

## THE PARADIGM OF JOINTNESS

"It seems to me immaterial whether he is a soldier who has really studied the air or an airman who has really studied land forces. It is the combination of the two, never the action of one alone, that will bring success for a future war."

- General Sir Archibald Wavel on Generals and Generalship in 1939.

### The Background

1. One of the oldest civilizations, India is a country with rich culture, and heritage and has withstood test of times. It is a glowing example of unity in diversity. "Vasudhaiva Kutumbam" (the world is a big family) has been the guiding torch historically. Even today, some of the big industrial houses work on the principle of "Hindu Undivided Family" implying jointness. It is but natural that the armed forces would also have this "unity in diversity" built in intrinsically. This has been amply proved by the differences that exist in the three services and when the balloon goes up (read Tsunami/ Bhuj earthquake and the like), the services have come together and on verbal instructions, men, material and machines have moved in the past. In fact first operation by the services was Joint Operation of strategic airlift in J & K in 1947! United we stand, divided we fall.

2. It is a sort of irony that Jointmanship is taught from NDA to NDC! It highlights the seriousness or the lack of it attached to such a vital ingredient of success in present day as well as future operations. The genesis could be the Hindu way of life which is highly individualistic. This could almost translate into non-acceptance of other's views in a way. Also, the British legacy of "Divide and Rule" has sowed the seeds of the so called division in the services. This may have been compounded by the Bureaucracy (and at times the political masters) so as to ensure that the armed forces do not become one. Histories of Pakistan China are too close for them to ignore.

3. It is believed that 66 countries in the world have migrated to Joint Planning including China. So, the larger question is when would Indian Armed Forces accept and migrate wholeheartedly? United we stand and prepare. The strength in unity is all too well known for further elaboration. In the world of today and tomorrow, synergizing the effects by unification in thought and action is the recipe for success.

4. In 'Seven habits of highly effective people' Covey conveys the transition from 'dependence' to 'independence' to 'interdependence'. If he is to be believed, then the individual officer is required to grow over the years to

interdependence and not remain stuck at the independence level. What is seen by the higher ranking officers of the three services is more or less this. There is still talk of service interest to be looked after at sometimes the cost of the national objectives.

5. Swami Vivekananda told an American audience in California about "Work and Secrets" in 1904, "One of the greatest lessons I have learnt in my life is pay as much attention to the means of work as its end. Proper attention to the finishing and strengthening of the means is what we need. The means are the cause; attention to the means, therefore, is the great secret of life." Our spiritual icon went unheard in his motherland!

6. American literature definitely makes an interesting reading since it is well researched by academia, military minds and bureaucracy as per the relevance. Winston Churchill in a lighter vein had said that the Americans have always got it right after they have tried everything else. If one glances through the history including the recent events, there is some element of truth in it. May be due to the best brains of the world, whopping economic might, no superpower to deal with (China with its paradoxical status of developing country is still far behind) and its relevance to India is fraught with danger inherent with such blind followership. Just as USA will fight the war the USA way, so would and should India. If that be so, with known constraints of resources both man and material, it is an imperative for the nation as a whole to galvanise both for common good.

### **The Jointness Conundrum**

"Where you have the will, you will have the skills."

- Verghese Kurien (Dairy development and creator of co-operatives)

7. What are our National Values? As Brig (Retd) GB Reddi points out in his book in 1993 on "In Search of National Values", these are never discussed in NDC, Army War College or DSSC or CDM! He in his study on commonality in 18 Core Indian Values and 16 Military values has brought out that barely five values (Truthfulness, Justice, Humility, Selflessness and Integrity) are common. More disconcerting is the wide variation in order of priority given by the service officers in the rank ordering in the prevailing environment! The divergence in rank ordering was very high indicating wide gap between the "ideal" and the "actual".

8. As per Covey, "Paradigms are powerful because they create the lens through which we see the world. The power of paradigm shift is the essential power of quantum change, whether the shift is an instantaneous or a slow and deliberate process." One has to decide whether or not one wants to see through the new lens. The problem with the present system of grooming of the officers is

perhaps that they sing the tune where they belong. For example, an officer when posted to Command HQ would criticize the way lower formation commander is acting with full knowledge that he if placed there would act in a similar fashion. Similarly, unless an officer is posted to the HQ IDS, he would not see "the other's point of view". However, once posted to IDS he would start propagating how important jointness is! Here is the real problem. Is it that the bright officers with such a fantastic exposure at various courses inside and outside countries, promotional and other extrinsic rewards and awards still continue to have the myopic view of their service, their officers, their arm, their "man", their region and so on and can not see rationale or objectivity? Then are we training and investing in right kind of officers?

9. Is staff becoming more important than the implementers or operators? With the establishment of IDS, there is a fear in some circles especially the operators that the staff is becoming more important than operators. It is both true and not true. In the complex environment of today and tomorrow, the planning element becomes crucial to optimization of efforts based on effect based operations. If the planning is comprehensive, chances of implementation of the plans to be successful are comparatively higher. The criticism, if any, about the delay due to HQ IDS is not that relevant since everyone is aware how long service HQs take to progress a case themselves! It may be recalled that Hitler had especially chosen his staff officers who had no urge for extrinsic awards and rewards. It resulted in an excellent band of staff officers who planned operations and other works meticulously and the result is for us to see. It may be important to identify such individuals in the organization right from early stage of his career and groom them for jointness.

10. The parable in "Who Moved My Cheese" is relevant. We require those common sense rats Sniff, Scurry and Haw that would search for new cheese and not Hem who get hooked to the available cheese and be happy with it. Today, the Hems can afford to do so for the lack of accountability and the tenure concept. We are looking for a change in the system but people won't change unless purpose and processes change. Gandhi once said scathingly, "Everybody is looking for a system so perfect that no one inside has to be good. Such a system does not exist." Processes are important since they set up the ground rules on which the system works irrespective of individuals. Hence, sometimes, the criticism of processes being thought of more than the end result may not be totally true.

11. It is likely that own turf and mindsets may be the two single dominant factors seemingly prevailing in the higher ranking officers. It is expected that as one rises in the organization, the ability to see the wood in the dark is to be growing exponentially and one is expected to rise above the common for the larger picture. Winston Churchill had said to the effect that larger picture whatever it may be must be seen. It is surprising to note that the contribution of an individual as he goes up the ladder reduces drastically with honourable

exceptions, of course. Is it that Parkinson's law of rising to the incompetency level gets validated. Or is it that only such individuals are allowed to rise in the hierarchical organization? Or is it that the vastness of the system engulfs and chains most of the individuals to the rote. It is in peace that regulations and routine become important and that the qualities of boldness and originality are cramped. Another argument is about practicality. Well, it is the job of the CEOs in the corporate world to make things happen. If one likes to compare the defence services with the corporate world (which is incidently on the rise with terms such as company policy etc.), then changes must be brought with boldness, vision and philosophical attitude.

12. Is the present system plagued by the Power struggle? Should capability be judged or the number? If info systems are to be managed by the experts, would it not be right for signals officers to man the IS? Relevance of branch at higher levels in policies -when technology is the prime mover- needs a review and many posts need to be seen with open mind and objectivity. If discretion is used in direct entry versus ex-NDA in anyone's favour, it stinks of selfishness, what else! This is of course opening the Pandora's box. There was a study carried out by DIPR way back, headed by scientist Mr Varhadpande on the pattern of 62-65 war casualties. There were many shocking/ revealing points. One such was the percentage of casualties in direct entry was more. The report was never made public for obvious reasons. While the incentives/ carrots for the frontliners are in order, can they, as a rule, rise from the "operating" levels to higher levels of skills required for jointness?

13. The Interoperability aspect is vexing one. It does not stem from the technology point of view. In fact, the technology is progressing at such a rapid pace that it is the commanders at highest levels that need to decide what they want to be shared and hence be interoperable. They are obsessed with fear of compromise of security of information by men in other uniform forgetting the numerous cases of leaks by their own servicemen. Trust is lacking amongst the comrades.

14. The problem of theatre commands seems to be plagued by who will get the larger pie so to say. HQ ANC is the test bed for joint command. Due to the policies and procedures not to speak of the mindsets and the "hidden" agenda, the progress on this viable concept is tardy to say the least.

15. Another example is the establishment of Aerospace Command. It looks only logical that aerospace is the extension of air in the vertical and if Indian Air Force is to defend the skies of the nation and over the areas of interest, Aerospace Command should be lead by Air Force with two sister-service representation for synergy. It is akin to Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA at HQ IDS) or earlier SI directorate being lead by Army with representation from the other two services. Would Army accept Theatre Commander over land to be an Air Force or more precisely a Naval officer? What is the problem in remaining

objective and allow growth of the organization? Is it a loss? Are we playing ZERO sum game or want to play a "WIN-WIN" game? US is quoted as per what suits. In some cases, the stand taken is we can not compare ourselves with US the superpower. In other cases, US example is quoted for following. This must stop.

16. Why Chief of Defence Staff is not nominated? One shudders to think but, is it the self- interest in the three chiefs that they would lose the power that they enjoy once one of them becomes CDS? Then, how can one rise to the highest post with this thinking where National interests are involved? One fervently hopes that this is not the case. Then is it that the govt is happy not to have CDS? It is difficult to believe (especially with Kargil committee recommendations) though govt would be happy so that "Divide and Rule" policy could be adopted as per their convenience. Why can't a junior three star made four star and be CDS? The source code in the 22 thought leaders and eight exemplary CEOs as identified by Shrinivas Pandit include values such as commitment, persistence, distinctiveness, curiosity, persuasiveness, risk taking, focus, high energy, learning and humility. It is difficult to say if an officer lacks in any of these qualities.

17. Loyalty needs to be redefined in the present context. Earlier, it used to be said that one's loyalty belonged to the nation first, then to service, then to arm and so on in that order. It also meant to many "Loyalty to service is loyalty to BOSS." Do officers with "out of box" thinking get sidelined in their organization? And find place in tri-service organizations?! This has created all the "fortresses", "turfs" and mindsets in the people who matter. Hence the "jointness" is at least spoken and not "seamlessness" in the services which is so very important for a country such as India. There is a need to have a paradigm shift and say that your loyalty to nation is first and last.

18. In so far as the requirement of jointness is concerned, the prevailing perceptions could be broadly classified as follows:-

(a) **Not Required.** There is a reasonably large strength in perhaps all the three services especially at higher levels who tend to believe that the jointness is required only for Multi-National Forces/ Operations and is not that much relevant in Indian context. Also, wherever handshake is required, the services are and have been doing it. The examples of Gujrat earthquake is cited as an example. When the balloon goes up, all the instructions flow verbally and every service pitches to the need.

(b) **Required.** There is a growing size of senior officers tending to believe in the jointness bandwagon. It may be that they have the recent exposure on the RMA and do appreciate the complexity of operations in years to come and the requirement of joint planning and execution. It is

also perceived that lower the years of service, more the willingness to share the information and work jointly.

(c) **The Middle Pathers.** This lot is bound to argue the pros and cons and take the middle path towards joint approach as a practical approach.

### **The Road Ahead**

“Act as if it is impossible to fail.”

- Carl Jung

19. One of the steps to be taken to make it seamless is one dress/ uniform for all. Most of the larger forces of the world have adopted the army uniform and there is nothing wrong in agreement to the same from all the services.

20. Ed Smith in his talk organized by CENJOWS stated that for Jointness to actually percolate, there is a need for brilliant officers to be posted to organization such as IDS who would be able to logically put forth the issues of jointness in a convincing manner to those who matter in the individual services.

21. One of the possible remedies is to ensure that all flag officers must have an IDS/ tri-service institute/ organization tenure/ experience before reaching the star/ flag level. Also, a study could be carried out by an outside agency to verify the changes in their thought process as a consequence of their exposure.

22. In the foreseeable future, perennial shortages may continue. The services are fielding new equipment and systems, maintaining the old ones which are at the later part of the bath tub curve in the life cycle of the product. This brings the focus again on jointness. There is a commonality of equipment and skill sets such as IT and networks, UAV, helicopters to name a few. What needs to be done is its identification and exploitation of the inventory and expertise across the services.

23. As Lt Gen (retd) SRR Aiyengar suggests, jointness can be achieved by triple As- Appreciate, Acknowledge, Accept. Another A can be added- Act. The essence of jointness is in trust and understanding. “Jointness is not created merely by doctrine, joint or otherwise. It is brought about by people good and bad. Like most things in life, it is created more successfully by a higher proportion of good people well trained in service capabilities and how to employ them keeping in mind the three As.”

24. Perception management is another important aspect. Some of the steps to be taken in this regard could be summarized as follows:-

- (a) A need is felt to identify the officers at ab initio stage who have the thinking abilities to think rationally and objectively without bias. They need to be nurtured and made to grow in the organization.
- (b) Jointness needs to be preached and practiced at all levels.
- (c) Joint Doctrines and organizations need to be covered in the training environment in the three services.
- (d) Lectures on jointness and related aspects may be arranged at HQs and other formations/ selected stations periodically to highlight the immense benefits to be accrued.

25. We know where to go. We know the direction. Let us not get carried away by SERP (Status, Ego, Rank, Position) and BRS (Branch, Region, Service) but values. Let us work together and not mind that extra credit another person may get along the way. Let us co-operate and inter-operate. If the three services can not come on the common grid of jointness, it will have to be an act of parliament through political instrument that the three services will be made to see the larger picture.

### **Conclusion**

"They did what they said they were going to do; they did it when they said they were going to do it; and they did it how they said they were going to do it."

- Frank Billone, CEO Kent Electronics

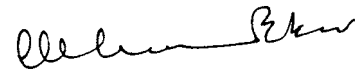
26. Jointness is not new to India and Indians. It is over the years that different values have got into the society and armed forces can not remain totally insulated from the society. Also, no system is so perfect that individuals do not have to be good.

27. Jointness or seamlessness would be the order of tomorrow and armed forces must get geared to it. It could come from 'Top to Bottom' or vice versa. Though latter approach would be easier due to advancement of technology, given the hierarchical organization, top bottom approach is plausible. For this the higher ranking officers with fantastic exposure, extrinsic and intrinsic awards and rewards must sit together, think together, act together not in the interest of their

service but in the larger interest. Let the joint organizations prosper for tomorrow sometimes at the cost of own service interest today.

28. There is no magic wand for jointness to start functioning. Earlier everyone at the higher echelons thinks and starts acting on it better it would be. Trust and understanding would be the touchstones of jointness. This quality in the officers needs to be identified at early stages and such officers need to be groomed. Jointness or seamlessness should be the mantra to be chanted by everyone concerned followed by befitting actions on ground. Loyalty needs to be redefined in the changed context of jointness. The leaders must transit from independence to interdependence as early as possible. In the final analysis, it is the whole that matters not the individual parts. An act of parliament may be the final solution to thrust, if need be, the jointness or seamlessness on the three services.

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