

India and the Great War Centenary Commemoration Project - An Update

Mr Adil Chhina@

During the period under review (Apr-Jun 2015) the Centre for Armed Forces Historical Research has continued with its efforts to highlight the role of India in the First World War through the joint MEA-USI India and the Great War Centenary Commemoration Project. Towards this end the Centre has completed publication of the following books which provide a broad overview of the Indian contribution from a variety of perspectives:

- (a) A large and well-illustrated Coffee Table Book titled India and the Great War by Sqn Ldr Rana TS Chhina (Retd).
- (b) A boxed set of eight illustrated booklets on the theme 'India and the Great War'. The subjects/authors of the individual booklets are :
 - (i) Overview by Sqn Ldr Rana TS Chhina (Retd)
 - (ii) France and Flanders by Tom Donovan
 - (iii) Gallipoli by Sqn Ldr Rana TS Chhina (Retd)
 - (iv) Mesopotamia by Harry Fecitt
 - (v) Egypt and Palestine by Harry Fecitt
 - (vi) East Africa by Harry Fecitt
 - (vii) Indian State Forces by Tony McClenaghan
 - (viii) Indian VCs 1914-18 by Adil Chhina

Another illustrated Coffee Table Book titled Les Hindous: The Indian Army on the Western Front is in the pipeline and will be published in the next couple of months. All these publications are being sent by MEA to Indian missions abroad for onward distribution. Copies are also available on payment from the USI. The publications are unique for the use of rare period images showing Indian soldiers and airmen in action in different theatres of the war. Many of these images have been sourced from various archives and collections and never been seen before, greatly adding to the value of the publications.

An event commemorating the Centenary of the Gallipoli Campaign was organised at the Salar Jang Museum by the Turkish Consulate in Hyderabad in collaboration with INTACH-Hyderabad on 24 March 2015, represented by Mr Murat Omeroglu and Mrs Anuradha Reddy, respectively. The event was well attended by the local public. Papers were presented by Prof Kahraman Sakul, a Turkish historian and Sqn Ldr Rana Chhina (Retd). The chief guest on the occasion was Maj Gen RK Jagga, VSM, GOC Bison Div, whose presence was greatly appreciated by the convenors.

Subsequently, in April, a seminar to mark '100 Years of the Use of Chemical Weapons' was jointly organised by the USI and the Embassy of Belgium, New Delhi on 24 April 2015.

A hundred years ago, in Belgium, the first mass use of asphyxiating gas by the Germans during the Second battle of Ypres (22 April 1915) marked the advent of the use of chemical weapons in warfare. Hence, weapons of mass destruction were born on the Western Front in the First World War. The first casualties at Ypres were mainly French troops in the path of the chlorine gas cloud. They suffered nearly 6000 casualties, many of whom died within minutes from asphyxiation and tissue damage in the lungs, while many were blinded, as the gas formed hypochlorous acid when combined with water, destroying moist tissues such as eyes and lungs. On 25 April 1915, the Indian Corps arrived in the Ypres Salient by forced marches from the part of the line held by them across the Belgian border in Northern France. They were used to plug the gaping holes in the front line caused by the German gas attacks and to launch counter attacks to regain the lost ground. They also became casualties of chemical warfare when the gas canisters were reopened by the Germans on 26 April. On this day, Jemadar Mir Dast, 55th Coke's Rifles, attached to the 57th Wilde's Rifles (FF) won the Victoria Cross for supreme gallantry in action.

Today, both India and Belgium are signatories to the Chemical Weapons Convention and the commitment of both nations to chemical disarmament is widely acknowledged. The seminar brought together leading international experts to examine both the historical and contemporary aspects of the use of chemical weapons in warfare. The seminar's inaugural address was given by Ambassador Navtej Sarna, Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs. The Ambassador noted how he had not envisaged that the WWI Commemoration Project would be as big as it had become. This was followed by the keynote address given by HE Mr Jan Luykx, Ambassador of Belgium, where he spoke of Indo-Belgian ties and acknowledged the role of Indian soldiers in defending Belgian soil during the war.

The seminar was conducted in two sessions, chaired by Lt Gen PK Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd), Director USI. The first session dealt with the Indian and Belgian perspectives of the Great War in Flanders. The first speaker was Sqn Ldr Rana Chhina (Retd), Secretary and Editor, USI-CAFHR who gave an overview of India and the First World War with special reference to Indian troops in Belgium. This acquainted the audience with the background of what was to follow as part of the seminar's theme. The second speaker in the session was Mr Dominiek Dendooven from the In Flander's Fields Museum, Ieper, and he spoke about the Belgian perspective of the Great War, again with a special emphasis on Indian soldiers in Belgium.

The second session dealt with Chemical Weapons Warfare and the impact of these weapons in the contemporary world. The session started with a paper by Gp Capt Ajay Lele (Retd), Fellow, Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses

(IDSA) where he spoke on the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the mechanism of the convention since beginning till the present. The second talk was presented by Cdr Glen Nolett, officer commanding the bomb disposal unit in the Belgian Army. He gave an overview of the problem of unexploded chemical ammunition from the First World War, and the working of the bomb disposal unit in great detail. He took all present for the seminar by surprise when he stated that well over a 100 tonnes of unexploded ordnance from the First World War are still unearthed every year to this day from Belgian soil. The third talk of the session was presented by Col (Dr) Can Akdogan (Retd), Regional Delegate to Armed and Security Forces, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). He gave an overview of the Geneva Conventions, legal constraints of war, and the role of ICRC during the Great War. The Valedictory Address was given by Dr GS Sandhu, IAS, Chairman, National Authority, Chemical Weapons Convention, Government of India.

In addition to the seminar, a joint USI-Belgian Embassy reception was held at the Belgian Ambassador's residence in New Delhi on the evening of the same day. This reception showcased an exhibition depicting the role of Indian and Belgian soldiers during the Great War and was curated by the USI-CAFHR team. Another exhibition on the Belgian experience of the war was also simultaneously displayed.

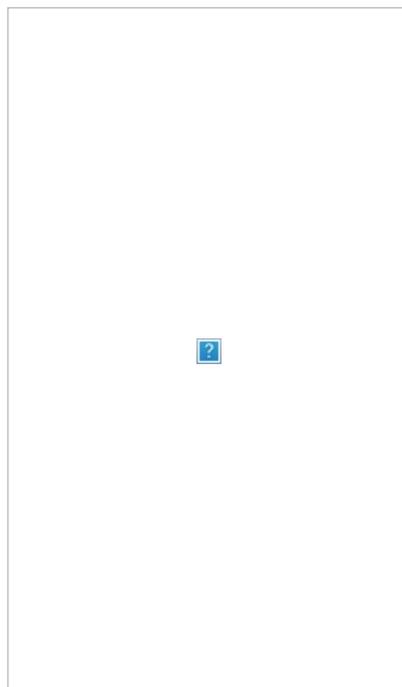
On the same day in the evening before the reception at the Belgian Ambassador's residence, a joint USI-Australian High Commission exhibition 'Gallipoli One Hundred' was inaugurated at the Australian High Commission in New Delhi to commemorate the Centenary of the landings at Gallipoli, in which the Indians and ANZACs fought side by side as comrades in arms. The exhibition had a central element - 'Camera on Gallipoli' accompanied by a supplementary exhibition - 'Indians and ANZACs' which was curated by Sqn Ldr Rana TS Chhina (Retd) and Prof Peter Stanley. The New Zealand High Commission was an active partner in these ANZAC Day commemorative activities.

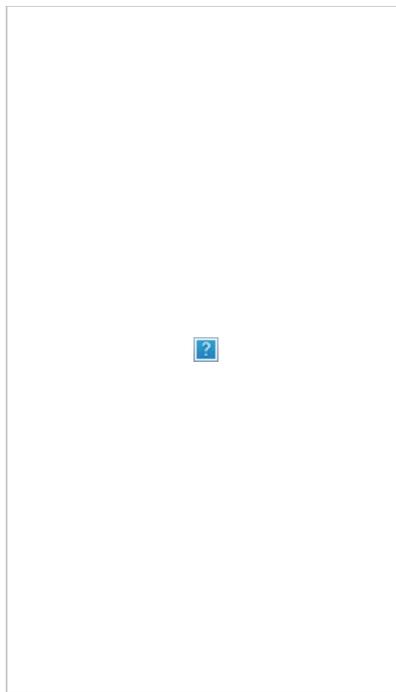
A dawn service was held on 25th April hosted by the High Commissions of New Zealand and Australia at the Delhi War Cemetery, Brar Square, Delhi Cantt. This dawn service is held every year to commemorate the ANZAC contribution at Gallipoli but for the first time, the Indian participation was officially recognised and commemorated as well. The dawn service was followed by a 'Gunfire Breakfast' on the lawns at the rear of the Australian High Commissioner's residence where the 'Indians and ANZACs' photo exhibition was again prominently displayed.

A lecture was given by Sqn Ldr Rana Chhina (Retd) at the National Archives of India (NAI) on 29 May 2015. The subject of his lecture was: First World War: Records, Memory and Memorialisation. The talk was well received and well attended. This was part of a lecture series being organised by the NAI on the occasion of their 125th Foundation Year celebrations.

On 17th June 2015, a joint USI-New Zealand wreath laying ceremony was organised at the India Gate at 0900hrs. The New Zealand Chief of Naval Staff Rear Admiral Jack Steer laid a wreath on behalf of his country to pay homage to the Indian soldiers who lost their lives in the First World War. A wreath was laid by Maj Gen PJS Sandhu (Retd), Deputy Director and Editor on behalf of the USI. General Sandhu wore his uniform for this occasion and descendants of WWI veterans were wearing the medals of their ancestors on the right side. A wreath was also laid by Maj Gen Ian Cardozo, AVSM, SM (Retd) and Sqn Ldr Rana Chhina (Retd) on behalf of the Indian veterans. The last post was played by Naval buglers. Rear Admiral Steer in his impromptu remarks to the gathering after the ceremony emphasised the importance of the event and recalled the sacrifices made by Indian and New Zealand soldiers at Gallipoli a century ago.

In the forthcoming months, the Centre will participate in a conference at the University of the Fraser Valley in British Columbia, Canada, titled 'India and the Great War: Memory and Memorialisation' being held from 30 Sep to 02 Oct 2015. It will also present a paper on the Indian involvement in Gallipoli at a conference at Cannakale University in Turkey on 14 Nov 2015. Papers will also be presented at the Joint USI-Royal Pavilion Brighton conference titled 'Voices of India: The First World War' in the UK on 21 Nov 2015. The first of the India and the Great War theatre histories 'Die in Battle, Do not Despair: The Indians on Gallipoli, 1915' by Prof Peter Stanley, will also be released at a function being organised at the USI in December 2015.





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Challenges to India's Energy Security in the Emerging Geostrategic Scenario*

Shri Saurabh Chandra, IAS@

The Politics of Oil

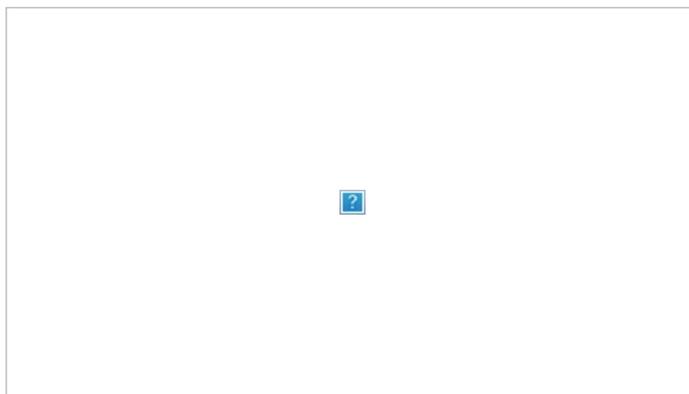
Oil is the most politicised commodity in the world. Oil was, is and will remain a potent political and economic weapon. Wars have been fought over it and kingdoms have been toppled, to gain control over the production, refining, transport and use of petroleum products. To achieve this objective since early 20th Century whenever necessary, active intervention has been resorted to by different countries. In 1928, the oil of the Middle East was divided between the USA and Britain by the Red Line Agreement. "Persian Oil", President Franklin D Roosevelt said to a British Diplomat in 1944, "is yours. We share the oil of Iraq and Kuwait. As for Saudi Arabian oil, it's ours."

In this background, it is imperative to go through the historical geostrategic milestones and their impact. The idea for establishment of Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was first mooted in 1949. OPEC was set up in 1960, in response to the US putting import quotas on Venezuelan and Persian Gulf Oil to support the Canadian and Mexican oil industries. In 1973, OPEC imposed an embargo against the US and Western Europe. By the end of the embargo in March 1974, the price of oil had risen from US \$ 3 per barrel to nearly US \$ 12 per barrel. The "first oil price shock" with the accompanying of 1973-74 stock market crash, was regarded as the first discrete event since the Great Depression to have a persistent economic effect. Although the embargo was lifted in March 1974 after negotiations at the Washington Oil Summit, the effect has lingered. This period also saw the prospect of nationalisation of oil companies, most notably Aramco by Saudi Arabia in 1980. As other OPEC nations followed suit, the cartel's income soared. It was during this period that the term "petro-aggression" was mooted, a term used to describe the tendency of oil rich states to instigate international conflicts e.g. Iraq's invasion of Iran and Kuwait and Libya's repeated incursions into Chad. Another term is resource wars; one of the first examples being-nationalisation of the Oil Industry in Iran in 1950's and the consequent changes in the political order in that country.

Uncertainty in the World of Oil and Its Impact

The only certainty in the world of oil is uncertainty. It is hyper-sensitive to shift in political orders and disturbances. To cite a few examples, Iraq invaded Kuwait on 02 Aug 1990 and the crude oil price rose to US \$ 36 per barrel. The success of the Allied air strike on 16 Jan 1991, by allaying the fears of a cut in Middle East crude oil production, led to a record one-day drop in oil prices. In March 2005, crude oil prices broke the psychological barrier of US \$ 60 per barrel. Global disturbances like the Korean Missile launch and the Iraq war resulted in oil being traded at over US \$ 79 per barrel (an all-time record) in mid-2006. By October 2007, the oil prices had touched US \$ 92 per barrel, in the wake of ongoing tensions in Eastern Turkey and the weak US \$.

The year 2008 was of historical significance in the pricing of crude oil (Please refer to Figure 1). In April 2008, oil touched a new high of around US \$ 120 per barrel. In June, the crude oil price rose by US \$ 11 per barrel in 24 hours on the apprehension of an Israeli attack on Iran. By July, it had reached its zenith price of US \$145 per barrel. Inevitably, this was followed by the fall in oil prices catalysed, by the world financial crises, in the aftermath of the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy. In September, it came down to US \$ 90 per barrel. The lowest point was to come in December, when it traded down at US \$ 32 per barrel.



This uncertainty has also been a hallmark of oil prices in the recent past. In 2014, trouble in Iran resulted in crude prices climbing to about US \$ 115 per barrel. However soon thereafter, oil prices crashed to US \$ 67 per barrel. After touching its lowest point of around US \$ 45, crude oil prices have again risen to about US \$ 65 in April 2015. Since crude oil prices defy the classical laws of economics viz. supply and demand and are highly sensitive to political developments and other exogenous factors, it is next to impossible to project them with a reasonable degree of accuracy.

Ironically, the official charter of OPEC states 'stabilisation of oil prices in the international oil markets' as its goal. Evidently, it has not served its purpose. Analysts attribute it to its inability to dominate the market, lack of entry barriers and a non-adherence to production quotas by the constituent countries.

At present, oil producing countries are reeling under the impact of low crude price. Rouble has depreciated; Nigeria has raised interest rates and devalued Naira, its currency. Venezuela may default on its debt obligations. On the

other hand, big importing countries in Europe, India and Japan stand to benefit. Money has been transferred from producers and sovereign wealth funds to consumers. Trade deficit, fiscal deficit and inflation have come down.

For India, the price uncertainty impacts exports to oil exporting countries. Lower crude prices adversely affect the inflow of remittances from expatriates in these countries. Lower oil prices also set back the foreign investment in exploration and production. To address each one is a daunting policy challenge, not to mention, lower foreign exchange earnings. India being a refinery hub is an exporter of refinery products. Overall the economic impact of cheaper crude oil is expected to be positive.

The fluctuations in crude oil prices are mirrored in exploration effort. The successive oil shocks have spurred oil companies to stretch the frontiers of oil exploration, even to rugged terrains such as the Arctic. The shale revolution got traction from the \$100 per barrel price prevailing over the last four years, before the southward journey started. The Shiekh vs Shale debates centre around the prudence of low cost producers cutting production to keep crude oil prices high and thereby keeping high cost producers in business and sustaining research efforts for production in different areas, which have the potential to cut down their market share.

Policy Formation in the Wake of Uncertainty

Given that crude oil prices cannot be predicted, policy formulation is a challenging and daunting task. A sound policy has to factor in and work around this uncertainty. In case of decontrolled products, there is a direct impact on prices and on the inflationary situation. In case of subsidised products, the increased subsidy enhances the fiscal deficit and indirectly fuels inflation. For an importing country, higher prices adversely impact the trade deficit and consequent fluctuation in the exchange rate of its currency. This complex problem requires innovative solutions. One way to protect government revenue is to impose excise duty at specific rates which can be suitably modulated in times of high and low crude oil prices. But the long term answer lies in policy measures which will enhance domestic production and reduce dependence on imports.

Energy Security Particularly in Context of India

There is no silver bullet for achieving energy security and there is no 'one size fits all' solution. There is no quick fix solution. Countries which are beneficiaries of nature's bounty and do not depend on other countries for their energy needs have concerns which are distinct from those of importing countries. India has to take proactive measures to attain a comfortable level of energy security. It is a hard grind and has to be spearheaded by National Oil Companies (Please refer to Figure 2).

To address this challenge, India's energy consumption basket and its comparison with the remaining countries in the world needs to be looked at (Please refer to Figure 3). India is primarily dependent on coal. The gap in natural gas and nuclear energy consumption provides an opportunity for increasing their share. Although there is an ambitious scheme to promote generation of renewable energy, the dependence on the carbon and hydrocarbon sources will continue to dominate the energy consumption basket.

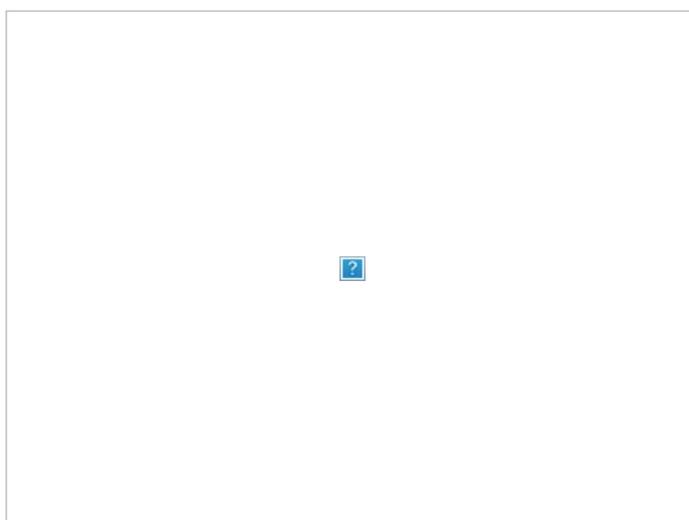


Figure 2

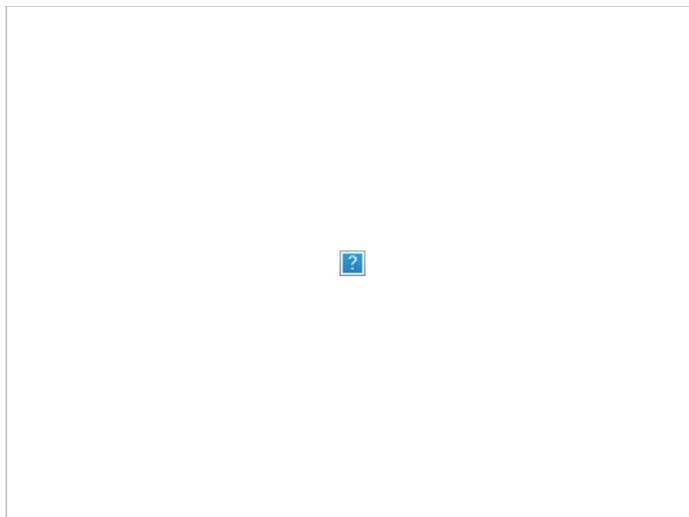


Figure 3

Regarding hydrocarbons, India imports 32 per cent of its annual gas consumption and 77 per cent of its domestic annual consumption of crude oil. Overall, about 72.5 per cent of the requirement of hydrocarbons is imported. The Prime Minister of India has given a challenging assignment of a 10 per cent decrease in the import requirement by 2022. This will require special efforts for enhancement of domestic oil and gas production. Energy security requires a holistic approach. Some of the generic measures to achieve this are :-

- (a) Maximising the domestic exploration and production. The approach to ensure global energy security revolves around production in the country.
- (b) Maximising indigenous service and material supplies with local content.
- (c) Diversifying and securing international sources/supplies.
- (d) Optimising cost and availability of supplies by striking a balance between long term, short term and spot contracts.
- (e) Creating sufficiently large strategic reserves. The norm is for 90 days of strategic reserves.
- (f) Creating strategic partnership with suppliers/countries. Instead of India just being a buyer, developing a strategic partnership with international suppliers and incentivise them to invest in India. One example is giving a stake to the exporting company in our refineries, petro-chemical complexes etc. There is a need to enable Indian companies access to the exporting country's hydrocarbon resources through a stake in the upstream sector. The idea is to transform a buyer-seller relationship into one of long term partnership.

After outlining the generic measures, the specific steps taken to address this challenge are given below :-

- (a) The area of sedimentary basin in the country is 3.14 million sq km. Almost 50 per cent is yet to be surveyed. An ambitious plan to cover the remaining unsurveyed area within five years has been put into effect. This is being done through Multi-client Speculative Survey carried out by private parties and the remaining by government funding/ national oil companies.
- (b) The essential task of reassessment of hydrocarbon resources which has not been done for over two decades and setting up of National Data Repository to house all the available data on the prospectively of these basis is under way.
- (c) Both the search for new oil in old fields and new oil in new fields, have to be incentivised. Reservoir management and adoption of the latest technology to improve oil recovery and enhanced oil recovery can optimise and maximise the production of crude oil from old fields.
- (d) To obtain new oils from new fields, a policy for bidding of marginal fields is at advanced stage of approval. This policy with attractive terms is expected to reignite the interest in exploration activity in existing fields.
- (e) The existing model for nine rounds of bidding that have taken place under the New Exploration Licensing Policy has failed to yield the desired results. Evidently, if we continue to do things in the same way, we cannot get different results. A new bidding model which is in conformity with the Government objectives of 'minimum government and maximum governance' and 'ease of doing business' is under formulation. The next round of bidding would be based on the new model which will, by introducing the uniform licensing policy enable companies to explore both conventional and unconventional hydrocarbons like shale gas, coalbed methane etc. at any point of the lease validity period.

In line with the above mentioned philosophy, the Government has approved the following :-

- (a) Early monetisation of discoveries by addressing the rigidities in the production sharing contract. The 34 cases resolved so far have hydrocarbon resources valued at approximately Rs 30,000 crores covering 34 cases.
- (b) Policy for testing requirement which will initiate the process of monetisation of hydrocarbon resources

valued at about Rs 1,00,000 crores.

- (c) Policy for allowing exploration in Mining Lease area.
- (d) Exploration and exploitation of shale oil and gas in nomination acreages by national oil companies.
- (e) Removal of uncertainty regarding gas prices by linking it to international prices. Since a large portion of the new gas is expected to come from High Pressure, High Temperature reservoirs and fields in deep water and ultra-deep water areas, a premium is proposed to be paid for gas produced from such difficult areas.
- (f) Stepping up exploration efforts in the North-East.
- (g) Monitoring and review for expediting transition from exploration to production.
- (h) Diesel deregulation and consequent reduction of subsidy burden on upstream companies. This would generate surpluses for enhancement of exploration and production efforts by these companies.

It is expected that the other measures to improve the investment climate would result in an investment of Rs 50,000 crores in 2015-16 by the public sector and private sector upstream companies. This is expected to go up after award of marginal fields and blocks through the next round of bidding.

Diversification in Sourcing of Oil and Gas

On sourcing of crude and gas, India imports crude oil from 47 countries for strategic and economic reasons (Please refer to Figure 4). Maximum import is from Middle East countries viz Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait and Nigeria, which together account for around 50 per cent of total crude imports. Of the remaining quantity,

India's Sources for Import of Crude Oil



Figure 4

18 per cent of oil is imported from South America and 17 per cent from Africa. Gas is being imported from 17 countries primarily Qatar, and also from Nigeria, Algeria, France, Yemen Republic, Norway, Spain and United Arab Emirates. Surplus gas in the region is available in Qatar, Iran, Turkmenistan and Russia. Evacuation of gas is easiest from Qatar via sea route. For evacuation of gas from Turkmenistan, a consortium has to build, finance, own and operate the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline. The consortium leader is slated to be finalised by 01 Sep 2015.

Exploration Abroad

Regarding acquisition of overseas assets, India has a dedicated arm - ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL). This company has met with reasonable success. Its activities span over four continents viz Africa, Asia, Europe and South America. It is participating in 32 projects in 16 countries. Currently, oil and gas is being produced from 10 projects in seven countries, viz Russia, Sudan, Vietnam, Syria, Columbia, Venezuela and Brazil. OVL's production equals about 10 per cent of the Country's total production of oil and gas in the Country. Its last big investment was in Mozambique. Although it has travelled a fair distance, the target of more than doubling its production in the next five years would require a concerted and focussed attention.

The Way Forward

The challenge to energy security is - increased production within boundaries of the Nation. One feature is that the majority of the acreage is held by the ONGC and OIL India whereas the state of the art technology is with international oil companies. Synergy between the two is the solution. A farm-in and farm-out approach would be one option for induction of latest technology in nomination acreages and also difficult areas awarded under the pre-New Exploration License Policy (NELP) and NELP rounds of bidding.

Turmoil in the Middle-East is a serious concern. Add to it the reduced dependence of the USA on Middle East oil and the fact that India and China would in the near future become the biggest importers of Middle East and West Asia oil. The strategic concern is of continued production in these areas and safe transportation through the choke points like the Strait of Hormuz and Suez Canal. The future of Iran sanctions remains an area of great interest both for its effect on the crude oil supplies and impact on international crude oil prices and also the possibility of construction of undersea pipeline to India.

Conclusion

Oil and gas security is an amalgam of policy, technical solutions and market mechanism. The Government, International Oil Companies and the National Oil Companies all have a role to play to ensure this.

On the supply side, oil and gas security involves enhancement of domestic production, acquisition of overseas assets of equity oil, building strategic reserves and promoting alternative sources of supply, which are diversified and of lower political risk. On the demand side, this would require promoting energy efficiency, fuel switching options and response capacity to supply disruptions.

A number of major steps have been initiated to improve India's energy security in the face of the emerging and ever changing geopolitical and economic developments. The policy measures enumerated above as they move towards fructification should enable India to tackle the challenges to its energy security caused by uncertainty which is the hallmark of the world of oil and gas.

The last one year's positive actions and movement towards addressing these issues in the hydrocarbon sector found echo in the following extracts from PM's speech at the Economic Times Global Business Summit :-

"The petroleum sector has seen major reforms. Diesel prices have been deregulated. This has opened up space for private players to enter into petroleum retail. Gas prices have been linked to international prices. This will bring a new wave of investment. It will increase supplies. It will resolve problems in the key power sector."

"Today India's cooking gas subsidy is the world's largest Cash Transfer Programme. Over 80 million households (the number now exceeds 127 million households) receive subsidy directly as cash into their bank accounts. This is one third of all households in the Country. This will completely eliminate leakage."

*Text of the 13th Major General Samir Sinha Memorial Lecture 2015 delivered by Shri Saurabh Chandra, IAS at the USI on 28 Apr 2015 with Shri C Dasgupta, IFS (Retd) in Chair.

@**Shri Saurabh Chandra, IAS** is a 1978 Batch (UP Cadre) officer. He was Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Government of India from 01 Mar 2014 until his superannuation from service on 30 Apr 2015.

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India's Role in Afghanistan Post 2014: Strategy, Policy and Implementation*

Major Balamurugan R Subbu@

Introduction

Afghanistan due to its location, culture and with mere existence in this region, affects not only the continent but the whole world in various dimensions. In the past, Afghanistan had a tumultuous history replete with internal strife and political instability. For centuries the great powers of the world have tried to tame this Region but succeeded only in pushing that Nation into gradual descent towards fragility and chaos. Matters have been worse due to various ethnic, sectarian and tribal faultlines that reside within the Country. Terror groups like Al-Qaeda prospered during Taliban ruled environment and invited the wrath of the USA by 9/11 incident. It prompted the latter to launch a large scale Military Operation in Afghanistan, better known by the Acronym Global War on Terror (GWOT). GWOT is the longest and costliest war of this age and finally it is drawing to a closure in Afghanistan. The USA managed to eliminate the Al-Qaeda Chief and dismantled his network to a certain extent and announced the withdrawal of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by the end of 2014. How this shapes Afghanistan's future will have a significant impact on this region, particularly on India. This article attempts to analyse the evolving situation in Afghanistan and suggest possible policy options for India.

Part I - Geo-Political Imperatives and Present Situation in Afghanistan

Geo-Political Imperatives

'Islamic Republic of Afghanistan' has a population of around 31 million people which consists of, 42 per cent of Pashtuns, 27 per cent of Tajiks, nine per cent of Hazaras and Uzbek groups.¹ There are other smaller ethnic groups like the Turkmen, Ajmak, Baloch and several others. The population of the country is divided into various ethno-linguistic groups. Sweep of the history reveals that the notion of tribal cohesion has always been far more important than the 'Idea of single nationhood'.

Geostrategic Location. Afghanistan has a strategically important location in Asia. It is a landlocked country and bordered by six countries namely; Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and China. This land served as a pivotal location on the ancient Silk Road, which carried trade from the Mediterranean to China. Sitting on many trade and migration routes, Afghanistan may be called as the 'Central Asian Roundabout' or 'Land Bridge' since routes converge from the Central, West and South Asia. It is also an important and most viable outlet for energy and mineral resources of the Central Asian Republics (CARs).

Political History. The political history of the modern state of Afghanistan began with the Pashtun-Hotaki and Durrani Dynasties in the 18th Century. In the 19th Century, it became a buffer state in the 'Great Game' between British India and the Russian Empire.² A series of conflicts viz Anglo-Afghan War and coups, Soviet invasion and civil Wars devastated much of the country.³ Post

9/11, 'Operation Enduring Freedom' was launched as a new phase of war in Afghanistan by the USA led coalition. The United Front (Northern Alliance) had also joined hands to remove the Taliban from power and dispel Al Qaeda.

Present Situation

During the last four decades, Afghanistan has witnessed incessant bloodshed owing to external intervention and civil wars. Present situation in Afghanistan is far from stabilised. Process of establishing a successful 'democratic system' is still in an embryonic stage.⁴ Most of the developmental projects of the donor nations are yet to be completed and have now entered in a sort of pause mode. Between reconstruction and military operations the latter gains priority and statistics also suggest that ten times more has been spent on military operations than on rebuilding Afghanistan, with corruption and inefficiency further eroding the value of the reconstruction process. Major investors are in the process of shifting their businesses abroad due to instability and existing security situation. Basic amenities and educational facilities are yet to reach the rural areas of Afghanistan. Literacy level is lingering on 39 per cent and primary education to all is still a mirage.⁵ Lack of steady income and employment opportunities for the youth, makes them vulnerable targets for 'Jihadists'. 'Agri-culture' in Afghanistan has been turned into 'poppy-culture' due to the monetary benefits in opium trade.

Militarily, in the North and the West, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) should be able to control the insurgency after the withdrawal of ISAF. By contrast, in the South and East; serious fighting is likely to continue without any prospect of ANSF gaining the upper hand within the reasonable time frame. Initially, the ISAF had aimed at pacifying Afghans by delivering a debilitating blow to the Taliban and driving them out of key areas. Simultaneously, the ANSF was to be trained and equipped to safeguard stability and peace in the State. However, ISAF could not accomplish its goals completely. Moreover, training such large security forces from scratch in a short time would not be feasible and this trained force is yet to show concrete results. The young ANSF would have to carry out major operations instead of mopping up the remnants of the insurgency. It is unlikely that they would be able to defeat the Taliban completely. The present Government is not able to contain growing 'Kalashnikov culture'. Till date, bomb blasts or suicide attacks are part of daily affairs to the Afghans. The fact is that the ISAF has failed to subjugate the Taliban led militancy adequately. It is also evident that the Taliban have launched several fresh campaigns in many areas recently.

On 30 Sep 2014, under heavy pressure from the USA and the UN, the two rival candidates, Mr Ashraf Ghani and Mr Abdullah Abdullah, formed 'National Unity Government' under a power sharing agreement and sworn in as the President and Chief Executive respectively. It is also opined that this deal is fragile and likely to be a cause of friction

between these two groups within the Government. On the following day the newly formed Government also signed long delayed 'Security Pacts' with the USA and the NATO to authorise deployment of a portion of ISAF post withdrawal.

Part II - Likely Scenarios: Post Withdrawal Afghanistan

After 25 years of Soviet troop's withdrawal, Afghans are at another historical crossroads. Potential threats and risks associated with the withdrawal of ISAF is a matter of concern for the international community. Analysis of the present situation in Afghanistan leads to three possible scenarios that could play out in the future.

Scenario I : Stable and Balanced Transition

In Scenario I, the National Unity Government may succeed in power sharing and lead the nation into development path. The USA along with regional players may implement a sound transition plan by handing over the responsibility of combat operations to ANSF in a graduated manner. ISAF would leave mandated troops for the purpose of training, mentoring and providing logistics support to the ANSF with a view to strengthening the Afghan security framework to requisite size/level with adequate capability to deny Taliban/Islamic State (IS) takeover. All the ongoing development projects can be expected to be completed in timely manner to enable Afghan political establishment to function smoothly. In this case all the Regional powers should also agree in words and deeds to respect Afghanistan's sovereignty and cooperate with one another for maintaining stability and prosperity in the entire Region.

Scenario II : Failed/Divided Afghanistan

In Scenario II, there could be a sharp deterioration in the security situation following the withdrawal of ISAF. The fragile power sharing agreement may falter and the Afghan Government may fail to maintain peace and security in Afghanistan; and Taliban, backed by Pakistan military and other religious extremist groups, may take over the Government. This Taliban supported weak regime is likely to create a radicalised regime in collaboration with other international terrorist organisations. Such an administration will be an ideal setting for the militants to plan and execute terrorist strikes across the World in furtherance of their perceived aims. Chaos and infighting within various ethnic groups for power sharing in Afghanistan is a likely scene. If this perception gains ground then, it may worsen the present situation, the neighbours and donors may withdraw support and financial aid to the present Government. In such a scenario Afghanistan may fail to survive as a democratic nation.

Scenario 3 : Extended/Additional ISAF Presence.

In this scenario the ANSF may not win the conflict with Taliban and allied groups but it may be able to maintain peace and stability in areas under its control. In such a situation, the regional powers may step in with their Security Forces under the UN or NATO leadership to safeguard their interests and also to maintain peace in this region or the ISAF may have to rethink its drawdown plan and may extend the duration of stay. This scenario assumes importance in light of recent reports about the resurgence of the Taliban and rise of Islamic State (IS) in Iraq and Syria.⁶

Part III - Global Stakes in Afghanistan

Global Stakes

Afghanistan is the new battleground where overlapping interests of multiple regional and global players have come to the fore. Each player has his own interests and is demonstrating a resolve to pursue the same resolutely. Common interest to all is the discovery of nearly a trillion dollars worth of mineral wealth in Afghanistan which has added an altogether new economic dimension to this turbulent region.⁷

Pakistan

Pakistan is sharing 2640 km long porous Durand Line with Afghanistan. It is keen to have Taliban as part of the Government in post withdrawal Afghanistan to achieve its own interests. Its assumption of the role as a key facilitator of the Afghanistan peace process signals a pragmatic shift in its regional security approach. This entails a shift from its previous India-Centric 'Strategic Depth' policy of dominating Afghanistan through 'Pashtun-Taliban proxies' which yielded limited strategic gains. Pakistan's troubled political framework, disturbed Internal Security situation and fear of secession of Balochs and North West Frontier Province are the main factors for this change. These factors are pressing it to seek direct solutions with Afghanistan.⁸ Also, major changes in economic, political and security situation in Afghanistan compels it to change the strategy towards Afghanistan. Pakistan is also worried about the rising Indian and other powers influence in this region.

A stable Government in Kabul will pave a way for repatriation of nearly 1.9 million registered and one million undocumented Afghan refugees which is a security problem for Pakistan. Afghanistan may play very crucial role to keep Pakistan's declining economy afloat. The failed Afghanistan entails unaffordable consequences for Pak internal security, political stability, sovereignty and economic viability.

At the same time, possibility of Pakistan's double game cannot be discounted. Pakistan's support to Taliban continues to be sanctioned at the highest levels of Government, with Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) even represented on the Quetta-Shura, the Taliban's War Council so as to retain influence over the movement's leadership.⁹ Taliban fighters continue to be trained by Pakistan while the ISI not only provides financial, military and logistical support but also retains strong strategic and operational control over the Taliban campaign in Afghanistan. Even though the USA led ISAF is fighting the insurgency; Pakistani military continues to view the Taliban as a strategic asset. In turn it can also be predicted that in a post withdrawal scenario, Pakistan may aid the Taliban to take over Kabul or would export terrorism to India to achieve its perceived aims.¹⁰

The USA

The USA has largely won its vital national interest ie dismantling the Al-Qaeda structure in turn to avoid another strategic shock like 9/11. Unlike India, the USA overtly may not be interested into deciding who actually governs Afghans so long as the territory is not used as a springboard for attacks on its soil. But it is in look out for a credible partner in this region to play a safe 'Gas Game' and to safeguard its economic interests in this region. The USA intends to use it as an operating base from where it can keep an eye on Iran & Southeast Asian states.

Iran

Iran shares a 736 km long border along plains in western Afghanistan which is closely associated linguistically, culturally and religiously with Afghanistan. Iran is looking for pro-Iran Government in post withdrawal Afghanistan.¹¹ It is concerned about flow of terrorism and narcotics from Afghanistan. Although Iran wants to see the foreign forces leave this region, it also has concerns over the exodus of a large number of refugees. If the security situation deteriorates post withdrawal, it may not serve Iran's interests. Iran wants to develop the existing economic and trade ties with the new Government. It is also concerned about the safety and well-being of Hazaras based in Central Afghanistan where fresh offensives are being launched by Taliban.

China

Prime interest of China is its economic ties with Afghanistan. China intends to explore the market potential of this region for its goods to keep its economy in pace. It is concerned about the continuing US presence as well as the potential threat of Uighur militant groups operating in Xinjiang from bases in Afghanistan.¹² It has avoided any direct involvement in Afghanistan security or politics, fearing this would make it a target for Islamist terrorism. Hence, China dreams of a stable and trouble free post withdrawal Afghanistan.

Russia

Presently, Russia is refocussing on the problem of Islamist extremism inside Afghanistan which may spread to the CARs and neighbouring regions. It is facing drug menace emanating from Afghanistan for the last two decades. It considers that a stable Government in Kabul may be able to control this menace. In sum, stable Afghanistan is the only expectation of Russian Government. It is unlikely that Russia would get involved in Afghanistan politically or militarily.¹³

CARs

CAR States are agonised on the consequences of instability in post withdrawal Afghanistan. They are anxious about the survival of their own political regimes, economic burden associated with the possible influx of refugees, and geopolitical changes that might result from withdrawal of ISAF. Drug production and trafficking and poses another challenge to all the CARs.

In sum, most of the nations yearn for a stabilised and trouble free Afghanistan as mentioned in Scenario I, whereas Scenario III is also acceptable to a certain extent but Scenario II is not acceptable for sustained growth and peace in this region.

Part IV - Present Indian Stand and Recommended Strategy, Policy and Implementation

Present Indian Stand

India and Afghanistan have enjoyed cordial relations since 1950. Since then, India supported whatever Government was in place provided, even if it was opposed by Pakistan. Once the Taliban consolidated power in 1996, chasm between India and Afghanistan widened especially post IC-814 incident. In 2001, India expressed her support to GWOT and Northern Alliance in war against Taliban. Later, India followed a 'soft power approach' aimed at striking a chord with ordinary Afghans through developmental initiatives and stayed away from internal politics. It also wisely refrained from sending troops for engaging in security operations. However, Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) in 2011 and 2013 indicated, training, capacity building of ANSF and security cooperation along with various infrastructure developmental projects. India has pledged United States Dollar (USD) 2 billion on various projects, emerging as the fifth largest bilateral donor to Afghanistan and has already invested approximately USD 1.1 billion in various projects including steel plants and power projects. India is also laying the foundations for sustainable economic development in the Country by various trade agreements. Notwithstanding the above, Indian political establishment was criticised at various forums for the soft power approach which yielded no real strategic gains.

Factors Influencing India's Policy

Indian policy in Afghanistan has been influenced by various tangible and intangible factors. Some of the factors are as follows :-

- (a) Prime factor is Pakistan, its involvement in Afghanistan politics, economic and development projects, and its support to Taliban.
- (b) Bilateral relationship with the USA and its influence on the USA over Indian activities in Afghanistan.
- (c) Nature of Indian political establishment and its external affairs strategy. With the 'Neighbours First' policy of the present Central Government, some fundamental changes can be expected in the regional policy of India.
- (d) Survivability of the newly formed Government and its abilities to negotiate peace with Taliban.
- (e) Long term acceptability and implementation of bilateral security arrangement by both ISAF and Afghanistan.

Recommended Indian Objectives

India's grand strategy on foreign policy is mostly under performing in its core interests and vital objectives. In the present context, we need to reorient our thinking and realign the policy objectives based on dynamic situation developing in this region. Some of the suggested policy objectives are as follows :-

- (a) Maintain the sovereignty and integrity of Afghanistan by strengthening the institutions, both civilian and military, and by facilitating a smoother political transition.
- (b) Deny this region to the terror groups who may use it as launch pads to export terrorism to India by establishing a stable state.
- (c) Safeguard own economic interests and also explore the market space for Indian goods in this region.
- (d) Required to play safer 'Gas game' in order to fulfill energy requirements in which Afghanistan may play a crucial role in future.
- (e) Actions taken in Afghanistan should not hurt own religious sentiments.
- (f) Need to take steps which would fulfill our aspirations as a major Regional Power.

Recommended Policy and Strategy

India needs to refine her Afghan policy and formulate a comprehensive strategy that would include dexterous use of all instruments of diplomacy, strategic intelligence operations and a significantly enhanced economic embrace with a calculated risk quotient ie 'intense and multilateral engagement with Afghanistan. The option postulates a qualitative and quantitative upgrade in our economic, social and political domain. The recommended option comes with a risk quotient - the probability of losing our economic investment in case of Scenario II/III. The inevitable risk of loss of economic investments in the above case in Afghanistan must be endured by an aspiring Regional Power like India.

Intense and Multilateral Engagement

India must initiate ventures encompassing infrastructure development projects, strengthening of the Government machinery, capacity building of the State, ensuring better local governance and providing financial aid for the growth of Afghanistan. Indian scholarships to Afghan students should be significantly enhanced to reinforce the existing goodwill amongst the Afghan people. A trader to trader interaction especially in industrial sectors of carpets and rugs, marble and food processing will boost the primary industrial sectors of Afghanistan.

India should steer away from a direct military intervention in Afghanistan. However, India must continue assistance in the training, equipping and capacity building programmes for the ANSF, to enable them to resist Taliban-IS attempts to regain power in Kabul. In addition, reduced military engagement below the threshold of direct intervention must be vigorously pursued. Diplomatically, India should engage the regional players ie Iran, Russia, CARs, China and even Pakistan to be able to build a regional consensus on Afghanistan which envisages a stable Afghanistan and consequently a stable region. India must at the same time, attempt to make bridges with the moderate faction of the Taliban apart from the erstwhile Northern Alliance factions.

Implementation Facets

Tenets. It is opined that, India should pursue calibrated enlargement of its political and socio-economic footprints as also military to military engagement while taking care not to get drawn into a military quagmire. The enlarged economic footprint that we seek needs to be secured with an adequate complement of Para Military Forces. The recommended policy and strategy is based on the prevailing situation in Afghanistan. However, India needs to keep a close watch on the outcome of dynamic political and security situations and calibrate its policies for engagement accordingly.

Political Engagement. The population of Afghanistan has a very positive perception of Indian activities in the country. This has been endorsed by various surveys and statistics. With such positive credentials about India being a natural friend and ally, India should leverage the goodwill to pursue its interests. Some of the steps that may be taken are as under:-

- (a) **Reviving Northern Alliance Links.** India needs to revive links with the erstwhile Northern Alliance. Major players of Northern Alliance have already integrated with the regime of Afghanistan and are actively participating in governance. Even if the power sharing agreement between Taliban and present Government process bears fruit, Northern alliance members may not be comfortable sharing space in Kabul with Taliban. Thus, India needs to be prepared for such an eventuality, and should keep the time tested past links alive.
- (b) **Engaging 'Good Taliban'.** India must engage with all ethnic groups in Afghanistan, particularly with the Pushtuns. India has generally been opposed to talking to the Taliban on the plea that there is no distinction between 'Good' and 'Bad' Taliban. But it must accept the prevalent reality and find ways and means for political reconciliation with the 'Good' Taliban.
- (c) **Social Engagement.** India could enhance its investment in social sectors like education, health, vocational training, developmental projects in rural sector etc. Such social ties with more people to people contact will be beneficial to the Indo-Afghan relationship. India has a natural advantage in age old cultural ties (Kabuliwala) and that must be further reinforced. India need not be extra sensitive to Pak sensitivities in building its relationship with Afghan people.

Economic Engagement. India should enlarge its economic footprint in a calibrated manner. India should pursue both 'low visible high impact' projects as well as projects which will have a strategic impact. Possible focus areas are as follows :-

- (a) **Mining and Oil Exploration Rights.** India should bid for additional mining and oil exploration rights in Afghanistan while making concerted efforts to safeguard the existing projects. India should pursue for additional petroleum blocks in Northern Afghanistan.
- (b) **Power Projects. Currently,** India is providing technical expertise in development of power projects. We need to exploit the possibility to extend India's footprint in construction of additional power lines and infrastructural developments.
- (c) **Develop Additional Inlet / Outlet Corridors.** India should assist Afghanistan emerge as a trade, transportation and energy hub connecting Central and South Asia to provide free and unfettered transport and transit linkages. In this regard, India is already in talks with a dozen countries to build seamless corridors from Iranian ports of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas to Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Caucasus. Some recommended projects for development of additional corridors are as under:-
 - (i) Rail links from Iran's ports joining Afghanistan's Garland Highway (Ring Road).
 - (ii) Seamless road and rail links to Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan which would increase the overall trade by 80 per cent.
- (d) Facilitate greater engagement between the Chambers of Commerce of both countries for strengthening trade, economic, scientific and technological cooperation.
- (e) India should create a favourable environment for trade by simplifying customs duties, lowering tariff, creation of air cargo facilities and by improving credit and insurance facilities.
- (f) India lacks direct road or rail access and transit arrangements with Afghanistan which deprives it of the benefit of India's huge market for its goods and services. Free access to the Indian market would stimulate the Afghan economy and therefore, India must take measures to reach a consensual Afghanistan - Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement.

Military Engagement. India is poised to become the largest country outside the US/NATO ambit in terms of commitment to provide military training, equipping and capacity building of the Afghan Security Forces. The strength of Afghan Army is targeted to be built-up to 2,40,000 by 2014. India should intensify its military engagement in the field of training, mentoring, capacity building and logistics. Recommended implementation facets are as follows:-

- (a) Increase the capacity of pre-commission training from the present strength of 50 per year to 150 / 200 per year in a phased manner.
- (b) Provide expertise on counter terrorism and specialised skills by training Afghan troops in Army Training Institutions/Schools. With the training of a battalion strength per quarter in various Indian Army institutions, India will be able to train upto a brigade plus strength in a year.
- (c) Indian Army is planning to send Training Teams to Afghanistan for training of Afghan troops. This training should be 'on the job training' of battalion groups on the lines of Corps Battle Schools (CBS). As part of SPA, India can establish some of these battle schools where these training teams can be effectively employed.
- (d) Assist Afghan Army in establishing institutionalised training mechanisms. India may sign a 'Long Term Training Memorandum' with Afghanistan for establishment of training institutes for the Afghan National Army, like Junior Leaders Academy, Command and Staff College etc.
- (e) The major part of military inventory of ANSF is of Russian origin. Similarly, India too holds equipment of Russian origin. Thus, India can provide assistance to ANSF in the field of training, overhaul and maintenance.
- (f) India should initiate and intensify military to military contacts and exchanges in the form of seminars, discussions and visits.
- (g) India may offer to pay, raise, equip and train up to two Afghan infantry divisions. India is capable of training upto 2500 troops simultaneously in various Regimental Centres.

Regional Approach

India's interests and policies in Afghanistan converge broadly with those other key players like Iran, CAR, USA, China and Russia.¹⁴ Cooperation among these countries could contribute significantly in countering the resurgence of the Taliban and stabilising Afghanistan. These aspects have not been adequately explored on account of political differences, regional instability and the lack of an inclusive forum in which they can be discussed. Table 1 indicates various dyads in the South Asian region in terms of their competition or convergence in interests and reinforces optimism about the Indian role in regional approach. Due to the converging interests of India with other nations, India could be a potential key facilitator of strengthened regional cooperation for peace and security in the region. India needs to contemplate this regional approach in various forums and take other key players onboard. India has to navigate with global and regional players to build a consensus by calibrating their differences and competing interests, yet securing its own. Presently, India is boosting its Government-to-Government relations with the USA, CARs, and in particular with Tajikistan and Iran for a common approach on Afghanistan. The Government should also initiate trilateral relationship with Iran, Russia and CARs Nations to counter any adverse situation in Afghanistan to safeguard

the regional peace, economic interests and stability.

Table 116 : Intensity of Competition or Convergence (High * Moderate ** Low *)**

Competing Interests	Converging Interests
Pakistan - Afghanistan***	USA - India***
Pakistan - India***	Pakistan - China***
Pakistan - Iran**	Pakistan - Saudi Arabia***
Pakistan - USA***	Pakistan - United States*
Iran - Saudi Arabia***	India - Iran***
Iran - USA***	India - CAR**
CARs - Pakistan*	India - Russia*
Russia - Pakistan*	Russia - Iran*
Russia - USA**	
India - China*	
Russia - China*	

Conclusion

No unilateral solution or formula exists for the Indian policy towards Afghanistan. The fluid, dynamic and unstable situation in this region offers only a multilateral approach as a possible course in future. Lack of Indian efforts to establish a stable Afghanistan will lead to others filling the vacuum which would impinge on our own aspirations. India needs to avert these possibilities and explore the situation to fulfill her own aspirations. The Indian stakes in Afghanistan are high and time is running out. India cannot fritter away all the goodwill that India has built up over the years with the people of Afghanistan and let others dominate this region. Timely intervention and implementation of a well-orchestrated policy may bring both peace and prosperity to India as well as to this region.

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Challenges and Prospects of Cyber Security in the Indian Context*

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Introduction

The World Telecommunications Day is celebrated on 17 May. India is marching towards Digital India. Approximately 278 million people out of a population of 1.2 billion are connected on the internet.¹ Out of six lakh villages, mobile connectivity has been provided to 5.5 lakh villages, only 50,000 villages are left. Government's endeavour is to connect all citizens of the Country through digital means. If this dream has to be realised, we need policies, techniques and procedures which address the issues of 'Cyber Risk and Security' to guarantee success to these concepts.

Indian Cyberspace is under constant threat. Just to highlight the gravity of the situation, according to data from the Computer Emergency Response Team - India (CERT-IN), the cyber espionage incidents have gone up from 23 reported incidents in 2004 to a mammoth figure of 62,189 in 2014.² Given the number of critical systems reachable via the Internet coupled with the growing technological advancement of other countries and our heavy reliance on imported hardware and software, 'It's a question of when, not if.'

Shifting Trends

From worms and viruses to Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) and Advanced Persistent Threats (APTs), in the past quarter of a century the sophistication, impact and scale of cyber-attacks have evolved significantly. Technologically advanced nations have been developing ways to use information as a weapon and target financial markets, government computer systems and utilities. Some of the global prominent attacks are Stuxnet, Flame, Dark Seoul and Sony Pictures Entertainment Hack. These attacks were carried out using espionage and a combination of backdoors, Trojans and worms, and were state sponsored.

Although, the bigger attacks are reported, less noticed is growing cottage industry of ordinary people hiring hackers for much smaller acts of espionage. Websites like "Hacker's List" seeks to match hackers with people looking to gain access to competitor's e-mail accounts, databases etc.³

Our Neighbours

China. It has been estimated that 90 per cent APTs are traced to China. China has been accused of cyber attacks not only on the US or India, but also across many nations of the world. China now has both the intent and capability to launch cyber attacks 'anywhere in the world at any time'. China has mounted almost daily attacks on Indian computer networks of both government and private sector, showing its intent and capability⁴. The Chinese are constantly scanning and mapping India's official networks. This is China's way of gaining 'an asymmetrical advantage' over a potential adversary.

Pakistan. China has found an ally in Pakistan whom it can use as a launch pad to inflict cyber attacks on India. On 26 Jan 2014, Pakistani hackers defaced 2118 Indian websites.⁵ Pakistan may use mass media and internet to disturb the secularly balanced India by triggering religious sentiments of Indians. The Assam riots that triggered a widespread exodus of north eastern students from cities such as Bangalore and the widespread stone pelting incidents in J&K, confirmed the subversive games Pakistan plays through social networks.

Indian Preparedness

India has issued Cyber Security Policy and legal framework to secure its Cyberspace as elaborated in the succeeding paragraphs.

National Cyber Security Policy 2013

The objective of National Cyber Security Policy (NCSP) 2013⁶ in broad terms is to create a secure cyberspace ecosystem and strengthen the regulatory framework. A National and sectoral 24X7 mechanism has been envisaged to deal with cyber threats through National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC). CERT-IN has been designated to act as a nodal agency for coordination of crisis management efforts. CERT-IN will also act as umbrella organisation for coordination actions and operationalisation of sectoral CERTs.

The policy calls for effective public and private partnership creating a think tank for cyber security evolution in future. Other important facets of the policy are promotion of research and development in cyber security, development of human resource through education and training programmes and creating a workforce of 500,000 professionals trained in cyber security in the next five years. The policy document aims at encouraging all organisations whether public or private to designate a person to serve as Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) who will be responsible for cyber security initiatives. The release of the NCSP 2013 is an important step towards securing the cyber space of our Country.

Legal Framework: IT Act 2000 and IT Act (amended) 2008

The highlights are :-⁷

- (a) **Definition of Computer System and Punishment for Cyber Offences.** Provides comprehensive definition of computer systems and ascertains liability on various types of crimes.
- (b) **E-Governance and E-Transactions.** Provides legislation for E- governance & E-transactions.

- (c) **Authority to Government.** Authorises government for interception, monitoring and blocking of websites.
- (d) **Protected Systems.** Under the Act, critical systems can be declared as 'protected systems' and security breaches of such systems attract imprisonment.
- (e) **Appellate Tribunals.** Cyber Appellate Tribunal, which is now operational, is expected to expedite legal proceeding of cyber crime cases.

Challenges of Cyber Security in India

Lack of Comprehensive Policy

The NCSP was issued in 2013 but has been proceeding in fits and starts. Some of the shortcomings are as given below:-

- (a) **Need for a National Security Policy.** The National Security Council (NSC) has not published any official document outlining the National Security Policy (NSP). Since NCSP was not a subset of any NSP, it was relegated to the status of an isolated departmental document of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MoC&IT) rather than desirable national level policy. The policy does not give any road map, timelines and funding for its implementation.
- (b) **Insufficient Private Sector Input,** Including Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). During the formulation of NCSP minimal effort was made to obtain input and expertise from other sectors. Although it engaged with industry groups such as the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the process was half-hearted at best. This excludes an entire pool of talent that is available from India's many start-up firms, as well as individuals.
- (c) **Exclusion of Armed Forces.** Unlike the policies of cyber mature nations that recognise cyber security to lie at the broad intersection of both military and commercial networks, the NCSP is largely ambiguous about the role, interplay and interdependence of these two distinct aspects of national cyber security.
- (d) **International Cooperation and Advocacy.** The policy fails to mention the leadership role India should be playing in a variety of areas in cyber security, including development of international security standards, testing of ICT products, cyber security norms and conventions, solutions to the issues of Internet governance, among many others.

Organisational Shortcomings

There are around six apex bodies, five ministries and almost thirty agencies that make up the cyber organisation.⁸

It requires serious introspection to make the entire structure conducive to effective command and control. It is recommended that GoI reconfigures apex bodies to create a single empowered authority to resolve the predicament of multiplicity at the top level.

Lack of Internationally Accepted Policies and Laws

The biggest hurdle before curbing cyber threats at the international level is lack of harmonisation at international level. Till now we have no 'Internationally Acceptable Definition' of cyber warfare. Further, we have no universally acceptable cyber crimes treaty as well.

IT Act 2000 and 2008

The provisions of IT Act are mostly bailable and there has been very low rate of convictions.⁹ It will not be wrong to say that it is effective in metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bhopal, Bangalore, etc, but it is feeble in tier-two cities as awareness of the law by enforcement agencies remains a big challenge. This needs to be suitably addressed.

Supply Chain Integrity

Supply chain integrity has become paramount with the needle of suspicion pointing towards the hardware and software that make up the brains and body of cyberspace. While much of the equipment used in global networks is supplied by China, the storage and data storage networks are largely of the US companies. The dominance of Chinese companies like Huawei and ZTE with reportedly close links with the Chinese military is a matter of concern.¹⁰ In addition to the widely reported issues with hidden backdoors and kill switches, it is also a fact that network equipment providers get access to sensitive information in the course of providing after sales support.¹¹

International Cooperation

The MoUs signed by India have been lopsided in favour of other nations. The Indo-US Strategic Dialogue held in June 2013 renewed focus on cyber security with the establishment of a Strategic Cyber Policy Dialogue of cyber experts. While the macro issues important to the US are being addressed through these dialogues, they do not seem to provide scope for addressing issues important to India such as evolving the necessary mechanisms for rapid information sharing in the law enforcement process.¹²

Non Adherence to International Best Practices: ISO 27001

ISO 27001 certification is suitable for any organisation, large or small and in any sector for protection of critical information, such as in the banking, financial, health, public and IT sectors. All critical sector organisations under

Central Government ministries/departments are mandated to implement information security best practices as per ISO 27001. However, there are only 546 organisations in the country which have obtained the certification. What is more intriguing is that the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) has not made any effort to ascertain as to why all the Government organisations have failed to obtain ISO 27001 certification.¹³

Large User Base with Few Experts. With a population of around 1.21 billion, India has so far only 65,000 trained personnel pertaining to cyber security as against the estimated requirement of 5 lakh trained personnel. In addition, there are only 97 Master trainers and 44 empanelled auditors by CERT-IN in the country.¹⁴

Pirated Software. According to the Global Software Piracy Study done by an independent firm, Business Software Alliance (BSA), about 60 per cent of Indians used pirated software. Only 33 per cent of companies in India have written policies in place requiring use of properly licensed software. This increases the chance of encountering malware.

Data Traffic Transit through Foreign Countries. Much of the data traffic that traverses through cyberspace touches the US networks at some point, or is carried over these networks. Also, majority of the websites of commercial, NGOs, individuals and private organisations are hosted outside India and thus the data is always vulnerable.¹⁵

Lack of Strong Security Culture. India lacks a strong security culture. A country's security culture should permeate all those who are actively engaged in security-related sectors. This is especially important in the cyber security domain, where every individual has the potential to be both a defender and a victim.

Cyber Balance Sheet of Cyber Mature Nations

The USA

Till late nineties, the US suffered from various shortcomings like inadequacy of national policy, multiple organisations, wasteful funding and ineffective regulations to penalise the perpetrators.

Policy Framework. The National Security Strategy (NSS) released in May 2010 called for integration of various agencies.¹⁶ As per the guidelines in NSS the Department of Defence (DoD) coined its cyber concerns in the National Defence Strategy (NDS) and the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR).¹⁷ Further, these strategic documents were used by the Joint Staff to formulate the National Military Strategy (NMS). Now, DoD has cyber policies at strategic, operational and tactical levels.

Integration of Organisations. The responsibility of cyber security was spread across the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), DoD and Department of Justice (DoJ), which worked in independent silos and failed to prevent cyber attacks against the US. In 2008 National Cyber Investigative Joint Task Force (NCIJTF) was formed and drove the US towards unity of command.

US CYBERCOM

In the year 2006, Pentagon reported an all time high 360 million attempts, including hacking into the US \$300 billion Joint Strike Fighter project.¹⁸ The Pentagon spent nearly 14 months in 2008 cleaning the worm 'agent.btz' which originated from a DoD facility in the Middle East. Under these circumstances, the US formed the United States Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) on 23 June 2009 under the US Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM).¹⁹ A four star general wears a dual hat of Director, National Security Agency and Commander, USCYBERCOM. The Command is charged with putting together existing cyberspace resources, creating synergy and synchronising war-fighting effects to defend the information security environment.

Other Cyber Programmes of the USA

Various programmes are run by the NSA with near impunity due to provisions and authorisations under Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA). Some of the NSA's programmes are directly aided by national and foreign intelligence agencies as well as by large private telecommunications and internet corporations such as Verizon, Telstra, Google, Microsoft and Facebook.

The cyber security firm Kaspersky Laboratory has disclosed in Feb 2015 that a US cyber espionage group called the 'Equation Group' embedded surveillance tools on the hard drives produced by a number of well known manufacturers like Western Digital, Seagate, Hitachi and Toshiba. It was almost impossible to get rid of the malware, even after disk reformatting and re-installing the computer system.

The US DoD has declared its Cyber Strategy in Apr 2015.²⁰ This new strategy sets prioritised strategic goals and objectives for DoD's cyber activities and missions to achieve over the next five years. It focusses on building capabilities for effective cybersecurity and cyber operations to defend DoD networks, systems, and information; defend the nation against cyberattacks of significant consequence; and support operational and contingency plans. The strategic goals listed are as follows:-

- (a) Build and maintain ready forces and capabilities to conduct cyberspace operations.
- (b) Defend the DoD information network, secure DoD data, and mitigate risks to DoD missions.
- (c) Be prepared to defend the US homeland and US vital interests from disruptive or destructive cyberattacks of significant consequence.
- (d) Build and maintain viable cyber options and plan to use those options to control conflict escalation and to shape the conflict environment at all stages.

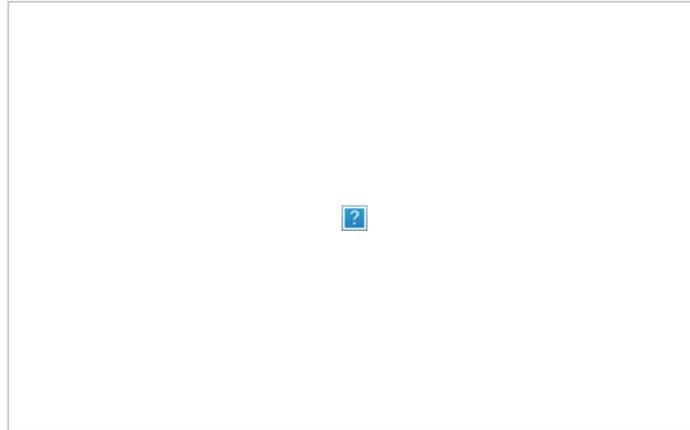
(e) Build and maintain robust international alliances and partnerships to deter shared threats and increase international security and stability.

China

The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is actively developing a capability for computer network operations (CNO) and is creating the strategic guidance, tools and trained personnel necessary to employ it in support of traditional war fighting disciplines. The Chinese have adopted a formal IW strategy called ‘Integrated Network Electronic Warfare’ (INEW) that consolidates the offensive mission for both computer network attack (CNA) and Electronic Warfare.

Organisations and Capabilities of PLA

Chinese efforts to dominate the information space are driven primarily by three goals - exercise control over their populace, dominate adversaries by dominating the information space and finally overcome the technological gap with the West through strategic intelligence acquisition in the cyber domain. The assessed Cyber structure of China is illustrated in the succeeding paragraphs.²¹



Cyber Organisation of PLA

Third Department. It is tasked with the foreign signals collection, exploitation and analysis as also communications security for the PLA’s voice and data networks. The GSD Third department directly oversees following entities : -

- (a) **Operational Bureaus.** There are twelve operational bureaus and every operational bureau has a specific mission such as radio or satellite communications interception, cryptology, translation, information assurance, intelligence analysis, cyber operations which include exploitation, defence and attack. The second, seventh and eighth bureaus are likely to be involved in Cyber operations.
- (b) **Technical Reconnaissance Bureaus.** The PLA maintains at least six technical reconnaissance bureaus (TRB) that are responsible for SIGINT collection against tactical and strategic targets and have apparent CNO duties focussed on defence or exploitation of foreign networks.
- (c) **Research Institutes.** Science and Technology Intelligence Bureau and, Science and Technology Equipment Bureau oversee three Research Institutes namely 56th Research Institute, 57th Research Institute and 58th Research Institute which focus on codes and passwords, development of communication intercepts and signal processing systems, cryptology and information security technology.

PLA Information Security Base. On 19 July 2010, the PLA is said to have established the “Information Security Base” headquartered under the PLA General Staff Department to serve as the PLA’s Cyber Command. The base is likely to consolidate key tasks of China’s computer network operations and information warfare.

PLA Information Warfare Militia Units. From about 2002 onwards, the PLA has been creating IW militia units comprising personnel from the commercial IT sector and academia, and represents an operational nexus between PLA CNO operations and Chinese civilian information security professionals.

Hacker-State Collaboration. The Chinese government demonstrates willingness to leverage the power of hacker communities by direct collaboration between state and hackers so that the CNO is coordinated and mission oriented with the ability to deny state involvement. Xfocus is one of the many such hacker groups which has transformed into a commercial information security company. “Red Hackers” or “Hongkes” are Chinese citizens, often motivated by patriotism or financial gains, who act as modern-day privateers attacking foreign targets.

Cyber Security Measures. Chinese authorities have instituted ‘The Great Firewall’ to regulate the internet in mainland China. Also, China has shifted to indigenous operating system based on Unix called Kylin. It also employs indigenously developed search engines and social networking websites. Some of these are given below: -

	Popular websites	Chinese Equivalent	Type of Application
(a)	Twitter	SinaWeibo	Mass Messaging

(b)	Facebook	Renren, Pengyou	Social Networking
(c)	Google Talk	QQ	Instant Messaging
(d)	MySpace	Douban, Diandian	Forum/Blog
(e)	Youtube	Youku	Video Sharing
(f)	Whatsapp	Wechat	Mobile Voice and Text App
(g)	Foursquare	Jiebang	Location-based Social Networking App

Recommendations

Formulation of National Security Policy. India should formulate an all-encompassing National Security Policy (NSP) and the National Cyber Security Policy should be a subset of this policy. Thereafter, National Cyber Doctrine and Cyber Security Strategy can be formulated by respective ministries. This would introduce tier-based 'policy-doctrine-strategy' formulation and ensure 'whole-of-nation' approach in cyber security. The policy should give the road map, timelines and funding for its implementation.

Reconfigure Apex Organisation. The apex bodies should be reconfigured to create a single empowered authority to resolve the predicament of multiplicity at the top level. It is proposed that an exclusive 'Cyber Security Center (CSC)' be formed under the NSC, which would be singularly responsible for policy formulation, budget allocation and nationwide implementation

Cyber Crimes and Cyber Terrorism. MHA should be the nodal agency for handling cyber terrorism. To handle cyber terrorism and cyber crime, a slew of measures will be needed, ranging from monitoring and surveillance, investigation, prosecution etc. The National Counter Terrorism Centre being set up should have a strong cyber component.

Cyber Warfare. There is a need to create a Directorate or Special Wing in the NSCS for this. It would oversee and coordinate both defensive and offensive cyber operations. Other aspects of Cyber Warfare to be looked into are:-

(a) **Raising of Cyber Command.** While cyber warfare is an ongoing activity during peace time there is a dire need to develop this capability for a warlike situation. Cyber warfare in a manner is Network Centric Warfare and will form an essential part of preparation of the battlefield in any future conflict. This will comprise not only the three Services but personnel from the DRDO and scientific and technological community.

(b) **Reserve of Young IT Professionals for Cyber Warfare.** There is a need to create and maintain a "surge capacity" for crisis or warlike situation. Young IT professionals constitute a vast resource base and a large number would be willing to loyally serve the nation when required. This resource must be capitalised by raising of cyber warfare reservists which could be embodied, when required.

Capacity Building. Some of the measures are :-

(a) There is need to place special emphasis on building adequate technical capabilities in cryptology, testing for malware in embedded systems, operating systems, fabrication of specialised chips for defence and intelligence functions, search engines, artificial intelligence, routers, etc. In the interim, all software and hardware manufactured by foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) needs to be tested for any security loopholes.

(b) Developing mobile software platforms including operating systems, anti viruses, root kits, malware, viruses, Trojans and other cyber weapons etc.

Public Private Partnership. Close cooperation between the Government and the Private Sector is necessary because much of the infrastructure and networks are in private hands. A joint working group was established in July 2012 with representatives from various ministries of the GoI and the Private Sector but it suffers from many problems like, the lack of a comprehensive road map with timelines and funding.

International Cyber laws. Adopting a proactive approach in the United Nations, including lobbying with like-minded nations in ensuring all encompassing international cyber laws and treaties are promulgated.

Human Resource Development. There is a need to introduce new courses, curriculum and academic institutions in the field of cyber security, ethical hacking, cryptology etc. to boost human resource in the field of cyber warfare.

Synergy and Coordination. There is a need for coordination, planning, understanding and synergy of efforts amongst all civil, military, intelligence, law enforcement and educational organisations responsible for cyber security, information assurance, cyber warfare and perception management.

Research and Development. There is a need to focus on :-22

(a) Functioning and Software design of social networks to ensure 'security and privacy', and emphasis on 'malware detection'.

(b) Develop reliable technology for protection of personal data in third party domain namely; social networks, cloud providers, outsourcing during various phases of its lifecycle; transmission, processing or storage.

(c) Develop mechanisms for ensuring digital rights and protecting privacy with assured empowerment of user to manage their data and avoid anonymous usage.

Conclusion

The exponential growth of cyberspace is possibly the greatest development of the current Century. Cyberspace being the fifth common space, it is imperative that there be coordination, cooperation and uniformity among all agencies to safeguard it. There is no quick fix solution that can secure our cyber space. The solutions are sprinkled in strong policy and law enforcement, real-time information sharing, embracing technology and sensitising our cyber space users on cyber hygiene.

Endnotes

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*Text of the talk delivered at USI on 20 May 2015 with Lieutenant General Davinder Kumar, PVSM, VSM (Retd) in Chair.

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China's Military Strategy: Will the Rise of China be Peaceful?

Mr Claude Arpi@

Introduction

On May 27, 2015 Xinhua announced the publication of its Ninth White Paper on National Defence. Since 1998, every two years or so, the State Council (the Chinese Cabinet) releases a White Paper (WP) on defence; 'over the years, each of them has distinctive characteristics', noted the news agency. The theme of the latest edition, titled 'China's Military Strategy', is 'active defence'. It should be mentioned that the new WP is the shortest, with 9,000 **Chinese characters** only.¹

China Military Online, a website affiliated to the PLA, explained: "This is the first time that the Chinese government published a WP specialised in China's military strategy. The WP systematically expounded on the Chinese military's missions and strategic tasks in the new era, pointed out that the basic point in making preparation for military struggle (PMS) shall be focussed on winning local wars in conditions of modern technology, and highlighted maritime military struggle and maritime PMS."²

The PLA website acknowledges that the WPs never earlier mentioned that "PLA Navy (PLAN) shall be in line with the strategic requirement of offshore waters defence and open seas protection". Open sea protection has been an addition compared to the previous WPs, similarly, "the PLA Air Force (PLAAF) shall be in line with the strategic requirement of building air-space capabilities and conducting offensive and defensive operations."³

As importantly, it says "the traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned," while China should expedite the development of a cyber force. Mao's old view of 'an Army of peasants' is dead and gone. In the years to come, the Chinese Navy and the Air Force are bound to take a more preponderant place in Beijing's defence strategy.

There is certainly a lot for India to learn from these 'strategic' statements; in fact, it is not a phenomenon restricted to the Middle Kingdom, it is a planetary evolution.

The Evolution of the White Papers

Let us have a look at the earlier eight WPs.⁴ Released in July 1998, the first WP was entitled 'China's National Defence'. Xinhua explained that it "created the first complete and systemic framework on national defence that was consistent with not only the international practices, but also the Chinese characteristics. For the first time, China systematically expounded on its defence policies and explicitly expressed its new outlook on security."

Two years later, the second WP pointed out a 'serious security situation' in the world; it emphasised that in the present world "factors that may cause instability and uncertainty have markedly increased and the world is far from peaceful". It further stressed that China always prioritised safeguarding its sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and safety. It also dealt at length with the Taiwan issue, stating that "creating splittism [between the Mainland and the Island] means giving up peace across the Taiwan Straits".

In December 2002, another WP on 'China's National Defence' was released. It brought out five national 'core' interests "as the fundamental basis for defence policy and systematically expounded on the military strategy and guideline in the new era." The composition of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), the Chinese People's Armed Police Force (PAPF) and the Chinese militia was for the first time revealed. The 2004 WP developed the idea of 'dual historical missions of mechanisation and informatisation'. One chapter dealt with the concept of revolution in military affairs (RMA) ...with Chinese characteristics. The public was informed about the decision of Beijing (or the Central Military Commission) to promote 'informatisation' and to 'reduce the military staffs by 200,000'. That was an important reorientation.

Two years later, the 2006 WP dealt with the 'critical period of multi-polarisation' and spoke of the concept of national security strategy. A special chapter dealt with the Chinese PAPF and provided information about border defence and coastal defence. It was a time when Zhou Yongkang, the 'security czar' was all-powerful and the PAPF was given a larger budget than the PLA. The 2008 WP on China's National Defence provided a strategic blueprint for national defence development and talked about the basic mission of China's strategic missile troops and the specific tasks of its nuclear missile forces.

The 2010 WP introduced the military security mechanism of mutual trust across the Taiwan Straits and comprehensively expounded on the diversified employment of China's armed forces in peacetime. It mentioned the military modernisation drive and spoke of China's efforts to establish a joint operation system; it also pointed out the development of a military legal system and elaborated on the objectives and principles of building military 'mutual trust under new circumstances', by giving an all-round introduction to what China had done to promote military mutual trust in recent years (for example humanitarian or UN-mandated missions).

The 2013 WP had a different title; it was called 'Diversified Employment of China's Armed Forces'. According to China Military Online, the 2013 paper "illustrated the principles for diversified employment of China's armed forces and officially publicised the designations of the 18 Group Armies in the PLA Army." It provided information on the size of the PLA Army's operational troops, the PLAN, the PLAAF as well as the types of missiles equipping the Second Artillery Force (SAF). According to Beijing, the objective was to make China's armed forces more transparent.

There is definitively an effort at transparency, though there is still a gap between the 'theory' professed in the WPs and the ground scenario on China's extended frontiers (on land, in space and on seas). We shall come to this later.

The 2015 White Paper

As mentioned earlier, the latest WP is titled China's Military Strategy. Xinhua, quoting Chinese analysts, says that the WP attaches more significance to maritime interests and marine power in open seas 'amid increasing reported maritime threats'. There is a clear evolution, not to say revolution, giving prominence to the seas and the Navy, over the ground forces and the PLA. According to a press release of the Ministry of National Defence (MND), it is the first WP 'on strategic defence and operation and tactical offence'. It reiterated the principle of 'active defence', which means that 'China will not attack unless under attack itself'. The WP states that a world war is unlikely in the foreseeable future and China remains in a period of strategic opportunities for development.

However, China's maritime rights and interests are strongly highlighted: "Some of [China's] offshore neighbours take provocative actions and reinforce their military presence on China's reefs and islands that they have illegally occupied." Beijing warned "some external countries are also busy meddling in South China Sea affairs [and] a tiny few maintain constant, close-in-air and sea surveillance and reconnaissance against China."⁵ The WP admitted that China generally enjoys a favourable environment for development, but external challenges were increasing; and though only briefly mentioned, Beijing also admits the existence of several internal threats. The WP spoke of many multiple and complex security risks, "leaving China an arduous task to safeguard its national unification, territorial integrity and development interests."

In Beijing's eyes, the 'bad guy', of course, remained Washington; Beijing does not appreciate the US 'rebalancing' strategy and its 'enhanced' military presence in the region. Then, there is Japan, Mao would have probably called Tokyo, a US lackey; the WP affirmed that Japan is "sparing no effort to dodge the post-war mechanism, overhauling its military and security policies."

As a result of these threats, Beijing believes that China now "faces a long-standing task to safeguard its maritime rights and interests."⁶ Other nations certainly do not share the same perception about peace and stability in the region; this does not bother Beijing as the WP affirmed. Then, the WP listed the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia as being 'shrouded in instability and uncertainty'; but perhaps more importantly for Beijing, the 'Taiwan independence separatist forces' were termed by Beijing as the biggest threat to the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations.

That is not all, and here come the 'internal' threats: "Separatist forces for 'East Turkistan independence' [Xinjiang] and 'Tibet independence' have inflicted serious damage, particularly with escalating violent terrorist activities by 'East Turkistan independence' forces." Beijing should seriously consider this particular menace at a time when China is financing the Pakistan Economic Corridor. It is also an open admission that Beijing is more bothered by a 'terrorist' Xinjiang than a non-violent 'Tibet'.

One of the WP's conclusions was that "China's national security is more vulnerable to international and regional turmoil, terrorism, piracy, serious natural disasters and epidemics, and the security of overseas interests concerning energy and resources, strategic sea lines of communication."⁷ In the years to come, this will practically translate in an important enhancement of the capacity of the PLAN. The future belongs to those who will control the Sea, believes China.

Has the message been received in Delhi?

Some Comments on the WP

According to some Chinese analysts quoted by the nationalist Global Times, the new WP contrasted with others, including the 2013 version, which had only mentioned that 'some neighbouring countries' were making moves which 'complicated' the situation. At that time, Japan was singled out for 'making trouble' over the Diaoyu Islands in East China Sea.

The US is now the main villain as China wanted "to mark out its bottom line regarding its maritime rights and interests as the country needs enhanced capabilities to protect its increasing number of overseas interests." In the past, WPs used to focus more on the ground forces instead of the Navy; it has resulted in 'a lack of maritime technology and experience' for China, believe those who drafted the WP.

The most important information contained in the WP was the confirmation that the PLAN is 'gradually' shifting its focus from 'offshore waters defence' to a combined strategy of 'offshore waters defence and open seas protection'. Wen Bing, an associate research fellow at the Academy of Military Sciences (AMS), who participated in previous WP compilations, told The Global Times "It is also a win-win when our protective measures can safeguard regional stability. It should be noted that China always abides by the law and respects the safety concerns of countries involved. ... According to international conventions, we often protect our overseas interests through cooperation."⁸ One could call it 'regional stability' with Chinese characteristics.

Soon after the release of the WP, Real Admiral Guan Youfei, director of the Foreign Affairs Office (FAO) briefed more than 80 foreign military attachés based in Beijing. He explained that the WP expounded the missions and strategic tasks of the Chinese Armed Forces in the new historical period and interpreted the strategic guidelines of 'active defence'. He spoke of the Chinese Armed Forces' steadfast determination and strong will to safeguard national sovereignty, security and development interests, as well as regional and world peace.⁹

Four Critical Security Domains

Interestingly, the WP speaks of four 'critical security domains':-

- (a) Oceans - Shifting focus to the combined one of "offshore waters defence and open seas protection."
- (b) Outer space - Opposing an arms race in outer space while vowing to secure its space assets.
- (c) Cyberspace - Expediting the cyber force development to tackle "grave security threats" within the digital

realm.

(d) Nuclear force - Stating China will never enter into a nuclear arms race.¹⁰

It is a qualitative shift as the ground forces and the PLAAF are not even mentioned.

A Historical Background of the PLAN

The WP gives an historical background on the PLAN: “The Chinese Navy kept troops close to land from the 1950s to the end of the 1970s under the strategy of inshore defence. Since the 1980s, the navy has realised a strategic transformation to offshore defensive operations.” Today, says the WP, the Navy will continue “to perform regular combat readiness patrols and maintain a military presence in relevant sea areas” while the Chinese armed forces: “will also strengthen international security cooperation in areas considered especially important to China’s overseas interests.”

In a recently-published paper, the US Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) argued that since 2009, the PLAN “has made significant strides in operationalising as well as modernising its force. Although the PLAN’s primary focus remains in the East Asia region, where China faces multiple disputes over the sovereignty of various maritime features and associated maritime rights, in recent years, the PLAN has increased its focus on developing blue-water naval capabilities. Over the long term, Beijing aspires to sustain naval missions far from China’s shores.”¹¹

The 2015 WP definitively marks a trend in this direction. As we shall see, it translated in reclaiming reefs in the South China Sea and continuously building new infrastructures.

In a chapter on the Evolution of a (Chinese) Naval Strategy, the ONI paper explained that the launching of the Liaoning, the country’s first aircraft carrier was a turning point “although Liaoning remains several years from becoming fully operational, and even then will offer relatively limited combat capability.” The ONI affirmed: “China’s leaders have embraced the idea that maritime power is essential to achieving great power status. Since the 1980s, China’s naval strategy has evolved from a limited, coastal orientation, to one that is mission-focussed and becoming increasingly unconstrained by geography.”¹²

It mentioned China’s shifting threat perceptions and growing economic interests which “have catalysed a major shift in strategic orientation and the perceived utility of naval forces.” Today, Chinese naval strategists have expanded “the bounds of China’s maritime capabilities and defences beyond coastal waters.” Since 1987, PLAN has a strategy referred to as ‘offshore defence’, which focusses on regional goals and deterring a modern adversary from intervening in a regional conflict.

Offshore defence is usually associated with operations in the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea—China’s Near Seas.

The ‘Joint Sea-2015’ drills between China and Russia should be seen in this light. Held between May 11 and 21, 2015 in the Mediterranean Sea, it involved nine surface ships from both navies. Geng Yansheng, the spokesman for the Chinese Defence Ministry explained that the exercises “will deepen friendly and pragmatic cooperation between China and Russia, and boost response operation capabilities in the event of security threats at sea.”

Peaceful or not, it is a fact that the PLAN is spreading further and further from its bases.

Some Other Points

China promises not to join nuclear arms race. China reiterates it will never enter into a nuclear arms race with any other country. It promises to keep its nuclear capability at the minimum level required for maintaining its national security. The PLA will however “optimise its nuclear force structure, improve strategic early warning, command and control, missile penetration, rapid reaction, survivability and protection.”¹³ China will also deter others from using nuclear weapons against China, says the WP. There is nothing new on the above.

Cyber security. As we have seen, Beijing considers cyberspace as ‘grave security threats within the digital realm’; therefore, according to Xinhua, China will speed up the development of a cyber force. The WP noted: “International strategic competition in cyberspace has become increasingly fiercer and quite a few countries have developed their cyber military forces.” It further points out that China is one of the major victims of hacker attacks: “China will enhance its capabilities of cyberspace situation awareness, cyber defence, support for the country’s endeavours in cyberspace and participation in international cyber cooperation, so as to stem major cyber crises, ensure national network and information security, and maintain national security and social stability.”¹⁴

No Naval Bases. Quite surprising, at least seen from an Indian perspective, the Defence Ministry spokesperson Yang Yujun asserted that China has not built any military bases overseas, as China ‘seeks no hegemony or military expansion’.¹⁵ All the more astonishing as a few days earlier, it was reported that China was negotiating a military base in the strategic port of Djibouti. Djibouti President Ismail Omar Guelleh openly stated: “Discussions are ongoing”.

Already last year, Geng Yansheng, the Chinese Defence spokesman, defended a Chinese submarine’s docking at Colombo port and calling ‘utterly groundless’ reports that China was setting up 18 naval bases in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Myanmar and several other nations in the western and southern Indian Ocean. He was commenting on an article in a Namibian newspaper¹⁶, citing a report which had appeared on the Internet in China; Geng said: “The report also exaggerated and twisted the content of that commentary. Therefore the report is utterly groundless”.

They may not be called ‘bases’ in Putonghua, but they are ‘bases’ in English.

The Other Side of the Coin: Chinese Aggressive Posture in the South China Sea

During the recently-held Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, the US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter, in his keynote address, affirmed that the US would continue to fly, sail, and operate in the region wherever international law allows. Carter also demanded “an immediate and lasting halt to land reclamation by all claimants” in the South China Sea.

The latest move by China was to build man-made islands in the South China Sea to impose its sovereignty over the area. The American Admiral Harry Harris called this a ‘great wall of sand’ in strategically important waterways. Steve Tsang explains in *The Guardian*: “The Chinese are dredging the seabed to transform a few reefs and rocks in the Spratly group of islands and atolls – which they claim – into man-made islands with a runway that can support military flights. This has caused great concern among their neighbours. The Chinese government rejects international criticisms, asserts its sovereign right to build on the islands, and demands that American naval surveillance aircraft overflying the new islands leave the Chinese air control zone immediately. There are also reports that China has begun to put heavy weapons on one of them.”¹⁷ China immediately dismissed the US views as ‘incomplete and lacking of jurisprudential evidence’.

Rear Admiral Guan Youfei, director of Foreign Affairs Office of China’s National Defence Ministry, told the Shangri-La Dialogue: “Freedom of navigation should be for the benefits of economic development, rather than sending military aircraft and vessels everywhere”. He justified the lighthouses built by Beijing on Huayang and Chigua Reefs (also known as Cuarteron and Johnson South Reefs). These sites have recently witnessed massive reclamation work: it was just ‘to improve navigation safety in the South China Sea’. Guan added: “China has been exercising restraint on the South China Sea issue and the United States should treat the South China Sea issue in a more objective way.”¹⁸

Observers believe that Beijing will use the reef reclamation as bases in order to extend its naval reach. A few days before the ‘dialogue’, a US spy plane flew over a disputed region, taking the fever to a scale higher. As the P-8A Poseidon aircraft went over the islands, the Chinese navy sent eight warnings before the plane flew away. The US announced that it had decided to publicise the incident “to raise awareness of China’s massive land reclamation activities in the disputed waters.”

Beijing’s answer came a few days later: “it would not tolerate any party violating its overseas interests and would expand its naval power as part of a military strategy that aims to extend its offshore reach.”¹⁹

These few incidents show that though the China speaks of its peaceful rise in the WP, it is not always the case on the ground (or more correctly on the Seas). There is however no doubt that the publication of the new WP marks a change in Beijing’s strategy and in the future, the PLAN is bound to play a more preponderant place in China’s defence strategy.

The Chinese Navy

How does this manifest on the Seas? During a two-day conference held by the US Naval War College’s China Maritime Studies Institute in Newport, Rhode Island, James Fanell, the former director of the US Pacific Fleet’s intelligence and information, declared that China will soon have some 415 warships including four aircraft carriers and 100 submarines. This was reported by the Defence News.

A Taiwan publication *Want ChinaTimes* says: “A lot of the anti-ship missiles equipped by the Chinese warships or submarines have ranges far in excess of similar missiles in service with the US Navy. With such a large number of long-range surface-to-surface missiles in hand, the PLA Navy is altering politics and strategies throughout the Asian theater.”²⁰

The already-quoted report of the US ONI confirms: “During 2014 alone, more than 60 naval ships and craft were laid down, launched, or commissioned, with a similar number expected through the end of 2015. Major qualitative improvements are occurring within naval aviation and the submarine force, which are increasingly capable of striking targets hundreds of miles from the Chinese mainland. Although the PLAN faces capability gaps in some key areas, it is emerging as a well-equipped and competent force.”²¹

It is a fact that India can’t ignore.

Some Conclusions

Though the new Chinese ‘transparency’ is welcome, the situation on the ground is quite different from what it is professed in the WP, whether one looks at the situation in the South China Sea or on the LAC with India, in the high Himalayas.

Beijing believes that ‘nobody can tell China what to do’. The *South China Morning Post* noted: “Beijing has hit back at the US criticism of its land reclamation operations around the Nansha Islands in the South China Sea, saying, “No one has the right to instruct China on what to do.”²² The *China Daily* quotes a Chinese ‘expert’ who warned: “Washington is playing with fire as it has adopted an increasingly high profile over the South China Sea situation in recent months.”.

Beijing does not seem to be in a mood to relent on any front. A few days ago, it turned down the Indian proposal to clarify the Line of Actual Control (LAC), a move which seems most reasonable and logical.

At the same time, it is clear that, on the seas, India can’t match China’s fast paced development of its Navy, whether it is in terms of speed and quantity, but a smaller, disciplined and well-equipped Indian naval force could be a deterrent factor. The Indian Government probably realises that it can’t stop the rise of the Middle Kingdom, neither on land, nor on seas, but in the years to come, a professional and well-trained Indian Navy could indeed ‘balance’ the fast growing Chinese Navy and its expanding aspirations beyond its shores.

Endnotes

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One Belt One Road: A Strategic Challenge

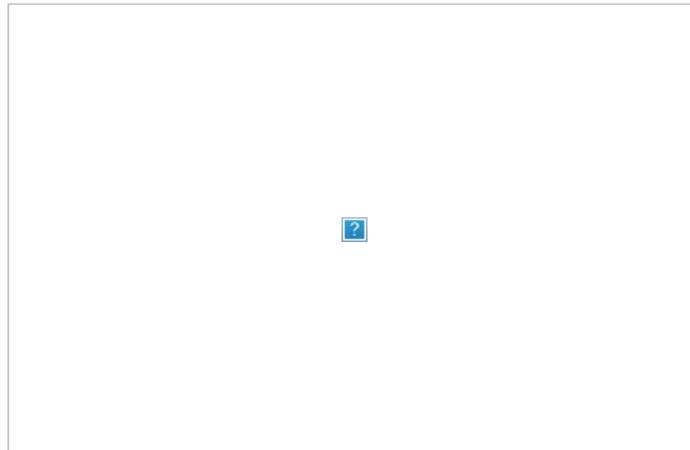
Lieutenant Colonel K Nishant Nair, SC@

Introduction

The origin of the “One Belt and One road” initiative dates back to September 2013, when Chinese President Mr Xi Jinping during his visit to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, invited the countries to join the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB)¹ and the 21st century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) respectively.² Together, they form the “One Belt and One road” (OBOR) initiative, which has been touted as an economic initiative presenting a win-win situation for all the countries participating in it. Undoubtedly, a land and maritime silk route stretching across the heartland of Eurasia and the rimland of the Indian and Pacific ocean will facilitate trade and provide impetus to economy but it will also provide China with an unprecedented foothold in these areas, making it a big stakeholder in the affairs of management of sea lanes of communication (SLOCs), provide it with a springboard to exert influence across the Asian, African and Eurasian continents. Hence, the OBOR presents both an economic opportunity and a strategic challenge of unprecedented proportions to countries like India. This article explores the geostrategic dimensions of the OBOR initiative, highlights the Indian concerns and provides policy recommendations on the same.

OBOR Initiative

Please refer to Map 1. The initiative as mentioned earlier comprises of the land based SREB and the MSR. According to the available data the SREB will begin in Xi’an in central China pass through Lanzhou (Gansu province), Urumqi (Xinjiang), and Khorgas (Xinjiang) to the West near Kazakhstan. Thereafter, run southwest from Central Asia to Northern Iran before swinging to West through Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. From Istanbul, the Silk Road crosses the Bosphorus Strait and heads northwest through Europe, including Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic and Germany. Reaching Duisburg in Germany, it swings North to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. From Rotterdam, the path runs to the South to Venice, Italy — where it meets up with the MSR.³



A recently published vision document by Chinese Government identifies specific gateways that will connect China with other Silk Road economies, like Xinjiang province for connecting Central, South and West Asian countries including Pakistan. Similarly, China’s Heilongjiang will become the gateway for Mongolia and Russia’s Far East. Eurasian high-speed transport corridor linking Beijing with Moscow will also be developed through the area. China also plans to leverage Tibet’s geographic location for extending a Silk Road node to Nepal. Two areas in southwest China : Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region and the Yunnan province will be used to establish links with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN). Yunnan, which borders Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar will connect with the Greater Mekong sub-region, and serve as a pivot to link China with South and South East Asia. Yunnan’s provincial capital, Kunming, is the end-point of the proposed Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) economic corridor, which starts in Kolkata.⁴ Thus, the SREB will comprise the main artery and a number of hubs and spoke networks connecting the hubs or gateways to other areas of economic interest. The document also mentions developing of China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central Asia-West Asia and China-Indochina Peninsula economic corridors.⁵ However, the details of the same have not been elaborated upon.

The MSR will stretch from the western Pacific to the Baltic Sea beginning in Quanzhou in Fujian province then connecting Guangzhou (Guangdong province), Beihai (Guangxi), and Haikou (Hainan) before heading south to the Malacca Strait. From Kuala Lumpur, the MSR heads to Kolkata in India then crosses the rest of the Indian Ocean to Nairobi, Kenya. From Nairobi, the MSR goes North around the Horn of Africa and moves through the Red Sea into the Mediterranean, with a stop in Athens before meeting the land-based Silk Road in Venice (Italy).⁶ The vision document published by the Chinese Government also visualises a route from China’s coast through the South China Sea to the South Pacific.⁷

Geostrategic Dimensions of OBOR

Overt Objectives

The OBOR has been overtly touted as an economic initiative with potential to bring unprecedented economic growth to the participating nations. It will also provide means to achieve the security of SLOCs and help mitigate security concerns. The integration of all existing cooperation in the neighbourhood and the region will create trade networks, boost economic activity and productivity through infrastructural linkages like port facilities and development of

continental arteries.⁸ This will provide accessibility to the China's hinterland and allow it to capitalise on vast manufacturing infrastructure that it has created. China has also created a 10 billion Yuan fund (\$ 1.6 billion) for neighbouring countries which are part of MSR and has plans to create a \$16.3 billion fund to build and expand railways, roads and pipelines in Chinese provinces that are part of SREB.⁹ It also plans to promote policies that encourage Chinese banks to lend money to other countries along the planned route. This is in addition to the funds which it has already committed (Sri Lanka - \$1.4 billion for developing port infrastructure; Central Asia - \$50 billion for infrastructure and energy deals; Afghanistan -\$327 million). With the establishment of China's new Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) more money is likely to flow into the region to shore up infrastructure capabilities. Thus, the idea is not just to create an economic trade route but also increase its political influence by creating a community with "common interests, dependencies and responsibilities."¹⁰

Covert Intentions

An analysis of OBOR reveals a deeper strategy, a strategy which has the ingredients to turn the 21st century as the Chinese century. The strategy once implemented has the potential to establish China as the predominant maritime power in Asia-Pacific, apart from a continental power with political and economic influence across Eurasia. It would provide China an uninterrupted access to the various ports which are part of the project along the SLOCs through which its energy and other resources flow and at the same time reduce the concerns of the 'Malacca dilemma'.¹¹ Thus the project has the potential to bind the participating nations in a collective security framework. The economic potential of the project will attract many countries which are not part of the framework to join it, while China will take the centre stage with its economic might and investments. The initiative has the potential to further tilt the skewed balance of power in Asia in favour of China and establish her as the predominant power in the Asia-Pacific. To that extent, it is indeed a response to the US strategic rebalance to Asia.¹²

In India the echoes of Booz Hamilton's 'String of Pearls' theory are becoming louder.¹³ As the scope of the project is yet to be defined, the gamut of security concerns it will bring about are still being debated. The fact that it was initially proposed specifically in relation to ASEAN and later extended to Sri Lanka (February 2014)¹⁴ and Maldives (Signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with China to join the MSR in December 2014)¹⁵ while the initial maps did not include Gwadar (Pakistan) and Hambantota (Sri Lanka), all point to a plan which is still unfolding. Hence, it can be argued that MSR is a manifestation of the 'String of Pearls' strategy albeit with a different name serving the same purpose. In the same vein the 'String of Pearls' may manifest in terms of access to ports and bases for People's Liberation of Army Navy (PLAN) for logistic support like refuelling etc. rather than having permanent bases as envisaged by Hamilton.

Militarily, the MSR initiative is part of its attempt to breakout of its maritime isolation, constrained by the US led alliance domination of the first and second island chains, which have effectively restricted Chinese maritime space.¹⁶ The implementation of the initiative would be in sync with the PLAN programme of expansion which might make it one-third larger than the US Navy by 2020. The development of the carrier groups which is likely to be increased to four by 2020 with their likely area of operations in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) will also facilitate PLAN to play larger role in security of MSR operations, thereby facilitating the PLAN to secure a foothold in the IOR.¹⁷

As China uses its economic strength to secure foreign policy goals, the OBOR initiative has also been compared to the 'Marshall Plan' enacted by the US after World War II. The US implemented the plan to establish itself as a bona fide super power; Beijing is also betting its twin Silk Roads can do the same.¹⁸

India's Concerns

The sheer magnitude of the project itself is overwhelming. As the project unfolds the participating countries would be intertwined with each other in more complex ways than can be imagined at present in terms of trade agreements, visa regimes, logistics agreements, customs regulations etc. to facilitate trade and business. The OBOR initiative has the potential to drive affected nations to enter into agreements with each other to derive economic benefits, thereby pushing countries more closely into the Chinese fold. Needless to say, China with its investments in the OBOR will hold the centre stage in the geo-economics. The integration of all the existing cooperation with neighbouring and regional countries will result in a group of polarised nations which are economically interdependent, share the common trade and security concerns, look up to China to be the common arbiter thereby; creating a regional and international geo-economic, geopolitical and collective security framework. This may result in reduced Indian influence in the subcontinent and effectively restrict Indian importance to its periphery.¹⁹

Though Chinese analysts have been insisting that OBOR is a geo-economical initiative and not a geopolitical one, India has all the reasons to be sceptical. The impact of infrastructure development of the magnitude as envisaged in the OBOR initiative has increased the fear of being encircled by China, physically and geo-politically.²⁰ The possible manifestation of the 'String of Pearls' has already been delved upon earlier in the article. Even if the China does not have a 'String of Pearls' strategy, the project will undoubtedly facilitate the Chinese to establish a foothold in the Indian Ocean thereby contesting India's position as the security provider to countries in the region.²¹

The project also has military implications for India; the unresolved border dispute with China and the trust deficit which exists after the 1962 War between the two countries further complicate the issue in India's neighbourhood. India is also wary of growing Sino-Pak nexus. Pakistan and China are already in the process of developing the Karakoram Highway which forms part of the Xinjiang Gateway. India also has unresolved border issues with Nepal, Myanmar, Bangladesh. thus the initiative has the potential to further complicate the resolution of outstanding border issues between India and its neighbours, if part of the project is implemented through the disputed areas. The possibility of the infrastructure created under the initiative to be used in case of a military conflict by Indian adversaries is also a matter of concern.

Recommendations

As China engages regional powers and India's neighbours proactively to prepare the groundwork for implementation of OBOR, India finds itself in a dilemma to cooperate or compete. Cooperation as mentioned earlier will entail a long term geopolitical price and India by itself may not be in a position to compete. Hence, India must engage multilaterally to safeguard its interests in the IOR and Asia-Pacific. The broad Indian strategy must aim at safeguarding Indian interests in immediate areas of interest in the short term to mid-term. India must deepen its relations through economic, diplomatic and military cooperation with important countries along the IOR to include Sri Lanka, Maldives, Iran, Mauritius, Seychelles, Madagascar and countries in the African continent and, South Asian countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

The Project 'Mausam' and India's 'Spice Route' projects are steps in the right direction.²² However, the scope of both should be restricted to immediate area of interest to ensure a focussed and sustained effort. India must strengthen the multilateral framework by drawing on its Strategic Partnership with the USA and, its deepening ties with Japan and Vietnam to ensure freedom of navigation and prevent domination of the IOR and Asia-Pacific by a single country. This will help India to safeguard its national interests while maintaining its strategic autonomy. India must also strengthen the existing mechanisms of Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to implement 'Project Mausam' and the 'Spice Route' initiative.

India should be more proactive to resolve all its outstanding border and maritime issues in an earlier timeframe with its neighbouring countries, as without their resolution it will be difficult for India to win their complete trust in the implementation of the aforementioned projects. This will go a long way in bringing down the geopolitical concerns of its neighbours who look up to India for support. In South Asia, where most countries have suffered from colonialism, countries are more likely to be influenced by geopolitical considerations than geo-economical ones in their major policy decisions. Hence, resolution of border disputes and unresolved border issues will play an important role in the success of such initiatives in the region.

Conclusion

Since 2002, China's leaders have described the initial two decades of the 21st century as a 'period of strategic opportunity', a period during which the international conditions are conducive for growth of Comprehensive National Power. China's leaders have also routinely emphasised the goal of reaching critical economic and military benchmarks by 2020. These include successfully restructuring the economy, promoting internal stability, military modernisation in order to attain the capability to fight and win potential regional conflicts, protection of SLOCs, defence of territorial claims in the South China Sea and East China Sea, and defence of western borders.²³ Undoubtedly, China's OBOR initiative will go a long way towards meeting many of these objectives. However, the geopolitical concerns of the countries are likely to be the biggest impediment towards achieving the full potential of the initiative. The unprecedented scale of the project gives rise to associated geopolitical insecurities which may prevent wholehearted participation from at least some of the countries. Thus, geo-economics may initially prompt the countries to join the OBOR initiative; however, geopolitics may prevent it from achieving its full potential. Add to it, China's recent aggressiveness in dealing with disputes in South China Sea²⁴ and coercive economic practices²⁵ the challenge presented is indeed a grand one, not just for India but for other regional powers too. Timely implementation of 'Project Mausam' and the 'Ancient Spice Route' along with multilateral cooperation with other regional powers offers a way out for India to safeguard its national interests in the IOR and Asia-Pacific.

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Introduction

The defining trend of emerging shapes and contours of the 'New World Order' is marked by gradual shift in the 'balance of power' from the Atlantic to Pacific and Indian Oceans. The phenomenon can be primarily attributed to the rapid pace of growth in the Asia-Pacific Region. This has led the US to review its strategy in rebalancing assets, in consonance with the evolving global geopolitical architecture.

'US-India Joint Vision for Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region (IOR)' issued after the summit meet between Prime Minister Modi and President Obama, during latter's visit on the eve of this year's Republic Day, is an indication of perceptible makeover in the strategic partnership between the two nations.¹ The implications are far reaching, given the enormity of the canvas it covers; connectivity from Africa to Asia, economic development, maritime security, stability and multilateral engagements. PM Modi's visits to Japan and Australia last year followed by recent tour of three island nations in the Indian Ocean, manifest significant shift in India's foreign policy, as Delhi seeks to play a central role in the region.² The above process of transition is driven by numerous strategic imperatives which merit holistic overview, to facilitate pragmatic assessment of the emerging architecture and defining India's future policy options.

Strategic Imperatives

As a sequel to the strategic review undertaken by Thomas Donilon, former National Security Adviser to the US President, it became evident that there was glaring imbalance in the American power projection posture which was biased towards the West.³ This was to pave way for the announcement of 'pivot to Asia' strategy; the Obama Doctrine.⁴ President Obama during his address to the Australian Parliament on 17 November 2011 announced 'pivot to Asia' strategy; later referred to as 'rebalancing'.⁵ The key factors behind this 'broader shift' were China's rise and vast potential of Asia-Pacific Region.

Around the time President Obama was unfolding his Asia Doctrine, former Foreign Secretary Hilary Clinton articulating her assessment in Foreign Policy wrote; "As wars in the Middle East were winding down, it was necessary for the US to invest in Asia-Pacific, where new economic and security architecture was shaping up"; professing an integrated view of the Indian and Pacific Oceans". She defined Asia-Pacific as a region stretching from Indian Ocean to the Western shores of Americas, spanning two oceans; the Pacific and Indian, that are increasingly interlinked by shipping and strategic configurations.⁶

The US Department of Defence (DoD) 'Strategic Guidance Document' titled "US Global Leadership-Priorities for 21st Century Defence" published in 2012 reiterated the necessity to rebalance towards Asia-Pacific as America's economic and security interests were inextricably linked to the developments in the arc extending from West Pacific and East Asia into Indian Ocean Region (IOR).⁷ Even the former US Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel in his speech at 'Shangri La Dialogue 2013' had enunciated that "Vision of Asia-Pacific was open and inclusive, wherein US was working to enhance the capacity of its partners and seeking to build relations with rising powers like China, India and Indonesia. The USA was looking towards India, as one of the leaders, in the broader Asia region".⁸

As per the 'rebalancing strategy', China is not to be considered an inevitable adversary but a potential partner and stabiliser in Asia-Pacific; at the same time, to be dissuaded from using force to resolve international disputes. Hilary Clinton had elaborated on the issue in her remarks at the US Naval Academy on 10 April 2012; "We are not seeking new enemies. Today, China is not the Soviet Union. We are not on the brink of a new Cold War in Asia....A thriving China is good for America and thriving America good for China, as long as both thrive in a way that contributes to the regional and global good".⁹

The renewed emphasis to link Indian Ocean with Western Pacific, in the wider geographic perspective has paved way for the acronym 'Indo-Pacific'. The term was first used by the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his speech while addressing the Indian Parliament in August 2007.¹⁰ It also finds mention in the Australian 'White Paper 2013'.¹¹ Salient facets of the US 'rebalancing Asia-Pacific strategy' are:-¹²

- (a) Redeploy US military assets released from Afghanistan so that 60 per cent of the naval potential is allocated to Asia-Pacific by 2020. This implies adopting a flexible military posture, with both deterrence and punitive capability by optimising the limited resources. Maintenance of generational lead in military technology over China remains an inherent component of the strategy.
- (b) Revamp network of traditional alliances having shared economic and security concerns; besides accord priority to strengthen strategic partnerships with countries like India as also seek new partners in Southeast Asia. While maintaining credibility of alliances, escalation of conflict and tension in the region are to be avoided. Favourable strategic architecture in the area is to be ensured through existing organisations like East Asia Summit (EAS) and Association of South East Asian nations (ASEAN). Besides proposals like 'US-Japan-India triangle' or 'US-Japan-India-Australia quadrangle' are to be actively pursued
- (c) Economic revival and scaling up stakes in the region through initiatives such as TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership), alongside pursuance of ideological agenda.

Emerging Architecture

In view of several political, economic, security and socio-cultural factors that are simultaneously at play in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean makes the region an arena of intense rivalry between the competing powers. The US remains

a dominant player in the region although it faces serious challenge in coping with rising China. Due to trappings in Iraq and Afghanistan, America has been confronted with severe resources crunch as well. Its core interests are to ensure regional stability, continued dominance, economic prosperity with unhindered access to markets, freedom of navigation and peace time engagement including forward presence to enable calibrated response in the event of a crisis situation or conflict.

People's Republic of China (PRC) has always considered Asia-Pacific its area of influence. As per PRC 'National Defence paper 2013', "Asia-Pacific region has become an increasingly significant stage for world economic development and strategic interaction between major powers".¹³ After redefining earlier 'periphery policy' incorporating the concept of 'extended neighbourhood', there has been marked increase in the Chinese activities in this region. China declaring 'Air Defence Identification Zone' has led to heightened tension in Asia-Pacific. As per the 'US Department of Defence China Report- 2012', PRC is developing 'Anti-Access' and 'Area Denial' (A2/AD) capabilities.¹⁴ Beijing's strategic objectives in the Asia-Pacific region are to seek sovereignty over South China Sea while working towards diminution of US influence. Its rapid military modernisation with yearly double digit increase in the defence budget (allocations for 2015 stands at \$ 140 bn although unofficial figures could be two times) particularly accretion in the naval potential, is in line with its growing stature as a global power.¹⁵

Today, Russia is more concerned with its immediate periphery and does not have the capacity to engage in Asia-Pacific power play. However, China and Russia seeking closer partnership to advance their mutual interest in Asia-Pacific, remains a viable option.

For Japan, China's assertiveness and North Korea's nuclear programme pose serious security concerns. Prime Minister Abe is determined to restore Japan's primacy. He is reported to have proposed a strategy whereby Australia, India, Japan and the USA form a 'diamond' to safeguard the maritime space, stretching from the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific.¹⁶ In the altered scenario, Japan is focussing on India as a security partner. Mr Modi during his visit to Japan last year spoke of two countries being natural allies. Clearly, India-Japan relations are important in the context of Peace and stability of the Indo-Pacific region. The Japanese 'New Defence Policy Guidelines' aim to re-craft its military strategy. It plans to spend as much as US \$284 bn, during the period 2011 - 2015, to modernise its Self Defence Forces. Tokyo has removed 1 per cent GDP cap on defence spending. Its defence budget for 2015 is pegged at US \$42 bn, a rise of 2.8 per cent.¹⁷

South Korea remains deeply concerned as it faces volatile security environment with respect to North Korea and China's continued support to Pyongyang. Seoul is also sceptical about the limitation of the US support in the wake of growing Chinese military power. It has launched a 15 years military modernisation programme, allocating US \$550 bn; almost one third set aside for arms purchases.¹⁸

Although historically aligned with dominating Anglo-Saxon power, initially Great Britain and later the USA; presently, Australia sees opportunities for itself in the so called "The Asian Century". While deepening relations with China, it is also building its own defence capabilities and supporting the US rebalancing to Asia-Pacific. It regards Indian and Pacific Oceans as 'one strategic arc'. While seeking trilateral partnership with the US, Japan and South Korea, it takes cognisance of Delhi's growing strategic footprint and perceives India's special role in the context of 'Indo-Pacific'.¹⁹ To prepare for the new security challenges, Canberra has proposed substantial boost in the defence spending, amounting to \$72 bn over the coming two decades.²⁰

The ASEAN has emerged as a formidable economic force with a combined GDP of over US \$2 trillion. Taking pragmatic view of the geopolitical realities, ASEAN have sought to put their act together to resolve disputes through consensus and dialogue, while maintaining organisational centrality. These nations have enhanced cooperation with the USA to check Beijing's growing influence. The mistrust between China and ASEAN is increasing because of South China Sea dispute, with Vietnam and the Philippines directly involved in it. As per data released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), there is strong evidence of ensuing arms race in the region. Between 2005-09, Singapore's arms imports jumped by 146 per cent, Indonesia's 84 per cent and Malaysia's by an astounding 722 per cent.²¹ Whereas Vietnam does not have the economic potential to match China's arms acquisitions, it has opened its prized military asset; the deep water port in Ran Cam Bay, in the hope of drawing foreign navies, thus enhancing the security of shipping lanes.

The Indian Ocean has emerged as a region of immense strategic importance in the maritime domain. Home to nearly 2.6 bn people, it is being seen as an integrated entity stretching from the West coast of Australia to the Indian subcontinent. The access to the Indian Ocean is primarily through Gulf of Aden, Strait of Hormuz and Strait of Malacca. It is a global highway with 66 per cent oil and 100,000 ships transiting its waters every year.²² Half of global container traffic and 70 per cent of oil trade passes through Indian Ocean.²³ Any interruption in the free flow of oil arteries or trade would have catastrophic effect on the region. Therefore, security and stability of the IOR is of critical importance.

Given its geographic location, natural resources and markets, South Asia naturally integrates into Indo-Pacific region. India, historically a maritime power is seen as an important player in the region, given its geostrategic location. India's 'Look East Policy' alongside strategic engagement with the Gulf region and other smaller island states in the South-Central Indian Ocean is in keeping with its emergence as one of the power centres in the new world order.

China perceives India to be a rival, trying to exercise control over the Indian Ocean, seeking hegemony in the region, besides posturing to contain it. Beijing has taken pains to invest in South Asia and IOR, considering the area to be its extended periphery; as also to reduce dependence on the Malacca Strait, given that 40 per cent of its oil and gas imports pass through Indian Ocean. Beijing's aims to project itself as a resident power in the Indian Ocean, as part of its grand design to play greater security role in the Indo-Pacific. It has adopted deliberate strategy to secure the 'sea lanes of communications'. China has taken numerous initiatives to squeeze India's strategic space. India is definitely concerned about China's posturing and extended reach into its neighbourhood.

India's Strategic Options

The US policy of rebalancing Asia opens wide array of strategic options for India. As a long term strategy, India must seek a role in shaping of political, economic, social and security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region. South China Sea is vital for India not only as shipping gateway to East Asia but also a strategic maritime link between the Indian and Pacific Oceans. It profoundly impacts India's strategic vision, given its expanding economic and security interests.

India enjoys high credibility in the ASEAN region and East Asia. It needs to further deepen the current level of strategic partnership. India's North East Region and Andaman & Nicobar Islands should be brought within the framework of India-ASEAN relations. Indo-Japanese strategic partnership is steadily developing in the backdrop of emerging geo-economics and security environment in the Asia-Pacific. Security cooperation has emerged as an important component of the bilateral relations; institutional framework for which was set-up in 2006.²⁴ The navies of the two countries held first ever joint exercise in June 2012, off the coast of Japan. Negotiations are in progress for the purchase of Japanese US-2 amphibious aircraft.

As India began to shed its continental mindset in the 1990's with the opening of economy, its strategic engagement got revived with increasing dependency on the Gulf region for its energy requirements. Over the years, IOR has emerged as India's geopolitical nerve centre with the island states (Maldives, Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Seychelles) figuring prominently in Delhi's Indian Ocean policy. It was in February 2013, at a seminar in Rhode Island under the aegis of 'Brown-India Initiative', India's then Ambassador to the US had stated; "India's vision apparently is to create a web of interlinkages for the shared prosperity and security in the India Ocean and Asia-Pacific and develop it into a zone of cooperation".²⁵

Prime Minister Modi has rightly focussed on cementing strategic ties with countries in South/South East Asia and Indian Ocean. His recent visit to Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka has scaled up the level of engagement, by building on the process of interdependencies with the island states. India needs to play a pro-active role to counter China's grand design of dominating the IOR through initiatives like the 'maritime silk road project' and 'string of pearls' strategy.²⁶

To emerge as a key player in the Indo-Pacific, India ought to leverage its strategic potential to cope with the emerging challenges. Mr Modi has proposed 'collective cooperative' mechanism for the region which entails formulation of integrated policy involving politico-economic initiatives alongside dynamic defence diplomacy. Potential of private sector, military and diaspora ought to be fully optimised.

Given the ongoing phenomenon of the geopolitical shift, Asia-Pacific and IOR are going to be the scene of intense competition and rivalry, as part of fierce balance of power game, driven by national interests. The US 'rebalancing strategy' offers India excellent opportunity to leverage its geostrategic position as a key player in the Indo-Pacific. How it succeeds will largely depend on its calibrated approach in simultaneously engaging with its immediate neighbours to ensure peaceful periphery and extended neighbourhood to pursue its larger strategic interests.

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The Burmese Political Mosaic

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Introduction

Burma borders our country on the northeast. The population of Burma has a natural similarity with India's northeast. This is because the population of Burma and northeast India are anthropologically similar. India's northeast was inhabited by people who migrated from China via Burma and gradually settled in India's northeast. All these people had different animist religions. Subsequent to their migration and settlement in India's northeast, there was a migration of asiatic people from northern India who had evolved Hinduism as their religion. Thus, some of these migrated people who had settled in India's northeast were converted to Hinduism. These are today the Assamese caste Hindus.

In Burma all the migrated population that had settled there followed different animistic religions. Subsequently, in India, during his reign, Ashoka the Great adopted Buddhism and was so taken up with this religion that he sent emissaries far and wide, who travelled East, West, South and North and spread the gospel of Buddhism. The majority of people who had inhabited our neighbourhood to the east-Burma were thus converted to Buddhism. The Burmese kings patronised Buddhism. Ashoka's emissaries carried Buddhism further East to China, Japan and southeast Asia. Meanwhile, while Buddhism took root in the plains of Burma, it did not find place in the eastern hilly border regions of Burma. The eastern borders of Burma are hilly, thickly forested and people following animist religions had settled on this axis. North-South was inhabited by people that were the Wa, Kachin, Kokang, Pa O, Karen, the Shan and some smaller tribes. Each of these tribes had their respective animist religions. Today, the Karens are partly Buddhist, as also the Shan. The other tribes are either still animist or some, like the Kachins were converted to Christianity by the British when they conquered Burma. The majority of Burmese who live in the central plains of Burma are all Buddhist as also the Mons who live in the South and the Rakhines in the West. In the West are also some migrants from Bangladesh, who have spilled into Burma. They are Muslims, and are called Rohingyas. Besides, there are several Naga tribes all animist and Chins who have all become Christians.

Meanwhile, China on the eastern borders had become Communist. This was obviously not welcome to the Buddhist leadership in Burma. Communism had its impact in Burma with the formation of the Burmese Communist party. They made their headquarters in the North and East of the country bordering China. This was not to the liking of the Burmese army which was solidly Buddhist.

The Legacy of British Rule

The British ruled Burma in two very different ways. In the lowlands of Burma proper, the Irrawaddy valley and the adjacent coastal areas, the British had imposed direct rule, abolishing the monarchy and replacing the aristocracy with British civil servants and local clerks. From the 1920's in Burma proper the British also began to introduce representative government. Political parties flourished and regular elections were held with a very limited franchise. Under a constitution approved in 1935, the people of 'Burma proper' were allowed to form a government. Thus, by the time of Independence, lowland Burma had considerable experience of parliamentary politics.¹

The highlands were treated very differently. Here the British kept the hereditary Chiefs in power. British Political officers controlled the hereditary Chiefs. In the Buddhist Shan areas, the British appointed thirty four Sawbwas. The British supported their authority as also of the different tribal Chiefs. In these "tribal" areas, there was very little economic development. Almost no roads were built and only a single railway line was laid from Mandalay to Lashio. Lowland Burma became a cauldron of left wing and nationalistic politics; the hills were almost entirely peaceful. The British tended to trust these highland people and recruited them into the Indian army and police, while excluding the ethnic Burmese. The plains and the hill people of Burma thus went through very different experiences of colonial rule. At Independence, there was intense suspicion followed by civil war.²

Meanwhile, across the border in China there was a revolution and a Communist government took over. Communism attracted the Burmese and a strong Communist party of Burma was formed. This leaning to left extremism was not appreciated by the majority of Burmese. The Burmese army was mainly recruited from the Burmese from the central plains, all Buddhist who did not appreciate the godless Communists. Hence, the Burmese Communist party was forced to the northern and eastern borders of Burma and sustained by the parent Communist Chinese. With strong support from the parent Chinese Communist party, the Burmese Communist party survived for several years, but remained confined to the northern and eastern parts of the Country. Then Deng Xiaoping took over and reversed the Communist way and encouraged private enterprise. Soon dozens of factories had sprung up on the Chinese-Burmese border in Yunnan producing goods specifically for the Burmese market.³

Independence and the Civil War

When the time came for granting Independence to Burma, the British were worried about the fate of the Shan and other ethnic minorities in an independent Burma and suggested detaching the upland areas and keeping them as a British Crown colony.⁴ However, this plan was not followed-up.

The country was soon wrecked by civil war. Armed unrest started as soon as the British left and was at first not an inter-ethnic conflict but a fight between the Burmese Army dominated by ex-student politicians and the Burmese Communist party. Before long however, the civil war involved a dizzying array of factions, insurgencies and militias, from ethnic Karen soldiers, once loyal to the British, to Islamic Mujahedeen fighters demanding a separate state along the East Pakistan border. By the end of 1949, a fresh complication ensued. Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist army was in full retreat from Mao's Communist army. A section cut-off from the main army crossed over into Burma through Yunnan. They were backed both by the United States and the Thai government. Soon a vast tract of land on the eastern border was in Chinese Nationalist hands, complete with its own airstrips. Later, some of them moved to Taiwan, others married locally and became the centre of an ever expanding network of opium and heroin cartels. Over the late 1960s

and 1970s war lords like Khun Sa, half Chinese and half Shan and Lo Hsing, Han from the Chinese border enclave of Kokang emerged as internationally wanted drug kingpins, battling the Burmese Army as well as each other for control of what became known as the Golden Triangle.⁵

Soon, this developed into regular war against the Communist insurgent forces by the Burmese Army and they gained the upper hand. In March 1989, the Burmese Communist party itself collapsed. The end had begun with the mutiny of units from the town of Kokang, led by their ethnic Chinese commander Peng Jiasheng, who was heavily involved in the narcotics trade and more mercenary than the Marxists. Within days the mutiny spread and soon Peng and his co-conspirators had captured the Communist HQs and radio station.⁶

The erstwhile Communist forces then splintered into four smaller militias. The Burmese army's Intelligence Chief General Chin Nyunt reacted with speed and ceasefire deals were signed between the Burmese Army and the Communist militias. By the mid 1990's, ceasefires had been extended to almost all the insurgent ethnic groups around the Country. In offering the ceasefires, the Burmese Army also promised development in the hills. The World Bank and the United Nations could not intervene. It was into this vacuum that the Chinese traders, businessmen and traders stepped-in.

Not long after this the Kachin Independent Army (KIA) with its several thousand fighters agreed to a ceasefire with the Government. The KIA was allowed to keep their arms because the territory they controlled had been in a kind of limbo. The Burmese Army and the KIA are now located interspersed. This has of course not precluded business, especially cross border business with China; and over the years, jade mines, toll roads and relentless logging have kept powerful men of every faction comfortable. A new political economy has emerged - tied to China's increasing presence with both sides, Burmese and Kachins tied to China's increasing presence.⁷

The Growing Chinese Influence

By the 1970s, Beijing was directly involved in the war supporting the Burmese Communist party. Burma's is the longest lasting military dictatorship anywhere in the world. It is also a uniquely isolationist state that has gone through several different incarnations since the military coup of 1962 overthrew the last elected government. In its early years, the generals at the top, led by General Ne Win were organised as the Revolutionary Council overseeing their singularly disastrous Burmese way to Socialism, cutting-off nearly all contact with the outside world, expelling the Indian middle class and nationalising most businesses. At a time when parts of Asia were starting to zoom ahead, Burma fell far behind.

To the southeast of Lashio, a town on the northeastern border with China is the territory of the United Wa State Army (UWSA), boasting more than 10,000 armed men, backed by armour, artillery and even surface to air missiles. The Wa were once very remote people, like the Kokang. From being head hunters, today the Wa are big players in the Burma-China borderlands. Their Army is one of the largest private armies in the world. In the 1990's, they were the world's largest producers and traffickers in heroin. They have recently turned to meta-amphetamines. Under their ceasefire agreement with the Burmese Army, they are allowed to keep their weapons and their autonomy. To enter the Wa state proper, there are checkpoints and Burmese soldiers are not allowed. But there is no border with China. Coming from Lashio, the dirt roads become Chinese highways, and much of the Wa zone is on the Chinese electricity grid and so is even its internet and mobile phone grid. It is a stunning reversal of Burma's geography. What were muddy mountain hamlets are now more modern than Rangoon.⁸

Even stranger an entity than the territory of the UWSA, is the town of Mongla, further South, along the Mekong and adjacent to Laos. A one-time communist rebel base, Mongla transformed itself over the 1990's into a sleazy holiday destination for Chinese tourists, complete with casinos, transvestite cabarets, nightclubs and brothels featuring women from across Asia and even Russia! Officially the area around Mongla is in the Shan state of Burma.⁹

Over the past twenty years China has emerged as the Burmese government's top foreign friend and supporter. China has provided millions of dollars' worth of military hardware, including planes and tanks as well as crucial diplomatic protection at the United Nations. Trade has risen to an all-time high with official figures now placing bilateral trade at over two billion dollars a year; the real figure, including contraband is doubtless much more. Together with a growing array of investments, the Burmese economy today is tied more closely to China's than at any time in history.

China for its part was denouncing Burma's generals as fascists and actively plotting the regime's overthrow through all-out backing for the Communist insurgency. Only with the consolidation of power of Deng Xiao Ping and like-minded reformers did the focus turn to economic development at home. Export of Maoism ended and the search for markets began. Human rights were never on the agenda. In Africa, Chinese firms have been buying mines, building roads and in general spending billions of dollars without so much as a peep into good governance, gender equality or other issues linked to western aid. Burma though is not just another foreign country, it occupies a critical space on China's southwestern flank, right next to its densest concentration of ethnic minorities.

By early 2010, construction had also begun on the oil and gas pipelines that would connect China's southwest across Burma to the Bay of Bengal. These pipelines would run from Mandalay, past Ruili, first to Yunnan and then onwards to the Guanxi autonomous region. Like the huge hydroelectric projects on the Irrawaddy and the Salween, that were also moving forward, the pipelines from Burma would ensure the energy needed for ever faster industrialisation of China. This has also solved for China what is known as the Malacca dilemma. All ships moving with oil or minerals from Africa or Europe have to slip through the Malacca straits to reach China. With the pipelines from Sittwe to Yunnan over the hills of northeastern Burma all ships would be decanting oil at the new terminal near Sittwe on the western coast of Burma!¹⁰

Elections and the Democratic Reforms

After several years of army rule the Country's elections were held in 2011. The pro-army Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) won the election, capturing eighty per cent of the seats. A number of ethnic regional parties did well in their own regions. The leadership of the USDP was nearly all recently retired army officers. The retired General Thein Sein was sworn in as the President in March 2011. A week later Ms Aung San Suu Kyi was released after six years of house arrest. The new government was little more than a façade for the continued rule of the Army. However, the new President, General Thein Sein was different from the earlier Army generals who were ruling Burma, to the extent that a more human face was presented in governance. The Army still held the levers of power. No relaxation was made to Ms Aung San Suu Kyi. The West however continued to tie their policy to Ms Aung San Suu Kyi and democracy for Burma.¹¹

The next parliamentary elections are scheduled for November 2015. The military dominated government of President General Thein Sein promises that they would be free, fair and inclusive. The promise is looking increasingly tenuous, amidst signs that Burma is retreating on democratic reforms. A recent crackdown on protesters recalls the ruthless repression of student protesters by Burma's military junta in 1988. During a protest rally on 09-10 Mar 2015, more than 120 people, mainly students and Buddhist monks were arrested and many injured. The groups were protesting for more democratic freedom.

In another threatening sign, General Thein Sein effectively revoked the persecuted Rohingyas right to vote with an executive order on 11 February 2015 that said temporary residence white cards that many Rohingyas hold in lieu of citizenship would expire on 31 March 2015. Also, the Constitutional provision that prevents Ms Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the opposition to contest the elections as her children have foreign citizenship still stands.¹²

Conclusion

The writ of the Burmese Government does not run in the eastern peripheral units of Burma, starting with the Kachin, Wa, Kokang, Palaung, Padaung, Karen and Shan states. In all these states, the Burmese Army units and the local militia are both billeted. The eastern periphery states have their own armies with weapons, all purchased from China with proceeds from the export of timber, mainly teak, and a flourishing drug trade. Where earlier the drug export used to be opium and heroin, now it is metha-amphetamine. There is likely to be only desultory polling in these peripheral states.

In the mainland of Burma, a large section of Rohingyas, Bangladeshis, who have migrated from East Pakistan and later Bangladesh, but have been living in Burma since 1971 and even earlier have been disfranchised by the Central Government of Burma. The fact that they had migrated long before Bangladesh was born in 1971 has not been considered by the Burmese Government. By all standards they are citizens of Burma, but the present Government does not concede this. If the elections are held, these Rohingyas will not be allowed to vote. Regrettably, in communal incidents that have taken place between ethnic Burmese Muslims living in the central plains of Burma and also in the eastern borders in Lashio, the ethnic Burmese Muslims were given no shelter, when attacked by the local Buddhist Burmese. In the West the Rakhines who live on the border with Bangladesh are Buddhists like the mainland Burmese, but they too have their own private army with weapons.

The Burmese Government should consider amalgamating all peripheral groups each with a private army and each engaged in illegal trade with China and also having a flourishing trade in narcotics into mainland Burma before going in for the next elections. If they conduct elections leaving the semi-independent groups like the Wa, the Kachin, the Kokang, Palaung, Padaung, Karen and Shan it will be a continuation of the present Burma where the Burmese Army's writ runs only in that part of Burma where the Buddhist Burmese dominate the land.

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Shri Anshuman Rahul@

Introduction

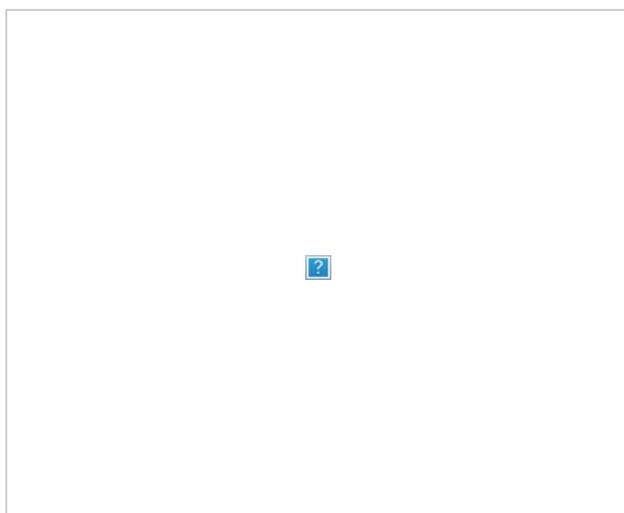
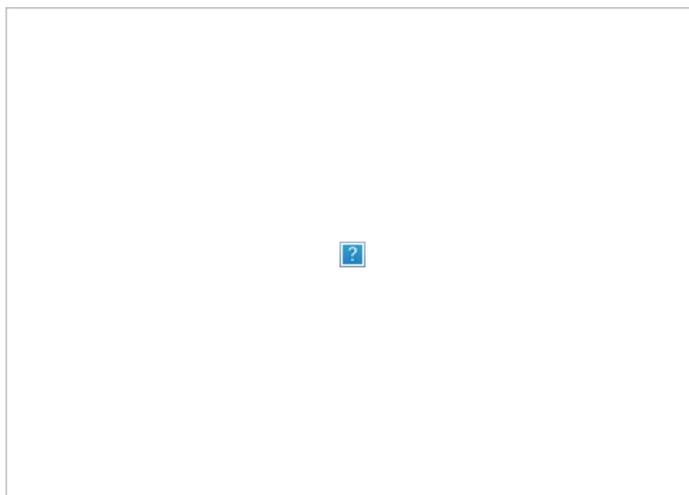
In the era of Cold War, the 'National Security Act of 1947' of the United States not only paved the way for the creation of separate US Air Force from the US Army Air Corps but also the formation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) along with the creation of Unified Combatant Commands (UCC). The UCC is defined as a system having: forces from at least two military services; a continuing, broad mission and; either a functional or geographic responsibility.¹ Please refer to Map 1 which reflects the 'Area of Responsibility' (AOR) of the six geographic Combatant Commands listed below :- 2

- (a) USNORTHCOM : US Northern Command
- (b) USSOUTHCOM : US Southern Command
- (c) USEUCOM : US European Command
- (d) USCENTCOM : US Central Command
- (e) USPACOM : US Pacific Command and
- (f) USAFRICOM : US Africa Command

The basic motive behind the formation of these commands has been to defend the interests of the United States (US) on the foreign soil and carry-out military operations, if required. This essay seeks to examine the background of the formation of the US Africa Command and its relevance in the present geopolitical context.

AFRICOM

On 06 Feb 2007, the US President, George W Bush announced the establishment of the United States Africa Command i.e. AFRICOM, a separate military command for the whole of African continent with an AOR for 53 countries barring Egypt. This command formally came into existence on 01 Oct 2008 and headquartered at Kelley Barracks of Stuttgart, Germany. Before the formation of AFRICOM, US-African military relations were conducted by three separate military commands of USEUCOM, USCENTCOM and USPACOM as shown in the Map 2 below.



Purpose and Intent

The establishment of AFRICOM was considered to be necessary “in order to streamline the bureaucratic structures that had expanded to three different commands”³ with the motto of ‘Partnerships, Security, Stability, and Reliability’. Moreover, the establishment of AFRICOM was essential to reflect the increased interest and commitment on the part of the US to Africa. This has been primarily so because Africa is not only geographically large, economically resourceful but also a volatile region. Through AFRICOM, the US aims to build the military capacity of African nations in the belief that “failed states are best suited for ideal training, staging and breeding grounds for international terrorists.”⁴

The US President further stressed that “Africa Command will enhance our efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa.”⁵ In this context, AFRICOM as a tool of the US foreign policy ensured the implementation of a host of military, security cooperation, and security assistance programmes being funded either by the Department of State or the Department of Defence.

Packaging and Marketing

The branding and packaging of AFRICOM was done in a best possible manner to sell it to the African nations. To start with, the US government nominated General William E ‘Kip’ Ward, a four star General from the United States Army as the first Commander of AFRICOM. Perhaps, he was most suited to this job as he was an African-American who was currently serving as the deputy commander of EUCOM and in the past he was associated with ‘Operation Restore Hope’ of Somalia in 1992-1994.

The most highlighted fact of this initiative was that “the commander of AFRICOM cannot conduct exercises or carry-out any other military activity in any of the African countries without the consent of the respective US ambassadors.”⁶ Therefore, in contrast to the other US combatant commands, AFRICOM was not supposed to act as the lead agency but oversee both traditional military activities and programmes being funded through the State Department budget by providing assistance, advice, and training for the African security forces on a bilateral and regional level.

Theresa Whelan, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for African Affairs, testified before the Congress in 2007 that the primary focus of AFRICOM has been on “preventing problems before they become crises and preventing crises before they become catastrophes or conflicts” and “AFRICOM is about helping Africans build greater capacity to assure their own security.”⁷ She also claimed that the funding by the US government would help “train health care professionals and provide desperately needed hospital equipment, train teachers and provide educational materials, prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS through various awareness programmes, train prosecutors in support of the legal reforms and the promotion of independent judiciaries, train police forces consistent with important human rights norms, and to train customs and border control officers to increase capacities to thwart illicit trafficking of weapons, narcotics, and even children across national borders.”⁸

Africa’s Apprehension and Threat Perception

The United States government had a very high level of optimism from the African governments and their respective leaders in the context of AFRICOM. They were of the opinion that AFRICOM would be gladly accepted, widely supported and the African countries would be more than willing to collaborate with it. However, AFRICOM was marred in controversy during its early years as the views of African leaders ranged from lukewarm acceptance to outright hostility. Such concerns are elaborated in the succeeding paras.

Historical Legacy

Africa-US relations date back to the 17th century when ‘African slaves’ were ‘transported’ to the US. In 1884-85, even though the US did not participate directly in the infamous episode of ‘Scramble for Africa’ but did endorse the move of European states to occupy Africa in order to fulfil their commercial requirements.

Caught in the quagmire of ‘Cold War’ in the 20th century, the US assumed African nationalist leaders to be ‘radicals’ and ‘natural allies’ of the ‘Communists’. This led to military interventions and covert operations whereby duly elected and legitimate African leaders were assassinated and replaced with corrupt regimes. In 1960, on the directions of the US President, Dwight D Eisenhower, CIA conspired to kill Congo’s democratically elected Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba.⁹ Similarly, in 1965, the Army Chief of Staff, Joseph Mobutu overthrew the first President, Joseph Kasavubu in a CIA backed coup and grabbed power.

In a similar fashion, there were unsuccessful attempts to assassinate the first President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah but was ultimately deposed in a US backed coup on 24 Feb 1966. The CIA also supported the Angolan South-African rebels who made a constant effort to overthrow the legitimate government of Angola during 1976-1992. Moreover, it is now in the public domain how the US government always supported the ‘apartheid system’ being practised by the minority government of South Africa. Even in the Great Lakes region, Uganda and Rwanda had been actively supported by the US military and intelligence agencies in their invasion of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).¹⁰

The recent history also played a crucial role in building-up the negative perception around AFRICOM. The formation of AFRICOM in tandem with the unilateral decision of the US to attack Afghanistan and Iraq raised suspicions in the minds of Africans. The US air strikes on Somalia in January 2007 and their overwhelming support for Ethiopia’s military intervention in Somalia also added to their concerns. Thus, the African leaders were of the opinion that the formation of AFRICOM was a ‘neo-colonial’ effort by the US to dominate the region militarily.¹¹

Lack of Consensus

With the formal announcement for the establishment of AFRICOM, the sovereign African countries were quite perplexed with the unilateral decision taken by the US. They strongly resented it, in the belief that “the US had not

taken into consideration the requirement and concerns of the African people it intended to work with".¹² The Department of Defence (DoD) admitted this fact that "they had made no attempt to consult with anyone at the UN while they were developing AFRICOM and hadn't really consulted with anyone in Africa either".¹³

The hasty decision of formation and establishment of AFRICOM without any consultation with the African countries gave impression that "the United States was least interested to listen to the African voices and presented a readymade solution which was applicable to all the African problems".¹⁴ This unilateral decision without any consultation or prior inputs from the African states reflected the "arrogance and condescension of the United States".¹⁵ The African leaders not only perceived this decision as an aggressive policy but also considered AFRICOM to be a potential threat to Africa.

Militarisation of US-Africa Policy

While referring to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and thereafter the open declaration of 'Global War on Terrorism' on Afghanistan and Iraq by the US, many African leaders were of the opinion that AFRICOM's formation reflected a growing militarisation of the US relations with their continent and a new focus on anti-terrorism at the expense of traditional development aid.¹⁶ Even though there is a strong representation of non-military US public sector agencies in AFRICOM focussing on the components of soft power paving the way for diplomacy and aid but not to forget, AFRICOM is still a military organisation.

The critics have voiced their concern as AFRICOM has also been formed to strengthen the military of friendly regimes who can act as 'surrogates' on behalf of the US in its 'Global War on Terrorism' (GWOT) particularly in countries with abundant oil and natural gas supplies - and for efforts to increase its options for more direct military involvement in the future on the African soil.¹⁷ This in turn would prevent the direct military involvement of the US in Africa. This argument stands to be true as it is in public domain that the "US-Africa relations since the Cold War have been basically defined by the national security interests of the United States".¹⁸

Many opponents while citing the historical legacy of the US to get involved in proxy wars considered AFRICOM to be an "attempt to militarise Africa in order to remain an economic competitor against the European Union, India and China - under the cover of fostering peace, security, combating terrorism and fighting the narcotics trade in West Africa".¹⁹ Many critics shared the comment that "China is bringing factories and infrastructure to Africa, while the US brings the military"²⁰ and they asked, "whether the old wineskin of an American Combatant Command can really hold the new wine of peaceful cooperation and, if it does, whether the old skin could contain it".²¹

Africans often have a very negative view of their own militaries because of past misbehaviour, including coups, mistreatment of civilians, and corruption. Even though the US military personnel are professional and committed to civilian control but they do not consider the African militaries to be completely trustworthy. It has been because of their lack of professionalism and the lack of desire to work under the civilian control. This proved to be true in 2012 when Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, a military officer who received professional military education under 'International Military Education and Training' (IMET) programme at the US, led the coup in Mali and deposed the democratically elected President Amadou Toumani Toure.²² Moreover, some Africans were also of the opinion that increase in the US military on the African soil would attract the enemies of the US thereby bringing the GWOT to the backyard of the African continent.

AFRICOM Headquarters on African Soil

The original plan of the US to establish the AFRICOM's headquarters on the African soil was one of the prominent reasons why many African leaders, governments and civil society vehemently opposed it. A number of African countries like Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Djibouti and Kenya refused to host AFRICOM on their soil. Some African countries such as South Africa, considered to be a regional hegemon were of the opinion that a permanent American military presence in the region will act as a rival in their sphere of influence.²³

Coming across the stiff resistance, the Bush Administration in February 2008 announced that AFRICOM's headquarters would remain in Stuttgart, Germany, for the foreseeable future. However, the fierce opposition to AFRICOM's headquarters on the African soil reflected the lack of understanding of African politics on the part of DoD as many opponents opined that AFRICOM was a recipe for further militarisation and potentially, the continued pauperisation of Africa.²⁴

Change in African Responses

Since 2007, the US and AFRICOM has withstood all the criticisms and have been constantly engaging the African countries through diplomacy. AFRICOM in concert with the other US government agencies and international partners conducted sustained security engagement through military-to-military programmes, military-sponsored activities, and other military operations in order to promote a stable and secure African environment in support of US foreign policy.²⁵

AFRICOM working at both the bilateral and multilateral forum chalked out military engagements with African countries whereby they participated in joint military exercises under the supervision of AFRICOM trainers. The African militaries have benefitted immensely from the military exercises conducted by AFRICOM as they have been equipped with new arms and sophisticated weapons. However, a broader question still remains - whether they will adapt the professionalism from the US counterparts or they will still remain divided due to political compulsions of the domestic politics.

Though AFRICOM was feared by the African governments and citizens but, with the passage of time and the increased engagement between the African states and AFRICOM, the US has become aware of the continent's problems thereby resulting into a positive development of increased resources, training, and assistance. Simultaneously, the US

Armed Forces who had a single military base at Camp Lemonnier of Djibouti in Africa have established drone bases at Djibouti, Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, Niger, South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Seychelles.

In this regard, the decision of the US administration not to have AFRICOM headquarters on the African soil has brought the African countries closer and in the words of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defence for African Affairs, Amanda J Dory, "The US military effort on the continent is being accepted by many African leaders... when US Africa Command first stood up, there was concern among some leaders that it signified a 'militarisation of US foreign policy and a sort of creeping colonialism'. Those fears seem to have subsided".²⁶

However, it must be noted that "the rejection of AFRICOM did not stem from widespread anti-Americanism but rather from the reluctance of leaders, the media and public opinion that stemmed from fears concerning US hegemony in Africa" (Burgess, 2008).²⁷

Conclusion

AFRICOM which acts as a tool of the US foreign policy at the ground level of Africa aims to provide a stable and secure African environment which is in the long-term interest of Africa as well as the US. However, the increasing number of African participants in the military exercises conducted by AFRICOM indicate that the African countries are willing to move ahead with AFRICOM. Moreover, the fear of militarisation of Africa has been sidelined as the US economy is yet to completely recover from the financial crisis of 2008 coupled with huge explorations of shale oil within the country.

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A Relook at Operation Sadbhavana in J&K

Colonel Sandeep Kapoor@

“The constant threat of low intensity proxy war and terrorism has become a disturbing feature of national life. This constitutes the new face of war”.

Dr APJ Abdul Kalam,
Former President of India

Introduction

Winning hearts and minds’ is a concept occasionally expressed in the resolution of war, insurgency and other conflicts; in which one side seeks to prevail, not by the use of superior force but by making emotional or intellectual appeals to sway supporters of the other side. The concept was first used during the Malayan Emergency by the British to keep the Malayans’ trust and reduce a tendency to side with ethnic Chinese Communists by providing medical and food aid to the Malays and indigenous tribes. Subsequently, the concept was employed on a number of occasions e.g. in the Vietnam War in 1960 and the Iraq campaign in 2003 by the US Army.

Military Civic Action (MCA) is integral to the Army’s counter-insurgency/counter-terrorist (CI/CT) operations doctrine. It envisages the limited use of military resources for the benefit of the local population without in anyway impinging on its operational effectiveness and/or the accomplishment of its primary mission. MCA seeks to demonstrate the humane face of the soldier. Simultaneously, MCA presents an opportunity for interaction with people and moulding of public opinion, a prime requisite in a CI/CT scenario. Operation Sadbhavana was introduced in the Northern Theatre in 1998, however, the true essence of the concept was developed as a model by 14 Corps in 2002. In June 2000, when Lieutenant General Arjun Ray took over as GOC 14 Corps, there seemed every likelihood of militancy spilling over to Ladakh from the troubled Kashmir Valley. However, owing to the GOC’s initiative to meet the aspirations of the local populace and to integrate them as part of the national mainstream, the situation in the region post the Kargil War has been ever peaceful.¹

Subsequently the concept of Operation Sadbhavana picked up pace in other parts of J&K and has been able to promote national integration with a concerted focus on resolving local problems of the populace. The key areas addressed by Sadbhavana projects have been development of remote and inaccessible areas where civil administration was barely effective; assuaging the feeling of alienation and moulding public opinion towards peace and stronger affiliation with the Nation.²

Current Situation

In the current situation elimination of terrorists, especially the leaders in hinterland, has practically rendered the terrorists organisations rudderless compelling them to regroup, survive and sustain themselves instead of operating with impunity. Although the militancy has reduced considerably (Please refer to Figure 1),³ the situation remains critical due to the threat of existing terrorist infrastructure in the neighbourhood, agitational dynamics, missing personnel/sleeper cells, rise in false human rights (HR) allegations, activism of vernacular media and the emergence of woman over ground workers (OGWs). As an offset of the changing dynamics in the State, wherein the security forces (SF) are the key players in the ongoing transitional phase of establishing public law and order and handing over the situation to the civil administration, there is a requirement to review the existing methodology of conducting Sadbhavana operations.

Focus Areas

The core concept of Operation Sadbhavana is that “human security is the key element of national security, which can only be ensured through human resource and infrastructure development”. Accordingly, Operation Sadbhavana initiatives have focussed on infrastructure development/improvement, quality education, women empowerment, health care, community development, integration tours and sports.⁴

	Civilians	Security Forces	Terrorists	Totals
1988	29	1	1	31
1989	79	13	0	92
1990	862	132	183	1177
1991	594	185	614	1393
1992	859	177	873	1909
1993	1023	216	1328	2567
1994	1012	236	1651	2899
1995	1161	297	1338	2796
1996	1333	376	1194	2903
1997	840	355	1177	2372
1998	877	339	1045	2261
1999	799	555	1184	2538
2000	842	638	1808	3288

2001	1067	590	2850	4507
2002	839	469	1714	3022
2003	658	338	1546	2542
2004	534	325	951	1810
2005	521	218	1000	1739
2008	349	168	599	1116
2007	164	121	492	777
2008	69	90	382	541
2009	55	78	242	375
2010	36	69	270	375
2011	34	30	119	183
2012	16	17	84	117
2013	20	61	100	181
2014	8	14	39	61
Total*	14680	6108	22784	43572

* Data of casualties till 8 Jun 2014
Source : www.satp.org

Figure 1: Showing Reduced Level of Militancy in J&K : 1988-2014

Steps Towards Nation Building

Infrastructure Development. Focus has been on small and manageable projects without recurring liability which include water supply schemes, construction/repair of schools/hospitals/health centres/community halls, development and construction of roads/tracks, bridges and electrification.

Education. To guide youth into the mainstream by establishment of vocational training centres (VTCs), education cum motivational tours, provisioning and training in Information Technology, conduct of awareness seminars, debates, establishment of women empowerment centres etc.5

Health. To promote health infrastructure in the region by organising medical and veterinary camps.

Sports. To promote national integration and provide a platform to the students to express their talent by conduct of inter district and intra district level sports competitions.

Perception Management. Special initiatives have been taken to project the humane face of the Army. The focus has been on conduct of rescue operations during calamities, youth employment generation schemes which include vocational training of youth for self-employment, management of neglected societies to include Gujjars/Bakarwals and conduct of various social awareness campaigns on education, communal harmony etc.

Potholes in the Path of Goodwill

MCA initiatives are required to be dynamic in nature and therefore must be under continuous review. A few irritants which highlight the necessity of reviewing the core concept periodically are mentioned below :-

- Trigger for Riots.** The separatists have played a dominant role in triggering negative vibes amongst the people against the role of SF and this needs constant monitoring. The civil administration has not been very effective in maintaining calm under such situations.
- Upkeep and Maintenance of Infrastructure Projects.** Follow-up action by the administration is essential to ensure long term benefits to the affected populace.
- Education.** Army Goodwill Schools are limited to big towns and the number of eligible students is less due to financial constraints of the family and remote location of villages. More so, there is a mismatch in the medium of education in government schools and schools located in remote areas which focus on Islamic curriculum of education.
- National Integration Tours.** The present Bharat Darshan tours have mainly focussed on the students. Only 20 students on an average get a countrywide exposure per tour. Although the expenditure on conduct of tour is high, the benefits are short-lived. Hence, the concept is less viable in terms of tangible results. Alternatively, sponsoring a student for lifetime education is a more viable option.
- Health.** The medical camps do not cover people living in remote areas as camps are conducted in urban areas where primary health centres (PHCs)/hospitals already exist. Camps have literally turned out to be free medicine doling ventures.

General Shortcomings

Some of the important shortcomings noticed in the conduct of Operation Sadbhavana are :-

- (a) Lack of incorporation/integration of intelligentsia, sarpanches, panches, village elders, locals and media.
- (b) Lack of commitment and affiliation of the civil population.
- (c) No follow-up action or maintenance machinery after the project is completed.
- (d) Minimum signature of civil administration in the project; hence they lack interest.
- (e) Lack of synergy between SF and civil administration.
- (f) Inadequate visibility/signature of contribution by the Army.
- (g) Lack of focus to convince stakeholders that something new and credible is afoot.
- (h) No continuity and innovation in application of projects.

Need for Change

In the present scenario we already have a nearly effective civil administration functioning in the State which is fairly evident from the ongoing development projects. The proposed methodology envisages maintaining high visibility of the contribution being made by SF through a well-planned media campaign.

Way Ahead

Infrastructure Projects. Dual use infrastructural development projects along the border areas to be incorporated; e.g. construction of roads and tracks, minor bridges and culverts, electricity and water supply schemes, bore wells, storage tanks and store shelters which facilitate military/operational/administrative plans. Benefits from these projects can be reaped by own troops in addition to locals. Efforts should be made to seek the participation of local MLAs, village/block committees' members, civil administration officials and public stakeholders to share initial costs and maintenance of the projects. Limited new projects to be initiated in hinterland and emphasis be given on consolidation and improvement of existing assets. Employment related projects should be initiated which during construction and after completion provide employment and livelihood to the locals.

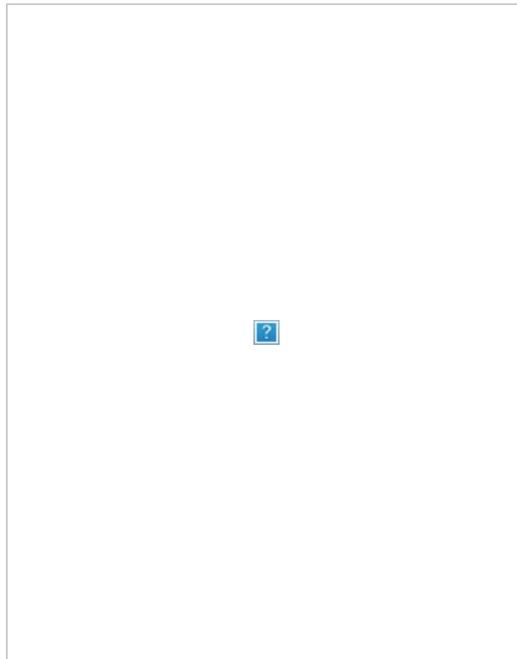
Education. An Army Goodwill School to be established at the District level with the running and maintenance responsibility being shared by the civil administration also. The schools should employ adequate number of Muslim lady teachers with an aim of encouraging girl students to join them. Maulvis should also be incorporated as teaching staff in the school. In addition to providing education, the schools should also be actively involved in helping the students in their future studies. The utilisation of VTCs needs to be optimised by using the infrastructure for conduct of training capsules based on aptitude to facilitate gainful self-employment. Assistance be provided to village elders/maulvis in terms of computers, books and other training aids for their establishments to facilitate effective linkages. Such measures would help in making inroads in their set-up and moulding opinion in favour of the SF.

Steps to Promote National Integration. Integration tours for key players such as village elders/sarpanches/maulvis to the mainland be organised with an aim of showcasing the well-established civil administration running in various parts of the Country. Sponsoring of students assists in the overall upgradation of living standards of the entire family and also reduces their financial burden. Within the total expenditure incurred on tours to the mainland, approximately 10 to 15 students can be provided lifetime free education, which would also secure their future. It will also bring about societal and education reforms in the local populace. The vast pool of educated youth in the villages will create a positive environment in the upliftment of the society. The venture will have a long-lasting impact on the local populace and will project a positive image of the Indian Army.

Tours from students of reputed institutions of the State shall provide exposure to the entire District vis-à-vis 20 odd students being sent for Bharat Darshan tours. Such tours shall end up being more cost effective, promoting awareness and strengthening the cause of joining the mainstream. On an average the proposed tours should provide exposure to approx 700-800 locals and students in comparison to exposure of merely 20 students for each tour to other parts of the Country (Please refer to Figure 2 and Figure 3). During organised tours from other parts of India to J&K, aspiring students could be selected for admissions in reputed institutions. A counselling programme aimed at identifying talented students and ensuring their placement in institutions countrywide, could be initiated accordingly (Please refer to Figure 4).



Figure 2 : Exposure through Bharat Darshan Tours



Health. Preference should be given to areas having pro-nationalistic population. Holding of remote medical clinics (RMC) at farthest locations at regular intervals, would result in delivery of health care to a set of populace, which stands deprived of requisite medical care. The said concept shall ensure greater hold of company commanders in their respective area of responsibility. There should be a mechanism that a patient screened initially from RMC, having major medical/surgical illness is referred, seen and managed at tertiary hospitals like Base Hospitals. This will go a long way in earning goodwill by ensuring quality treatment to a patient. Mini diagnostic centres with a dual purpose could be established at remote locations which shall not only benefit the local populace but also cater for medical infrastructure of our own soldiers.

Sports Centres/Nodes should be established at various places by the Army to provide guidance/coaching to youth interested in pursuing sports as a career.

SF Friendly Projects. Operation Sadhbhavana should serve as a major platform for the perception management efforts of IA by showcasing the good work undertaken by them. Some of the suggested projects should include seminars to encourage students to join the IA e.g. seminar on communal harmony, Service Selection Board training for selected students etc. Effective media campaign to include branding and marketing of various projects through intelligent integration across domains could also be incorporated. Optimum utilisation of print, electronic and cyber facilities should be harnessed to showcase and achieve desired objectives. Scope of mid-course correction by means of regular assessments should be carried-out to assess the utility of the project to carry-out necessary modifications. Region based aspirations should be tailored and applied with due diligence and passion after understanding the cultural sensitivities and aspirations of the people in a given geographical area. The project should consist of a mix of activities addressing the local people and the neglected community of gujjars / bakarwals.

Incorporation of Corporate Sector. Owing to the relentless operations conducted by the IA over the past two decades the State is presently undergoing a number of developmental projects to include construction of roads, railways, bridges, hydel projects etc. A number of private companies are presently involved in various developmental projects and are providing job opportunities for the local youth. The same companies could also be major contributors to the cause of Operation Sadhbhavana in terms of corporate social responsibility which is a routine norm followed nationwide by the Corporate Sector.

Conclusion

Operation Sadhbhavana was launched to meet the aspirations of the people affected by insurgency when the State administration had failed and there were no means of providing succour to the local population. Now with the State government having successfully established its law and order machinery as well as undertaken development projects in various fields, it is necessary to ensure a smooth transition of handing over the responsibility / onus of projects which were being undertaken by the Army under Operation Sadhbhavana to the State. The time has now come to reinvent a strategy keeping in view the existing dynamics to ensure retention of goodwill generated by Operation Sadhbhavana which could become a mode of normal governance in the State.

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Conflicts, Oil and Peacekeeping in South Sudan

Colonel Shailender Arya@

Introduction

The Republic of South Sudan is facing a renewed conflict not long after it emerged as a new entity on 09 July 2011 after five decades of civil war with the Islamist North. There were high hopes from the youngest nation of the world. On the day of its hard-won Independence, US President Obama remarked, "Today is a reminder that after the darkness of war, the light of a new dawn is possible." But merely after two years of Independence, the tribal fault lines again came to haunt this fledgling nation, plunging it into civil war. The Guardian, a prominent British newspaper ran a story calling it: 'South Sudan: The State that Fell Apart in a Week'. India has significant stakes in this predominately-Christian East African country. India is the largest troop contributor in the increasingly challenging peacekeeping operations in South Sudan under the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and has made significant financial investments in that country, particularly in the oil sector. Therefore, return of stability in South Sudan is an important priority for India. Peace in South Sudan is also vital for Africa as its neighbouring countries have plunged into a whirlpool of violence; for example, Joseph Kony's Lord's Resistance Army operates in a wide area of Central and East Africa including South Sudan; in April 2015, 147 students were killed in Kenya's Garissa University College by Al Shabaab terrorists; Somalia is divided among competing warlords; Mali and Central African Republic are in flames and Boko Haram is increasing its area of influence in Nigeria.

African Crisis - Indian Impact

South Sudan is the second largest UN peacekeeping operation after the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In 2011, when a referendum to break away from Sudan was passed with 98.83 per cent of the vote resulting in the relatively peaceful formation of a new country - South Sudan, the peacekeepers were relieved. With no danger of North-South conflict, the UN focus could now shift to rehabilitation and economic development. But the relief was short-lived. On 09 April 2013, five Indian Army personnel including an officer were martyred after an INDBATT-II convoy was ambushed by the rebels between Bor and Pibor in the Jonglei State. The Indian troops led by Late Lieutenant Colonel Mahipal Singh fought bravely against a large number of rebels hidden in a dense jungle and prevented overrunning of the convoy. Sporadic incidents continued till another full scale civil war erupted on 15 December 2013. On 19 December 2013 the UN base at Akobo in Jonglei State was attacked by nearly 2,000 rebels armed with heavy weaponry. The 43 Indian peacekeepers stationed at the base gallantly repelled the attacks, preventing civilian casualties but in the process lost two JCOs; Dharmesh Sangwan (Rajputana Rifles) and Kumar Pal Singh (Army Medical Corps).

While many countries including Uganda and the US took actions to withdraw their personnel, the Indian peacekeepers continued to carry-out their mission and protected a large number of civilians who had taken shelter in UN compounds. On 21 December 2013 three US Air Force V-22 Osprey aircraft en route to evacuate US nationals from Bor came under rebel fire, injuring four Djibouti-based Navy SEALs of the ground security team.¹ The next day after negotiations with the rebel commanders, four UN and civil helicopters evacuated 380 officials as well as about 300 foreign citizens to Nairobi. The rebels reported that on 27 December 2013, Ugandan MiG-29 bombed their positions around Bor, the capital of the Jonglei state, complicating the situation by active participation of Uganda in the civil war; an intervention strongly opposed by Ethiopia.

The two Sudans are estimated to have the third largest crude reserves in Africa after Nigeria and Angola. Oil & Gas Journal has pegged that Sudan and South Sudan together have five billion barrels of proved crude oil reserves. According to British Petroleum's 2014 Statistical Review, approximately 3.5 billion barrels are in South Sudan and 1.5 billion barrels are in Sudan. The potential of Sudan in securing the energy security needs of India is well known. India had named a Special Envoy well before South Sudan became independent in 2011 and was among the first to open a consulate in Juba, four years before it formally became the national capital.² Many Indian corporates like Tatas, Kirloskar and Reliance are active in both countries and they have invested around US\$ 450 million in power plants, sugar industry and railways. The India-Sudan trade for the current year is expected to touch over US\$ one billion while the total Indian investments in Sudan are between US\$ 2.8 to 3 billion.

India's leading public sector oil company ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) has significant investments totalling US\$ 2.5 billion in Sudan in production and exploration. It has acquired 25 per cent of the shares of the biggest oil consortium, the Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC). Annually the OVL's blocks provide approximately 2.4 million tons of crude to India.³ In addition to the oil blocks, which are now mostly in South Sudan; the GNPOC has built a 741 km-long multi-product pipeline linking Khartoum Refinery to Port Sudan. The recent civil war in South Sudan has led to a near halt of oil production and other industrial activities. South Sudan's loss of 350,000 barrel of oil per day had affected India's annual crude supply. The Indian economic investments in Sudan have also become risky as Sudan has lost majority of its oil fields to South Sudan.

Another War Starts

The tribal tensions in South Sudan were visible after Riek Machar was removed from Vice President's post in July 2013 in a government reshuffle by President Salva Kiir Mayardit, who assumed the leadership of Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) in 2005 after the tragic death of the founding leader John Garang in a helicopter crash. All actions in South Sudan are invariably judged in terms of tribal divides. Salva Kiir is a Dinka, the largest tribe of South Sudan and yet constitutes only 11 per cent of the population wherein the deposed Vice President Riek Machar is a Nuer which is the second largest tribe with five per cent of the population. The rest 84 per cent population is divided into another two hundred tribes whose respective chief's orders often override those of the formally constituted government. Riek Machar had continued to retain the post after South Sudan became Independent and his presence was seen as vital to promote ethnic unity of Nuers with the Dinka majority.

Tribe remains a strong identity in most of Africa particularly in countries like South Sudan, where nation building

remains embryonic and a national identity still fragile.⁴ The presidential guard in the national capital Juba was a multi-ethnic unit called 'Tigers' that was meant to bind the diverse communities. The violence began at Juba after a fight between Dinka and Nuer soldiers in the presidential guard on 15 December 2013, igniting a political power struggle in the ruling party and sparking widespread ethnic killings. The army units loyal to President Salva Kiir were pitted against a loose alliance of ethnic militia forces and mutinous army commanders nominally headed by Riek Machar, who was also accused of plotting a coup by the President Salva Kiir.

Riek Machar is a seasoned guerrilla fighter and a wily operator who had switched sides on several occasions to strengthen his own position and that of his Nuer ethnic group. He was once married to a British aid worker Emma McCune in 1991 who died two years later in a car accident in Nairobi. Incidentally, Emma was born in India where her father ran a tea plantation in Assam and her story has been beautifully captured in a book titled, *Emma's War, Love, Betrayal and Death in Sudan* by Deborah Scroggins. The rebel forces loyal to Riek Machar soon captured Malakal, Bor, Bentiu and Akobo with nearly 14,000 civilians taking shelter in the UN compound in Bor. Riek Machar is being supported by another fellow-Nuer and his political ally General Peter Gadet, a skilled military leader who was commanding the Sudan People's Liberation Army's (SPLA) 8th Division in Jonglei. He defected from it and with troops loyal to him, mainly Nuers, attacked and took control of military installations in Bor.

The SPLA loyal to the government launched a counter-offensive to recapture Bor, Bentiu and Malakal which escalated the conflict and displaced thousands. But before the SPLA took the conflict to the bush, the Nuer community in the capital Juba was targeted. The Nuer neighbourhoods of Mangaten, Hai Referendum, Area 107 and Eden City in Juba saw massive ethnic cleansing with about 30,000 survivors taking shelter in the two UN compounds. The Nuer survivors recall being asked only one question "incholdi?" which means what is your name in Dinka language, failing which they were identified as Nuers and marked for reprisals. Similar fate awaited the Dinkas in the Nuer dominated areas of Jonglei and Unity States. Overall, more than 1,000,000 people have been displaced inside South Sudan and more than 400,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries, especially Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda.

An undefined ceasefire now prevails in South Sudan and sporadic fighting continues in Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei states. The January 2014 peace deal between the two factions has failed to halt the fighting and Bentiu, the capital of oil-rich Unity State, has changed hands several times in the recent months. Further talks, mainly in Ethiopia have not made much of headway. In March 2014, South Sudan's President Salva Kiir sacked the head of the army, General James Hoth Mai, who hails from the same tribe as that of former Vice-President Riek Machar. Several rebel forces opposed to the SPLM-dominated government have emerged, including the South Sudan Liberation Army of Peter Gadet and a force originally formed by a former SPLA general, the late George Athor.⁵ In a recent incident equivalent to being the Boko Haram of South Sudan, UNICEF stated that in February 2015, 89 young boys were abducted by an armed group in Wau Shilluk, a riverside town in Upper Nile state, by a militia aligned with the SPLA.⁶

Conflicts, Oil and China

South Sudan, apart from the current civil war has many other unresolved tribal conflicts. It is at war with at least seven armed groups in nine of its 10 states. Tribal clashes often erupt in Jonglei between the Nuer White Army of the Lou Nuer and the Murle. In addition, the Sudan versus South Sudan conflict continues to pose threat to the nascent oil infrastructure. The region of Abyei still remains disputed between Sudan and South Sudan and a separate referendum will be held in Abyei on whether they want to join Sudan or South Sudan. In April 2012, South Sudan troops temporarily occupied the oil field and border town of Heglig before being repulsed by Sudan. This was followed by Sudanese warplanes raid on Bentiu in South Sudan. In February 2012 Sudan shut down the South Sudan's oil export pipelines in a dispute over transit fee. Over 80 per cent of the oil is extracted in South Sudan while the pipelines, refineries and the export are through Sudan's Port Sudan facilities in Red Sea. South Sudan was forced to halve public spending as oil revenues constitute 98 per cent of South Sudan's budget.

In order to avoid its problematic dependence on the North, South Sudan has planned to build alternative pipelines through Kenya and Djibouti - a pipeline to the port of Lamu, and to Red Sea port respectively. However, these alternate pipelines can only be functional after three to four years considering the challenging terrain, limited finances and the security challenges. In March 2013, after over a year of nearly shut oil production, Sudan and South Sudan agreed to resume pumping out oil. There is a strong possibility that while the international community focuses its attention on South Sudan, Sudan will be emboldened to intensify its offensive in Darfur, South Kordofan and Blue Nile states.⁷ The conflict in Darfur which had witnessed ethnic cleansing of African tribes by the government-supported Arab Janjaweed has already taken a heavy toll of human life with approximately 400,000 deaths.

While the Sudan versus South Sudan conflict has an incentive in terms of petrodollars for normalising relations, the civil war in South Sudan aims to control resources. The recent fighting witnessed attacks on oil companies, signaling that the brewing political struggle could mask a larger tussle for control over the country's resources. These attacks have taken place in South Sudan's Unity State, home to some of Asia's top oil majors.⁸ China is the largest investor in Sudan's oil industry as well as the largest consumer of Sudanese oil, apart from being the major supplier of arms like Red Arrow-8 and Weishi rockets to Sudan. China's investment in Sudan is an estimated US\$ 20 billion before the countries split and US\$ 8 billion separately in South Sudan after its independence. China's CNPC owns a controlling 40 per cent share in GNOPC. In 2015, for the first time in peacekeeping operations, Beijing announced that it would send 700 combat troops to join the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan, signaling an unusually robust intervention. The troops started arriving in South Sudan in April 2015.

All Hopes on the UN

Negotiations between delegations representing President Salva Kiir and Reik Machar started in Ethiopia under the auspices of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an organisation of eight East African countries. On 23 January 2014 South Sudan's Government and rebels signed a ceasefire agreement, with South Sudan's Government expressing scepticism over whether the opposition will be able to control all the militias involved in fighting. The last round of talks in December 2014 failed and the gap between the two factions has in fact widened.

Meanwhile, the Tanzania hosted intra-SPLM dialogue in Arusha in 2015 has opened a parallel process that detracts from the IGAD effort.⁹

While the immediate trigger of the violence was a political power struggle within the SPLM, the root causes of the crisis are deeper and structural, such as poor governance, corruption, nepotism and tribalism. Lasting peace requires that these underlying causes be addressed within a comprehensive and inclusive framework. The SPLA should be transformed from a ethnic-based liberating force into a professional state army that represents and defends all citizens.¹⁰ There is a need to establish a hybrid court, administered by both national and international staff, similar to those employed in Sierra Leone, East Timor, Kosovo and Cambodia to restore the capacity, credibility and independence of the ethnically prejudiced justice system. Finally, an acceptable constitutional foundation must be laid with power rotations; and the tribes cannot be left out of the equation given their social leverage and military fuel in the current conflict.¹¹

Nine days after the first hostilities broke out in South Sudan, the UN Security Council voted on a resolution to send 5,500 additional peacekeepers to South Sudan, boosting its force to 12,500. The UNMISS is now expected to assume a greater role monitoring ceasefire and protecting civilians. However, UNMISS is a mild Chapter VI mission which can only 'monitor peace' unlike the stronger Chapter VII missions which have well armed military peacekeepers who can 'enforce peace', as in DRC, Somalia, Haiti or in the Gulf War I. Historically, under Chapter VII, UNSC was granted broad powers essentially as a reaction to the failure of the League of Nations, and it may impose measures on states that have obligatory legal force and therefore, need not depend on the consent of the states involved.

In spite of these complex circumstances, a lot is expected from the Blue Berets, the much-loved UN Peacekeepers of which Indian peacekeepers form the largest component. India must insist upon devolution of more powers to the UN peacekeepers and strengthening the mandate of the mission to ensure security of our peacekeepers as well as to enable the UN to carry out its role of ensuring peace. A Rwanda like situation cannot be allowed to develop in South Sudan wherein the weak UN mandate allowed the Tutsi-Hutu clashes to spiral into genocide. There is also possibility that the conflict will slip into an ethnically-charged civil war like Somalia, with the Dinka and its tribal allies perpetually fighting Nuer and its supporters. At this uncertain juncture, India cannot risk soldiers in a civilian-led mission that primarily conducts civilian tasks in a country with only limited force protection requirements.¹² A peaceful South Sudan, assisted by the efforts of a strong UN Mission, could be a stabilising factor for the entire Africa as well as a peacekeeping success story which would enhance the reputation of Indian peacekeepers in conflict zones across the globe.

Endnotes

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