Security Strategies for India as an Emerging Regional Power with Global Ambitions

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National Goal

Any strategy must have a purpose or a goal, the clearer it is the better it is. India's Strategy is clear and will remain so for quite some time—it is the transformation of India. At independence, there could be no doubt about what the national goal or aim should be. The abject condition of India in 1947 left us with no choice but to make the transformation of India into a strong, prosperous and modern country the overriding national goal. In 1947, after partition displaced about 10 million people, life expectancy was 26 years, literacy 14 per cent (8 per cent among women), and disease, hunger and poverty were rampant. India had seen less than 1 per cent economic growth since 1900 to the extent that we were unable to feed ourselves. The Bengal famine of 1943 and 200 years of Empire Raj had reduced one of the most prosperous and advanced societies in the world to one of the most miserable and backward. Because of this, at Independence the goal of transforming India naturally took priority over all other possible goals. Goals of status, recovering lost territories, organising our neighbourhood, and so on were only means to an end, and were to be pursued only insofar as they helped us to transform India. There have always been differences among us on how to get there. But the goal of transforming India has been agreed across the political spectrum and is what all governments since independence have worked for.

As National Security Professionals our task is to protect and secure India's integrity, citizens, values and assets, and to enable the development and transformation of India into a strong, prosperous and a modern nation where every Indian can achieve his or her full potential. To do this task, India must accumulate hard power if it has to have a say in the international system. We accumulate hard power not because we seek domination or

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hegemony or because it makes us feel good. We do so only so that we can transform the lives of our people. That is the sole purpose of the acquisition of hard power. India is unique in several respects, and no other power shares our interests. In fact, the established power holders in the international system resent the rise of new powers and resist it, covertly and overtly. If we seek a say in the running of the international system, and a larger international role, it is for the purpose of transforming India. Some in India think that this is too defensive a goal, that we should make it clear that we wish to be a great power or a super power. However, being a great power will follow, not precede, our success in building a strong, prosperous and modern India. The USSR which attempted otherwise saw its defence spending consuming its economy, leading to its disintegration.

All rising powers in history have chosen to keep their head down while building their own strength, rather than inviting resistance to their rise to great power status by proclaiming their power. Those that followed the path of flaunting their ambition and their growing power too early, like Wilhelmine Germany and Imperial Japan, were frustrated in their rise and paid a heavy price. Sparta prevailed militarily over Athens at the cost of her own destruction, leaving Persia the real winner of the Peloponnesian war. The Soviet Union, Japan, Germany and Pakistan are all 20th century examples of what happens to powers that overreach and proclaim grandiose ambitions. China so far had bided its time. Let us see whether China's rising assertiveness will be 21st century example of this phenomenon.

Please note that this task does not limit our security calculus to the territory of India. Also, that it excludes ideas such as exporting democracy, protecting the ideological frontiers of India, creating global public goods, seeking status, seeking revenge, undoing Partition, and other such pursuits, unless they contribute to the security of India's citizens and assets and to India's development and transformation.

Our goal is sufficient security, not absolute security. And the reason why it should be so is because absolute security for any one state in the system would mean absolute insecurity for all the other states. By this criteria, with a few exceptions, we have actually managed to provide India with sufficient security to enable

her to change and grow faster after independence than ever before in her long history.

Strategy

A strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve one's long-term or overall aims. In other words, it provides for the achievement of one's goals using the means available within the given situation. It is thus largely a means and ends problem. Setting the goal is a political function that a state, society or nation undertakes through political and social mechanisms.

What strategy you adopt depends not just on the goal or where you want to reach but, on the means, available and the situation that you are in. A reactive strategy is one where you list threats and respond only when they become acute or hit you; this is the strategy of the small and the weak and of those without capacity and vision. Alternatively, a proactive strategy, with a vision and some power, helps to shape the environment. This is a state that we have achieved after 70 years of independence. We can consider this as a much more reactive strategy that we have achieved. In having a reactive strategy no matter how powerful you are, you need to set up a hierarchy of tasks which enable you to measure the tasks against your goal of the transformation of India.

Our Inheritance

The Raj always gave priority to imperial interests over India's and based its defence of India on defence in depth. This was based upon what Mortimer Durand, then Foreign Secretary wrote in 1875, that Curzon later adopted, and the former governor of the NWFP and last Foreign Secretary of British India, Olaf Caroe, called–the glacis or Himalayan fringe. These three sought to build a ring of buffer states or neutral zones running from the Persian Gulf through Iran, Afghanistan, Tibet, and Burma, which was later replaced by Siam. In this effort they met with mixed success at different times in Afghanistan and Iran. Britain fought wars to ensure that the states and statelets in this zone were neutral and not available to Britain's rivals through the Great Game and, as a last resort, war. Within the outer ring of buffers, was another zone where British influence predominated and no other power was allowed to enter,

but British Indian law and administration did not apply. In this zone, the presence of Indian forces was avoided, as far as possible, until Curzon pushed them forward in the West. In the West, Indian law and administration applied up to the Indus, from the Indus to the Durand Line tribal law applied except within 500 yards of the main highways and the tribal chiefs kept the peace in return for British subsidies. A similar distinction was maintained between boundaries in the East which were, however, left much more fluid since there was no threat from a decrepit China in British eyes comparable to that from the Russian empire.

At independence, India faced a new strategic situation that, our inheritance from the Raj did not prepare us well for. Externally it was not an easy situation. In 1947 India lost the security provided by the Royal Navy and Empire. We could not be followers of Curzon, Durand and Caroe in pursuing grand strategy without the resources or interests of the British Empire. We had been partitioned, saddled with refugees, had a hostile neighbour to our West with whom we were forced to fight from day one and had a number of large princely States to be integrated within the subcontinent. China occupied Tibet in 1950 and we had a border with them for the first time. Before that we had a boundary settled by custom, usage and treaty with Tibet. We lost all the buffers that the British Indian Empire had: Afghanistan, Tibet, Myanmar, this made the earlier British strategy impossible for the new government to follow. Lastly, we could no longer rely on the Royal Navy for our maritime security. For almost two centuries the British Indian government had left the sea to London, while Calcutta and Delhi worried about the land borders. The result was a severe case of sea-blindness in the new Indian republic and its leaders, which we have only recently started to overcome. Logically, once our land frontiers were closed with two difficult neighbours like Pakistan and China, it was the sea, the much cheaper domain for transport but which is much more expensive militarily, that we should have turned to.

Independent India

Independent India fought four major wars in first twenty-three years of our existence. This shaped its national strategy. There are, of course, basic drivers of national strategy such as geography and history and economic endowment, that remain true no matter how

your capabilities or the situation around you change. But the effect they have on policy varies over time.

On the other hand geography, history and economic endowment have made us a trading and manufacturing nation. We have been most prosperous and successful when most connected to the world because we are people-rich even if resource poor. Today, 80 per cent of our imports are essential maintenance imports of energy, crude oil, fertiliser, non-ferrous metals and even lentils like *moong dal.* In history we have been an exporter of ideas and people, and have been a net provider of knowledge and security– in the Indian Ocean area and across land borders to our West.

There are changes in how we see our interests as a result of technology and changed situations, the best example are the Himalayas. For most of history we had no border with China, only with Tibet, and regarded the Himalayas as an impenetrable defensive barrier protecting us. Today, with the Chinese in Tibet and with modern technology, the Himalayas are not an impenetrable barrier or defensive wall, and it is essential that we have visibility across the mountains to know what is happening in Tibet. Our definition of our interest, in this case, has evolved considerably. Equally, we often speak, as Curzon used to, of India's interests from Suez to Malacca. But today, our major trading partners are all outside this region, which accounts for less than 15 per cent of our non-oil trade. Our area of primary economic interest is, therefore, much wider than our geopolitical reach. Our well-being is affected much more by global factors than is reflected in our political-military thinking. In other words, though geography is unalterable, and history is a man-made construct, neither can be taken for granted as always having the same effect on our calculation of national interest or on the strategy that we should follow.

National Security Tasks

Since free India couldn't follow the strategy of the Raj, what should determine our strategy? As stated in the beginning, our goal is the transformation of India; it is according to that task that we should prioritise and concentrate on issues and problems — on the basis of how they will affect our ability to transform India into a modern, prosperous and secure country where every citizen has the

opportunity to achieve his or her full potential. The overriding goal of transforming India enables us to prioritise among our many opportunities and challenges according to their effect on India's integrity and their ability to affect the transformation of India.

The Hierarchy of Security Tasks. The hierarchy of security tasks that results from this calculus of seeing what matters in terms of our transformation in order of importance are:

The Integrity of India

This is primarily physical integrity and territorial integrity, but it is also in terms of defending India's other attributes and values and its sovereignty. This is a primary and permanent interest.

Internal Security

This is critical to the wellbeing of our people and, therefore ranks above everything else and next only to the integrity of the nation. It is also critical to our ability to deal with our external security. Unlike the fifties and sixties, we face no external existential threat as a nation. Deterrence, nuclear and conventional, has by and large operated since the seventies, and when it failed — as in 1999 in Kargil — it has rapidly been restored. The last large-scale conventional war we fought was forty-six years ago in 1971. The risk of war is not what it was. The balance of power in our immediate neighbourhood is better than it was. Nor is there a serious separatist threat within India that we cannot prevail upon.

If there is an existential threat to India it is from within. It is our internal polarisation and divisions — LWE, communal violence and polarization. These are our own nation building failures. There is social violence as a consequence of extremely rapid and unequal development and rootlessness following rapid urbanisation, which could threaten the existence of India as we know it, and which today contributes to the average citizen's heightened sense of insecurity. Deaths from terrorism and separatist violence have declined steadily for a decade and a half, but since 2012 deaths from communal violence have risen. The crime statistics for social violence and crimes against the person such as rape, are also worrying and increasing. Our real threats are internal—polarisation and alienation.

The problem of social violence and fracturing, alienation etc as a result of urbanisation is not peculiar to us in India though it is most rapid and dislocating in India and China. This is a global issue. Of the 560,000 violent deaths around the world in 2016, 68 per cent were murders, wars caused just 18 per cent deaths. Today 70 per cent of humanity lives within 200 miles of the coast, and of the 43 megacities (over 10 million population) only 3 are outside what used to be called the Third World. By 2025, 75 per cent of the world's population will live in cities. In India by then more than half our population will live in cities. Socially, we will be an aspirational and young population, cut off from traditional family and social structures, alienated and alone, ready for new ideologies, good or bad. The political effects of urbanisation are even more marked. Politics becomes an exercise in mob psychology and mobilisation, abetted by the mass and social media which converts politics into politics of emotion. This is an environment where social violence, polarisation and the militarisation of policing are likely, and where traditional policing is ineffective. Today we see social violence on the rise across the globe, enabled by the new technologies and the easy availability of traditional weapons. The state has lost its monopoly of violence.

In India, since the beginning of this century, all indices of violence have actually declined except—and this is important, communal violence and social violence or crimes against the person, which have increased since 2012. This is already visible, and not just in India. However, for us the scale of the problem is more complicated.

External Challenges– China and Pakistan

China's rise is the foremost challenge which could derail our quest for transforming the lives of Indians. But it is also an opportunity, as is the return of classical geopolitics and the post-2008 fragmentation of the globalised world economy after the end of the world's unipolar moment. It is in our interest to create, to the extent possible, an external environment that enables the transformation of India. Pakistan is a strategic distraction and we will talk about it later.

Transnational Threats

This has become important, particularly in the public mind, as Pakistan has sought to compensate for her internal decline by

attacking India and making herself useful to outside patrons — a nuclear bomb for Saudi Arabia; checking India and providing access to the Indian Ocean and influence in Afghanistan for China; a strategic toehold and the tactical promise of a clean exit from Afghanistan to the US, and so on. But the fact is that Pakistan and the cross-border terrorism she sponsors could derail our quest only if we allow them to. That is why I say that Pakistan is only a strategic distraction. Sadly, though India's responses to terrorism have improved, terrorism itself has enjoyed a global resurgence — in West Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan and North Africa. In Afghanistan, Pakistan has got the US, Russia and China to buy into the idea that the Taliban should be accommodated in the government, and that Pakistan can deliver that outcome. And we now see terrorism spreading in South-East Asia as well, from among the Rohingya in Myanmar through Malaysia and Indonesia to the Philippines. The dangers of contagion and radicalisation in India are increasing, though its effect will depend on what we do internally.

The threats mentioned earlier are those that we can manage but the real transnational threats now come not so much from terrorism but from the militarisation of outer space, from the hostile use of cyber space, and from renewed proliferation risks.

Enablers and Necessities

These are things without which we cannot transform India. These are challenges which would affect our quest unless handled properly. They include energy security and building the technological and industrial sinews necessary for India to be strong and prosperous. They also include non-ferrous metals, access to markets and the other things we depend on the world for, because of our resource endowment.

Over half of our GDP is due to the external sector, from the import and export of goods and services. In 1991 when we began radical reform and opened up to the world, external merchandise trade (import and export of goods) was about 15.3 per cent of India's GDP and most of it went West. By 2014 it was 49.3 per cent of GDP and most of it flowed East of India. When you add Services, more than half our GDP depends on our dealings with the rest of the world. This has changed and expanded the definition of India's interests. Clearly, freedom of navigation in the South China Sea became an Indian interest of some importance once

our trade began increasingly flowing East through those waters. During the same period, China, for strategic and commercial reasons, in 1996 informed the UN that the nine-dash-line was her boundary in the South China Sea and after 2008 began describing it as a "core interest". In other words, as both our countries grew, our interests evolved, and we began to rub up against each other in the periphery that we share. The larger point is that as we have developed, our interests have grown, we are more dependent on the rest of the world than ever before, and, therefore, our definition of our own security has grown. This requires an adjustment in our thinking, and in our strategy.

The New Geopolitical Scenario

We are today in a new geopolitical situation, caused primarily by the rise of China, India and other powers—Indonesia, South Korea, Iran, Vietnam—in a crowded Asia-Pacific which is the new economic and political centre of gravity of the world. Rapid shifts in the balance of power in the region have led to the arms race that we see around us, and to rising uncertainty, now also fuelled by the unpredictability, disengagement and transactional "America first-ism" of Trump. China-US strategic contention is growing, uninhibited so far by their economic co-dependence. The shift in the balance of power is clearest in global GDP shares.

Share of Global GDP (PPP)

	1980	**2016**
Advanced countries	64 per cent	42 per cent
Europe	30 per cent	16.7 per cent
China	2.3 per cent	17.8 per cent
India	3 per cent	7.24 per cent

By 2014 India and China together accounted for about half of Asia's total GDP. In PPP GDP terms they are the world's largest and third largest economies. Most of this, of course, is accounted for by China. China and India's combined share of world GDP in 2016, of 17.67 per cent (in nominal terms) or even 25.86 per cent (in PPP terms) is still well below their share of world population of 37.5 per cent, but represents a significant economic force. How the overall location of economic activity has shifted is apparent in

the fact that of the world's total nominal GDP of $ 74.1 trillion, Asia accounts for 33.84 per cent, North America for 27.95 per cent and Europe for 21.37 per cent[2]. America's share has remained roughly constant since the seventies, and it is Europe's that has dropped sharply, in favour of Asia.In essence, as a result of globalisation, the balance of power has shifted. The world is multipolar economically, still unipolar in military terms, but confused politically.

Transformation in International System and Impact on Indian Security

We are living in a time when there is a deep sense of strategic confusion, not just in India but in some of the most powerful states in the world. In our case, that confusion extends not just to the ultimate goal the national security apparatus should pursue, but also to the best means to achieve them. We seem to mistake controlling the narrative with creating outcomes, which is the real task of foreign and security policy.

Looking at the world as a whole from the end of the Cold War in 1989 for some years until 2010; war seemed to be going away. Interstate warfare disappeared for a while and civil wars were at a lower level. Since 2010 war is back, and armed conflict is increasing steadily in the world as a whole. The number of wars, the number of battle deaths, the number of terrorist incidents, and the number of people displaced by violence, are all getting worse. In 2014, for the first time since the end of the Cold War, global annual battle deaths topped 100,000, a level below which it seldom fell during the Cold War, with spikes above 200,000 for extended periods. In the same year, 2014, the worldwide total of refugees and internally displaced persons topped 50 million, a number not seen since the close of WWII and the Chinese civil war in the forties. In 2015 it touched 65 million people! In the same period, terrorism has reached unprecedented levels in the Middle East, Africa and the West. The global number of terrorist attacks, and the number of casualties almost tripled between 2010 and early 2016.

We are now in a far more dangerous world, where the Westphalian state has collapsed or vanished to our immediate West, but where traditional great power rivalry between strong and rising states is the norm to our East. This is evident in the return of Asia-Pacific to centre stage in global politics and economics,

the international system's limited ability to accommodate change (when established powers like the US, Europe and Russia are losing self-confidence), and the return of classical geopolitics in terms of territorial and maritime disputes, political instability, and contention in the maritime domain in the South China Sea and the East China Sea. China is successfully building a continental order, consolidating the Eurasian landmass with Russia's help, through pipelines, roads, railways, fibre optic cables and so on, using her One-Belt-One-Road/BRI project as a strategic Marshal Plan across the continent. She is also contending for supremacy in her near seas with the existing maritime order led by the US and has succeeded to the extent of converting the South China sea into the South China lake.

China is reforming the PLA into an instrument of force projection, an expeditionary force modelled on the US armed forces. She has also modernised her nuclear and ICBM forces into a more capable second-strike force and developed MRBM and cruise missile capabilities and systems that are altering the regional military balance, even with the USA. The latest round of PLA reforms, of the military commands and regions, of the role of the Political Commissars, and the functional and other military changes show a determination to change the PLA in fundamental ways into an instrument for power projection and to fight short, intense, high-technology wars in "informationalised" conditions, outside China's own territory and immediate periphery, further developing PLA missile, maritime and air capability. The five new theatre commands are modelled on the US pattern and bring an unprecedented degree of jointness into the PLA. As China seeks primacy in a world so far dominated by the US, we are in the midst of a destabilising power transition which may or may not be completed. The immediate prospect, therefore, is for a low-growth world which is more riven by inter-state and intra-state conflict and violence. In other words, we are in an increasingly dangerous world, which is fragmenting and slowing down economically, while India's adversaries — state or non-state, or both, as in Pakistan's case— are becoming increasingly powerful.

Internal Security Concerns

If the external world is getting more unpredictable and uncertain, the internal security challenge is also evolving. The increase in communal violence and polarisation, and its concentration in certain

North Indian states, is worrying. The other rising form of violence is social violence, mostly against the person, in the form of rapes, violent crime and other side effects of rapid urbanisation, the breakdown of the sense of community and family, and the rootlessness of the displaced and marginalised, whether for economic reasons like work, or as a consequence of other phenomena. It is this marginalisation, to some extent the consequence of development, that feeds the Naxalites with their foot soldiers and makes LWE such a difficult phenomenon to eradicate. This is something that traditional policing and the Indian state is not equipped to handle, mitigate or solve.

It is a cause of worry that while the world around India has changed in fundamental ways, we are still doing what was good for us some years ago, and may be frittering our energies away on status and prestige goals rather than our hard interests. In other words, that we have not adjusted our policies to the new realities.

India's Suggested Response

What should India's response be to the new emerging situation?

Strategic Autonomy. Fear of the future which portends an unstoppable China, leads some to suggest alliance with the USA. In my view the best response is the pursuit of strategic autonomy. This has been the common thread running through the foreign and security policies of successive governments of India until the present one. In practice it has meant keeping decision-making power with ourselves, avoiding alliances, and building our capabilities while working with others when it was in India's interest to do so. Alliance seems to me to be exactly the wrong answer. We should retain the initiative with ourselves and not get entangled in other's quarrels, keep our powder dry and ourselves free to pursue India's national interest. This is a world that calls for creative diplomacy and flexibility, adjusting to the fast changing balance of power and correlation of forces around us. The sources of instability are in our immediate vicinity: in fragile and extremist-ridden West Asia, and in East Asia where a rising China is increasingly assertive in the pursuit of her expanding definition of her interests; in Pakistan and her internal demons. No alliance will solve these to our satisfaction. The US has her own and different stakes in China, Pakistan and West Asia.

Now is the time for us to stick to the verities that have enabled us to come so far, and to make progress in the last seventy years despite huge power asymmetries against us. Now is the time to build our own strength, enlarge strategic autonomy, and work with all those whom we can work within the international system. That appears to be the best way forward. Why do I think that strategic autonomy is the best way forward for us? Doklam is only the most recent example that shows that no one else is ready to deal with our greatest strategic challenge, China. We saw the tepid reaction of the rest of the world. To expect anything else is unreasonable. They do not share our interest in the integrity or the rise of India. No other country shares our precise set of interests for the simple reason that no other country shares our history, geography, size, culture and identity, and our domestic condition, all of which determine what we seek from the international system. What we seek is an external environment that supports the transformation of India, that enables us to build a modern, prosperous and secure country, eliminating poverty, illiteracy, disease and the other curses of underdevelopment from the lives of our people. That is our core interest.

Because that core interest is permanent, strategic autonomy has served our interest best despite changes in the international situation. During the Cold War, when the world was divided into two hostile camps, it obviously served our interest not to be dragged into external entanglements decided on by an ally or alliance. When the bipolar world ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union we entered two decades of globalisation, of an open international trading and investment climate. Once again it was in our interest to pursue a multi-directional foreign policy, working with all the major powers in the pursuit of India's transformation. The results of the pursuit of strategic autonomy speak for themselves: Over thirty years of 6 per cent GDP growth and a much more secure and capable India, which has pulled more of its citizenry out of poverty and grown faster than it ever did in history. Only one other country, China, can claim a better record in the recent past in terms of improving the quality of life of its people and in rapid economic growth. As a result of that period of accelerated growth and change, India is today much more integrated into the world than when she began. By every metric of power, in the last thirty years India has improved her position vis

a vis every country in the world except China. Strategic autonomy has served us well in much more difficult circumstances soon after independence when we lacked many of the capabilities that we now take for granted.

Building and Strengthening National Capabilities. It is essential that we presently concentrate our effort on strengthening ourselves, consolidating our periphery and on external balancing. Building our own capacity in every aspect of hard and soft power is essential. We have made some strides in building national power and in internal consolidation in the last seventy years. It is China that is our main strategic challenge, because she sees our rise as affecting her quest for primacy, first in the region, then in the world. If we are to meet this challenge, it is essential that we build our capacity in more than conventional defence. Wars are not won by equipment alone but by men and ideas too. We need an all-azimuth definition of security to guide our effort. This means military reform and changes in defence industry and higher defence management. This includes keeping up with the relevant technologies, as we did with nuclear weapons despite the pressures, we were subject to. For the future it includes scientific advances in communications, surveillance and other areas, like the use of photons. We need to prepare for the coming economic revolution caused by digital manufacturing, artificial intelligence and other developments.

Domestic Cohesion. We have gained experience in tackling and handling terrorism and separatism. Deaths by these two causes have been declining in India for a decade and a half. But deaths from communal violence are rising since 2012, as are social violence and crimes against the person. The more divided we are, the worse the condition of our people, the less able we are to cope with our internal and external security tasks. We need to reform our internal security structures and management methods, starting with police reforms.

Periphery Consolidation. If we are to enjoy peace at home to develop, we need to consolidate our periphery and ensure that it cannot be used against us. This is not the first time that we see outside powers in the Indian subcontinent. Today every major power except China defers to your preferences in the Indian subcontinent, and your means to cope with the situation have grown exponentially. We should learn to use them.

India – Pakistan Relations. Pakistan is not a strategic threat to India unless we hand them victory by making it possible for Pakistan to exploit religious fissures in our society. India has done best in the years when Pakistan was most active making trouble in Punjab, J&K and elsewhere. Our Pakistan problem now is in large part a China problem, because it is China that enhances Pakistan's capabilities, keeping her one step behind us at each stage of her nuclear progress, building up her defences and committing to her long-term future in the CPEC.

India – China Relations. India should engage China bilaterally to see whether we can evolve a new modus vivendi, to replace the one that was formalised in the 1988 Rajiv Gandhi visit which successfully kept the peace and gave the relationship a strategic framework for almost thirty years. In essence that provided for: negotiations on the boundary question while preserving the status quo on the boundary; not allowing bilateral differences like the boundary to prevent bilateral functional cooperation; and, cooperating where possible in the international arena. In practice each stayed out of the other's way internationally while concentrating on internal development and growth.That framework is no longer working and the signs of stress in the relationship are everywhere from our NSG membership application, to Masood Azhar's listing by the UN, to Doklam. The more we rise, the more we must expect Chinese opposition and we will have to also work with other powers, and in the subcontinent to ensure that our interests are protected in the neighbourhood, the region and the world. The balance will keep shifting between cooperation and competition with China, both of which characterise that relationship. The important thing is the need to rapidly accumulate usable and effective power, even while the macro balance will take time to stabilise. As stated earlier a large part of our trade flow is also going through the South China Sea. This makes freedom of navigation in the South China Sea a significant interest for India. As a consequence, India's stakes in the peace and stability of the area have grown. India, therefore, works with partners in the region like Singapore, Japan, Vietnam and others in new ways extending to defence and security issues. Like maritime security even issues like cyber security have emerged. These impact on India-China relations and need to be taken into account.

Besides, the international context in which the relationship developed has also changed. Before the 2008 crisis, the main economic issues on the multilateral negotiating agenda were North-South issues in the Doha Round, and international trade and investment flows were supportive of India and China's development. It was relatively easy and natural for India and China to work together on those North-South issues, to work up a common front. The same was true of climate change negotiations where India and China worked with the BASIC group to preserve the advances of the 1992 UNFCCC. After 2008, however, the world economy fragmented, with each major economy attempting to preserve its own growth and prevent contagion. With the post-2008 rise of protectionism, and China's rise to become a great manufacturing and trading power in the world, the issues were now of opening up domestic markets to each other in negotiations like RCEP, or trade facilitation, and were no longer developmental in nature. Energy security issues came to the fore in the climate change negotiations with far less flexibility displayed by the industrialised countries, and a middle-income and highly industrialised China's interests were now more aligned with those of the US and Europe.

In other words, both the global and regional context had become more challenging for India-China relations. Regionally, China-US strategic contention has intensified and presents other Asia-Pacific states with a choice between the two that they do not wish to make. The contested commons and security risks in the maritime, cyber and other domains further complicate the calculus.

As a result of successful domestic reform and development, the outside world is now a much greater factor and matters much more for both India and China, and will affect their future directly. They will, therefore, both seek to shape that external environment to a much greater degree than before. And since they both share the same periphery, they need to come to an understanding of how they will prevent their activism in their immediate periphery causing friction in their bilateral relationship.

To these changes in the balance of power and emergence of new factors that require a recalibration of India-China relations should be added the trajectory of domestic politics in both countries. The emergence of leaders who rely on a heightened sense of nationalism for their legitimacy, who present themselves as strong

leaders, represents both an opportunity and a danger. As strong and decisive leaders they could take the decisions required to deal with difficult issues in the relationship. At the same time a reliance on nationalism limits their ability to compromise and be flexible, or to counter the negative narrative that is emerging in both countries on the relationship.

The one factor above all others that has brought renewed stress into the India-China relationship is China's much stronger strategic commitment to Pakistan evident since President Xi Jinping's 2015 visit to Pakistan which announced the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

This calculus of interests suggests that India-China relations are more complex than simple narratives suggest, and indeed that there is room here for both sides to seek a new strategic framework or modus vivendi for the relationship. This would require a high level strategic dialogue between the two sides about their core interests, red lines, differences and areas of convergence.

External Balancing. We must simultaneously work with other powers to ensure that our region stays multi-polar and that China behaves responsibly. Some of this began as part of the "Look East", now "Act East", policy begun by PM PV Narasimha Rao in 1992, and we are working more closely in defence, intelligence and security with Japan, Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Australia and others.

There has been a lot of talk of the **Indo-Pacific** recently. Freedom of navigation and security in the Indo-Pacific is critical to India's wellbeing and future prosperity. But it is not the answer to our continental security issues, of which there are many, and which are not shared by any of the other members of the Quad. A free and open Indo-Pacific is a noble goal, but it will not be achieved so long as we do not recognise the different geographies, security issues and solutions in the Indian Ocean, the seas near China and the Western Pacific. The western Pacific is dominated by the US Navy. The seas near China are being converted into a Chinese lake, and are the only maritime theatre where China can hope for a favourable balance of power in the near term. The seas near China are enclosed seas, and have, therefore, been battle spaces in history, since powers can hope to control them and what flows through them. The Indian Ocean, on the other

hand, has an open geography, and has, therefore, always been a trading highway rather than a battle space. Even at its height, pax Brittanica never managed to control all the choke points around the Indian Ocean. The security solutions and architecture for each of these bodies of water has, therefore, to be different and designed specifically taking into account the conditions of that sea.

National Security Structures

While the external security organs of the state have evolved considerably in the life of the republic, this is not equally true of the internal security organs. Our biggest security concern today is from within. India has shown an ability to learn and adapt to our external security threats. We have yet to show the same ability for our internal security threats, to modernise policing, for instance, to cope with the results of rapid urbanisation and social churn. This requires us to **reform our policing**, a road map for which the Supreme Court gave us in 1996 but which the states have not implemented.

No strategy can work without it being seen as an integrated whole, without a driving vision, clarity of goals and being matched to the means available and the situation. And that holistic view and the coordination of the various parts of the national effort is why we set up the National Security Council in 1998. NSC and NSCS now twenty years old. We have enough experience to give it a statutory basis and to formalise its working.

Are our structures effective?

Yes, they have been so far. We have built up nuclear deterrence faster than any other nuclear weapon state did; deterred large scale conventional war since 1971. Our national security structures and actions have provided sufficient security and kept the peace for India's best ever period of economic growth and social change in history, namely, the last thirty years.

Are we ready for future challenges?

We are better than before at handling conventional threats, including terrorism. But technology is changing the nature of the threats, as are the changes in India. The new technologies, like ICT, AI etc, empower both the state and small groups and individuals, irrespective of their motivation, good or bad. This has

far reaching consequences and we must stay abreast of the technologies and work out our own counter-measures.

Conclusion

Tactically, China-US contention — which I think is structural and, therefore, likely to continue for some time with a paradigm shift away from cooperation to increasing contention, despite temporary deals and "victories" declared by one or both. This opens up opportunities and space for other powers. Both China and the US will look to put other conflicts and tensions on the back burner while they deal with their primary concern, the other. We have seen this effect already in the Wuhan meeting and the apparent truce and reducing of rhetoric by both India and China, even though this does not extend to a new strategic framework or understanding or to a settlement of outstanding issues.

Strategically speaking, again, there is opportunity for India's transformation. Despite dim prospects for the global economy as a whole, the UN forecasts that If China grows at 3 per cent, India at 4 per cent and the US at 1.5 per cent, by 2050 China's per capita income would be 40 per cent of US levels, and India's at 26 per cent, where China is now. China would be the world's largest economy (in PPP terms), India the second, and the US the third. By that time both China and India will be overwhelmingly urban societies.

Of course, history, like life, is not a linear extrapolation from the past. But given the recent record of India growing at near 7 per cent for over 30 years and China at around 10 per cent for the same period, the lower estimates suggested by the UN appear a reasonable guess. Both India and China have much the same ratio of trade to GDP, show a hesitation in wholeheartedly embracing the private sector, display widening income inequality and distribution failures, and show limited state capacity, particularly in health and education. But rapid growth has given them the means and access to technologies to deal with these problems, if they can manage rising geopolitical risk and avoid costly entanglements abroad.

Seventy years after independence we are better placed and have capabilities that we never had before. And yet, if you were to ask the average Indian, they would tell you that they feel more

insecure than before or than previous generations. And that has a good reason. Our definition of security has grown to include several non-traditional aspects, most of which are now included in "human security". Our expectations of the State and of the world are much higher than they ever were. And this is so at a time when the world itself is much more uncertain than it ever has been since WWII — politically, economically, and in terms of the pace of change in technology and life-styles.

The other reason why Indians do not feel as secure as we did is less well recognised and something of a paradox. As a result of seventy years of development, by most metrics of power India has improved her relative position vis a vis every other country except China. This is particularly true since reforms began in 1991. And yet, today India is more dependent on the outside world than ever before. We rely on the world for energy, technology, essential goods like fertiliser and coal, commodities, access to markets, and capital. Consequently, we cannot think of securing India without considering energy security, food security, and other issues that can derail our quest to transform India, such as climate change and cyber security. We also cannot think of securing India without trying to shape the external environment along with our partners. When you add the new security agenda and the contested global commons in outer and cyber space and the high seas, to our traditional state-centred security concerns such as claims on our territory, nuclear proliferation, state-sponsored cross-border terrorism, etc., you can see why there is greater worry or a sense of insecurity.

As for India, we risk missing the bus to becoming a developed country if we continue business and politics as usual, or try to imitate China's experience in the last forty years, do not adapt, and do not manage our internal social and political churn better. We need fundamental reform of our internal security apparatus and military reform if we are to manage this singular world. Ultimately what should guide us as national security professionals is the quest to make India a great power with a difference, namely, in a way which enables us to achieve Gandhiji's dream of 'wiping the tear from the eye of every Indian'. That would be in keeping with our core values, national interest and is the right objective.

Avoiding war and attaining one's goals is the highest form of strategy by any tradition or book — whether Kautilya, Sun Tzu or

Machiavelli. And if you look at India's record over sixty-eight years of independence, we have not done badly in moving towards our main goal of transforming India. That requires the national security calculus to consider broader questions — from technology issues, like atomic energy and cyber security, to resource issues like energy security, while building the strength to deal with traditional hard security issues. We have weathered several storms and performed our basic functions in the past. But it is certain that what will face us now will not be more of the same. Which brings me to the last and most important improvement that I think we need to make in our national security structures and their work — introducing flexibility into our thinking and our structures. For change is the only certainty in life.

Some Points made by the Speaker in the Q & A Session

- We may not have a written National Security Strategy, but our beliefs constitute our strategic culture. Based upon these our strategic behaviour has by and large been consistent regardless of who is in power in the Central Government.
- Our demography dividend can only be realised if we continue growing. We cannot grow if we cut ourselves off from the world.
- Education is critical to growth as also making sure that all sections of our society are beneficiaries.
- Pakistan will continue to make herself useful to her patrons - China and the USA which will help her to face us.
- What happens between China and the USA is a crucial variable which is important for our security situation.
- It is not that we cannot work with China. Since the 1980s China and India who are the world's largest and second largest importers of fertilizer have coordinated when they go to market to pick up their stocks, lest going in an uncoordinated manner creates a scarcity and drives up prices.
- 34 per cent of India's trade goes through the South China Sea, hence freedom of navigation in this sea is important for India.

- The US-China tariff war is also a consequence of realisation by the US that China is its peer competitor, and the window to prevent the rise of this peer competitor is closing. Since World War II, US core strategic interest has been to prevent the rise of a peer competitor. How far US big business which draws a very sizable part of its profits from trade with China, will go with sanctions remains to be seen.
- In case we are asked to choose to go with either USA or China, we should go with neither. We should maintain our strategic autonomy.
- We need to have hard power, and for that our defence budget needs to be more than what it is presently. At the moment our deterrence is showing signs of being frayed.
- In some way or the other everyone in India is a minority, that is why we are a democracy. Democracy gives inclusiveness and that is what gives us cohesion.
- Military reforms must be related to the current situation and not to the past.
- Almost 90 per cent of the Naresh Chandra Committee and Subramanium committee reports were implemented. But these were the minor recommendations. The major recommendation, in particular for a CDS was not implemented. One reason for this is resistance from within the Services themselves.
- The National Security Advisor (NSA) is essentially an advisor, however; of our five NSAs some have maintained the view that unless you can implement what you advise, then you are of no use. All NSAs tried to do the job in their own image. The experience from USA has generally been that when NSAs (like Kissinger) tried to implement their advise directly themselves, the results were not good.
- Ideally senior serving military officers should be in the National Security Council (NSC), however; not only in the Armed Forces but also in the IAS there is a particular career progression route which gets upset when a rising officer goes off his core field. We must institute a system whereby the career interest of senior officers can be safeguarded in the NSC stream.
- We need specialist security professionals and not generalists.