

# JOINTNESS IN THE DEFENCE FORCES: CHALLENGES AND THE WAY AHEAD

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I consider 'Jointness' to be a very topical issue in the Armed Forces today. I refer to it as 'Topical' because now there is an almost universal acceptance that in the not too distant future, India is destined to be a major global player of consequence, capable of securing for its masses their cherished quality of life and safeguarding its legitimate security

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interests. With a landmass of about 2.39 million Sq Km and a population of over 100 crores of which close to 40% are in the most versatile and productive age bracket of 18 to 35 years and a rich and vibrant base in science and technology, especially in the field of information and communication technology, India is poised to join the league of 'Developed Nations.'

The desired geopolitical and strategic status of India will require a commensurate national security apparatus that is contemporary in character and responsive in managing security challenges which the future is likely to throw up. India ought to be capable of leveraging its military instrument in pursuit of its legitimate national security interest. Our entire national security establishment and

specially the Armed Forces have to foresee the need of enhancing their effectiveness in the context of emerging technological advances and dynamic threat spectrum. We will need to optimise our strategic decision making process and war fighting concepts to become more efficient as well as cost effective.

This is one of the important facets amongst others where debates assume significance. The concept of 'jointness' is not new to us. The Joint Services Wing for training officer cadets, which later became the National Defence Academy (NDA), was the first of its kind anywhere in the world. Other Joint Services institutions such as the Defence Services Staff College and the National Defence College followed suit. Independent India, has fought and won many wars, which could not have been possible without the requisite degree of synergy, the hallmark of 'jointness', in our security system. Notwithstanding this history, however, there is need to bring changes in our system to adapt to the demands of contemporary and future national security challenges.

**But any debate or discussion on 'change' would require clarity of the concept. So what is this concept that we are all talking about?**

Institutionally, 'jointness' and synergy are much talked about concepts, though interpreted differently by different people. I will tell you my simple interpretation of it. To my mind, as far as our national security apparatus is concerned, it is about striving for optimal operational and cost effectiveness in the current and envisaged future geopolitical environment. Dissected further, it would mean that the three Services should be able to operate seamlessly with common understanding of the missions and joint strategies to accomplish them. It would imply Joint Operational Doctrines for all Theatres of war, Joint Concepts of Operations to accomplish identified military missions and also procedures that can fructify these concepts and doctrines. It will entail possessing interoperable systems, joint training to develop common understanding and synergizing institutional assets, whose ownership, responsibility and accountability, with respect to managing national security is currently delineated. And all this has to be achieved in a cost effective manner.

I would not like to go into the analysis of why we are at what we are. Most of this is in the public domain. The simple fact is that we need to evolve the ethos of acting jointly, which is a prerequisite for successfully waging a modern day war. All these would entail

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transformation and reforms in the Armed Forces. However, more than anything else, these would involve changes in mindsets which would place national security interests above sectoral interests.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from Guilio Douhet who wrote in 1921, ***“There are experts of land, sea and air warfare, but as yet there are no experts of warfare; and warfare is a single entity, having a common purpose.”***