

EXPANSION OF THE NATIONAL CADET CORPS IN COASTAL DISTRICTS: STRENGTHENING LOCAL CAPACITIES FOR MARITIME SECURITY

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Introduction

The genesis of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) is intricately linked to the India-Pakistan War of 1947-48. The war highlighted the need for sufficient strength of reserves who could take up arms when required. This found expression in the legislature (Constituent Assembly) through a demand for military training of the youth of the country. Subsequently, the NCC was raised with the enactment of the National Cadet Corps Act, 1948.¹ The NCC aims at “developing character, comradeship, discipline, a secular outlook, the spirit of adventure and ideals of selfless service amongst young citizens.” It further aims at “creating a pool of organised, trained and motivated youth with leadership qualities in all walks of life, who will serve the nation regardless of which career they choose.”²

The Prime Minister in his Independence Day address to the nation on 15 August 2020 highlighted that the NCC would be extended in 173 border districts, including coastal border districts. He also highlighted that about one lakh (10 million) new NCC cadets will be trained in the border districts, about one-third of whom would be ‘our daughters.’ The dual aims of the planned expansion are availability of trained manpower for disaster management and skill training of youth for a career in the armed forces.³

Subsequently, a press release by the Ministry of Defence also highlighted that the planned expansion would not only expose youth in coastal areas to military training and disciplined way of life but will also motivate them to join the armed forces.⁴ The press release provided the following additional details with respect to the planned expansion:-

- The expansion would be undertaken by upgrading 83 NCC units, including 20 Naval NCC units.

¹ “Genesis,” National Cadet Corps, accessed September 29, 2020, <https://indiancc.nic.in/genesis/>

² “Aim of NCC,” National Cadet Corps, accessed September 29, 2020, <https://indiancc.nic.in/aim-of-ncc/>. See also Himadri Das, *Coastal Security; Policy Imperatives for India*, 189.

³ “PM’s address to the Nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort,” Prime Minister’s Office, accessed September 28, 2020, https://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/pms-address-to-the-nation-from-the-ramparts-of-the-red-fort/?comment=disable&tag_term=pmspeech

⁴ “NCC all set for a major expansion to cover 173 border and coastal districts”, Press Information Bureau, 16 August 2020. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1646237>

- The upgrade of Naval NCC units would be supported by the Indian Navy.
- The plan would be implemented in partnership with states for which more than 1000 schools and colleges had identified.

The Director General NCC was also quoted as having stated that the expansion plan will prepare the youth for unique challenges faced in border and coastal areas and facilitate availability of trained manpower in support of aid towards national calamities and emergencies.⁵ He also stressed on the importance on social service and community development as important features of the NCC curriculum.

The NCC is administered is funded by both the Central and State Governments, and is administered by the Ministry of Defence at the Centre and the Educational Departments in respective states.⁶ As per the MoD *Annual Report 2018-19*, the sanctioned strength of the NCC is to increase progressively in five phases (40,000 per phase) to 15 Lakh (1.5 million) from 13 lakh (1.3 million) in 2010. Up to the third phase of expansion the strength of the NCC stood at 14.2 lakh. This makes the NCC the largest uniformed youth organisation of the country. As on 30 September 2018, 814 NCC units supported 13.29 lakh cadets in 17,374 institutions across the country. The strength of the naval cadets was 73,666 (5.5 per cent of the total strength); however, notably, 14,717 girls already account for approximately 25 per cent of all naval cadets.⁷

Previously, in December 2016, a report by a committee constituted by the Ministry of Defence under the chairmanship of Lt. Gen DB Shekatkar (Retired) while recommending measures to enhance combat capability and rebalance defence expenditure of the armed forces had *inter alia* recommended the need for ‘improving the efficiency of the NCC.’⁸ Subsequently, Lt Gen Shekatkar, also stressed that increasing the footprint in coastal and border areas would lead to greater interest amongst the youth in joining professions related to the maritime domain, and that trained cadets could play an important role in supporting the Armed Forces in various contingencies⁹

Mandate and Training

As per the Section 10 of the National Cadet Corps Act, 1948, while persons subject to the Act of the NCC are not liable to military service, they “shall be liable to perform such duties and

⁵ Mayank Singh, “Defence Ministry approves major expansion of NCC to cover 173 border and coastal districts”, *The New Indian Express*, 17 August 2020. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/aug/17/defence-ministry-approves-major-expansion-of-ncc-to-cover-173-border-and-coastal-districts-2184232.html>

⁶ “Frequently Asked Questions.” National Cadet Corps, accessed October 03, 2020, <https://indiancc.nic.in/frequently-asked-questions/>

⁷ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2018-19*, (New Delhi: Ministry of Defence, n.d.), 194 <https://www.mod.gov.in/sites/default/files/MoDAR2018.pdf>

⁸ “Report of Shekatkar Committee”, Press Information Bureau, 04 February 2019, <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1562586>

⁹ Shushant Kulkarni, “Explained: Why PM Modi has announced an expansion of the NCC”, *The Indian Express*. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-why-pm-modi-has-announced-an-expansion-of-the-ncc-6555847/>

discharge such obligations as may be prescribed.”¹⁰ Accordingly, during the 1965 India-Pakistan War, the Central Government, through a Gazette Notification, prescribed certain duties to be performed by NCC officers and cadets of the senior division. *Inter alia* this included passive air defence, rescue, first aid, casualty evacuation, fire-fighting, civil defence patrols, look outs, maintenance of essential services, traffic control, etc. In the war, one of the cadets was also awarded with a gallantry award.¹¹

The NCC has also participated in various social service and community development activities such as *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*, *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao*, cancer/ AIDS awareness, blood donation, traffic control, to name a few.¹² NCC cadets have also been contributing to disaster relief operations. Notably, in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the NCC extended support to civilian authorities under ‘Exercise NCC YOGDAN’. The tasks envisaged for Senior Division volunteer cadets included, manning of helpline/call centres; distribution of relief materials/medicines/ food/essential commodities; community assistance; data management; traffic/ queue management, etc.¹³ Some cadets were also involved in making educational videos for social media and in making masks for local communities.¹⁴ However, as per the guidelines, cadets were not employed in handling law and order situations, active military duties, or in COVID hotspots.¹⁵

The training curriculum of NCC is primarily focused on character building, inculcating leadership qualities and skill enhancement through a structured syllabus involving theoretical classes, practical training, and other activities. In addition to certain common subjects, such as weapon training, disaster management, social awareness and community development, the institutional training for naval wing NCC cadets includes navigation, communication, seamanship, rigging, boat-work, fire-fighting, damage control, ship and boat modelling, search and rescue, swimming, etc.¹⁶ Other training initiatives for naval wing cadets include annual Nau Sainik Camp; special yachting camps at the Indian Navy Watermanship Training Centre (INWTC), Goa; attachment with Indian Naval Academy, Ezhimala; annual Technical Camps at naval technical bases/ dockyards; conduct of sailing expeditions; participation in overseas deployment with the Indian Navy’s Training Squadron, etc.¹⁷ Training-related requirements for

¹⁰ “The National Cadet Corps Act, 1948,” Ministry of Law and Justice, Legislative Department, <http://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A1948-31.pdf>

¹¹ Lt Col Umang Kohli, “Indo-Pak War 1965: Role of NCC,” *Sainik Samachar*, n.d., <http://sainiksamachar.nic.in/englisharchives/2015/aug16-15/h7.htm>. In the war, one of the cadets, Sergeant Pratap Singh, was awarded the Ashok Chakra Class III for leading fire-fighting efforts at Gurdaspur railway station following an air attack on a goods train carrying inflammable material

¹² Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2018-19*, 194.

¹³ “NCC offers its volunteer cadets for national duty to fight COVID-19 under ‘Ex NCC Yogdan’: Issues guidelines for temporary employment of cadets”, Press Information Bureau, 02 April 2020. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1610145>

¹⁴ “Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh reviews contribution of NCC in nation’s fight against COVID-19”, Press Information Bureau, 02 April 2020, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1621188>

¹⁵ “NCC offers its volunteer cadets for national duty to fight COVID-19 under ‘Ex NCC Yogdan’: Issues guidelines for temporary employment of cadets”, Press Information Bureau, 02 April 2020. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1610145>

¹⁶ “National Cadet Corps (N.C.C)(Code 72) (2019-20),” Central Board of Secondary Education, accessed September 29, 2020, http://cbseacademic.nic.in/web_material/CurriculumMain20/SrSecondary/NCC.pdf

¹⁷ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2018-19*, 189-191.

NCC cadets are actively coordinated between the Command Headquarters (HQs) of the Indian Navy and Regional NCC HQs.¹⁸

Strengthening Maritime Security Capacity

Security of coastal areas can be viewed from the linked concepts of coastal defence and coastal security. Coastal defence is the military function of defending the nation and its citizens against seaborne threat of conventional and sub-conventional armed attack in coastal areas. Such attacks could include use of missiles, mines, guns and explosives, by ships, submarines, aircraft and marine/ Special Forces, etc.¹⁹ Tasks in support of coastal defence include surveillance, patrols, mine warfare, activation of coastal batteries, port/ harbour defence, Naval Cooperation and Guidance to Shipping (NCAGS), etc.²⁰ Coastal security, which primarily focuses on prevention of infiltration by non-state actors by sea, encompasses maritime border management, island security, maintenance of peace, stability and good order in coastal areas and enforcement of laws therein, security of ports, coastal installations and other structures, including Vital Areas and Vital Points (VAs/ VPs), vessels and personnel operating in coastal areas.²¹

Since the '26/11' terrorist attack in Mumbai, several measures have been taken to strengthen maritime and coastal security. This includes actively engaging the coastal communities for community policing purposes (eyes and ears concept). However, the coastal security construct developed post '26/11' has faced several challenges on account of manpower shortfalls with various stakeholders such as the State Marine Police and the Fisheries Department. Towards addressing shortfalls in human resources for coastal security, utilising the human resource pool comprising Ex-Servicemen (ESM), NCC cadets, and traditional sea faring communities for coastal security has been recommended in the past.²²

Presently, NCC units are located in 703 out of 716 districts in the country, and this includes all coastal districts.²³ On a *pro rata* basis, as part of the planned expansion, Naval NCC units would be responsible for training about 24,000 cadets. The envisaged expansion of the NCC in coastal areas would facilitate the availability of additional trained manpower to states, and this can—to some extent—mitigate the manpower challenges being faced by such agencies. In addition to assistance in disaster management, some of the areas that NCC cadets can progressively be employed to support security-related efforts by central and state agencies in coastal areas, including:

¹⁸ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2018-19*, 146.

¹⁹ Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy* (New Delhi: IHQ MoD(N), 2015), 162.

²⁰ Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Indian Maritime Doctrine* (New Delhi: IHQ MoD(N), updated online version 2015), 92.

<https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian-Maritime-Doctrine-2009-Updated-12Feb16.pdf>

²¹ Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, 109.

²² Himadri Das, *Coastal Security: Policy Imperatives for India* (New Delhi: National Maritime Foundation, 2019), 264.

²³ Lt Gen Vinod Vashisht, *Youth Development through National Cadet Corps: Expansion, Contribution to Build National Cyber Capacities, Skill Acquisition and Social Service Orientation* (New Delhi: Vivekanda International Foundation, 2019), 4. <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/youth-development-through-national-cadet-corps.pdf>

- Participation/ conduct of community interaction programmes.
- Participation in community policing.
- Assistance in pollution control efforts, such as coastal clean-up.
- Manning of control centres, especially to coordinate NCC effort whenever involved.
- Manning of helplines.
- Augmenting manpower for point-security of Vital Areas/ Vital Points, especially in heightened states of readiness.
- Manning of Fish Landing Points to support state agencies in accounting of boat movements.
- Assistance to State Police in traffic management and other tasks.
- Augmentation of war-watching organisation.
- Assistance to NCAGS organisation.

To be able to effectively utilise the planned expansion of the NCC in coastal areas to support security-related activities there will be a need for the following:

- Consolidation of inter-agency linkages, especially at the district-level for optimal utilisation of trained manpower.
- Participation of NCC cadets in bi-annual coastal security exercises and periodic defence exercises for training in simulated scenarios.
- Development of Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for most effective utilisation of trained cadets to support efforts of other agencies
- Augmentation of local training efforts to meet the specific requirements for which NCC cadets could be employed.

Conclusion

The planned expansion of the NCC in coastal areas, which is essentially a community focused initiative has the potential to contribute effectively, in supporting both central and state agencies, in addressing challenges like disaster management and security-related tasks. Therefore, this capability must be effectively leveraged. This, however, will be contingent of deepening inter-agency linkages with NCC units, especially at the district-level. Considering the social multiplier effect of motivating and training local youth, the overall gains from this initiative are likely to be significant, and the focus on a larger share of girl cadets is also likely to lead to a greater intergenerational impact.²⁴ Finally, as stressed by the Raksha Mantri, the modernisation of the NCC must be with a view to making it “more relevant to the new and changed times.”²⁵

²⁴ Each cadet touches the life of ten or more. See Vashisht, *Youth Development through National Cadet Corps: Expansion, Contribution to Build National Cyber Capacities, Skill Acquisition and Social Service Orientation*, 4.

²⁵ “Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh reviews contribution of NCC in nation’s fight against COVID-19”, Press Information Bureau, 02 April 2020, 02 April 2020. <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1621188>

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