

## **Opinions on the Role of Chief of Defense Staff**

#### What is the issue?

The Chief of Defence Staff should not become another interposed level between the Defense Minister and the service chiefs.

## What is the post of Chief of Defense Staff?

- Indian Prime minister announced post of Chief of Defense Staff in his Independence Day speech 2019.
- The CDS is a high military office that oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services.
- It offers seamless tri-service views and single-point advice to the Prime Minister on long-term defence planning and management, including workforce, equipment and strategy, and coordination in operations.
- The role of the CDS becomes critical in times of conflict.
- As of now, India has Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC), The senior-most Chief of Staff is appointed to serve as a Chairman until he retires.
- The current Chairman is the Chief of the Army Staff.
- The CoSC is a toothless office in the manner of its structure.
- The post did not further tri-service integration, resulting in inefficiency and expensive duplication of assets.

### What should be the role of CDS?

- Charge of new organizations Retention of existing warfighting structures, while the CDS takes control of newer organizations being set up for tackling future threats, has some merit.
- Development of future technologies and means to face emerging threats in the cyber, space, missiles domain, nurturing of AI-based platforms, usage of drones for various roles and such modern conflict realities is indeed important.
- Cost-effective development These advancements are extremely costly, and the CDS can facilitate optimal, cost-effective integrated development and deployment of such structures.
- Modern war and warfighting have tremendous economic costs.

- Defence budgets are invariably inadequate to meet the "wish lists", and intense prioritization of capabilities is inevitable.
- The CDS can be the vital point to undertake such prioritization and rationalization, and, therefore, can play a stellar role in the perspective planning and development function.
- Considering the high cost of future technology, the CDS can also contribute towards the optimization of existing structures.
- Such review of existing establishments and manpower should also be an assigned task for him.
- **Integrating Workforce** Future conflict situations would possibly need an integrated application of fighting formations and resources, with unitary operational control of deployed elements.
- The CDS would be better placed for integrated employment of warfighting potential, and therefore logically needs to be part of the operational control chain.
- His tri-service position makes him the most suited driver for the integrated application of warfighting resources and facilitates unitary control in integrated operations.

#### What lies ahead?

- In the debates on CDS, one often heard the designated profile as "providing single-point military advice".
- National security decisions are always taken after a multitude of advisory inputs from a number of agencies, duly analyzing ramifications and end state probabilities.
- The CDS is better termed as the primary military advisor, with the service chiefs also remaining important military advisors.
- The CDS should not become another interposed level between the Raksha Mantri and the service chiefs, whose access to the minister should remain as prevalent.
- The CDS also has a primarily advisory role, and therefore should not be boxed into administrative efficiency roles, but must be in the operational control chain.
- In the interim, the CDS may not override the operational responsibility of the service chiefs, and in due course, his operational responsibility can expand and become more "hands-on".
- Thus, it is clear that the CDS would play a far more critical role in the national security apparatus, than the three service chiefs.

# **Source: Indian Express**

