



## ACB ISSUE BRIEF

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### Civil-Military Relations: Role in Doctrinal Development

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India has long faced multifaceted security challenges on all three domains i.e. land, sea, and air. There is hence the need for a credible force<sup>1</sup>. This is best illustrated by the recent clashes in the Galwan region of Ladakh. The recent Galwan crisis has shown the need for joint operations and enhanced Civil Military Relations<sup>2</sup>. Civil Military Relations (CMR) is a subset of Political Administrative Interface. The issues therein have been outlined in Athreya (2009)<sup>3</sup>. CMR have long been a vexed topic in India<sup>4</sup>. CMR is a triangular relationship between Politicians, Bureaucrats and Military<sup>5</sup>. The *Maroon Zone* goes beyond the *Purple Zone* and includes a third element of the military. The creation of the post of the **Chief of Defence Staff** (CDS) is often seen as a watershed in CMR in India. This was announced by the Prime Minister on 15 August 2019<sup>6</sup>.

#### CMR Theories

There are various theories of on Civil Military Relations as under:<sup>7, 8, 9:</sup>

**Institutional (Objective Civilian Control):** This is delineated in Samuel Huntington's book, *The Soldier and State*<sup>10</sup>. This requires water tight divisions between the civilian and military domains. The power of military is limited to military matters. Civilians are expected to maintain limits and refrain from military ambit. This intends to balance liberal politics and military professionalism. Independent India has by definition followed this line of an apolitical army with civilian control<sup>11</sup>.

A variant in this genre is Michael Desch who in his book titled *Civilian Control of the Military*<sup>12</sup> propounds a theory of *Thin Permeable Layer*. Thus, while there is military in autonomy in military, technical and operational spheres (how to fight wars), there is complete subordination to civilian control of grand strategy (when and whether to fight wars). There is scope for crossover of domains in exceptional circumstances. Thus, civilians can intervene in military matters and the military act politically. However, Desch also believes that civilian control must prevail.

**Convergence (Subjective Civilian Control):** Another theory was espoused by Morris Janowitz in his book *The Professional Soldier*<sup>13</sup>. Subjective Control is achieved by blurring the separation of military and civilian realms. The innate separation is not destroyed. He stresses on the need for a military leadership that shares civilian values leading to civilian dominance because of shared values<sup>14</sup>. In the case of a nuclear armed state the armed forces often have to undertake limited operations to achieve deterrence<sup>15</sup>. This increases the need for mutual understanding of civilians and military.

**Principal-Agent Theory (Assertive Civilian Control):** This theory was propounded by Peter Feaver in his book *Armed Servants*<sup>16</sup>. He held that Civilians are Principals and Military are Agents. There is thus a constant tussle represented by the working/complying vs shirking/avoiding dichotomy. Military is likely to exploit weaknesses of civilians even without staging a coup. Civilians too can manipulate cost-benefit analysis of military and dominate. This view too believes in civilian supremacy including obedience of wrong orders<sup>17</sup>. This theory was in vogue in India until the 1962 Indo-China War.

**Concordance Theory:** Another view on CMR is the Fusionism or Concordance model. This model believes that the civil and military domains should merge. Rebecca Schiff thinks that cooperation is gained through dialogue, accommodation and shared values among the military, political elites, and society<sup>18</sup>. This will discourage the military from interfering in politics<sup>19</sup>. This theory is apart from the aforesaid three theories in that it considers military and political to not be necessarily distinct. According to the Concordance view the main areas of focus are political decision-making process, social composition of the armed forces, recruitment of personnel, and military style of functioning<sup>20</sup>. The book of Steven I. Wilkinson titled *Army and the Nation* address this in India. Applying this theory it shows that the armed forces have been apolitical in their nature<sup>21</sup>.

**CMR Elements:** While addressing the Combined Commanders Conference in December 2015 onboard *INS Vikramaditya*, Prime Minister Modi challenged senior military commanders to reform their “beliefs, doctrines, objectives and strategies.” This address listed six broad areas for military reforms—defence planning, enhancing jointness (the ability of the army, navy and air force to operate together), urging manpower rationalisation (tooth to tail ratio), emphasising Professional Military Education (PME), restructuring higher defence management and streamlining defence procurement process<sup>22</sup>. A combination of diplomacy, military, intelligence, law enforcement, and the economy are needed to counter these challenges<sup>23</sup>. The most pressing issues in CMR are doctrines, and jointness. This paper shall focus on political decision-making process especially doctrinal formulations and military diplomacy. The view of Mukherjee concurs with this list<sup>24</sup>.

**Political Party:** The BJP government lead by Narendra Modi took office in 2014. Constructivists like Dr Ian Hall attribute strong response of India to Pakistan in 2016 and 2019 to the Hindutva ideology of the ruling BJP<sup>25</sup>. However, he too mentions that the government had not at the time of writing the book undertaken major structural reforms including creating a CDS post<sup>26</sup>. These policies have since been implemented. Earlier writers too talk of so-called doctrines that are attributable to politicians<sup>27</sup>. These are often vague and not created by scholarly rigour or official policy. The Concordance Theory of CMR holds the contrary view on political party ideology being a major factor in governance reforms. This theory attributes defence policy and doctrines to effective CMR.

## Integrated Defence Staff

The new CDS subsumes the existing *Integrated Defence Staff* (IDS)<sup>28</sup>. This in turn was created consequent to the Kargil Review Committee (KRC). After the Kargil Conflict, the Government constituted the KRC to carry out an in-depth review and analysis of security management system in the country. The recommendations were considered by the Group of Ministers (GoM) which made specific proposals for implementation based on the analysis carried out by four task forces. One of the weaknesses noticed was lack of integration in the forces. Based on the said recommendations the IDS was set up in 2001 vide Government of India, Ministry of Defence letter number MoD/IC/1027/32/IDS/5843/2001 dated 23 November 2001<sup>29</sup>.

The post of the CDS is often seen as having originated in the KRC. Colonial Indian Army had a Commander-in-Chief who was akin to the new CDS. This was downgraded to be on par with the navy and air force<sup>30</sup>. There were early calls for the creation of a CDS even after the 1962 war<sup>31</sup>. However, it stayed in abeyance. According to Lt Gen Gautam Banerjee the idea was mooted once again in the early 1990s<sup>32</sup>. There had been calls to create a CDS since the days of the KRC. This was however opposed by all three players. Politicians did not want to disturb the existing civilian control of military. Armed Forces Services were not necessarily keen on jointness. Bureaucracy were not open to changing procedural rules<sup>33</sup>.

One early fear was that the CDS would essentially be from the Army since it was the largest force. Thus, the Navy and Air Force have had their own reservations<sup>34</sup>. Given India's geography this was a valid concern even from a strategic view point.

There have been recent attempts to plug this gap. In early 2020 a new CDS has been created at four-star level to replace the current Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (PC-COSC). A new Department of Military Affairs, headed by the CDS has been created in the Defence Ministry with civilian and military staff<sup>35</sup>. Joint or Theatre commands are being created to facilitate jointness<sup>36</sup>. Given that the CDS is the head of a department within the Ministry of Defence there is enhanced possibility for political-military interface. This is an improvement over the earlier situation wherein each Chief gave service-centric advice. The erstwhile Chairman COSC being rotational was not very effective. The CDS can prioritise specific military components based on the military strategy and resource availability<sup>37</sup>. By way of illustration a new Air Defence Command has been created<sup>38</sup>.

**Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC)**<sup>39</sup>: This is a three-star post that was intended to assist the erstwhile PC-COSC. It continues to be the focal point of jointness in the armed forces. Since the creation of the CDS the CISC is considered a de facto Vice-CDS. This post is held by rotation by the three services. It is assisted by five Deputy Chief of IDS (DCIDS) drawn from all three services holding specific portfolio at three-star level.

**Andaman and Nicobar Command**: The Andaman and Nicobar Command remains the only tri-service theatre command, that directly serves under the CDS<sup>40</sup>. This was created in 2001 following the GoM report.

## Military Doctrinal Formulation in India

An important element of CMR is doctrinal formulation. Thus, while the CDS post now exists questions remain around the role it will play in this aspect. India has not drafted a white paper on defence strategy<sup>41</sup>,<sup>42</sup>. Military doctrines essentially flow from strategic thinking<sup>43</sup>. India has undertaken the formulation of Military Doctrines since the first nuclear tests in 1998. These provide the best available source on the conceptual basis for India's defence policy and strategy. All Doctrines too take an essentially Realist position. The 1962 War with China is seen as a watershed that moved Indian foreign policy from Idealism to Realism<sup>44</sup>. There is however a view that India has always been Realist<sup>45</sup>.

Given the absence of a policy document from the civilian government many doctrines from the military point again to the Concordance Theory that fuses military and political aspects. In India each armed service has its own doctrinal branch. This is not necessarily the case in other countries. The main institutions involved in doctrinal formulation are:

**Army**: The Indian Army has a Chief of Army Staff (COAS) which is a four-star General. Under this there is the Deputy Chief of Staff (Planning and Systems) which is a three-star post. Under this is the Directorate-General of Perspective Planning also a three-star post<sup>46</sup>. The **Centre for Land Warfare Studies**<sup>47</sup> and independent think-tank operates under this directorate. There is also an Army Training Command (ARTRAC) headed by a three-star officer at Shimla. This branch is responsible for doctrinal formulations<sup>48</sup>. Thus, the think tank and doctrinal branch are separate. This can be said to encourage intellectual discourse. In 2004, the Cold Start Doctrine of the Indian Army was released<sup>49</sup>. This was followed by a second doctrine in 2018<sup>50</sup>.

**Navy**: The Indian Navy has a Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) which is a four-star post. The Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation (DSCT) is a three-star post directly under the CNS<sup>51</sup>. The Indian Navy has several doctrinal other bodies including the Flag Officer Doctrines and Concepts (FODC), the Maritime Doctrines and Concepts Centre (MDCC) at Mumbai and the Indian Naval Strategic and Operational Council (INSOC) at New Delhi. The MDCC drafted the Indian Maritime Doctrine 2015<sup>52</sup> and the DSCT drafted the Indian Maritime Strategy 2016<sup>53</sup>. There is besides the Navy supported think-tank the **National Maritime Foundation**<sup>54</sup>. This has operations in Chennai along with **Chennai Centre for China Studies**<sup>55</sup>.

The Indian Navy released the first doctrine in 2009. In 2007, Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy was released<sup>56</sup>. A second version of the Indian Maritime Doctrine was released in 2016<sup>57</sup>. In the same year a Maritime Strategy Paper was also released<sup>58</sup>.

**Air Force:** The Chief of Air Staff is a four-star post. The 2012 doctrine was published by the Air War Strategy Cell in the IAF Headquarters. The College of Air Warfare besides being a training establishment also has a doctrinal role<sup>59</sup>. There is also an IAF supported think-tank **Centre for Air Power Studies**<sup>60</sup>. The Indian Air Force released a doctrine in 2012<sup>61</sup>.

**Joint Doctrine:** The IDS has a DCIDS Doctrine Organisation and Training Branch<sup>62</sup>. Under this post there is a Directorate of Doctrine that has drafted the **Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces**<sup>63</sup>. There is also an IDS supported think-tank called the **Centre for Joint Warfare Studies**<sup>64</sup> (CENJOWS). The **United Services Institution**<sup>65</sup> (USI) too is currently seeking supported from the HQ IDS. The first Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces was released in 2006. The second Joint Doctrine of the Armed Forces was released in 2017<sup>66</sup>.

## Civilian Think Tanks

A continued issue in India is the inability or unwillingness of civilian government especially politicians to participate in the doctrinal process. This is attributed to ignorance of military matters. A lack of accountability is also a drawback. There is hence a need for the Defence Ministry to create institutional capacity for efficient participation. One suggestion is to utilise think tanks to this end<sup>67</sup>, <sup>68</sup>. The following bodies are relevant in this context:

**Government Think-Tanks:** Besides the aforesaid think-tanks, two government think tanks merit mention. **Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis**<sup>69</sup> is supported by the Ministry of Defence. The **Indian Council of World Affairs**<sup>70</sup> is supported by the Ministry of External Affairs.

**Private Think-Tanks:** There are private think-tanks that too hold conferences, publish books and papers, and undertake like activities. These too can influence strategic thinking. Prominent ones include **Observer Research Foundation**<sup>71</sup>, at New Delhi with branches in Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata, **Gateway House**<sup>72</sup> at Mumbai and **Takshashila Institution**<sup>73</sup> at Bangalore. Other examples include **Synergia Foundation**<sup>74</sup> at Bangalore, **Chennai Centre for China Studies**<sup>75</sup>, and **Asia Centre Bangalore**<sup>76</sup>.

**Party Political Think-Tanks:** Some think tanks are aligned to political parties. The most prominent ones are India Foundation<sup>77</sup> and Vivekananda International Foundation<sup>78</sup> that are aligned to the ruling BJP. Dr Ian Hall believes that these have had a major impact on foreign and defence policy<sup>79</sup>.

## Military Diplomacy

India takes a Realist approach and views the global maritime domain as essentially anarchic and having intense competition. Thus, nation states need to adopt hard or soft power measures<sup>80</sup>. Defence Diplomacy could be defined as peaceful use of military as a tool of national foreign policy<sup>81</sup>. It has to be unified with the national diplomatic efforts<sup>82</sup>. It is not to replace but supplements overall foreign and security policy, under political leadership. All military diplomacy has objectives of strengthening diplomatic ties with other countries, training the nation's armed forces, acquiring better weapon technologies, and acquiring a sphere of influence<sup>83</sup>. The basic aim of India's defence diplomacy is to promote goodwill towards India overseas<sup>84</sup>. Each of the three forces has a role in Defence Diplomacy. There is also contribution by para-military bodies e.g. the Indian Coast Guard<sup>85</sup>. Defence Diplomacy is a good example of effective CMR. This requires cooperation and exchange as stipulated in the Concordance Theory.

The IDS has an International Defence Cooperation Directorate that is a single point agency in HQ IDS to handle all issues relating to International Defence Cooperation and is responsible for implementation of Tri-Services Defence Cooperation as mandated by foreign policy of the Govt of India<sup>86</sup>. Besides each service has its own unit for diplomacy.

## Conclusion

This paper aimed to study Civil Military Relations. Two specific elements of CMR under scrutiny were Doctrinal Development and Military Diplomacy. These were in the list the aforementioned of six issues. The prominent theories of CMR were studied. This paper has adopted the Concordance Theory as an explanatory framework. Further, this paper has demonstrated that the Constructivist view of political parties influencing military and diplomatic policy has not been found valid.

India has followed a Realist line of thinking in foreign and defence policies. Realism as an International Relations Theory position conjoins well with Concordance Theory of CMR. The current apolitical institutions and systems for doctrinal development have been found to be effective.

Notwithstanding the hype and rhetoric surrounding the new CDS post it is more an evolution in reforms that started in 2001. It can be said that given the efficacy of the existing IDS the creation of a permanent head is a natural progression. It is noteworthy that the CDS is at the same four-star level as the three service chiefs. This post is more in the nature of a *Primus Inter Pares* and not a supreme commander. This also make geographic sense for India. The CISC and DCIDS continue to play a key role in effective implementation CMR.

Doctrinal Development and formulation need high levels of expertise. The armed forces have created institutions to achieve this end. As noticed, there is no civilian government publication on declared foreign or security policy. Think-tanks are a major source of strategic thinking. To the extent there are party political think tanks, these may in fact benefit from veterans and retired bureaucrats in their ranks. This will help avoiding political parties from being excessively extreme.

Military Diplomacy continues to be practised by the three services. There are also joint efforts in this sphere. It continues to complement and supplement civilian diplomacy.

Popular media addressed the vexed issue of Political-Administrative Interface in the BBC television series **Yes Minister** and **Yes Prime Minister**. The episode titled **The Grand Design** highlighted Civil-Military Relations. It showed the tripartite interface of politicians, bureaucracy, and military.

## Way Forward

1. Institutional reforms in CMR are work in progress. These need to be carefully evaluated for effective advancement.
2. The IDS will continue to serve as a permanent secretariat for CMR. An attempt could be made to not have the CDS and CISC from the same service. The DCIDS could also be distributed across services.
3. Military Diplomacy will continue to be an important aspect of CMR. This needs to be addressed at a joint and service specific level.

4. The politically unbiased system of doctrinal development with relevant expertise should be maintained irrespective of the political party or coalition in power.
5. Think-tanks can be used in doctrinal formulation. This should be extended to civilian think tanks. Private think tanks that often have veterans will be a good source of expertise. There may also be civilian scholars who will be able to contribute effectively.
6. Party political think tanks will continue to be a check and balance on their party. The think-tank system should engage with them rather than avoiding interaction.
7. Currently all think-tanks are concentrated around the national capital of New Delhi. Given the size and diversity of India, all military think-tanks should open branches across India. This will follow the current example of NMF.
8. IDS has two think-tanks i.e. USI and CENJOWS. The former has a building with library and conference facilities. The latter could be moved permanently outside New Delhi with one or more location across India.
9. Given that IDSA is a think-tank of the Defence Ministry it could assist in the drafting of defence white papers and other such documents. ICWA could undertake a similar role for the Ministry of External Affairs.
10. Asia Centre Bangalore continues to be a centre of excellence in strategic thinking. In the last year it has created a website, and published several articles. An Issue Brief series has also been started. The armed forces, civilian government and think-tanks can draw on these resources.

Disclaimer: The views in this Issue Brief are of the author. It does not represent the views of Asia Centre Bangalore, its members, or Governing Board.

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