



Advancing Defense Integration in India

This editorial is based on [“Has the Chief of Defence Staff post improved India’s combat efficiency?”](#) which was published in The Indian Express on 16/05/2024. The article examines the vital role of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) in India's defense integration efforts, highlighting challenges, solutions, and the imperative for enhanced jointmanship and strategic preparedness.

For Prelims: [Integration Among Defence Forces](#), [Chief of Defence Staff](#), [1999 Kargil War](#), Kargil Review Committee, Department of Military Affairs, [Galwan Valley clash](#), [Line of Control](#), [Defence Research and Development Organisation](#), [Rafale fighter jets](#).

For Mains: Rationale Behind Appointing the CDS, Factors Contributing to the Mixed Trajectory of the Office of CDS in India

India consistently navigates enduring and significant challenges to its [national security](#) and sovereignty. The creation of the [Chief of Defence Staff \(CDS\)](#) in 2019 was intended to enhance overall combat efficiency and prepare for new emergencies shaped by the **techno-strategic churn**, but its trajectory so far has been mixed.

Recent reports suggest consideration of new posts like **Vice CDS and Deputy CDS** to support the CDS's multiple roles. Along with this, the current imperative is increased integration among India's three armed forces, ensuring **seamless collaboration, unified strategies, and enhanced operational effectiveness**.

What is the Rationale Behind Appointing the CDS?

- **Promoting Jointmanship:** For decades, the lack of integrated planning and resource optimization among the [Army, Navy, and Air Force](#) had been identified as a major structural deficiency, undermining India's overall combat effectiveness.
 - **Example:** India's joint operations during the [1999 Kargil War](#) to an extent lacked planning and coordination, highlighting the need for better integration.
- **Establishing a Single Military Adviser:** The CDS was envisioned as an empowered, single-point military adviser to the government, bridging the civil-military gap and providing coherent strategic guidance.
 - Prior to the CDS, the government received **separate and sometimes conflicting advice** from the three service chiefs, making it difficult to obtain a cohesive military perspective.
- **Enhancing Operational Synergy:** The CDS is tasked with spearheading the transition towards integrated theater commands, **fostering greater synergy and interoperability** among the services during operations.
 - During the [2004 Indian Ocean tsunami relief efforts](#), better coordination among the services could have improved the effectiveness of the response.
- **Optimizing Resource Allocation:** By promoting jointmanship, the CDS is expected to rationalize

defense expenditure and ensure optimal utilization of resources across the services.

- **Strategic Force Management:** The CDS is mandated to oversee long-term defense planning, force structuring, and capability development, aligning military preparedness with evolving security threats.

What is the Timeline for the Creation of the Post of Chief of Defence Staff in India?

- **1999:** The **Kargil Review Committee**, headed by **K. Subrahmanyam**, recommended a comprehensive review of the national security framework for improved decision-making in defense matters.
 - The committee also recommended a holistic study and reorganization of the mechanisms and interface between the **Defense Ministry and Service Headquarters**.
- **2001:** Based on the Kargil Review Committee's report, a Group of Ministers (GoM) recommended the creation of the post of the **Chief of Defense Staff**.
- **2001-2019:** Despite the GoM's recommendation, no government implemented this significant defense reform due to a lack of political will and general consensus.
 - Many major countries, including Italy, France, China, UK, USA, Canada, and Japan, had already created the post of the Chief of Defense Staff to bring more jointness and integration in their armed forces.
- **2019:** On 24th December 2019, the Cabinet Committee on Security took the historic decision to create the post of the **Chief of Defense Staff** to enhance the quality of military advice to political leadership through the integration of service inputs.
 - This step aimed to develop and foster expertise in defense matters for better and more informed decision-making.
 - The CDS was designated as the **Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee** and the Principal Military Adviser to the Defense Minister on all tri-services matters.
 - On 31st December 2019, former Chief of the Army Staff, **General Bipin Rawat**, was appointed as the country's first Chief of Defense Staff.
 - The Cabinet Committee on Security also approved the creation of the **Department of Military Affairs**.
 - This new department handles all military-related matters, while the Department of Defence focuses on national defense and policy.
- **2022:** Lt General Anil Chauhan (retired) was appointed the Chief of Defence Staff on **28th September, 2022**.

What Factors have Contributed to the Mixed Trajectory of the Office of CDS in India?

- **Tragic Interruption and Policy Discontinuity:** The first CDS, General Bipin Rawat, passed away in an unfortunate air accident in **December 2021**, just about a year after taking charge.
 - The Indian government took an inexplicable nine months to appoint the next CDS that impacted the continuity and effectiveness of defense leadership and strategic planning
- **Overload of Responsibilities:** The current array of responsibilities assigned to the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) appears to be unnecessarily burdensome.
 - Critics argue that this confluence of roles, requiring a blend of military proficiency, administrative finesse, and strategic political advisory, may have detracted from the CDS's capacity to concentrate on the core objective of fostering joint operational synergy.
- **Lack of Adequate Consensus Among the Services:** The functionality of CDS may be hindered by divergent priorities, conflicting interests, and differing perspectives among the **Army, Navy, and Air Force**.
 - The **Defence Minister of India** recently acknowledged that many viewpoints have to be taken on board on the creation of integrated theater commands, referring to the differing perspectives among the services, particularly the Indian Air Force.

- Achieving consensus among the three services, each with their own traditions, cultures, and priorities, has proven to be a significant challenge.

What Emerging Defense Challenges Necessitate a More Unified and Integrated Approach from India?

- **Two-Front Threat Scenario:** India faces the prospect of potential simultaneous conflicts with China and Pakistan, given the ongoing border tensions and unresolved territorial disputes.
 - The [Galwan Valley clash with China in 2020](#) and the frequent ceasefire violations by Pakistan along the [Line of Control \(LoC\)](#) most recently in **November 2023** underscore the need for coordinated military preparedness on both fronts.
- **Hybrid Warfare and Cross-Border Terrorism:** The challenge of hybrid warfare, which combines conventional and unconventional means, including [cross-border terrorism](#), requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional response.
 - In 2020, the Indian government banned several mobile applications, including TikTok, citing **national security concerns** and their potential use for hybrid warfare tactics.
- **Maritime Security and Blue-Water Ambitions:** As India seeks to establish itself as a maritime power with global reach, it requires a strong, integrated maritime strategy involving the Navy, Coast Guard, and other agencies.
 - The [Indian Ocean Region](#), with its critical sea lines of communication and energy supply routes, demands a robust and coordinated naval presence and maritime domain awareness.
 - China's growing naval presence and influence in the IOR, including acquisition of the [Hambantota port](#) in Sri Lanka and the establishment of a naval base in Djibouti, poses a strategic challenge to India's maritime interests.
- **Force Modernization and Capability Development:** Effective force modernization and capability development require a holistic approach that considers the requirements of all three services, avoiding duplication and ensuring interoperability.
 - The acquisition of new platforms, such as the [Rafale fighter jets](#) or the [Indigenous Aircraft Carrier \(IAC\)](#), necessitates joint training and integration with other service components.
- **Space Security and Counter-Space Capabilities:** With India's increasing reliance on space-based assets for various military and civilian applications, ensuring space security and developing counter-space capabilities has become crucial, necessitating a coordinated effort from the **Armed Forces**.
 - In 2019, the [Defence Research and Development Organisation \(DRDO\)](#) conducted '[Mission Shakti](#)', neutralizing a satellite in space with an anti-satellite (ASAT) missile as part of the **Indian Ballistic Missile Defence Programme**.
- **Arctic and Antarctic Operations:** As global climate change opens up new opportunities and challenges in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, India has recognized the need to develop joint defense capabilities for operations in these hostile environments.

What Measures can be Taken to Enhance Integration of Indian Armed Forces?

- **Enhancing Role Clarity:** There is a need to streamline the existing distribution of roles between the CDS and the three service chiefs, ensuring a clear delineation of command and control channels.
 - Also, the potential creation of the positions of **Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS)** and **Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Dy CDS)** presents an opportunity to streamline and enhance the effectiveness of the Chief of Defence Staff institution.
- **Integrated Theatre Commands:** The long-pending implementation of integrated theatre commands, aimed at promoting jointmanship and resource optimization, must be prioritized.
 - The government has recently announced the **Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control, and Discipline) Act**, signaling the initiation of creating unified theatre commands is a significant step in this direction.
- **Cross-Service Rotational Assignments:** Implementing cross-service rotational assignments for officers and personnel across the Army, Navy, and Air Force.
 - This initiative exposes individuals to different operational environments, fosters mutual

understanding, and promotes collaboration between the services.

- It also helps in **breaking down cultural barriers and promotes a unified perspective** on defense operations.
- **Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) Fusion Centers:** Establish OSINT fusion centers that aggregate and analyze publicly available information from diverse sources, including social media, news outlets, academic research, and satellite imagery.
 - Applying **advanced data analytics, natural language processing (NLP), and geospatial intelligence** to generate actionable insights, early warning indicators, and threat assessments for defense planning and operations.
- **Quantum-Secure Communications Network:** Develop a quantum-secure communications network that leverages **quantum cryptography** and **quantum key distribution (QKD) protocols**.
 - This network ensures highly secure and unbreakable communication channels for **joint military operations, intelligence sharing, and critical infrastructure protection**, safeguarding against cyber threats and data breaches and reintegrating India's defense forces.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the need for the position of Chief of Defence Staff in India. Also, suggest measures for improving coordination and effectiveness in integrated defense planning and operations.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims

Q. Department of Border Management is a Department of which one of the following Union Ministries? (2008)

- (a) Ministry of Defence
- (b) Ministry of Home Affairs
- (c) Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways
- (d) Ministry of Environment and Forests

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q1: Analyze the multidimensional challenges posed by external state and non-state actors, to the internal security of India. Also discuss measures required to be taken to combat these threats. **(2021)**

Q2: Analyze internal security threats and transborder crimes along Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan borders including Line of Control (LoC). Also discuss the role played by various security forces in this regard. **(2020)**

Q3: Border management is a complex task due to difficult terrain and hostile relations with some countries. Elucidate the challenges and strategies for effective border management. **(2016)**

