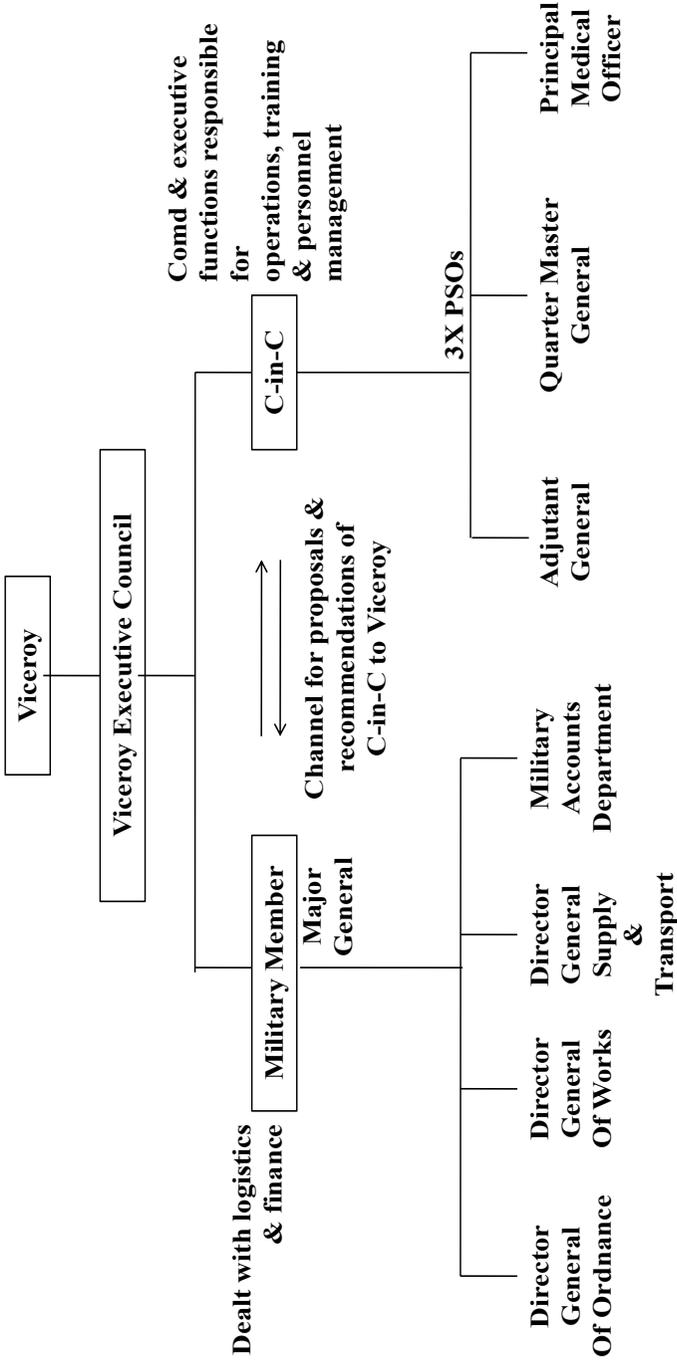
Higher Defence Organisation in India during Mauryan Empire

**Combined Headquarters
for
Army & Navy**

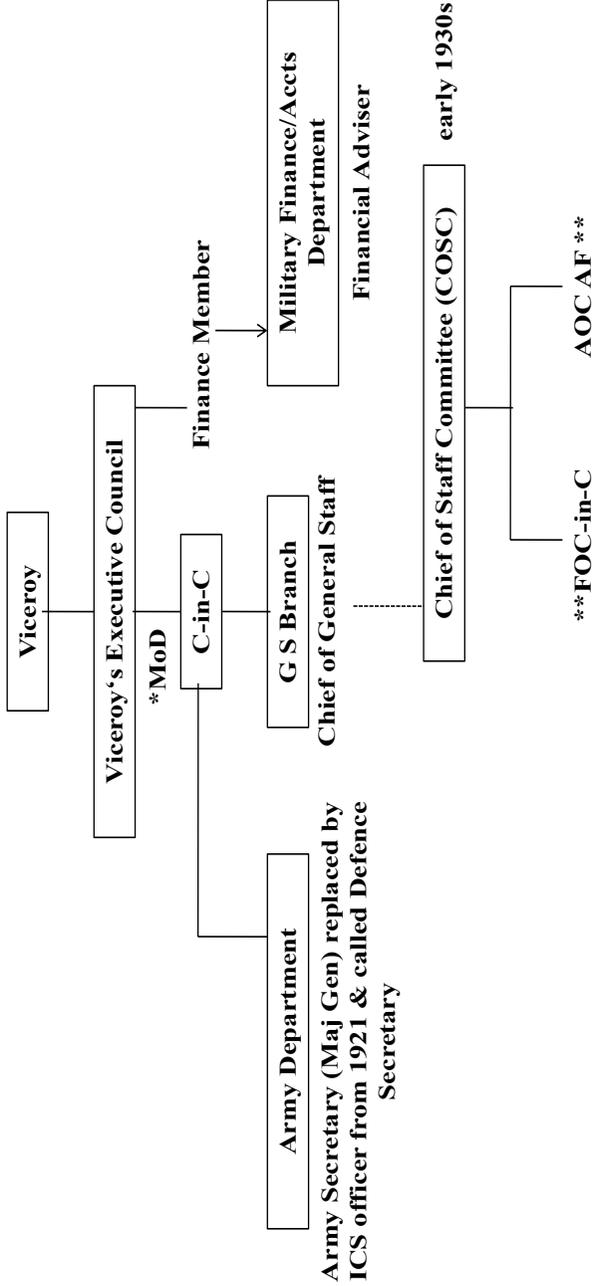


Board* : Each Board consists of 5 officers

Higher Defence Organisation in India : 19th Century (Post 1857 - 1906)



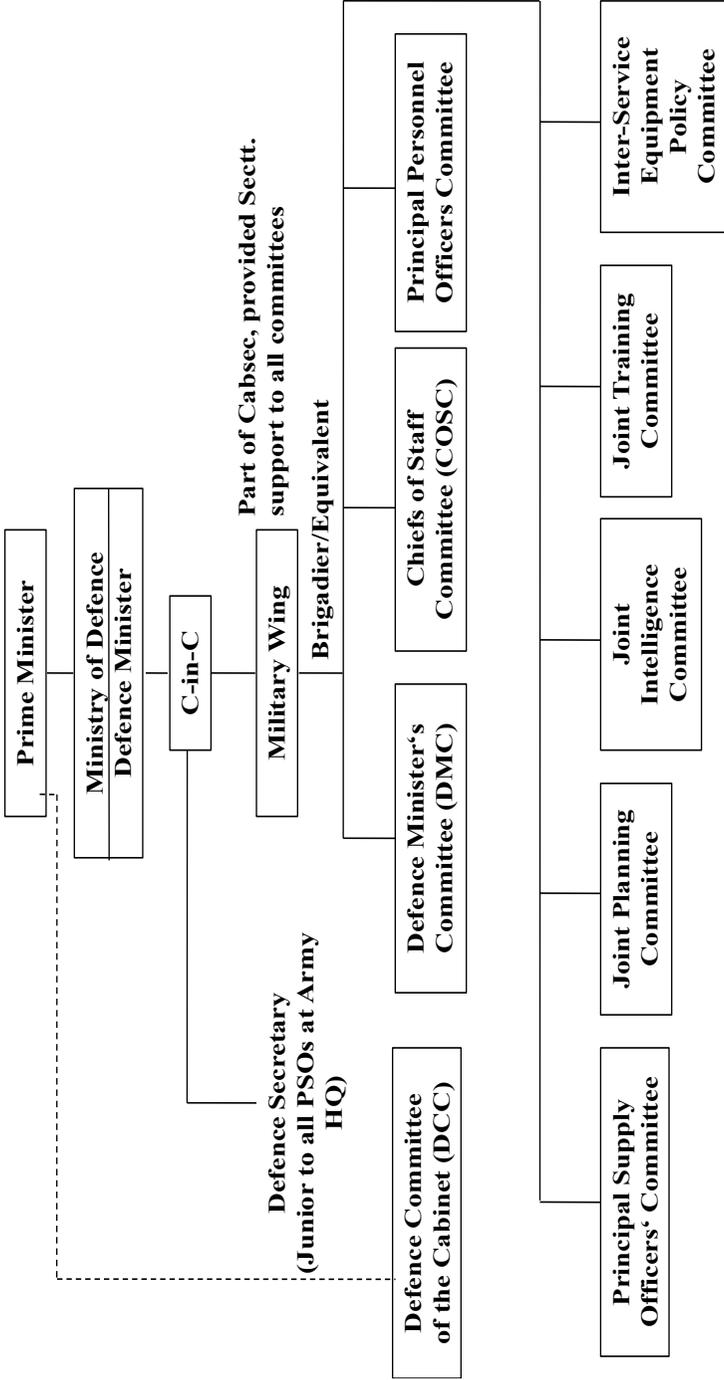
Reorganized Structure (Post Curzon-Kitchener Dispute) 1906 - 1946



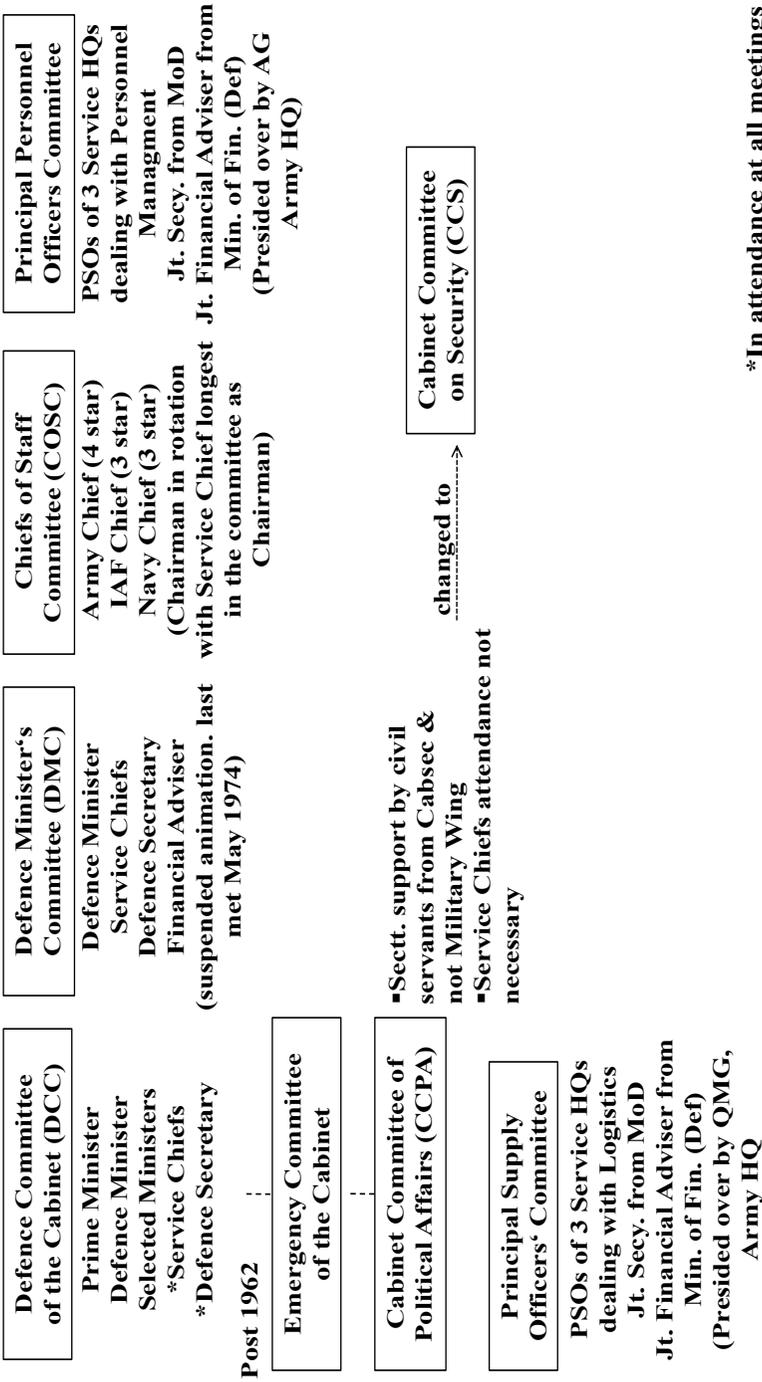
***In 1946 Sardar Baldev Singh became Defence Member of the Viceroy's Executive Council with the C-in-C working under him**

****Right of Direct access to the C-in-C & the Viceroy in event of any major differences**

Post Independence (1947 - 1962)

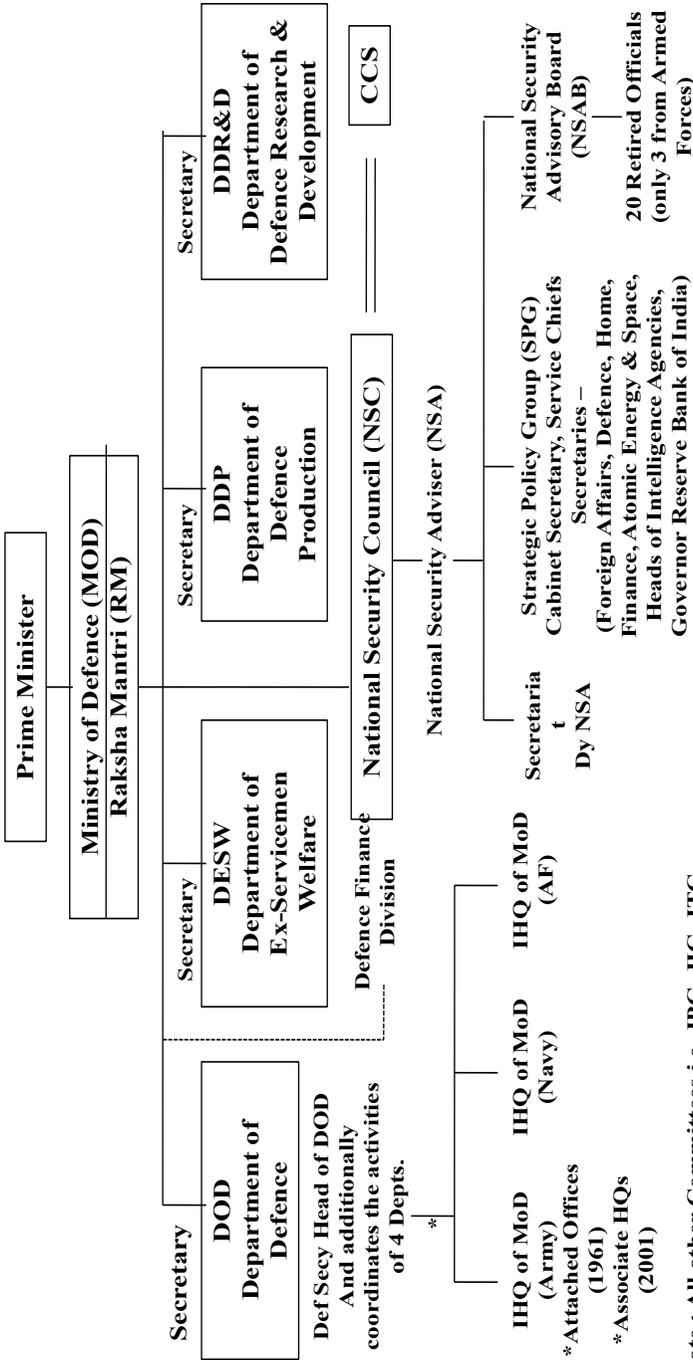


Post Independence (1947 - 1962) Contd.



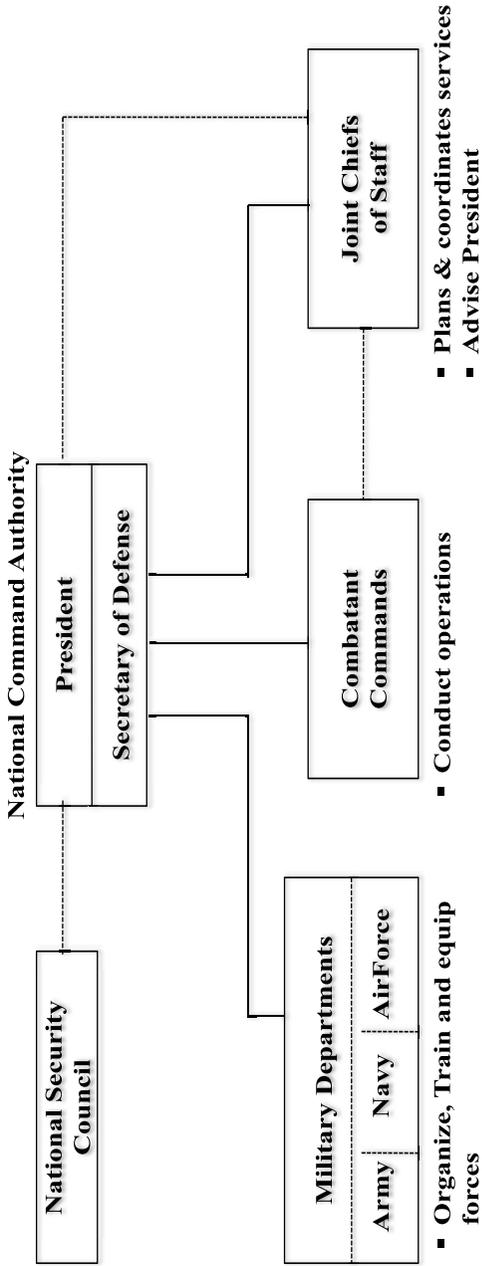
*In attendance at all meetings

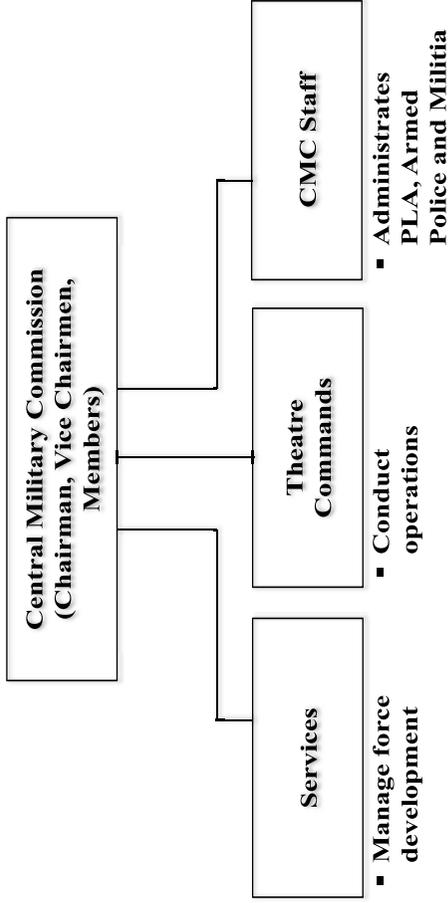
Existing Higher Defence Organization



Note : All other Committees i.e. JPC, JIC, JTC & COSC are functioning as before

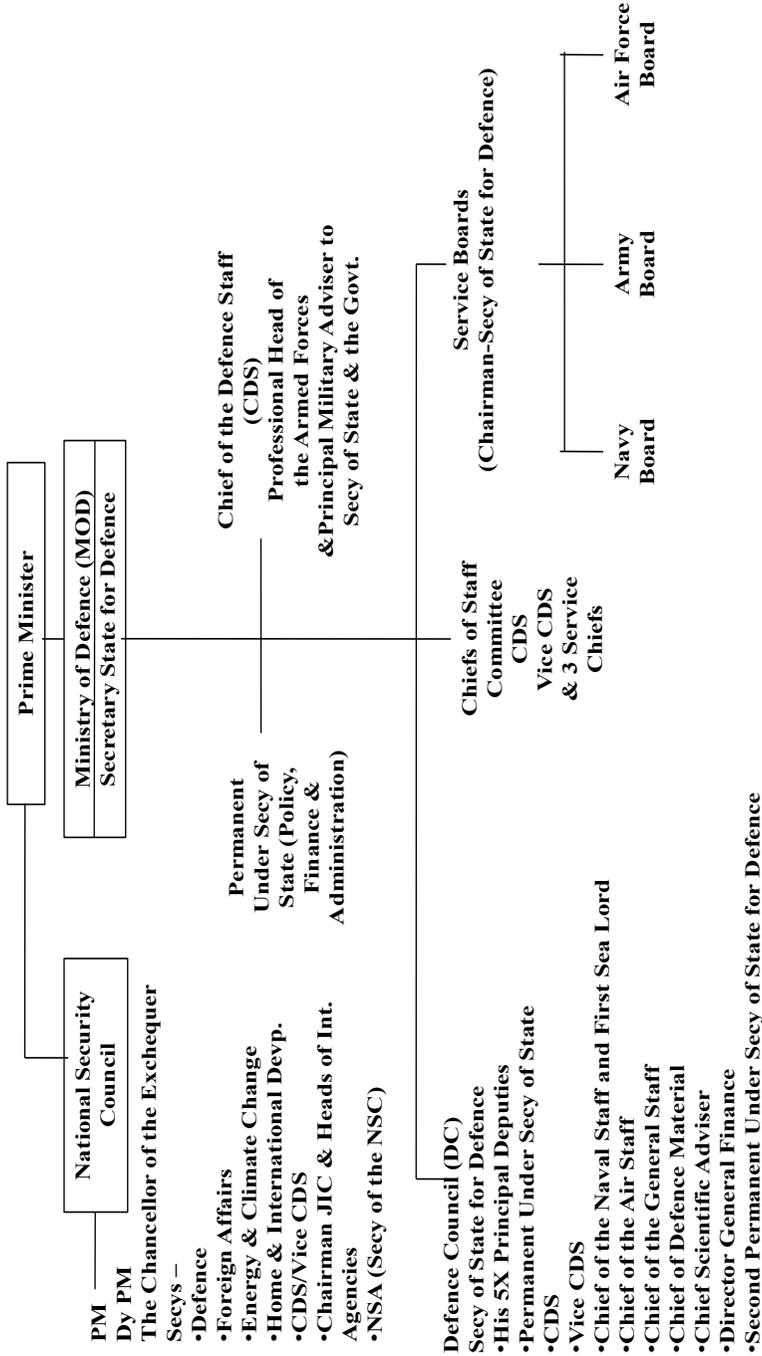
THE UNITED STATES



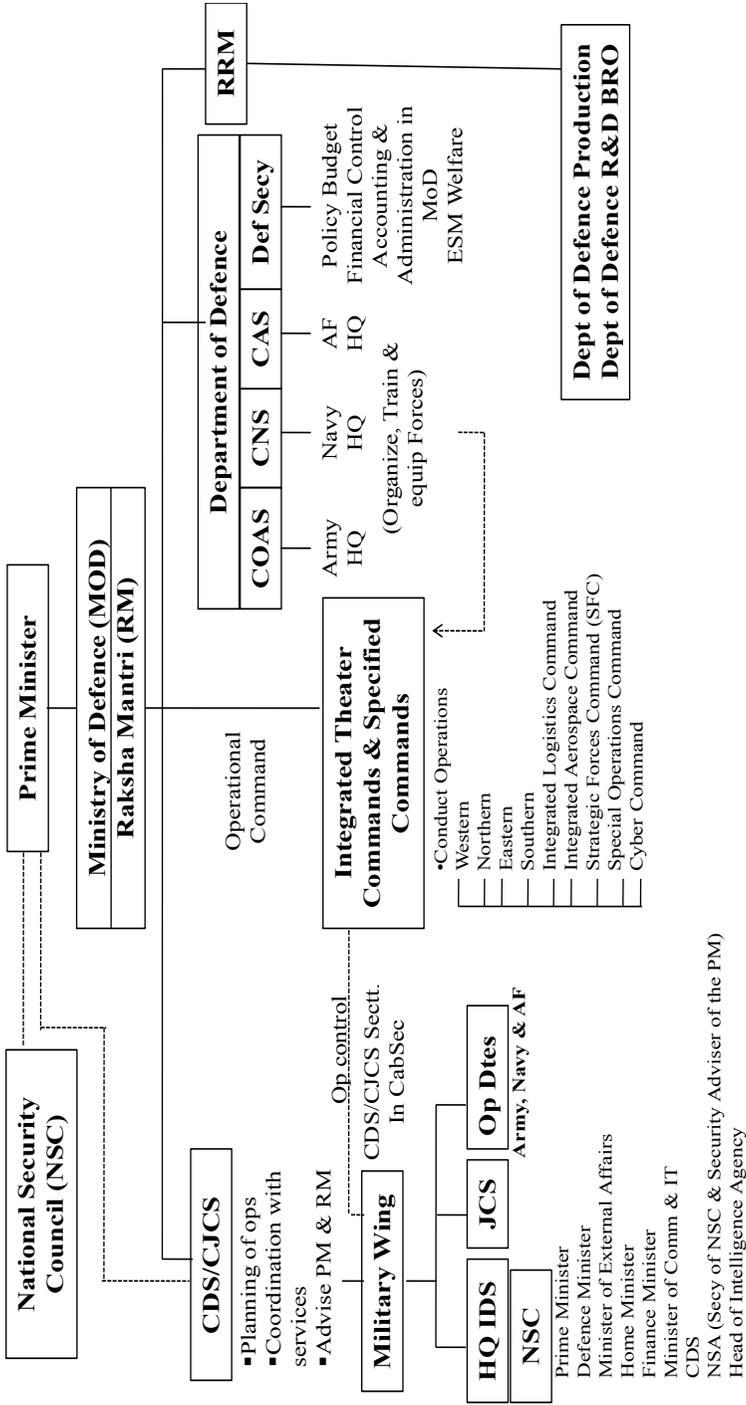
China

Chinese descriptions of reformed military structure strongly resemble structure of U.S. defence establishment under the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act

The United Kingdom



PROPOSED HIGHER DEFENCE ORGANIZATION FOR INDIA



NSA (Secy of NSC & Security Adviser of the PM)
Head of Intelligence Agency