

Chief of Defense Staff: A Rank that Enhances the Integration of the Armed Forces

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Abstract

India is a country with hostile neighbors like Pakistan on the side of the West and China on the east. We are facing potential threats from these two countries in all the ways like land, air, and water, where India needs to tighten its security to protect its borders. However, maintaining this territorial security with diverse leadership becomes tactical. To address this issue, India designed an integrated joint commander rank to unite the three branches under one roof: The Chief of Defense Staff (CDS). This CDS will enhance the decision-making capacity with rapid response and strengthen the country's security systems. This CDS brought revolutionary changes in defense leadership.

Keywords: Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), Theatre Commands

Introduction

India is the seventh-largest and most populous country in the world. We consist of almost all geographical features like Himalayan mountains, deserts, dense forests, oceans, rivers, and plain lands. Guarding these borders would be a challenging task for the security forces. At the same time, coordination and communication also play a significant role. This unintentional coordination, cooperation, and communication delay causes serious trouble in counter-insurgency and counter-militancy operations. This is not a single challenge, but in making any critical decisions, the war room needed the presence of three defense chiefs. As Herbert Simon said, "Making wrong decisions or delay in decision making are the same." To avoid such lapses, India made a superior rank to get all three forces under one roof: Chief of Defense Staff (CDS), the highest rank integrating all three army branches.

Chief of Defense Staff (CDS)

It was formed in 2020 as the Chief of Integrated Defense Staff, whose primary purpose is to create an integrated defense head to enhance the integration capabilities of the defense forces. This is the highest rank, which monitors, supervises, and guides all the defense arms. The main task of this chief of defense staff is to improve the integration of armed forces and enhance the moral capabilities of the leadership. This rank strengthens the decision-making capabilities in emergencies and avoids time lapses in the decision-making process in wartime situations. The CDS is the rank that improves the coordination among the three forces of the army, which is essential in counter-insurgency and counter-militancy operations. Here, the defense minister must not call all three chiefs to make critical decisions. The first

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Chief of Defense Staff was Honorary Ex-General Bipin Rawat. The current CDS is General Anil Chauhan.

"The subject experts have been demanding this for a long time. Today, we have decided that we will now have a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), and after the formation of this post, all three forces will get effective leadership at the top level." Prime Minister Narendra Modi

Need of CDS

Hostile countries like China and Pakistan surround us. They frequently attempt to intrude into our territory from Kashmir, Dokhlam, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, etc. In this scenario, we must deploy our soldiers under challenging terrains to protect our land. However, simultaneously, we must secure our waters because of the conflict in the Bay of Bengal. At the same time, China has a vast fleet of modern fighter jets.

This is a considerable challenge for our security forces in tackling the Ariel threats. To fill the gap, we must procure more advanced fighter jets and fasten ongoing projects (AMCA, Tejas Mark 2, Brahmos NG). In the meantime, we need to enhance the capabilities and integration of armed forces to tackle the intrusion. To fulfill all these gaps, "the Government felt a need for integrated rank, which will strengthen the combined leadership of the army, and the creation of CDS happened" (Vishwanathan 2022).

Role of Chief of Defense Staff

The Chief of Defense Staff enhances the armed forces' capabilities. As CDS is the integrated head of the armed forces, it needs to ensure the integration of all three forces and guide them in the correct path. There are many more responsibilities of CDS. They are:

Integration of armed forces

The Chief of Defense Staff is also called the Chief of Integrated Defense Staff, which should enhance the integration of the three forces. For example, in any joint operation, there might be a situation of confusion between the forces. The CDS is responsible for avoiding such confusion and maintaining the coordination between the forces. Alternatively, we can say it is the best example of Collaborative and Network Governance, and at the same time, it is another classic example of centralized administration with decentralized principles. The CDS is the single point of contact for reporting and making decisions. The CDS can direct any force among the three and form the teams collaboratively for any operation. For example, in any counter-terror operation conducted on foreign soil, the infantry needs more support from the Navy and the Air Force as per circumstances. As per the necessities, the CDS will form teams, including the Air Force and Navy.- The Chief of Defense staff can call any force at any time as per the necessity of field forces, improving the forces' operational readiness. For example, the people serving on the northwest border of the nation need regular assistance from the Air Force because of high altitude terrains, which causes problems in surveillance. So, the Chief of Defense Staff can order the Air Force to support the infantry divisions in various activities like surveillance, firepower, airlift, etc. So, with this lighter evidence, we can say that the Chief of Defense Staff is essential for tightening the integration of armed forces.

Boost the morale

In the army, morale plays an important role. To win any war, the leader of any army should build morale

and esprit-de-corps among his troops to win the war. For example, in 1942, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor to damage the Pacific Fleet and the army's morale. However, America had a strong general who built morale among the forces by conducting a raid on Tokyo, which damaged the morale and confidence of the Imperial Japanese Army. This increased the moral support of the US army, and US citizens also trusted the Government.

Another example is, in the 1971 war, the leadership of Ex-honorary General and Ex-Field Marshall Sam Manekshaw regularly visited frontlines and PoW camps and enquired about the well-being of soldiers and prisoners to increase the soldiers' immense morale. Leadership and morality are correlated to each other. A strong leader can always drive his fellows toward victory. If we look at Western history, Napoleon, Gen George S. Patton, Hannibal, and Julius Caesar are classic examples of leadership and morality. In the case of CDS, the post always needs to oversee the army's morale, where it has to look at all three branches of the armed forces.

Dual-Hatted Role

The concept of the dual-hatted job pertains to the two distinct responsibilities assumed by the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) in their capacity as the permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. This Committee comprises the three service chiefs as its members. Secondly, as the director of the recently established Department of Military Affairs (DMA) under the Ministry of Defence. The former pertains to a position inside the military sector, whilst the latter refers to a post within the governmental sector. In his capacity as the head of the Department of Ministry Administration (DMA), he is entrusted with substantial responsibility. "The CDS has the status of a Cabinet Secretary but functionally will head a department headed by a Secretary. Also, he will be under a ministry where the Defence Secretary is in charge of the ministry".(Raghavan 2019)

Role in the Armed Forces

The CDS will act as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister only on tri-services matters. As done so far, the three service chiefs will continue to advise the Defence Minister on matters exclusively concerning their respective services. "The Government has also explicitly clarified that the CDS will not exercise any military command, including over the three service chiefs. Nevertheless, the service chiefs will be members of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, headed by the CDS. [Earlier, the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee was the senior-most chief among the three services by rotation.] However, none of the other powers of the service chiefs, including advising the Government, has been curtailed or transferred. Nevertheless, the DMA, headed by the CDS, will also have the armed forces under its ambit" (Vishwanathan 2022). If three services' promotions, postings, and disciplinary matters fall under the DMA, the CDS will have extensive influence over the three service chiefs. Despite these, technically, the Department of Defence (headed by the Defence Secretary) will be responsible for the administrative and executive matters for the defense of India and every part thereof.

Role of Chief of Defense Staff in Theatre Commands

India is upgrading its defense strategy day by day. It underwent tremendous changes in recent years for territorial security. Among them, one of the crucial strategies is 'Theatre commands'. Theatre commands are the combination of various divisions of the army. For example, it is a joint command comprising the Army, Navy, and Air Force. All the battalions were distributed equally among every division. This will

enable the army to use appropriate force according to circumstances. This will avoid time lapses in decision-making and improve the effectiveness of attacking capabilities. It improves the operational pace in special operations, wars, attacks, tackling sudden attacks, etc. Each command is posted in a different geographical area. These commands are under the commandship of a command officer who will carry out the operations.

The role of CDS is to form this theatre command, which is a joint integrated force. The decision to form theatre commands started after the Kargil War. The Shekatkar Committee has recommended the necessity of Integrated Theatre commands. The Committee recommended Three Theatre commands: The Northern part at the China border, the Western part at the Pakistan border, and the Southern part for maritime security. After the appointment of CDS, this responsibility is on his shoulders. He has to unite divisions according to the strength and necessity of the area and hostilities. This theatre command is not a new idea as it is as old as the Second World War, and the other countries are already following it.

History of Theatre Command

Theatre Commands are not new to the world or India. It is the concept that Adolf Hitler developed in the 1930s. He named it 'Blitzkrieg,' which means lightning. In Blitzkrieg, he combined Wehrmacht (German infantry), Luftwaffe (German Air Force), Kriegsmarine (German Navy), Panzer divisions (Tanks), etc. With this concept, he invaded half of Europe. The entire West and the UK were unable to tackle the speed of Blitzkrieg. With this concept, he increased the occupational pace and conquered one nation after another. However, as the logistical support was meager, the failure of Operation Barbarossa and the poor networking system led to the inability of Blitzkrieg. Nevertheless, still, it is the best tactic in the world. Later, countries like the US, China, etc., followed the same pattern and designed it in the name of Theatre commands.

Changes in the Army after Chief of Defense Staff

Chief of Defense Staff is an honorary rank in the country. After the formation of the Chief of Defense Staff, the hierarchy became rigid. "Creating a Department of Military Affairs (DMA), with a Chief of Defence Staff as its head, on a New Year's Day 2020, is the most significant development in the National Security Domain since Independence". Admiral Arun Prakash (Retd), Former Chief of the Naval Staff.

- "Bring about reforms in the functioning of the three Services to augment combat capabilities by reducing wasteful expenditure.
- Promote the use of indigenous equipment and usher self-reliance in the Defence Industrial Sector.
- Ensure optimal utilization of Infrastructure and rationalize it through Jointness among the Services.
- Integrate and rationalize International Cooperation Plans of the Services in coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs.
- Formulate a Joint Promotion Policy for the Services.
- Promulgate Joint Staff Assignments for Career Progression and increase cross-staffing.
- Cadre review of the Armed Forces.
- Abolition of obsolete Rules and Acts.
- Review the terms of deployment of the Territorial Army" (India 2016).

Challenges faced by Chief of Defense Staff

There are many more issues to resolve in contemporary situations. The most important task is to form the theatre commands or Integrated Theatre Commands (ITC). It has been in the pending process for a long time and must be formed immediately to eliminate and tackle various threats. Another hurdle will be prioritizing budget allocation and acquiring the latest technologies to meet the tri-services requirements. The three services have competing claims (e.g., to build a new aircraft carrier for the Navy or more fighter jets for the Air Force), and it will not be easy to establish balance. "The CDS must ensure efficient logistics resource management and avoid duplicity of effort. This can be done by streamlining the current policies and preparing a Joint Logistics Doctrine. In the operational realm, the biggest challenge will be aligning operational preparedness to meet a two-front threat. Combined with the threat of proxy war, it makes it a two-and-a-half-front war" (Sinha 2007).

"The biggest and foremost challenge is to prepare the military for next-generation warfare. This includes non-contact operations (Like cyber/information warfare), low-intensity conflict, asymmetric warfare, and network-centric warfare. Challenges are also related to raising the technology threshold and dealing with nuances of multi-domain warfare. The nation has to be prepared, as some of these threats cut across all boundaries, extending beyond the military domain" (Bhutani 2016). Another big challenge is giving priority to self-reliance. Recently, we have banned most of the defense components from foreign countries. However, it will also significantly impact the logistical supply because we do not have specific logistics domestically. We have to maintain balance in seeing that part. At the same time, we cannot entirely depend upon imports because, in the long run, they will have adverse effects.

Recommendations

The theatre commands are already implemented in various countries, so the Chief of Defense Staff should find an alternative because everyone knows its merits and demerits.

Converting the 114 MRFA deal with additional manufacturing conditions in India will boost the defense program, making India more ATMANIRBHAR (self-reliant). It is a good aspect because India is going for self-reliance and improving indigenization. However, at the same time, we should concentrate on the logistical support for unexpected wars, so a balanced strategy is needed. To maintain the security and sovereignty of the nation, the fulfillment of requirements of all three branches of the armed forces is necessary. An integrated leadership like CDS and a fast-track approach will really be effective in achieving its objectives.

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