

DSSC/16592/1/Pers

**TRAINING AND MINDSET – THE KEYS TO
SYNERGY IN THE COMBINED ARMS CONCEPT**

Introduction

1. From the days of the Burma Campaign and the airlift of 1 Sikh into Srinagar in 1947, to the synergistic attacks on Karachi, capture of Dacca in Dec 1971 and victory on the icy heights of Kargil, Jointmanship or the Combined Arms concept is nothing new for the Indian Armed Forces. India was first off the block when it came to setting up 'Joint Institutions' of training and learning like the NDA and DSSC, models that are being replicated the world over. With a legacy as strong as this, India should have led the way when it came to developing synergies and maximizing its combat potential. What has happened instead, is a realization that in an era where economic progress has overshadowed military might, budgetary constraints and public/media scrutiny has forced large armed forces like that of India to introspect and see how they can extract more 'bang for the buck'. This is but one of the many compulsions that has pushed the 'Jointmanship' dilemma into the forefront. Recent conflicts in the Falklands, Gulf and Afghanistan have shown that true Jointmanship goes well beyond the 'Airland Battle' concept and single service capabilities are being joined together weeks or months before a 'crunch or conflict' situation. It also transcends beyond the skin-deep understanding that we presently possess each other's capabilities and limitations. To say that we are on the wrong track is to belittle the tremendous effort made over the last five decades, however, to introspect and effect a mid-course change is no crime, in fact, it is an absolute necessity. The recently published 'Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces' mostly articulates what we already know and steers clear of any radical and far-reaching changes, especially where it deals with 'Operational Imperatives for Change'. It is conservative, circumspect of being critical of shortfalls and does not articulate a concrete methodology of how we need to adopt the suggested model. To be absolutely fair, what it has certainly done is to act as a catalyst for debate on how to improve synergies and move from 'Jointmanship' to a truly Combined Arms Concept. If one were to simplistically highlight the three vital ingredients of Jointmanship, they would be ***Training, Mindset and Joint Operational Art***. All three are closely interlinked and complement each other in an open loop. There are no better practitioners of Operational Art worldwide than Generals, Admirals and Air Marshals of the Indian Armed Forces. The tactical acumen of formation commanders of all the three services is what has propelled India to the world centre stage as far as joint exercises are concerned with numerous countries waiting in queue. What then is impeding the progress in areas related to ***Jointmanship, Interoperability and Synergy*** between the three Services? Are they the other two compartments, viz Training and Mindset !!

Scope

2. This paper would attempt to introspect and reflect on two imperatives viz Training and Mindset that are vital for propelling Jointmanship to new levels and harnessing synergies to cope with the existing realities and paradigms of warfare. Some of the questions asked would be:-

- (a) Is our focus on Joint Training superficial and 'Skin Deep'? Is it more about control of ideas and assets rather than harnessing and exploiting them?
- (b) Are our mindsets too conservative, rigid, and are we, at times, oblivious of the rapid changes overtaking militaries the world over?
- (c) Is there a Dichotomy between what is articulated and what is practiced? Are we not concentrating too much on a 'Top Down Approach' to jointmanship?

Building Blocks of Jointmanship

Induction Phase.

3. Approximately half of the officer intake into the Armed Forces in India is from the NDA, a figure that is significantly lower as compared to 10 years ago, primarily due to the inability of NDA to attract talent. As a result of this, a large number of officers from the three services, many of them from the fighting arms, are exposed to very little Joint Training until they meet their counterparts from the other services at DSSC, Wellington. By then, mindsets have been developed and joint concepts are more in theory and less in practice, with single service concepts dominating the entire thought cycle of future staff officers and commanders. What are the options available to set this right? A few options are:-

- (a) Expand NDA to ensure that all graduate level intakes into the Armed Forces are through the NDA. Postgraduate intake into technical and specialized streams must go through a Joint Services capsule at the NDA prior to commissioning. Even the existing syllabi at NDA needs to be bolstered by more joint service academic content that is pitched at the right level.
- (b) If the above is not possible, all non Ex NDA officers must be put through a Joint Services YOs (young officers) capsule with both individual service and joint service content.

Early Years

4. The early years of training are, understandably, characterized by intense single service skill accumulation. At ground level, it is a phase of undesirable isolation from tactical concepts of 'joint war fighting'. Senior leadership is firm in their conviction that focus and acquisition of individual service professional knowledge is far more important than acquiring knowledge of the other services. Keeping in mind the rapid advances in technology and the ongoing Revolution in Military Affairs, we need to look at it from a different perspective, wherein we build up joint war-fighting capability during the early years of service; capability that is capable of swift intervention in scenarios as diverse as LICO, CI Ops, Protection of Maritime interests and Multi National Force interventions, all of which we are currently undertaking. Some thoughts on enhancing interoperability and jointmanship for officers between 3-8 yrs of service are :

- (a) Commencement of a Joint Junior Commanders Course for all officers of the three services that is merit based and pitched at the tactical level, the aim being to create a pool of officers who are jointly trained and tactically aware at the battalion, squadron and ship levels.
- (b) A specific Junior Combat Commanders course can also be conducted to identify and nurture tactically proficient officers from the fighting arms of the three services who would go on years later to refine and hone up Joint War Fighting Tactics, Strategy and Doctrine.
- (c) Selected officers from all branches and streams could also be sent on cross attachments for 3-6 months at the Battalion, Squadron and Warship level with a clear mandate of what to assimilate and take back.

The Middle Years (12-25 years)

5. This a period wherein the Indian Armed Forces devote the maximum time towards discussing and understanding Joint War-fighting tactics at institutions like the Defence Services Staff College, and attempt to move up the value chain during the three Higher Command Courses. In the present context, this is rather late as bulk of the joint syllabi at DSSC is devoted to understanding tactics of the other services, something that should have been done much earlier, probably at the Junior Commanders Course. Without blindly aping some other countries who have redesigned the content at their Staff Colleges to make it more responsive to present and emerging challenges, we too need to look very closely at continuing to overhaul the training methodology at our staff college and decide whether it is time to do away with three separate Higher Command Courses, and replace it with a single one. Some random Joint training related issues as food for thought are :

- (a) Review the entire syllabus at DSSC to make it truly joint in all respects throughout the course after only an initial period of single service re-orientation, focussing more on Operational Art, Strategy and Doctrine as against the present 'tactical heavy content'. This would only be possible if tactical proficiency is honed at the junior command and unit levels.
- (b) Moving up the value chain in terms of content will enable staff officers and potential commanders to understand the implication and process of joint capabilities, strategy and doctrine as articulated by their formation commanders. It will also teach them to exercise greater initiative and independent decision-making.
- (c) 8-10 years later, meeting up again, albeit in lesser numbers and sharing a common platform at a common Higher Command course will offer tremendous potential to look back critically and analytically at years, events and operations gone by. This would, inevitably, form the final building blocks before attitudes, operational experiences and perceptions get translated into doctrine and policy. Can it go wrong? In all probability not, since the architects would have cut their teeth, trained, fought, led and taught together.

The Senior Years

6. Offering an opinion on mindsets, attitudes and perceptions of our seniors is an extremely daunting proposition, made even more difficult when it relates to an issue as sensitive as 'Jointmanship'. What makes it a trifle easier is that the leadership in all three services acknowledge that there are roadblocks on the 'Combined Arms' route. They also acknowledge that 'turf' battles and mindsets act as major impediments to Jointmanship? What are the main areas of conflict that need to be resolved as seen from the middle level? Some of them are :

- (a) Fear/apprehension of losing resources, vacancies, control and power.
- (b) Reluctance to look at the 'big picture' or national and global realities, and look only at parochial individual service interest, the mantra being 'protect service interests and then only fit in joint imperatives'.
- (c) A distinct reluctance to accept the changed nature of warfare, it's uncertainty, speed and variety. While the old adage of Victory is measured by foot still rings true, so is the exponentially lethal and swift impact of airpower on conflict resolution with minimum loss of life and destruction. Energy interests and trade are vital for a nation's survival, and who better than maritime forces are vital to project and protect these interests.

International Perspectives

7. At a symposium at the National Defence University, in Jan 2002, US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld remarked, "The lesson of the war in Afghanistan is that effectiveness in Combat will depend heavily on jointness and how well the different branches of the military can communicate and coordinate their efforts on the battlefield. Achieving that jointness in wartime requires building that jointness in peacetime. We need to train like we fight and fight like we train and, too often, we don't." "Prophetic words indeed because soon after, the US led coalition forces unleashed a simultaneous combined Arms campaign to remove Saddam Hussain from power during Op Iraqi Freedom. The campaign was as different from the one prosecuted during Desert Storm as 'chalk is from cheese', the main difference being the simultaneity in attack and speed of execution that was only made possible because of Secretary Rumsfeld's insistence on Jointness, Interoperability and Synergy at every level. Presently, military technology has overtaken military thinking and therein lies part of the problem. Aerospace and naval power are heavily technology intensive and form vital components of the technology that has overtaken thinking. An appreciation of this would go a long way in bridging 'mindsets' as they exist today in terms of understanding each other's capabilities and shaping realistic joint warfare strategies for the future. The US Army is defining a new joint operational architecture that is going to integrate seamlessly with the emerging strike capability of US air and Naval forces. Joint doctrine the world over is being shaped by technology and 'effect' based compulsions. Given the pre-dominance of the Indian Army in post independence operations, integration of new and emerging capabilities of Air and Naval forces is proving to be a bit of a stumbling block and one of the impediments in putting together an operationally viable 'Combined Arms Doctrine'.

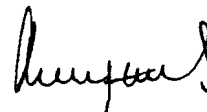
Conclusion

8. There is a distinct difference between 'Joint Training' and 'Training Jointly' as we presently do. While the former is like a well-composed painting with no rough edges, the latter is like an incomplete jigsaw puzzle in which the joint players are desperately trying to fit in the pieces till the last moment. It needs very little imagination to decide which model needs to be followed. In the Indian context, geo-political imperatives, topography and preponderance of low intensity/ counter insurgency/ urban warfare conflict scenarios would ensure that the Army's role would not diminish in any way. However, the emergence of political and strategic preferences for 'effect based operations' against centres of gravity and coercive diplomacy as a speedy means of conflict resolution has catapulted Air Power to the forefront as a vital component of military power. India's maritime interests, international forays in search of fast depleting energy resources and protection of SLOCs makes it imperative for us to focus adequately on maritime forces. We need to look beyond mere budgetary allocations and control of various commands, and embrace jointness with speed and a 'spirit of give and take'. This is possible only if we adopt a parallel approach of tackling organisational changes from

the top and initiating simultaneous changes in training patterns from the 'bottom'. Jointness has to be accepted as reality. We are moving too slowly in modernising the training and technology used in joint missions. At the end of the day, we have to realise that if the three services cannot resolve Jointmanship issues, force re-structuring would ultimately be dictated by politics in a democracy, just as the way it was done in the US and UK. The sooner we realise this, the smoother will be the transition to true jointness.

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