

Defense Reforms in a Rising India: An Organizational and Normative Shift towards Power Projection?¹

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For the past decade, pundits and commentators have showcased India as another rising Asian power like China. India's growing economy, larger international profile, and particularly its increased military spending, are seen as proof of India rising from being a regional power to perhaps a new Asian or even global power. Will India correspondingly move its military posture away from internal security and territorial defense, to emphasize power projection? Many commentators have pointed to India's large military purchases as evidence that India is moving toward power projection and rivalry with China. Whether this is really happening is hotly debated in India. This paper will look at the debate over defense and security reform in India and the establishment of India's first joint theatre command (for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands) as a test case.

India took an unprecedented step ten years ago by setting up a joint regional command for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The establishment of the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) was perceived as evidence that India is starting to balance against a larger China by reforming its defence organization (Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*; Rynning, *Changing Military Doctrine*). Although the ANC is a strategic location, India has historically avoided building up forces there and it has resisted building up power projection capabilities. Moreover, India has been reluctant to build jointness and joint operational commands, even though India's development of hard power capabilities are receiving increased attention. India provides an interesting case to examine different theories about how militaries learn. Realism and internal balancing (Posen), constructivism (Kier), and organization theories (Nagl, Bickle) will be used to see if they can explain why some actors have proposed change and others have opposed it. This study will also look towards Michael Raska's framework of a Diffusion Dynamics Model to help structure its analysis.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Society for Military Sciences annual conference in Copenhagen, Denmark in November 2013.

This paper seeks to examine the following questions:

- What are the perspectives of the major internal players on defense reform?
- Why did India decide to establish its first joint operational command?
- Does the ANC provide a future template for defense reform/transformation in India?

Competing Theoretical Perspectives

The traditional explanation makes the case that military innovation will likely come from an external threat or problem that will cause the civilian leadership to force change on a reluctant military that will resist efforts to change them.² According to Posen, “In general, only civilian intervention can shake loose these inter-service treaties and jealousies to produce an integrated grand strategy.”³ In contrast, there are other approaches that stress intervening factors that limit the effects of external threats to translate into coherent defence reforms. Kier stresses how the political-military culture of a country will place limits on how civilian and military planners “imagine” what the next war will be like and what changes are possible. So even though Britain, France and Germany all had similar experiences with the horrors of trench warfare in WWI and were experimenting with new military technology in the inter-war years, they would not all respond with the same reforms and military innovation.⁴ Others, like Nagl, have applied this to why some militaries can learn and adapt to the demands of counter-insurgency warfare and others cannot.⁵

² Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1984); and Locher, *Victory on the Potomac*, 448-49. However, one can also make the case that the traditional views see change as top-down, and that bottom-up approaches have been mostly overlooked, see Keith Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-40* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); and Adam Grissom, “The Future of Military Innovation Studies,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 29, no. 5 (Oct. 2006): 905-34.

³ Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 226.

⁴ Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine Between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁵ John Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Westport: Praeger, 2002).

Lastly, another group stresses that military change and innovation is not always forced on militaries from above but can from below. These analysts take the position that militaries can develop informal and formal doctrine “by doing” and that innovation inside the services is also possible. Bickel uses this framework to explain how the US Marine Corps developed their Small Wars Manual in the 1930s by learning from their experience in the Banana Wars.⁶

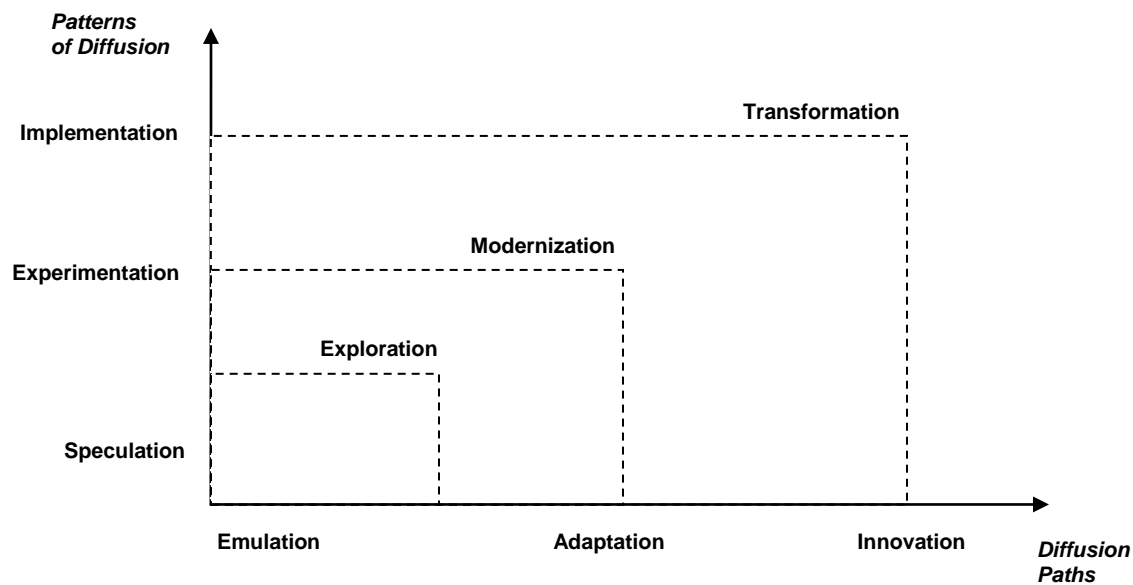
Contrasting Theories About Military Change	
Posen and Rynning	Internal balancing: in reaction to threats, civilians will force internal change on reluctant militaries
Kier, Nagl	How do militaries and civilians “imagine” the war to be, given the lens of their political military subculture and how organizational culture can either facilitate or hamper learning and innovation?
Bickel	Bottom up learning “by doing” (informal and formal doctrine)

Recently, Michael Raska, at RSIS, has been working on operationalizing these different theories of military change into a comprehensive framework that can examine different cases/countries. One is termed the Diffusion Dynamic Model, which has proven useful when looking at India’s defense reform. If one looks at the table below the place of India’s defense reforms is at the “modernization” phase, given the intersections of experimentation (pattern of diffusion) and adaptation (diffusion path).⁷ The limited experimentation of new, but limited reforms -- like the ANC -- are good examples of this.

⁶ Keith Bickel, *Mars Learning: The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-40* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999); and Adam Grissom, “The Future of Military Innovation Studies,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 29, no. 5 (Oct. 2006): 905-34.

⁷ Michael Raska, “Debating Military Change,” in Jo Ing Bekkevold, Ian Bowers, and Michael Raska (ed.) *Security, Strategy and Military Change* (forthcoming).

The Diffusion Dynamics Model



Source: Raska (2011); Based on Mahnken (1999); Farrell, Terriff (2002); Ross (2010);

Potential Drivers of Military Change in India

In the past 20-30 years, several developments have challenged the traditional paradigm of Indian defence organization. It is not always clear which of these developments is more important or what are the best responses, or even how relevant these are for a country like India. Moreover, there are disagreements about how these developments fit into the debate over increased jointness and integration.

The most obvious driver for military change is the modernization of India's conventional forces and the development of new force structures and doctrines. This combines several sub-factors like the nuclearization of the military balance with Pakistan, the Revolution in Military Affairs, Chinese military modernization, and the debate over power projection/"out of area" operations for the Indian military. Traditionally the Indian military was very Pakistan-centric

and kept a traditional British defensive doctrine based on holding and strike corps. Since the Sundarji reforms of 1980s, there has been a steady effort to mechanize the Indian army and make it more mobile and capable of executing operations both in a nuclear environment and high-tech/network warfare (the Cold Start just being the most infamous example). The military was searching for “strategic space” to be able to utilize its superior conventional capabilities to give options for policymakers.⁸ In its search for military options for policymakers, the military was influenced by the experiences of successful limited war in Kargil in 1999. The military also perceived that because of the lack of options between “do nothing” and “all-out warfare” in the 2001-02 Crisis with Pakistan, policymakers felt compelled to engage in their own clumsy halfway option of coercive diplomacy.⁹

Beyond dealing with a nuclear Pakistan, the armed services have also been tasked to come up with plans and capabilities for dealing with a larger and more powerful China. This presents them with a challenge that goes beyond the modernization of capabilities and also includes raising new military formations, acquiring new capabilities and technology, developing new doctrine, and developing an infrastructure in contested border regions, while at the same time avoiding any actions that strain the delicate relationship with China. The raising of more specialized mountain units, deployment of deep strike assets (like Brahmos cruise missiles and Su-30 aircraft), and the development of security infrastructure has been by most accounts slow and inadequate.¹⁰

On the other hand, during the past 20 years, while the military was pushing for conventional modernization, a large part of the Indian Army’s actual duties have been “sub-conventional” or, as is often termed in India, an “aid to civil authorities.” This has involved long counter-insurgency campaigns in the Northeast, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, support to

⁸ See Kalyan Raman, “Indian Military Responses to Pakistan, 1949-2010,” unpublished manuscript, Ali Ahmed, *India’s Limited War Doctrine: The Structural Factor* (ISDA Monograph Series, no. 10: 2012); and Harinder Singh, “India’s Emerging Land Warfare Doctrines and Capabilities,” *RSIS Working Paper*, No. 210 (13 December 2010).

⁹ Bratton, “Signals and Orchestration: India’s Use of Compellence during the 2001-02 Crisis,” *Strategic Analysis*, 34, no. 4 (July 2010).

¹⁰ Bibhu Prasad Routray, *National-Security Decision-Making in India*, RSIS Monograph, no. 27 (Singapore: RSIS, 2013): 38-40.

paramilitary forces fighting the ongoing Naxal insurgency, cross-border terrorism, and constabulary duties along many disputed borders (India has about 8,500 miles of disputed borders).¹¹ A large part of an entire generation of officers in the Army has spent most of their active duty careers dealing with internal insurgencies rather than conventional operations against Pakistan.

There is more to the debate over what power projection capabilities India needs than just the issue of military modernization. The issues include the familiar missions the Indian military has engaged in, such as the evacuation of Indian civilians from conflicts (Gulf Wars, Lebanon in 2006, Libya in 2011, etc.), Indian participation in the UN, and other international peacekeeping missions, and regional constabulary and soft-security needs (dealing with smuggling, piracy, humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR), etc.). More ambitious arguments were made about the ability to project hard power, including sea control in the Indian Ocean Region, amphibious operations, and assistance to friends in adjacent regions.¹²

The question of power projection is also linked to another driver for military change in India: the increasing interaction and exposure to international militaries and international military norms. Since the early 1990s, when India opened up its economy and moved away from non-alignment, the Indian military has vastly increased mil-to-mil ties with nations in Southeast and East Asia, the United States, Western Europe and others through bi- and multilateral exercises, military exchanges, cooperation on non-traditional security issues, and particular peacekeeping operations. More than ever before, the Indian military and defence establishment see how various trends and ideas are shaping other militaries and defence establishments and there is a desire to learn “best practices” and to be able to have greater cooperation or even

¹¹ The Army has been used in internal security since the 1950s in the Northeast; starting in the 1980s and then the 1990s with the insurgencies in Punjab and then especially Kashmir, a large portion of the Indian Army has been involved in continuous internal COIN operations for over 20 years. Author’s interviews with senior retired Army Officers, Delhi, India, July 2011. See also similar comments by former Army Chief, V.P Mallik, in *Kargil: From Surprise to Victory*, 364-65. For an in-depth discussions of the COIN operations, see Vivek Chadha, *Low Intensity Conflicts in India: An Analysis* (New Delhi: Sage, 2005); and Rajagopalan, *Fighting Like a Guerilla*, in particular 134-68.

¹² Military Affairs Centre, *Net Security Provider: India's Out-of-Area Contingency Operations*, IDSA Monograph (Delhi: IDSA, 2012); and the chapters by Walter Ladwig and Iksander Rehman, in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges*, Ed. Harsh Pant (London: Ashgate, 2012).

interoperability with them by becoming more like them. For example, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) created new organizational structures to manage military diplomacy.¹³

Drivers for Change and Innovation	
(1)	Modernization for mechanized high-tempo conventional operations
(2)	Internal security, low-intensity and border constabulary duties, soft security issues
(3)	Need for power projection or “out of area” capabilities? And what level? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. “Soft power projection”: evacuations, Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response, peacekeeping b. “Hard power projection”: project power against opposing force/hostile resistance
(4)	Need for “military diplomacy” and international cooperation: development of shared norms for what militaries do and how they are organized

Constraints of Indian Political Military Organizational Culture¹⁴

There are several aspects of Indian political military organizational culture that shape how the Indian state responds to these factors. These include a strategic culture of restraint, a tradition of non-alignment, a belief that India should lead by moral authority rather than hard power, a reluctance to formally articulate strategic policies, a Continentalist view of security issues, a secretive bureaucracy that does not release archival material related to security matters, and a strong separation between civilian and military leaders that hampers adequate civil-military dialogue.

First, India is said to have a strategic culture of restraint. India restrains itself in its acquisition and use of hard power and instead tries to use moral authority and soft power to achieve its goals. For long periods since independence (in particular 1947-62), India has not sought to project power in its region and spent less than 2% of its GDP on defence. Even in

¹³ K.A.Muthanna, *Enabling Military-to-Military Cooperation as a Foreign Policy Tool: Options for India* (Delhi: Knowledge World, 2006).

¹⁴ An earlier version of this section comes from the author’s work, “La Posture Stratégique Indienne,” prepared for IRSEM in November 2012.

times when India was more assertive (during the 1971 Bangladesh War and the 1987-90 intervention in Sri Lanka), these conflicts were confined to relations with its neighbors and India was reacting to developments in those countries rather than taking the initiative to shape developments. This is said to come from two sources: (1) the Gandhian/Nehruvian legacy of non-violence and reluctance to use hard power; and (2) a focus on internal development.¹⁵

The Indian state has also sought to frame its strategic questions in terms of keeping autonomy and maintaining moral authority. This stems from legacies of colonialism and the Indian National Congress (INC) ideology of independence, which contributed to making India an early leader of the nonalignment movement. Today this means that India will not form permanent alliances with any state and it will seek to balance any close ties with one state with initiatives toward others. For example, India will balance having closer military cooperation with the US and buying US transport aircraft, but at the same time aligning with the BRIC countries (Brazil-Russia-India-China) against the US on trade or climate change issues. Second, Nehru and his successors have sought to lead by moral authority and international solidarity (especially with the non-aligned movement) rather than unilateral use of force. India will always shape its strategic posture in moral terms, even if to critics this will seem like this moralizing is only cloaking *Realpolitik*. One could say that India is more comfortable using soft power rather than hard power to make its way in international affairs. Hard power is often pejoratively called “muscle flexing” by the bureaucracy.¹⁶

There is also a strong “Continentalist” view towards security matters and a “maritime blindness” towards the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This is said to come from a variety of factors. Historically the IOR was protected by the British Navy, and the pre-independence government did not have to worry about maritime security affairs. Instead, the colonial bureaucracy and the British Indian Army focused on the frontiers and internal security. This focus on borders and internal security remained since independence given the relationship with Pakistan and the Kashmir issue; the border dispute with China; and internal insurgencies and terrorism. Moreover, the Nehruvian economic model which sought economic autonomy and

¹⁵ For classic treatments of this see, George Tanham, *Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1992); Chris Smith, *India's Ad hoc Arsenal: Direction or Drift in Defense Policy?* (SPIRI: 1994); and Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2010).

¹⁶ For a useful overview see, in Christophe Jaffrelot, “The Cardinal Points of Indian Foreign Policy,” in Jaffrelot, *Religion, Caste and Politics in India* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2011).

limited trade meant there was less need for a strong navy or to take much interest in maritime affairs.

It can be hard to determine past and present Indian strategic posture and doctrine because India lacks a tradition of making written declaratory statements about its national security strategy. There is no equivalent of a published National Security Strategy or Quadrennial Defense Review. Despite being a parliamentary government, India has never published a White Paper on defence.

In addition to not making declaratory statements on its strategic posture, India also does not declassify documents related to national security and especially military operations. This makes it hard even for government-sponsored research centers to do lessons learned, develop better standard operating procedures (SOPs), and do adequate contingency planning. So it is difficult to say what the quality of Indian strategic learning is from both its own successes and failures and from watching international strategic developments.

There is a lack of a constructive dialogue between the military and civilian leadership in India. India is one of the few countries in the world where the military is not formally part of the Ministry of Defence.¹⁷ The political leadership and bureaucracy set the direction and the decisions on foreign policy with little consultation with the military services about how they could assist with India's goals. In return, the military leadership retains control over almost all military matters including the development of military doctrine, promotion and other matters with little civilian oversight.¹⁸ While the positive aspects of this is that India does not suffer from the poor civil-military relations or praetorianism one sees in Pakistan or Bangladesh, it does mean that Indian strategy and doctrine is not integrated. There is serious concern that in a time of crisis, there will be a serious disconnect between the goals of the political leadership and what

¹⁷ Stephen Cohen, *The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991), 175-77; Singh, *Defending India* (London: MacMillan Press, 1999), 109-12; and author's interview with General (ret.) V.K. Nayer, Delhi, India, Jan. 2010.

¹⁸ Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and its Armies* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996), 208-16, 221-32, and 239-44; Singh, *Defending India*, 107-08; Stephen Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 75-76; and Mukherjee, "The Absent Dialogue," *Seminar* (July 2009), 25-26. In the words of retired General Dipanker Banerjee, "Over the years a healthy tradition has developed that keeps the military at all levels and ranks insulated and at a safe distance from politicians and the political system." See Dipanker Banerjee, "India: Military Professionalism of a First-World Army," *In Military Professionalism in Asia: Conceptual and Empirical Perspectives*, Muthiah Alagappa (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2001), 24.

the military could actually deliver since each side has little understanding of the other. The uniformed services were not integrated with their civilian counterparts in the MoD.¹⁹

The lack of capacity for integration is also an overlooked constraint. Given the size of the Indian state and military, it is not often realized that many of the organs of the India state are woefully understaffed in relation to the population. The Indian police force only numbers 129 officers for every 100,000 citizens, well behind the UN-recommended 350 to 100,000 ratio. The Indian Foreign Service, the IFS, numbers only 700-800 officers, making the Indian foreign service smaller than in countries like Australia or Finland, let alone countries like France, China, Russia or the US. Even the Indian Administrative Services (IAS), the “steel frame of the Raj,” only numbers about 6,000 officers.²⁰ Few IFS and IAS officers are available for both inter-ministerial postings and key decisionmaking bodies within the ministries, and this seems to have a negative impact on efforts to improve integration and dialogue.

Constraints on Military Modernization
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strategic Culture or Restraint or Lack of Strategic Culture? 2. Focus on Soft Power/Moral Leadership and Strategic Autonomy 3. “Continentalist/Internal” Security Perspective: focus on territorial and internal threats 4. Lack of Articulated and Open Strategic Thinking 5. Lack of Integration and Capacity to Foster Dialogue between Civilian and Military

¹⁹ Raju Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, 129-30; and Admiral Arun Prakash (ret.), “India’s Higher Defence Organisation: Implications for National Security and Jointness”, *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 1 no. 1 (2007), 29. One could also argue they have an additional third hat in terms of the heavy ceremonial role they play in terms how much time they spend in ceremony, trooping the colors, receiving dignitaries at the airport, etc. My thanks to P.R. Chari on this point.

²⁰ Drawn from ; author’s interviews with senior IFS offices, Delhi, 4 and 6 June 2014; Kishan Rana, “Indian Diplomacy: Opportunity and Renewal,” in Rana, *Asian Diplomacy: The Foreign Ministries of China, India, Japan, Singapore and Thailand* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2008): 50-51.

Proposed Initiatives to Increase Jointness and Civil-Military Integration

Proposed Initiatives to Increase Jointness in India	
Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)	Single point military advice to government
MoD-Service Integration	Integrate services with MoD, and expand “billets” for service members inside MoD
Service Jointness	Increase joint training, doctrine development, procurement, and given incentives/requirements for joint service for promotion
Joint Commands	<u>Theatre Commands</u> : predeployment of assets to specific geographic commands, all service forces are under the operational command of a joint commander <u>Functional Commands</u> : pooling assets of a similar function to be controlled by joint commander

Views Towards Reforms in Jointness in the Indian Defence Establishment

Proposing Greater Jointness	Opposing Greater Jointness
Navy	Air Force ²¹
Army Futurists	Army Traditionalists
Defence Intellectuals	Bureaucracy?
Politicians	Politicians?

The Indian Army

The Indian Army has been the dominant service in terms of personnel, share of the budget, and prestige. This was historically true both before and after independence. The British Indian Army had a longer history (the navy and air force were late comers in the inter war years), and most of independent India’s threats have been land or territorial based so the Army was always seen as the most important. Not surprisingly, given both the Army’s size and the range

²¹ As will be noted later in this paper, while the Air Force is generally perceived as being against jointness, they would argue that they object to a specific type of jointness and really support another version.

of responsibilities it has, the views about jointness and joint commands are mixed within the service.

There are reformist minded officers who are pushing for more jointness, joint theatre commands, integration between the MoD and the services, and having a CDS.²² On the other side, there are more traditionally minded officers who are less interested. What is noteworthy is that pro and con groups do not necessarily disagree on the threats, but they are more divided over the balance of future roles for the Army along with the Army's autonomy and "turf."

To simplify the views in the Army between reformists and traditionalists, reformist officers take a line similar to the Navy's and call for increased jointness and the creation of both a CDS and theatre commands. On the other side are officers who are concerned about border conflicts and internal insurgencies and feel that theatre commands are unsuited for India. There is a general perspective amongst these officers that joint operational commands are only useful for power projection, and not for defence for border security.²³

If one reads these positions carefully, the argument can be made that the traditionalists are not opposed to jointness and reform in principle. For example, many of these officers are interested in experimenting with further jointness in the form of functional joint commands along the lines of Strategic Forces Command, and possible proposals include logistics, space, cyber, special forces, acquisitions, etc. Rather, they are opposed to reform because they see it as detrimental to the Army's resources and control at the expense of the bureaucracy and the other services.

The creation of a strong CDS system and theatre commands would take operational control away from both the service chiefs and also geographic commands. The service chiefs are

²² See Kanwal, *Indian Army Vision 2020*, 273-76; author's interviews with Brig. Gurmeet Kanwal (ret.), Delhi, India, 24 June 2011; Gen. VJ Oberoi (ret.), Delhi, India, 5 July 2011; and Gen. Satish Nambiar (ret.), Delhi, 13 June 2014.

²³ One can disagree with this point, but it is widely expressed in the Army, author's interviews with Army officers, January, Delhi, India 2010; and senior retired Army Officers, Delhi, India, July 2011.

not only staff commands, but also operational commands in wartime.²⁴ A reform that sets up a CDS in between the government and the services and then gives operational control to assets delegated to theatre commanders will be seen as cutting the power of the service chiefs.²⁵ As Arun Prakash observed, “One would like to emphasize the fact that since no Chief would like to preside over his own divestment, it is unrealistic to expect a favorable recommendation for the CDS system from the Services.”²⁶ Secondly, many in the Army (and the Air Force) have worries about losing commands and assets to theatre commands. This is because on the important border command areas, the Army has the largest share of assets deployed, so they see the rotation of a theatre command that is mostly Army to an Air Force or Naval officer as a loss of scarce assets.

The Indian Air Force

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has been seen as the most resistant to further integration. This has much to do with the Air Force’s traditional concern of maintaining its independence from the Indian Army. Unlike the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force (like the Indian Navy) was a much more modest force in pre-independent India and WWII. It has chafed at being relegated to a support service to the Army, for close air support and transportation. Moreover, like many other air forces, the IAF has set its mission to maintain an independent strategic role focused on the acquisition of high-technology and the combat missions of air superiority and deep

²⁴ Raju Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, 129-30; and Admiral Arun Prakash (ret.), “India’s Higher Defence Organisation: Implications for National Security and Jointness”, *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 1 no. 1 (2007), 29. One could also argue they have an additional third hat in terms of the heavy ceremonial role they play in terms how much time they spend in ceremony, trooping the colors, receiving dignitaries at the airport, etc. My thanks to P.R. Chari on this point.

²⁵ Author’s interview with retired senior Army officers, July, 2011; and author’s interview with Naresh Chandra (IAS ret.), Delhi, 10 June 2014.

²⁶ Prakash, “India’s Higher Defence Organisation,” 29. The full quote reads, “In India, the Service Chiefs have since Independence, continued to wear two hats; a ‘staff hat’ as the Chief of Staff and an ‘operational hat’ as the Commander-in-Chief of his force. This is an anachronism, and in all modern military organizations, the operational war-fighting responsibilities are delegated to designated Theatre Commanders, while the Service Chiefs are responsible only for recruitment, training and logistics of the armed forces. This issue was not addressed by the GoM, but is linked very closely to the CDS format. One would like to emphasize the fact that since no Chief would like to preside over his own divestment, it is unrealistic to expect a favourable recommendation for the CDS system from the Services.”

penetrating/strategic strikes into the enemy's interior.²⁷ Jointness as conceived in the present debates is seen to be detrimental to the IAF:

- (1) Given the Army's dominance in armed forces, jointness implies that the IAF will be effectively relegated to a supporting role;
- (2) The IAF strategic doctrine stresses the "indivisibility" of air power, that in order to be effective air power needs to be centralized:²⁸
 - 2a. Top down jointness could mean that IAF assets are under control of an Army or Naval officer who does not understand air operations; and
 - 2b. It is inefficient at best and dangerous at worst to parcel out valuable air assets to "theater commands."²⁹

The IAF sees the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) as a theatre, where given the ranges of modern aircraft and air-to-air refueling techniques it makes more sense to concentrate air assets and transfer them where they are needed. This is reinforced by the belief that the IAF does not have adequate numbers of assets to be able to divide them up into theatre commands (modern

²⁷ There are also concerns that given the land bias of both civilians and the dominance of a large army, there is a lack of understanding of air operations. Author's interview with retired senior Air Force officer, Delhi, India, June 2011; and author's interview with PR Chari (ret. IAS), 5 July 2011.

²⁸ See the classic statement on this by Air Marshal Jasjit Singh, "Indivisible Air Power," in *India and the World: Selected Articles from IDSA Journals*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Promilla & Co, 2005), in particular the following passage: "while some gains may accrue from integrating elements of air power with, say land forces, the division and fragmentation of air power can only result, at best, in confusion and sub-optimal exploitation, and at its worst, in military disaster," 185.

²⁹ Information in this paragraph gathered from author's interview with Kapil Kak, 24 June 2011, Delhi; author's interview with retired senior Air Force officer, Delhi, India, June 2011; and R. Venkataraman, *India's Higher Defence: Organization and Management* (Delhi: Knowledge Word, 2011). This reluctance in the Air Force for a CDS was commented upon back in the 1980s, see Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, 131. Also in fairness to the Air Force, the Air Force perhaps has some justification for its concerns about its roles and independence given that since the 1970s, both of the other services have encroached on its turf by the Navy's development of Naval Aviation, and the Army's development of aviation units. Prakash, "India's Higher Defence Organisation," 21.

aircraft are so expensive, procurement in the Indian system is inefficient, keeping them operational is difficult and having adequate facilities in remote areas is also difficult).³⁰

To be fair to the IAF, their responses to such criticism is not that they are hostile to jointness, but only to what they term “top down” jointness at the MoD or tri-service level. On the other hand, they promote “bottom up” jointness in terms of more joint training of soldiers, airman and sailors.³¹ They stress that jointness cannot be imposed top down by civilians or the establishment of a CDS and theatre command system, but only by the integration of MoD and the services and “bottom-up” jointness from inside the services.³² Hence their interest in not having a strong CDS and theatre commands, but instead a weaker committee system for the service chiefs and functional commands.

The Indian Navy

The service that has promoted jointness has been the Indian Navy. There are several possible explanations for the Navy’s support for jointness:

- (1) The Navy has traditionally had to interface more with the other services in order to conduct missions like projecting power from the sea;
- (2) The Navy has its own air and land forces so it is habituated to “internal jointness”;
- (3) The focus of the Navy in recent years on non-traditional security and constabulary duties has demonstrated the need for greater jointness;
- (4) The Navy has been the most “international service” and the service that has had the most experience cooperating and interacting with other navies and learning “best practices” about jointness; and

³⁰ Venkataraman, *India’s Higher Defence*, 235-36.

³¹ There is concern that the Army in particular does not understand how to balance the importance and requirements of strikes in a conflict, and that there needs to be an “educational” component of joint planning before top-down jointness can be implemented. Author’s interview with Air Vice Marshal (ret.) Kapil Kak, Delhi, India, 24 June 2011; and author’s interview with retired senior Air Force officer, Delhi, India, June 2011.

³² For an elegant example of this line of thought, see Venkataraman, *India’s Higher Defence*, in particular 217-44.

- (5) The Navy is the smallest service (often called “Cinderella Service”). It has the least invested in the current system and therefore, it is most open to change (presumably they would have the most to gain).³³

However, there are concerns that after more than a decade of being “the pro-jointness” service, perhaps the Navy is less keen than it used to be (or at least appeared to be). As will be discussed later, the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) was a naval command that the Navy “gave away” to be a test case for a joint theatre command. Yet, after more than ten years, there has been a reciprocal interest from the other services, so there is some feeling of regret that the Navy “lost” a command with no real tangible benefits.³⁴ Also it must be noted that the Navy too has not had a perfect record in terms of cooperation with other services and the bureaucracy, in particular with its natural partner, the Indian Coast Guard. In the 1970s, the Indian Coast Guard was created out of the Navy, naval ships and personnel were given over to form the new service, and relations since have been prickly at times.³⁵

Civilian Views

It has been difficult to get a clear picture of the civilians’ views because of the small number of civilians who focus on defence affairs compared to India’s population, and also because of the general secrecy of the Indian bureaucracy. It must also be stressed that both elected officials and the bureaucracy are concerned about the danger of a praetorian-minded military. While most outside observers see India as a positive model of civil-military relations in the developing world, civilian elites have remained suspicious of the services. This stems from several reasons. First, the origins of the military (in particular the Army) come from the British

³³ For more details, see the *Indian Maritime Doctrine* (Integrated Headquarters, MoD, Navy: Delhi, 2009), in particular 79-84 and 105-22. These include: disaster response, piracy, counter-terrorism in the littorals; etc. This was born out of a series of interviews by the author with several serving and retired naval officers in Delhi in June and July 2011; and the writings of pro-integration naval officers like Admiral Arun Prakash (ret.), Gen. Satish Nambiar (ret.) Gen. Vijay Oberoi (ret.) and Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal (ret.).

³⁴ This could be reflected in news that the ANC will go back to always having a naval commander in the future, more later on this, see Vivek Raghuvanshi, “India Gives Navy Control of Andaman and Nicobar Command,” *Defense News*, 29 Nov. 2013 (<http://www.defensenews.com/article/20131129/DEFREG/311290012/India-Gives-Navy-Control-Andaman-Nicobar-Command>).

³⁵ Author’s interviews with naval officers, Delhi, June-July 2011; and Dr. Amit Coshish, Delhi, 2 June 2014.

colonial military and were seen by early independence leaders as an anti-democratic, colonial legacy. Second, few of the political leaders at independence and since have had any military background or understanding of defense or security issues. Third, the praetorian tendencies and coups of militaries of Pakistan and Bangladesh -- whose militaries had also come from the British Indian Army -- serve as warnings against what could happen in India if the military was given too much power.³⁶ This suspicion came out into the open in 2012 during the on-going feud between the Army Chief VK Singh and the MoD.³⁷ More on this incident later.

In term of the elected officials, there is a high degree of irony in their role. On the one hand, they are the one group most capable of making changes in higher defence organizations (as seen in the limited reforms from the Group of Ministers' Report of 2001, and the intelligence/counter-terrorism reforms following the 2008 Mumbai attack). However, on the other hand, politicians are not generally interested in defence and security matters. Unless there is a crisis or disaster, defence issues are not important political issues in India.³⁸ There are exceptions like Jaswat Singh, Arun Singh, etc. but they are a relatively small group. Even in the parliamentary standing committee, most of its members are not known for their detailed knowledge or interest in defense issues. It is widely thought that with a few exceptions, many only get involved in defense issues in order to procure government spending for their districts.³⁹ Lastly, even for those interested in defense beyond "pork barrel" issues, the power of the parliamentary committees is limited.⁴⁰

The civilian bureaucracy, principally the IAS, also holds a somewhat paradoxical relation to defense reform. They hold much of the institutional power on managing the defense

³⁶ See, Rajesh Basrur, Ajaya Kumar Das and Manjeet Pardesi, "Introduction," in Basrur, Das and Pardesi, *India's Military Modernization: Challenges and Prospects* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014): 3-7.

³⁷ This paragraph based upon. Also, author's interviews with former member of Parliament Standing Committee on Defence, author's interview with retired IFS Ambassador 6 July 2014;

³⁸ See the comments by K. Subrahmanyam, "Report of the Kargil Review Committee," 20.

³⁹ Author's interview with Dr. Amit Coshish, Delhi, 2 June 2014; and former member of Standing Committee on Defence, Delhi, 2 June 2014.

⁴⁰ 22nd Report Standing Committee on Defence (14th Lok Sabha, 2006-07), 4.

establishment, given the lack of integration between the civilian MoD and the “attached” uniformed services. However, unlike their colleagues in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the civilians serving in the MoD are not defence specialists but part of the generalists Indian Administrative Service which rotate throughout the Government of India (GoI) bureaucracy.⁴¹ Promotion and advancement come from seniority and not from becoming specialists or making changes during their short-term in a position. So generally speaking, there are few incentives for enacting or supporting radical change in the defense establishment and many incentives to resist change that might endanger their position.⁴² The dominant view in the IAS seems to be twofold. First, they tend to question the need for most of these reforms. They tend to respond with the rhetorical question: “What is the problem” that these solutions intend to solve? Second, following from that point, they argue that if certain reforms are implemented like a CDS or integration of the services with the MoD, what is the point of having a civilian MoD?⁴³

Somewhat differently, but not surprisingly, the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) also have not taken a strong interest in the debate over defense reform. Because they are further removed from things, they do not see that there is a “civil-military crisis” both in terms of dangers from praetorism or in terms of need for radical reform of the existing system (i.e., the need for CDS, etc.). However, there does seem to be some realization that there should be greater integration

⁴¹ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming*, 162-63. They rotate quite frequently through posts. In their study of the higher civil service, Krishnon and Somanathan find that consistently from 1978 to 1996 about 50-55% (varying from 48 to 60%) of IAS [Indian Administrative Service] members spend less than one year at a post and then 25-30% (22-31%) spend 1-2 years. So effectively 70-80% of the service spends no more than 2 years and frequently only one year at any given post. Moreover, the promotion system in the IAS is based upon seniority and promotions are only denied by mistake. So “there is no specific career incentive linked to the acquisition of knowledge or competence either through formal study or through specialization or on-the-job learning. See KP Krishnan and TV Somanathan, “Civil Service: An Institutional Perspective,” in Devesh Kapur and Pratap Bhanu Mahta (ed.), *Public Institutions in India: Performance and Design* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005), 258-59, and 296-97.

⁴² As MoD officials admitted to the Standing Committee on Defence (Feb. 2009), “Renaming of Army and Naval Headquarters as Integrated Headquarters is merely cosmetic,” 36th Report, Standing Committee on Defence, 14th Lok Sabha, “Status of Implementation of Unified Command for Armed Forces,” 16. This resistance to change is not new, see for example arguments against the creation of a CDS back in 1968 by the then Defence Secretary P.V. R. Rao, “Governmental Machinery for the Evolution of National Defence Policy and the Higher Direction of War,” in *India and the World*, 70-71. See also Menezes, *Fidelity and Honor*, 548; Prakash, “India’s Higher Defence Organisation,” 22; and Bhonsle, “Jointness: A Strategic Culture Perspective,” 100.

⁴³ Author’s interview with Dr. Amit Coshish, Delhi, 2 June 2014; and senior IFS officers, 4 June 2014.

not only between the services and IAS, but also between MoD and MEA more generally.⁴⁴ However, progress has been limited in part because of the capacity/personnel shortages mentioned before. It is good to create posts to second MEA officers to the MoD and vice versa, but it does not help integration if there are not enough MEA officers to fill that post regularly. Moreover, the fact that posts are not regularly filled because of shortages also indicates that interagency postings are not a priority.⁴⁵

Results of the Kargil Committee and GoM Task Force

In 2000-2001, there were a series of rather unprecedented committees and task forces formed to investigate defence and security organization in India. These were the result of the strategic surprise India suffered during the Kargil War in the spring and summer of 1999. In the aftermath of the conflict, the Indian government formed the Kargil Review Committee (KRC) to determine what went wrong. They found that Indian intelligence and border security agencies were caught unaware as the Pakistani Light Infantry with support from irregular forces infiltrated Indian posts along the Line of Control (LoC). During the harsh winter months, both sides abandon high elevation posts, and in late winter/early spring Indian posts were occupied before the Indian military could move back into position. The Indian military and state were caught by surprise. Moreover, while India was ultimately successful in fighting a controlled, limited war to eject Pakistani forces, there were several shortcoming in terms of Command and Control, cooperation between the Army and the Air Force, and good coordination between the civilian bureaucracy and the armed services.⁴⁶

As the late K. Subrahmanyem summarised:

KRC [Kargil Review Committee] said that the decision-making process and procedures and organisation were 52 years old, formulated by Lord Ismay on the higher direction of war. India's Army, Navy and Air Force were all inherited from the British just like the

⁴⁴ Author's interview with senior IFS officers, Delhi, 4 June 2014.

⁴⁵ Author's interview with senior IFS officers, Delhi, 4 June 2014; and Ambassador (ret.) KC Singh, Delhi, 6 July 2014.

⁴⁶ Basrur, "Lessons of Kargil as Learned by India," in *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia*, 318-20.

police force and the judiciary. Unfortunately, we have not done anything to think for ourselves in all the above mentioned spheres and make our own legislation over the last 60 years. Since then, there has been the emergence of nuclear weapons and the revolution in military affairs. There has been no attempt to think about these developments in respect to India's security. The type of armed forces that we should have or the future should be the subject matter of a high-powered independent commission.⁴⁷

The KRC made the case for what was wrong with the Indian defence establishment, and then the question of what to do was given to a fellow body, the Group of Ministers on National Security, which issued a report of recommendations for reform in 2001. One of the major recommendations of the report was further integration of MoD and the services and to increase jointness between the services. As the KRC observed, "India is perhaps the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters are outside of the apex governmental structure."⁴⁸

In relation to integration and jointness, some of the KRC members wanted radical change in the defence establishment including a strong CDS, joint theatre commands and integration of the services with MoD. However, there was also opposition to such reforms.⁴⁹ The opposing arguments focused on a mixture of "if it's not broken, why fix it?"⁵⁰ and political military cultural reasoning that only great or imperial powers who engage in power projection need this level of integration and theatre commands, hence India does not need them. In particular, both civilian bureaucrats and members of the armed services invoked the classic Gandhian-Nehruvian position that India does not engage in power projection or "muscle flexing."⁵¹ Naturally this

⁴⁷ K. Subrahmanyam, "Report of the Kargil Review Committee: An Appraisal," *CLAWS Journal* (Summer 2009), 19.

⁴⁸ *Kargil Review Committee Report*, 258. Service HQs are "attached" to the government, not formally part of it. *Kargil Review Committee Report*, 259.

⁴⁹ Anit Mukherjee, *Failing to Deliver: Post-Crisis Defence Reforms in India, 1998-2010* (Delhi: ISDA, 2010), 19; author's interviews with naval officers, Delhi, June-July 2011; author's interview with PR Chari, 5 July 2011; author's interview with retired senior Indian Naval officer, Delhi, June, 2011.

⁵⁰ Venkataraman, *India's Higher Defence*, 221.

⁵¹ Raju Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, 131-32; Bhonsle, "Jointness: A Strategic Culture Perspective," 98; and author's interview with retired senior Army officers, July, 2011. However, a case can be made that since the 1980s Indian armed services have been involved in several expeditionary operations, like interventions in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and evacuating civilians war zones as far away as Iraq, Lebanon and even Libya. Moreover, there is a growing diplomatic role for the military as India increases its participation in military to military exchanges,

argument is then combined with the early counter-argument that India's needs are internal and defensive, focused on borders and aid to civilian authority, and that these needs do not require jointness and integration.

A compromise was struck between the reformers and the traditionalists.⁵² There was no CDS but instead a more limited Integrated Defence Staff, with the most senior Chief as the Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC). The civilian MoD was urged to have more integration with the services, and two experimental joint commands were created. One was a functional command, the Strategic Forces Command for nuclear command and control, and the other was a theatre command, the Andaman and Nicobar Command.⁵³

The Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC)⁵⁴

In 2001, the ANC was set up. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are situated in a central location in the Bay of Bengal. They are only 160 km from Indonesia and 45km from Myanmar's Coco Islands, and astride the Western end of the Malacca Straits. In contrast, they are 1,200 km from the Indian mainland. There are about 600 islands and islets that make up the two island chains, but only 10-12 are capable of developing infrastructure on.⁵⁵ As with most island territories, it provides a massive supplement to India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ),

exercises and disaster response. Author's interview with retired senior Indian Naval officer, Delhi, June, 2011. See also, K.A. Muthanna, *Enabling Military-to-Military Cooperation as a Foreign Policy Tool: Options for India* (Delhi: Knowledge World, 2006).

⁵² In the words of Prakash, "The task force faced a dilemma. If it overbid its hand, it was possible that we would frighten the politicians and the recommendations would be consigned to gather dust in a musty cupboard. On the other, this was the first opportunity in half a century to rectify much that was wrong with the nation's security edifice." As quoted in Venkataraman, *India's Higher Defence*, 176.

⁵³ Author's interview with retired senior Indian Naval officer, Delhi, June, 2011; and Mukherjee, *Failing to Deliver*, 19.

⁵⁴ An earlier version of this section appeared in Patrick Bratton, "The Creation of Indian Integrated Commands: Organizational Learning and the Andaman and Nicobar Command," *Strategic Analysis* (Special Issue on the Indian Ocean Region), 36, no. 3 (2012).

⁵⁵ Vijay Sakhuja, *Asian Maritime Power in the 21st Century: Strategic Transactions China, India and Southeast Asia* (ISEAS: Singapore, 2011) 57; and Pushpita Das, "Securing the Andaman and Nicobar Islands," *Strategic Analysis*, 35, no. 3 (May 2011), 466.

making up about 30% of it.⁵⁶ Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) in the Indian Ocean are critical in terms of the increasing amounts of goods and energy supplies that a rapidly growing India needs.⁵⁷ While geography would seem to indicate the importance of these islands, it is interesting to note that it took the Indian government several decades to invest in them.⁵⁸

Officially the Command was established to accomplish the following tasks:

- Defence of the territorial integrity, waters and airspace of the islands;
- Ensuring that eastern approaches to the Indian Ocean remain free from threats for unhindered passage of shipping;
- Monitoring of SLOCs in the designated AOR [Area of Responsibility];
- Exercising surveillance over the EEZ;
- Establishment of an ADIZ [Air Defence Identification Zone] for air defence and air space control; and
- Undertaking joint planning for contingencies and infrastructure planning.⁵⁹

However, it must be noted that beyond these official reasons, one of the main purposes of the command was to be a laboratory or test case to see how a joint theatre command would work and what the problems would be. In practice, several problems emerged: (1) the lack of interest by some services and the mainland; (2) problems with the civilian support staff; and (3)

⁵⁶ GS Khurana, "Shaping Security in India's Maritime East: Role of Andaman & Nicobar," *Strategic Analysis* 30 No. 1 (Jan 2006), 164; and Admiral Arun Prakash (ret.), "A Vision for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands," in *From the Crow's Nest*, 142-43.

⁵⁷ For energy, see Charles Ebinger's chapter, "India," in Ebinger, *Energy and Security in South Asia: Cooperation or Conflict* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2011), 15-60.

⁵⁸ As one retired Admiral jokingly said to the author, "Everyone except the Indian government saw the importance of the island's strategic location." In many ways, Delhi's neglect of the islands dovetailed with the general "maritime blindness" that marked Indian policymaking in the 1950s through 1970s. See Harsh Pant, "India's Growing Naval Power: Indian Ocean in Focus," in Geoffrey Till and Patrick Bratton (ed.), *Seapower and the Asia-Pacific: The Triumph of Neptune* (London: Routledge, 2011), 113-14. For a view of the importance of the islands, see Sakhuja, *Asian Maritime Power in the 21st Century*, 107-08, and on the shift away from "maritime blindness," see 90-92.

⁵⁹ Prakash, "A Vision for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands," 147. The actual document that laid out the primary duties and roles of the command is classified, but Prakash's points represent the essence of that document, Prakash, personal communication with the author, 13 December 2011.

problems with interfacing a joint command with non-joint services back on the mainland. As concerns the first point, to varying degrees the services have a tendency to not be very interested in ANC. At various times they have removed funding or assets from islands when needed, and they have not been interested in stationing valuable assets there. Second, in the first couple of years, one persistent difficulty was finding adequate numbers of civilian staff to work at the ANC.⁶⁰ However, there have been some administrative reforms in the past couple of years that appear to have mitigated many of these problems.⁶¹ Lastly, there have been problems with having a joint command “outpost” amidst a larger defence establishment that is decidedly non-joint. In the words of one MoD official, “[CinC ANC] has got the powers to execute whatever he has been directed to do. Whatever orders are given, he has to execute, but the instruments of execution are under Component Commanders which are Service-specific.”⁶² For example, each service maintains its own legal codes and jurisdictions, which can cause problems.⁶³ More difficult has been the dependence of the ANC on the mainland for food and refitting of its military assets.⁶⁴ As the Prime Minister’s envoy in 2009 stated, “it is my experience that ‘outposts’ tend to become just that. They command only episodic attention from decision makers and certainly only limited claim on budgetary resources.”⁶⁵

⁶⁰ In 2009, supposedly only 7 posts were filled out of a total of 115. This was largely due to the unattractiveness of the posting to civilians given the lack of amenities, the distance from the mainland, and not having quality schools for their dependents. Mukherjee, *Failing to Deliver*, 38; Vinod Anond, “Debating Defence Reforms Since Kargil,” *CLAWS Journal* (Summer 2009), 91; 36th Report, Standing Committee on Defence, 14th Lok Saba, “Status of Implementation of Unified Command for Armed Forces,” 14; and 2nd Report, Standing Committee on Defence, 14th Lok Saba, “Action Take Report on the Recommendations/Observations of the Committee Contained in the 36th Report (14th Lok Sabha) on ‘Status of Implementation of Unified Command for Armed Forces’,” 25-26; and author’s interviews with several serving and retired naval officers in Delhi in June and July 2011.

⁶¹ These have included recommendations by the standing committee on Defence to authorize the CinC ADC to recruit directly: 36th Report, Standing Committee on Defence, 14th Lok Saba, “Status of Implementation of Unified Command for Armed Forces,” 25-26; and author’s interview with retired naval officers, Delhi, India, June-July 2011.

⁶² As quoted in the 36th Report of the Standing Committee on Defence, 14th Lok Sabha, 2008-09, 19.

⁶³ Indra Sen Singh, “Uniform Code of Military Justice: Need of the Day,” *The Purple Pages*, 1 no. 2 (Feb. 2007), 92-97.

⁶⁴ For example, while the ships are operationally under CinC ANC, they cannot be refitted there, and need to go back to Eastern Naval Command. Author’s interview with retired senior Indian Naval officer, Delhi, June, 2011.

⁶⁵ Address by Shyam Saran, Special Envoy of PM, on “India’s Foreign Policy and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Port Blair, 5 Sept. 2009 (http://maritimeindia.org/sites/all/files/pdf/Shyam_Saran_Address.pdf).

One last point must also be stressed: for all the attention that security analysts gave the command, the assets and even the roles of the ANC are relatively modest and focused more on congratulatory roles rather than building up a base for power projection past the Malacca Straits.⁶⁶ In the Western and Chinese press, the Command has received constant attention as a move to balance against China's future entry into the Indian Ocean Region, or as a "spring board" for India's entry into the South China Sea or even as a "metal chain" to close the Malacca Straits to China.⁶⁷ For the first decade after the formation of the commands, the assets were limited: one Army infantry brigade, 5-6 Air Force transportation helicopters, 5-6 Naval patrol boats, and some amphibious and landing craft.⁶⁸ In recent years, reports indicate that the naval presence had been increased to 12-15 vessels (still mostly patrol vessels) and the Air Force designated Su-30s for the command.⁶⁹ However, it is also reported that the support infrastructure on the islands is barely able to handle the constabulary duties, let alone be a major military base for deterring a major power.⁷⁰ While in the future India could deploy more assets, there would have to be a large investment in building up the infrastructure to adequately service such a large footprint, and after the 2004 Tsunami there has been a great reluctance from the services to put

⁶⁶ Khurana, "Shaping Security in India's Maritime East," 173.

⁶⁷ A Chinese analyst wrote, "The islands are a 'metal chain' that could lock shut the Malacca Strait." Another writer worries not only about potential Indian denial of SLOCs but also the use of the islands for projecting power, that "With the help of the Andaman-Nicobar island as a strategic springboard, a leg of India's 'go east' strategy is already stretching toward the Asia-Pacific." As quoted in both Robert Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2010), 125-26; and James Holmes, Andrew Winner, and Toshi Yoshihara, *Indian Navy Strategy in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2009), 134-35. It is interesting to note that Indian authors have also made the same point about the Andamans as a "springboard", see Khurana, "Shaping Security in India's Maritime East," 178; and Prakash, "A Vision for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands," 140.

⁶⁸ NC Bipindra, "India to up Defences in Andamans, Lakshadweep," *The Economic Times*, 27 June 2011; and author's interview with active and retired Indian naval officers, Delhi, India, June-July 2011.

⁶⁹ Raghuvanshi, "India Gives Navy Control of Andaman and Nicobar Command;" and NC Bipinda and Devrupa Mitra, "Tiger Outsmarts Dragon in Andaman Waters," *New Indian Express*, 23 March 2014 (http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Tiger-Outsmarts-Dragon-in-Andaman-Waters/2014/03/23/article2124696.ece#.Uy68i_mSyno).

⁷⁰ Das, "Securing the Andaman and Nicobar Islands," 473. It must also be stated that there are important differences between the capacities of this command with an equivalent American Combatant Command like PACOM. ANC consists of the three services plus the Coast Guard, and there is not a large intelligence or diplomatic contingent like one would have at PACOM; author's phone interview with Admiral Arun Prakash (ret.), 13 June 2011.

valuable assets in such a remote and vulnerable location though this might have changed with the Su-30 decision.⁷¹

Conclusions

What insight does the decade-long experiment of the ANC give to further efforts at integration and jointness for the Indian defence establishment? What theoretical perspectives seem to best explain Indian behavior? In regard to the first point, the ANC has been seen by most as a successful experiment. It has improved both the security of the islands and their surrounding waters, it has facilitated mil-to-mil contacts with other regional players, and the services were able to work out ways of cooperating with each other in a joint command. However, I would argue that the reasons that made a theatre command possible in the ANC are rather unique and it would be unlikely to see the Indian government establish other joint theatre commands in the future. The development of the ANC strongly show characteristics of “Experimentation, Adaptation, Modernization,” rather than transformation.

The ANC was chosen as the first theatre command for several reasons. First, it was a small naval command that the Navy, generally the most “pro” joint service, offered “as a gift.” It did not require that one of the other services more resistant to jointness lose an important command. Second, because of the location and nature of the command, a vast island archipelago far from mainland India, the command was a de facto joint command since the 1980s (when it was upgraded to FORTAN). Third, the relatively unimportant nature of the command, its distance from the mainland and the tiny amounts of forces deployed there made it easier for the services to accept “losing” assets to the command. It was easier to accept having assets assigned to the command when they consist of only one infantry brigade, 5-6 transportation helicopters,

⁷¹ This ambivalence is most marked in the Air Force which has not been interested in positioning either a large number of assets or high quality assets, like fighters with strike capacity. This position is not without some reason, given the level of devastation the 2004 Tsunami did to Car Nicobar airfield, and the reality that more has to be done to develop infrastructure (in particular port facilities and extending runways). Khurana, “Shaping Security in India’s Maritime East,” 176-77; Das, “Securing the Andaman and Nicobar Islands,” 473; author’s interview with Air Vice Marshal (ret.) Kapil Kak, Delhi, India, 24 June 2011; author’s interview with Gen. (ret.) Gumeet Kanwal, Delhi, India, 24 June 2011; and author’s interview with PR Chari, 5 July 2011.

and a handful of patrol vessels. This would have been far more difficult in a sensitive border region with Pakistan or China where large numbers of military assets were deployed. Fourth, the command has served as a useful military addition to India's Look East Policy with Southeast Asia. Up until the 1990s, India had mostly ignored Southeast (and East) Asia and when it opened up its economy in that decade, it sought to improve relations with the dynamic Southeast Asian economies. A missing component of the Look East Policy was military engagement,. Having a tri-service command in the Andamans facilitated military to military ties with other Asian countries and also improved India's greater participation in HADR training and operations in the region.

In regard to the theoretical issues, the Indian political and military establishment showed a consistent lack of interest in such an "obviously" strategic location. This behavior seems to caution against the traditional, realist narrative of India building up the ANC to balance against China. While the British, Japanese, Indian strategists, and Chinese analysts have focused on the value of these islands, policymakers and much of the military leadership in Delhi have mostly ignored them and have only grudgingly and haltingly invested in them in the past 20-30 years.

The Indian government is traditionally reluctant to engage in "muscle flexing," and being seen as a large military power, so it has chosen not to develop more hard power assets in the ANC or to move quickly on further reforms that would facilitate power projection operations like a CDS or theatre commands. One of the official reasons given for the modest amount of assets deployed to the ANC has been to reassure other Asian states that India is not threatening. Also, the traditional Indian "Continentalist" views (that the primary concerns are internal security and securing borders) deter interest in the islands.

In regard to the final school of thought, of militaries innovating "by doing" from the bottom up, the evidence provided by the ANC is again mixed. It has been constantly stressed that the laboratory of the ANC has revealed many problems with jointness in the Indian military and that the services have worked out ways of dealing with them. However, given the tradition of secrecy and opaqueness in the Indian state, it is not certain how much long-term learning is going on. There are some indications that much of the joint arrangements could be ad hoc solutions from personality-based compromises, rather than building up set standard operating

procedures (SOPs) and norms that could be replicated elsewhere. Moreover, since this is such a small and isolated command, it remains uncertain what type of a ripple effect it could actually have given the size of the rest of the defence establishment.

In 2011-12, the government set up another task force, the Naresh Chandra Task Force on National Security, to do a stock taking of the results of the GoM-recommended defence reforms a decade later.⁷² While the results have not been made fully public, some indications in the press suggest that only limited reforms are being discussed and that the Task Force seems to have limited influence. The conversation has focused on another more limited version of the CDS, a permanent Chairman of the Chief of Staff Committee (CoCS) but still giving autonomy to the individual service chiefs, and again more integration of the services with civilians in the MoD.⁷³ What little talk of joint commands seems to focus on future functional commands rather than theatre commands, three that are most often mentioned are: Special Forces, Space and Cyber Commands.⁷⁴ Indications have been that Special Forces Command will have an Army Commander, Space an Air Force and Cyber will rotate. To balance this, it also said that the ANC will cease to rotate and go back to always having a Navy Commander.⁷⁵

Unfortunately for the prospects of defense reform, the Naresh Chandra group was meeting at the same time a series of mini-crises broke out between the Army Chief VK Singh and both the Ministry and Minister of Defense, AK Antony. While the details of the Singh case are not important, the practical result was an unprecedented ongoing dispute between a service Chief and a sitting Minister of Defence. There were a series of public scandals and crises during

⁷² Arvind Gupta, "The Naresh Chandra Task Force on National Security: A Timely Step," *IDSA Comment*, 25 June 2011; Gen. V.P. Malik and Anit Mukherjee, "Jawaharlal Nehru and the Chief of Defence Staff," *IDSA Issue Brief*, 8 July 2011; and Patrick Bratton, "An American Perspective on India's Defence Reforms," *South Asia Monitor*, 18 August 2011 (<http://southasiamonitor.org/detail.php?type=article&nid=1013>).

⁷³ Rajat Pandit, "PM-Led Council Discusses Naresh Chandra Report but Contentious Proposal Referred to Another Panel," *The Times of India*, 5 April 2013 (http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-04-05/india/38305553_1_inter-service-doctrinal-three-service-chiefs-chandra-task-force).

⁷⁴ "Separate Commands for Special Operations, Cyber Security, Space: NAK Browne Chief, IAF", *The Economic Times*, 2 October 2013 (http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-10-02/news/42617512_1_cyber-security-iaf-chief-nak-browne-cyber-command).

⁷⁵ Author's interviews with Indian Naval Officers, Delhi, 2 June 2014; and author's interview with retired senior naval officer, Delhi, 9 June 2014.

Singh's tenor at Chief, including: disagreements between him and the Minister and Ministry of Defence over Singh's age, leading Singh to take legal action; a letter by Singh to the Minister on the inadequacies of Indian defense readiness was leaked (perhaps by Singh himself); Singh's accusations against others attempting to bribe him during the Tatra truck scandal; Singh's personal rows with other Army officers who were likely to be his successors; and most strangely, accusations of unauthorized troop movements near Delhi in January 2012 (coincidentally on the same day that Singh took the age conversely to the Supreme Court). The controversy continued even after Singh left the service and continued to his election as a MP and member of the current government. Whatever the truth behind any of the issues, they happened at the same time the Naresh Chandra task force was assembling their recommendations to the civilian leadership. The controversy, particularly the incident involving the movement of troops near the capital, served as proof of the danger of giving the military leadership too prominent a role. It was one of the reasons the UPA government ultimately did not act on the Task Force's recommendation and decided to shelf the issue until after the elections.⁷⁶

The May 2014 election of a majority BJP government under Narendra Modi (for the first time in 30 years, a party was elected without having to form a coalition) seems to herald a new chapter in Indian defense reform. Defense and security issues have been more associated with the BJP than Congress governments, and indicators suggest that the new government wants to change the way the cabinet/government interacts with the bureaucracy.⁷⁷ Moreover, some of the more important defense initiatives of the past 20 years happened under the previous BJP coalition governments: the 1998 nuclear tests, the development of a nuclear doctrine, the KRC and GoM reports and recommendations, the National Security Council and National Security Advisory Board (NSAB), etc. There have been speculation that defense reform would be an issue to be considered by the new government.⁷⁸ Moreover, it is easy politically to go back and

⁷⁶ Author's interview with former member of Standing Committee on Defence, Delhi, 2 June 2014; author's interview with senior retired service officers, June 2014; and author's interviews with defense correspondents, Delhi, 6 and 14 June 2014.

⁷⁷ Sakat Datta, "PM Promises to Change Selection of Babhus," *Hindustan Times*, 9 June 2014; and Armann Bhatnagar, "President's Speech Highlights 12 Key Points of Modi Government," 9 June 2014.

⁷⁸ Author's phone interview with Raja Sabha member, Rajeev Chandrasekar, 11 June 2014.

update recommendations from the GoM because it was commissioned by a previous BJP government.⁷⁹

However, some skepticism is also worth noting. While there seems to be consensus for defense reforms, the questions remain, what types of reforms and how much is possible under the Modi government? A full CDS and theatre commands seem to remain controversial, so some sort of permanent chairman of the chiefs of staff committee (COSC) and functional commands (the ubiquitous Special Forces, Cyber and Aerospace mentioned earlier) seem to be more likely. Moreover, just because the BJP is normally associated with defense does not mean that the Modi government will embark on massive or radical defense reforms. Bureaucratic reforms, and defense reform in particular, are difficult tasks in India. As the saying goes, “India easy to govern, hard to change.” So many of these reforms risk being expensive in terms of political capital, involve battles with entrenched interests in the military and the bureaucracy, and will take considerable time. However, the BJP was elected with a mandate to focus on domestic and economic issues, not foreign and security issues. Defense is not a major electoral issue in India, and the Modi government is under pressure to deliver economic results to a public with very high expectations. One could make a case that radical defense reforms will not be an immediate priority.⁸⁰

Moreover, some additional observations underscore this point. First, when the new government was formed, they were unable to select a dedicated Defence Minister. Arun Jetley, the Finance Minister has been sharing both portfolios. While it was widely suspected that later this year (after the recent budget was passed) a dedicated Defence Minister would be selected, it does show that either Defence was not seen as an immediate priority and/or there were no suitable BJP candidates for the position.⁸¹ Second, even though the previous BJP coalition government of Vajpayee did initiate several new programs and policies related to defense, and it

⁷⁹ Author’s interview with Brigadier (ret.) Gurmeet Khanwal, Delhi, 5 June 2014; and

⁸⁰ See Bratton, “Cautious Optimism? What to Expect from Modi’s India,” *PacNet*, no. 50, Pacific Forum-CSIS, 3 July 2014.

⁸¹ In fairness part of this has to do with the recent RSS-BJP decision to shift older political candidates into “advisory positions” and get younger candidates into elections. So many of the defense and security heavy weights of the party were too old to make the cut off, and since defense is not a major political issue few of the new candidates has invested in it.

included some ministers and officials with strong defense backgrounds (Minister for External Affairs Jaswant Singh, National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra, etc.), many of their bureaucratic changes proved to be limited or in some cases moribund (NSAB in particular).⁸²

So it remains to be seen what reforms will take place under a BJP government. As with other political questions, much depends upon whether or not the new government can get the economy moving and satisfy the electorate. Then it could conceivably make greater investment into defense issues (perhaps in a second government). Alternatively, another crisis or surprise like Kargil or Mumbai could happen and force defense issues to the fore of the political agenda. Barring these two events, radical reform in the near future is unlikely. The Indian government will likely continue to experiment, adapt and modernize the existing higher defense structures rather than transform them.

⁸² 33-40.