

# Rising China: Implications for India

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## Introduction

Delhi is Beijing's only economic and geostrategic rival in Asia and regardless of any churning which may take place in the internal power dynamics in China's ruling communist party, Beijing's policy towards Delhi will continue to be shaped by its desire to achieve pre-eminence in the region. China is, today, a major power to reckon with. Under the banner of 'the peaceful rise of China', the Fourth Generation's leadership has transformed the Middle Kingdom into an 'Eden of wild capitalism'.<sup>1</sup> China sees itself as taking the lead in world affairs within the next three to four decades and to that extent would remain assertive with respect to her foreign policy, especially with respect to India. As over 70 per cent of China's oil imports come from the Middle East and Africa, securing of her sea lanes of communication (SLOC) assumes criticality and would shape Chinese policy in the region.

## The Indian Ocean Littoral

An ever-increasing demand for energy fuels China's growth. Its geopolitical strategy dubbed as the "String of Pearls" by American analysts<sup>2</sup> is arising as foreign oil becomes a centre of gravity critical to China's energy needs. Each "pearl" in this string is a nexus of Chinese geopolitical influence or military presence, which stretches from the Hainan Island to Gwadar. China is building strategic relationships and developing a capability to establish a forward presence along the SLOC that connect China to the Middle East. China's development of these strategic geopolitical "pearls" as of now has been non-confrontational. Beyond Taiwan, China's evolving maritime power suggests that the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is concerned with protecting her SLOC to keep open the "choke points" relevant to safeguarding trade and ensuring uninterrupted supply of energy resources. With the exception of "fishing trawlers" occasionally found mapping the ocean floor to facilitate submarine operations, the PLAN has yet to flex any "blue water" muscle. Lack of an aircraft carrier with PLAN is a serious limitation to China's 'Blue Water' ambitions and as of now, the PLAN is many years away from actually launching one.

While Chinese strategy in the Indian Ocean littoral appears non confrontational, India would need to keep a close watch on Chinese capability in the region. Chinese construction of the first phase of the Gwadar Port on the Arabian Sea at a cost of US\$ 250 million is significant as the port would allow China to secure oil and gas supplies from the Persian Gulf and project power in the Indian Ocean.<sup>3</sup> It will also be accessible for Chinese imports and exports through overland links that will stretch to and from Karakoram Highway in Pakistan occupied Kashmir's (POK) Gilgit-Baltistan that borders China's Muslim majority Autonomous Region of Xinjiang. China is reportedly funding most of the second phase as well. On the southern coast of Sri Lanka, China is constructing a port at Hambantota, ten miles from one of the world's busiest shipping routes at a cost of US \$ 1 billion. China plans to use the port as a refuelling and docking station for its navy, as it patrols the Indian Ocean and protects China's supplies of Saudi oil. As of now, China has no plans for a fully fledged naval base at Hambantota.<sup>4</sup> However, its strategic location makes it a very valuable asset for future use. Bangladesh too has offered China naval access to its prized Chittagong port, which India has long but unsuccessfully sought. China is also in the process of upgrading its surveillance capabilities at the Great Coco Islands in Myanmar besides constructing two helipads and storage space for weapons.<sup>5</sup> A Chinese electronic intelligence unit at the Coco Islands tracks India's missile launch facilities on the eastern sea coast at Chandipur in Orissa besides intercepting classified communications emerging from India's first Tri-Services Command at the Andaman and Nicobar. China has also vastly improved and militarised port facilities at Akyab (Sittwe), Mergui and Kyaukpyu where she is also building a deep-sea port. A major naval base on Hainggyi Island near the Irrawaddy river delta has also been constructed.

Chinese geopolitical influence or military presence stretching from Gwadar in Baluchistan Province of Pakistan to the Coco Islands in Myanmar is especially worrisome from the Indian perspective as it gives rise to the possibility of a 'maritime encirclement of India'. This is a futuristic assessment as at this stage in its development Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean littoral is merely aimed at seeking to protect its SLOC and it would take a decade if not more to develop the kind of military force that would be required to give China greater clout in the Indian Ocean. China also must consider the risks and costs of the military dimension of its "String of Pearls" strategy. The perception of an aggressive military build up could create a counterbalancing effect detrimental to Chinese interests. Even a limited forward military presence, to "show the flag," or as a hedge in case the US security guarantees fall short, could conflict with China's path to "peaceful development" and be counterproductive towards China achieving its larger national objectives.

As a counterpoise to growing Chinese military ambitions and maritime power building-up in seeking the control of the Indian Ocean, India needs to act now to preserve its areas of interest. Naval capability is built up over decades and is very cost intensive. Besides blue water capability, it must encompass a robust ship building and repair industry, coastal defence and defence of offshore installations. The coming decades are likely to see greater confrontation on the high seas and we must be prepared to face those challenges. For in the words of Alfred T Mahan, "Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia.... in the 21st century the destiny of the world will be decided on its waves."

## The McMahon Line

India's border with Tibet remains unsettled. While the McMahon Line is the effective boundary between India and

China, its legal status is disputed as China does not accept the validity of the 1914 Simla Accord. Till such time as the border is demarcated, there will always be cause for dispute as China is in illegal occupation of large parts of Indian territory South of the McMahon Line and also lays claim to the whole of Arunachal Pradesh. Post 1962, the India-China border has remained largely peaceful barring a few incidents. A major military offensive by China to enforce its claim lines appears unlikely in the present geopolitical environment. Even so, a major offensive would be very expensive to China both in material and human costs and in all likelihood would also not give them the desired payoff, especially if India uses its Air Force to intercept and interdict Chinese targets on either side of the Tsang Po River. The greater danger would lie in a limited incursion by the Chinese to partially alter the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Such a scenario could arise if China faces an economic downswing leading to severe dissidence at home in its coastal regions or if insurgency flares up in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) or Xinjiang Province. China could then ratchet up war hysteria against India to divert attention from its domestic problems. A suitable and apt response to a limited military action by China would require to be well thought out.

## **Neighbouring Countries**

China's growing influence in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal would need to be watched and countered both diplomatically and economically. Closer ties with China provide Bangladesh with a sense of security against India. China values Bangladesh for its immense natural gas reserves whereas Bangladesh's geographical proximity to Myanmar makes these reserves accessible to China through pipelines as also providing a strategic foothold to China in South Asia.<sup>6</sup> The Bangladesh Armed Forces are largely equipped with Chinese armaments and while the military is not too happy with the quality of Chinese arms, they are unable to find other goods as cheap. In terms of economic cooperation, there is greater scope for trade with India. Relevant in this regard is a statement by the Bangladesh Additional Foreign Secretary, "We have nothing to sell to the Chinese. We could sell a great deal more to the Indians, if they allowed us." Bangladesh also shares three of its borders with India and none with China, thereby limiting Bangladesh's ability to distance itself from India.

While India considers Nepal a part of its sphere of influence, it is increasingly being challenged by China's inroads into Nepal with China providing assistance in exploiting Nepal's hydro electric potential and in construction of road and rail linkages. Military assistance to the tune of US \$ 2.6 million has been pledged for Nepal's security sector. There has thus evolved a multi-layered engagement between China and Nepal which supports its wider South Asia policy. In Myanmar, China's strategic objective appears to be to gain direct access to the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea through Myanmar, bypassing the narrow Straits of Malacca.<sup>7</sup> China has greater economic, political, and military clout than India in helping out the military regime and given this advantage, India is unlikely to replace China's position as the most influential country in Myanmar. However, both Chinese and Indian interests converge in Myanmar towards economic development and maintenance of peace. While there would be competition, there would also be cooperation.

Chinese policy toward Pakistan is driven primarily by its interest in countering Indian power in the region and diverting Indian military force and strategic attention away from China. It also provides a bridge between Beijing and the Muslim world, a geographically convenient trading partner, and a channel into security and political relations in South Asia. For Pakistan, China is a high-value guarantor of security against India. The China-Pakistan partnership serves both Chinese and Pakistani interests by presenting India with a potential two-front threat in the event of war with either country. Chinese officials also view a certain degree of India-Pakistan tension as advancing their own strategic interests as such friction bogs India down in South Asia and interferes with New Delhi's ability to assert its global ambitions and compete with China at the international level. However, rising instability in Pakistan due to internal threats from fundamentalist forces is a cause of concern for China which is dealing with Uyghur separatists in its Muslim majority Xinjiang province. There is also concern of the utility of the Gwadar Port, given the state of unrest in Baluchistan. While Chinese support to Pakistan is likely to be more nuanced in future, she will continue to maintain a robust defence relationship with Pakistan as a useful way to contain Indian power.

## **Water Wars**

Perhaps the greatest threat to India are the Chinese plans to divert the waters of the Himalayan rivers to North China. The plan, dubbed the Western Route Scheme calls for building a massive hydroelectric dam and water-diversion scheme on the great bend of the Tsang Po River.<sup>8</sup> Of concern to India is the plan that calls for changing the direction in which the Tsang Po flows, to make it feed into the South-to-North Transfer project. By the time the river enters India as the Brahmaputra River, most of its water would have been diverted to China with disastrous consequences for the State of Assam and Bangladesh. Beijing has repeatedly denied any such intentions but rumours persist that a diversion project is in fact underway. Work is currently scheduled to begin in 2010, but it would not be completed until 2050. India needs to be alert to developments in this field, lest it be presented with a fait accompli in the years to come. She would also need to plan for a suitable response to prevent such an occurrence.

## **Assessment**

As China and India rise politically and economically on the world stage, it is natural that they compete with one another for influence. Rivalry between the two nations will be fuelled especially by each country's efforts to reach into the other's traditional spheres of influence, for example, China in South Asia and India in Southeast Asia. China's willingness to overlook human rights and democracy concerns in its relations with the smaller South Asian states will at times leave India at a disadvantage in asserting its power in the region, as was seen recently in Nepal and Sri Lanka. India will need to significantly enlarge its economic footprint in the South Asian region to ensure it maintains an edge in its traditional spheres of influence.

Energy competition between India and China is also reflected in the two countries' assertions of naval power. As India reaches into the Malacca Strait, Beijing is developing facilities along the Indian Ocean littoral to protect SLOC and ensure uninterrupted energy supplies. Militarily, there can be no let up in India's preparation to counter any Chinese misadventure. In the Himalayas, India will have to ensure air superiority at least in the areas South of the Tsang Po River. It will also have to upgrade its artillery capability in the mountains as well as develop infrastructure compatible to that which China has built up in Tibet. India will also have to ensure that its Navy maintains an edge in the Indian Ocean region to protect its national interests. To that extent, it is time that the Country takes a de novo look on prioritising its defence expenditure to meet the challenges of the future. India also needs to change the way in which advice is tendered to the Government so that the Services' concerns are adequately represented to ensure that the Nation's defence is not compromised.

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# Contesting Asia-Pacific: The United States of America, China and India

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## Introduction

Asia is the “cockpit of great power politics”<sup>1</sup>, and this contest will play around three parallel important relationships, viz., Sino-Indian, Sino-US and Indo-US relations. Other powers will form the backdrop around which this triad will play out. Tilting of one relationship either way could alter the Asian systemic balance. Two developments posit a defining trend in the triad of relations; one is Indo-US relations, especially in post-nuclear deal period, and the other is growing convergence between the USA and China. Deepening of Sino-US relations and Indo-US relations have an element of contradiction at systemic level; it is interesting to see how this is managed or plays itself out. Sino-Indian relations have improved considerably, yet the relations work under the overall atmosphere of rivalry and distrust. It is unlikely that this would go away in the near future.

This paper aims at exploring the nature and objectives of the three nations inter se relations and their rivalry in the Asia-Pacific region. They cannot formulate their Asian Security policies without taking each other into account. The peculiarity of their relationship is that they try to determine not only their own individual relationships but also strive to influence the policies of other countries also, especially in Asia. China wants to restrict India to South Asia. The USA wants to help India acquire its rightful position in the global affairs. However, it will take shape in a medley of American engagement in Asia – an interesting scenario which merits exploration. The close economic relationship between the sole super power the USA and rising power China will have a critical impact on the present global economic crises. India is reaping strategic consequences of economic growth, albeit diminished by recent global economic crisis.<sup>2</sup> The economic growth is engendering an “irresistible global power shift to East” constructing a new Asian hemisphere.<sup>3</sup> It is notable that these positive trends are taking place in Asia-Pacific. Asia-Pacific accounts for nearly half of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and in post-1990 period majority of the world economic growth has taken place.

Asia-Pacific is a loose geographical term which, generally, refers to littoral countries of the Pacific – the USA, China, Japan, Russia and Australia are its prominent constituents. India constituting a part of the Asia-Pacific is a matter of debate. India is seen as an Indian Ocean power. The American Pacific Command includes India as an area of responsibility. Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) does not include India, but informal Council for Security Cooperation in Asia Pacific (CSCAP) includes it. Regions are a construct, made by practices of states and non-state actors (amity and enmity).<sup>4</sup> Regions are in continuous state of formation. The inter se economic and security relations between the USA, China and India have become entwined in Asian geo-politics and cannot be discussed without considering each other’s interests.

## Sino-Indian Relations

If one word is to be used to characterise Sino-Indian relations, it would be 'rivalry'. Both China and India are ancient civilisations, with cultural and strategic influence spreading outside their territories. In the post-1962 period, India has been trying to salvage this relationship. The trade between the two countries has increased manifold from around \$ 12 billion in 2007 to \$ 40 billion in 2009. Border trade between the two has started at Nathu La Pass. China has given de-facto recognition to Sikkim as Indian territory. Further, the relations are marred by repeated border intrusions, raising suspicion regarding Chinese intentions and objectives. Arunachal Pradesh has become a sore point in bilateral relations. China earlier opposed Asian Development Banks granting of loan for projects in Arunachal Pradesh arguing it to be disputed.

In public pronouncements, China and India maintain that Asia has enough space to accommodate the ‘rise’ of both the countries. However, China continues to be “tactically offensive”, to alter the criterion on which to settle the border dispute. China is constraining India in its own backyard South Asia. China has set-up a number of naval bases around India. The Chinese help in augmenting Pakistani capabilities is immense. China is involved in setting-up of Gwadar port, which is a strategic location for the Chinese navy, close to the Strait of Hormuz. China’s naval presence has extended to countries like Bangladesh’s Chittagong port, Hambantota port of Sri Lanka, Marao port of Maldives and Hianggyi and Coco Islands in Myanmar. In a nutshell, China’s expanse in the Indian Ocean region is tremendous. China’s growing closeness with the political forces in Nepal is worrying India.

India’s foray in South East Asia through “Look East” policy was a handmaiden of its economic policy. India joined Association of South East Asia Nations (ASEAN) Regional Security Forum in 1996. It was an attempt at balancing rising China. India also became a part of East Asia Summit in an attempt to hedge against China. However, the most important country which would be helpful in hedging China, the USA is not part of the East Asia Summit. India’s forays in security related issues in South East Asia had aimed to counter China’s rise, and to project itself in the wider Asia-Pacific region. ASEAN countries were also apprehensive of China’s growth and wanted to hedge in, wherein India could be an important balancer. Yet, the most important balancer in the region is the USA, which provides confidence to East Asian states to engage China.

In the early 1990s there was much apprehension in South East Asian countries over Chinese strategic behaviour. By now “China fear” syndrome has turned into “China fever” syndrome.<sup>5</sup> Instead of the regional countries acting as means of balancing China, they are taking part in economic growth centred around China. It is early to say

whether ASEAN and its derivative institutions are binding the regional behemoth or they are being used by China to dissipate the counter-balancing forces. Also, the economic inter-dependency generated is so deep that the apprehensions of China edging out the USA are being raised. According to a Rand study, China's economic link with the South East Asian countries is very strong, yet it is not transferable to political influence.<sup>6</sup> It is true that China has not tried to flex its muscles except occasional sparring between the countries over territories and territorial waters. It has managed to convey its peaceful intention to the neighbouring countries. Even though the minor infringements are limited in scope, they do tend to keep the pot boiling and other states remain unsure of China's future options and strategies. The most recent example of testing waters was a naval spat with the US surveillance ship *Impeccable* in South China Sea. China claimed that the ship was in their territorial waters, yet the suspicion is that China was trying to test the new Obama administration.

In comparison to China, India's economic engagement with the ASEAN, which is an essential part of the 'look east' policy, has grown but remained short of expectations. India tried other institutional mechanisms like BIMSTEC (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation), Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, coupled with arrangements with ASEAN. India-ASEAN trade has increased to the level of \$ 38 billion. BIMSTEC was formed in 1997, it was more aimed at compensating SAFTA's (South Asian Free Trade Area) failure. However, trade under BFTA (BIMSTEC Free Trade Area) is full of potential. Despite these engagements the Indian need for an appropriate regional institution persists. India has been able to use these regional and sub-regional mechanisms to strengthen its 'look east' engagement. India's strategic 'look east' policy has been ably helped by the opening up of economy, growing closeness between India and the USA and willingness of the regional states to court India in order to hedge against rising China.

India's economic engagement with the South East Asian countries is substantial, yet it cannot match the Chinese economic presence in the region. China ranks in top three export destinations of the six East Asian countries. China's trade with the South East Asian countries has reached upto \$ 280 billion. Coupled with this is the growing closeness between the USA and China, but how it will affect the regional geopolitics is the moot point.

### **Sino-US Relations**

Sino-US relations after having wild swings in early 1990s, have come to occupy a relatively stable phase of relationship. Despite the stability of relationship on the surface, and growing inter-dependence between the two, it is unlikely that this relationship has reached its ideal pattern. Rather, it is bound to be the most contested relationship in times to come. The USA is a global superpower and China is a challenger. Yet, at what spectrum level the power politics between the two will take place, is the critical issue. Also, in their desire to compete with each other, what effect they will have on each other and other powers, is worth noting. The USA, as a global superpower, has come to symbolise certain values, e.g. liberal democracy, free trade, human rights and to some extent multilateralism.

China began opening its economy in 1978, under the guidance of Deng Xiaoping which had more domestic determinants, than the idea of competing with each other. However, presently China has become a manufacturing base of the world. China's entry into World Trade Organisation (WTO) in 2001 was facilitated by the USA. Yet, presently China has come to represent alternative to Washington Consensus, called Beijing Consensus. This has especially become important in the wake of the present global financial crises, which has seen the financial architecture built around Bretton woods institution inadequate. Beijing Consensus emphasis is on state intervention in the market. China is one of the few countries, which is likely to emerge stronger from the global economic crises. China holds nearly a trillion dollar US treasury receipts. China has embarked on aid diplomacy, whereby it has given aid liberally to many countries. This has added to China's positive image, gained during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis, when it didn't devalue its currency. In the global financial crisis, China has emerged as an economic power in its own right.

China can hope to build an economic arrangement quite distinct from the USA. If China and the USA are to compete economically, despite their burgeoning trade, the likely competition will be in East Asia. According to Bergsten, "the systemic issue is the potential clash between a China led Asia and the US-led "west" for leadership of the global economy."<sup>7</sup> China through a number of popular economic incentives like Chiang Mai Initiative has developed a positive atmosphere in the neighbourhood. The East Asia region increasingly falling into the Chinese sphere of influence is likely. China and the USA have recently completed a Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED), first since Barack Obama took over as the US President. It stressed on the need to reduce US trade deficit, and reduce over-consumption in the USA. The talks were hailed as success, emphasising close economic cooperation.

The American security interests in Asia-Pacific in particular, are centred on preventing any state to negatively affect policy choices in the region. The US military presence in the region is adequate to safeguard this. The USA and its key allies like Japan, South Korea and Australia are key allies helpful in achieving its objective. Yet, due to US involvement in Global War on Terror in Afghanistan and Iraq, the region had suffered a low priority. It has tried to correct by appointing an Ambassador for ASEAN, and signing of the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation. China's over-arching economic role in the Asia-Pacific cannot be overlooked either. Sino-US relations are discussed under two broad policy choices of containment and engagement, but the former policy is increasingly becoming redundant, both due to the peaceful neighbourhood policy of China and interdependencies generated due to growing economic engagement. The USA's traditional policy of 'hub and spoke' alliance is loosening under Chinese charm offensive.

The policy implications for Sino-US relations are that they are unlikely to deteriorate. China is cautious, and the USA is careful, on this aspect in their bilateral relationship. China's prime security interest is in Taiwan, on which the USA's policy is not to alter the status-quo. It will always remain difficult to say whether the USA will be

willing to fight China to defend Taiwan. Japan becoming more and more self-reliant in its defence and security policies will be in favour of China. The recent election of Yukio Hatoyama has stressed the need to take a re-look into the US-Japan special relationship, and forge an East Asian Community – with China and Korea. The US-Japan relationship will continue to be the axis of the USA's involvement in East Asia. However, growing economic relationship between China and Japan will lessen their security anxieties. Similarly, the growing relationship between Australia and China is likely to restrain Australia from supporting the USA in containment efforts against China.

Sino-US relations continue to grow with convergence at both bilateral and systemic levels. Bilaterally, economic convergence is too deep to ignore, and at systemic level convergence is on maintaining or modifying the international system. This convergence is very ably presented in Zbigniew Brzezinski's idea of G-2 (Group of Two). China's active role in Six Party Talks, accession to WTO, is unlikely to make it a revisionist state. Further, China, despite being active on global scale from Latin America to Africa, is unlikely to take an active policeman's role, as the USA is doing in Afghanistan and Iraq. China's emergence as a great power may not be antithetical to the US hegemony. China's prime strategic area of importance is Asia-Pacific, which is in congruence with its historical middle kingdom syndrome. Sino-US converging on recognising Asia-Pacific as Chinese strategic sphere of influence has theoretical basis in US "off-shore strategy."<sup>8</sup> In "off-shore" strategy the USA is supposed to be off-shore from East Asia. It is also noteworthy that Chinese accession of influence in East Asia has come at a period when the USA has adopted a muscular security policy. In this period China has increased its influence in ASEAN countries, as the ASEAN countries were presented with a fait accompli, where they have no choice but to engage with China. Economic benefits were an added advantage.

Sino-US relations have become too closely tied to unravel; it imparts an element of inevitability in China's rise, where neighbouring states have no option but to engage China. The only option is either, they are early gatecrashers to China's party or, reluctant latecomers. In this context, whether the Indo-US relations would attain their full potential, is difficult to say.

### **Indo-US Relations**

From, India's perspective this is the most important relationship, both for its intrinsic value and symbolic representation. In the recent past, the Indo-US relations have improved considerably. The Indo-US Nuclear deal signified and symbolises this recognition.

Indo-US nuclear deal gives legitimacy to Indian nuclear programme. It makes import of Uranium and technological transfers possible. But that is more mired in micro details. Australia has refused to give Uranium to India. The Indo-US relations have progressed in the military relations area. India and the US have conducted more than fifty joint exercises. This bilateral relationship has the highest elements of social relationship, owing to the movement of people as compared with Sino-Indian relations. The Indo-US cultural relations are one of the stabilising features. This is the essential core of the relationship, which will not let the relationship drift beyond a point. Presently, this core is adequately complemented by strong strategic relationship.

India has gained de-hyphenation from Pakistan. But the securitisation of the relationship between the two is so much that the relationship can be hardly de-hyphenated. The apprehension was evident in the context of appointment of the US representative on Afghanistan Richard Holbrooke, who was supposed to look into Kashmir problem as well. Intense diplomacy on India's part could ward off the US involvement in Kashmir. The euphoria generated under the Republican Government has become tepid in the new democrat government of Barack Obama. This also symbolises the limitations inherent in the Indo-US relationship. The Indo-US nuclear deal epitomises the acme of the bilateral relationship. It has also concomitant economic logic of nuclear reactor industry of the USA.

Overall, the rhetoric of Condoleezza Rice helping India achieve its rightful place in the world, weighs heavily on the atmospherics. Yet, the exact role for India in its scheme of things is not clear. The important posts of the bilateral relationship can be equally, if not more, argued as cold strategic pursuit of the US interests. The recent controversy over Enrichment and Reprocessing Technology, intrusive End User Verifications mechanism is a case in point. The Indo-US relations crests have been immediately followed by troughs. It is not meant that relations fall outside the dictum of realism where states are following their national interests.

Rather, the Indo-US relations operate under a set of deep-seated set of constraints, which will prevent the relationship from realising its full potential. There are some fundamental truths of the relationship that, unlike Sino-India relations, which have the dangers of deteriorating into a border skirmish, the Indo-US relations are free of such existential crisis. But Indo-US relations are likely to remain a stand alone relationship. It is unlikely that they would transform into an anti-China front, both because of the growing cordiality between Sino-US relations and Indian perception of their own national interests. Even in the benign gaze of the US offshore grand strategy, India will in all likelihood, be reduced to guarding the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOC), as Sahni argues in "neighbourhood watch".<sup>9</sup> At times this could be coupled with "disaster diplomacy" in Indian Ocean Region like aid to tsunami affected littoral states. It is unlikely that the stand alone relations between the USA and India would help to reap dividends in the Asia-Pacific. Apart from joint military exercises in the region, most importantly Malabar series of exercises, the relations are likely to retain a South Asian regional focus, alternating between country hyphenation with Pakistan and issue hyphenation with terrorism. Ideally, the goal should be to manoeuvre the positive relationship between India and the USA in Asia-Pacific. But unfortunately, at the time of peak of relationship between India and the USA (during Bush era), latter was nearly absent in South East Asia. Now, with Hillary Clinton's Indonesia visit, the region has come back into focus, but the Indo-US relations have lost the euphoria of Bush years.

## Conclusion

The Asian security architecture will be guided by Sino-US-Indian relationship dynamics. Sino-US relationship, would have major impact on emerging Asian architecture. The USA's permanent strategic footprint in Asia-Pacific, ensured through allies like Japan and South Korea, is likely to remain. But it is appearing more as guarantee against worst case scenarios, and giving the regional countries confidence to economically engage China. India has been striving to improve its strategic presence. However, given the constraints, Indian position is likely to become difficult and the relationship with China would become stressful. The recent repeated border incursions indicate that. In this context, evolution of an Asian Cooperative Security structure is less likely as China would continue to ignore India. Existing security fora are too loose and out of focus to impart necessary security benefits to affected countries in the region.

The Indian options in this strategic flux are limited. As Sahni argues, "India would be too big to hide but not sufficiently powerful to transcend, unwilling to bandwagon with China, but also unwilling to get involved in the American balancing game."<sup>10</sup> The most important realisation is that India cannot play the waiting game; as its strategic choices become more constrained. India has rightly accelerated the pace of military preparedness along the Sino-Indian border. It also reflects the gradual realisation, that augmenting of military capabilities has become a comparatively easier option, to enhance national power for safeguarding national interests. Though, economic diplomacy is the flavour, yet its potential is reaching deadlock. Doha round of talks is stuck; the domestic apprehension of signing FTA (Free Trade Area) with ASEAN is a pointer in itself. Further, India's 'look east' policy, though successful has to be re-invented. The ASEAN and its instruments are becoming Sinophilic. Taking a strategic look at the region is essential.<sup>11</sup> Here, Indonesia could play an important part, which has a revisionist tendency of seeing region dominated by small powers<sup>12</sup>. Hillary Clinton's visit to Indonesia emphasised the strategic importance of the Country. Indian Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor paid a visit to Indonesia to emphasise growing military ties between the two countries. Therefore, to achieve balance vis-à-vis China, there is a need for India to leverage its 'bigness' in the Asia-Pacific, by transcending South Asia, and cooperating with the USA.

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# Beyond the ADB: China, India and the Global Rivalry

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## **Introduction**

Contemporary relations between China and India have often been characterised by concurrent traits of cooperation, competition and coexistence. There have been many occasions in past when the two countries have competed for power and influence in international relations. However, while the previous power games were discreet and often sugar-coated with cooperative instincts, this time it has come out in open. The occasion was the recent opposition by China to Asian Development Bank's (ADB) 'Country Partnership Strategy for India (CPS) 2009-12 that sought a \$ 2.9 billion funding to India's infrastructure projects including some in Arunachal Pradesh, an Indian territory that is claimed by China. While Chinese opposition did not succeed, its approach was quite ruthless and direct. Months later after the incident, China continues to rage in frustration while Indians are still in shock and displeased about the blatant display of Chinese competitive politics. Either way, the ADB episode represents potential challenges which, if allowed to proliferate, would derail the bilateral relations and push the two countries towards unmanageable rivalry.

## **The ADB controversy**

The ADB controversy has come at a time when China and India are placed in the best phase of their bilateral relations. The border dispute, responsible for the 1962 War and much of the bad blood after that, remains sidelined in favour of a healthy cobweb of bilateral relations. Politically, the two countries have shown signs of accommodation and tolerance towards each other and have in fact cooperated on many issues in international relations. Economically, Sino - Indian bilateral trade has grown by leaps and bounds defying all benchmarks and estimations. Indeed, China has become the numero uno trade partner for India. Militarily, the two countries have overcome the one time hostile positioning along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) through a series of confidence building measures (CBMs) and indeed have participated in many joint military exercises, both on land and at sea.

All these developments have not deterred China to play power games against India, as and when opportunities knock. Towards the end of March this year, China used the ADB platform to withhold approval for CPS 2009-12 for India. China contended that part of the funds (\$ 60 million) were meant for certain schemes in India's Arunachal Pradesh which is also claimed by China and hence, a disputed territory.<sup>1</sup> India, as expected, opposed the move submitting that economic issues before a multilateral institution like ADB should not be mixed with bilateral issues like territorial dispute.

The impasse, however, ended with the ADB setting aside China's objection and approving the India Plan in mid - June 2009. Several factors account for India having overcome Chinese objection. First, China and India have almost same votes in the ADB (5.442 per cent and 5.352 per cent respectively).<sup>3</sup> Lack of asymmetry aside, China also failed to convince other countries and build an anti - India coalition in the ADB. Second, India argued that the CPS is neither a political document nor does it not make any judgement as to the legal or any other status of any territory and that China's objection on political grounds was a clear violation of the ADB's Charter.<sup>4</sup> Indian diplomacy burnt the midnight lamp in winning over biggies like the USA, Japan and South Korea apart from convincing other countries that could have derailed India's efforts, notably Pakistan.<sup>5</sup> Third, Chinese diplomacy of mixing business with politics, if allowed to succeed, could have had negative consequences for national projects of many countries. Many of these countries do not have alternative sources of funding like India. Fourth, this was for the first time such an objection had been raised in ADB. There was also a possibility of India reviewing its entire gamut of relations with ADB. Certainly, ADB would not have liked to earn the displeasure of India that has been its largest loan recipient last year amounting to \$ 2.9 billion. Little wonder, when the ADB's Board of Executive Directors met on 15th June 2009, all member countries except China supported the CPS.

## **Beyond the ADB: Competition Galore**

While the ADB is certainly the first platform where China has opposed India rather openly, there have been other international platforms where India has been at the receiving end of the Chinese competitive politics, albeit in a discreet manner. When the East Asian Community was in its fledgling stage, Chinese formulations envisaged no membership for India.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, for a long time, China was loath to India's entry into the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as an observer and budged only when it was given a similar status in SAARC. In recent times, Chinese presence has increased phenomenally in the Indian Ocean and its naval relations with many littoral states is being perceived in India as a step to restrain India's maritime influence. While all these issues are sidelined in favour of an up-building Sino - Indian relations, the Indian psyche is still peeved by the consistent and rather virulent opposition by China to India's candidature to a permanent seat in the proposed restructuring of the UN Security Council. By proposing a formula and insisting on a consensus, China is being discreet and yet showcasing a 'denial strategy' to India.

The rise in comprehensive power of the two countries has only complicated the problem. With many issues holding the bilateral relations still from being normal, the theater of mutual competition has expanded to other areas. The two countries have often adopted different stands not only in multilateral institutions but also in regional architectures on security and economic cooperation; have been competing for resources and influence in

distant lands; and above all, have polarly opposite perception of many issues in international relations. This adds weight to the hypothesis by pragmatist Sinologists in India that Sino - Indian rivalry would be characterised by competition and cooperation.

### **China's Intentions**

On the face of it, China opposed the ADB loan to India since it involved a territory that China claims as its own! For that matter, China has been critical of all official announcements by the Government of India in respect to Arunachal Pradesh and has not lost any opportunity to criticise economic, military or political decisions by the Government of India or visits by top political leadership. Chinese aggrandisements on Arunachal Pradesh have become sharp in recent years and the reasons could be the ongoing border talks between the two countries. Of late, China has shown focussed interest in Arunachal, particularly the Tawang tract, and is not even willing to discuss its earlier 'swap proposals'. Diplomatic roadblocks in multilateral institutions like ADB could be, therefore, Chinese pressure tactics to extract more concessions from India as the border talks enter the critical phase.

However, there is more to Chinese opposition than what was visible in ADB. Multilateral institutions, more so in Asia - Pacific region, provide China a cool instrument to project its power. China has been an active participant in all regional security forums, acting as winds beneath the wings of many of them. In recent times, China has also increased the frequency of joint military exercises with foreign militaries and has increased its presence in distant waters in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, it has become an active partner in the security and community building exercises with considerable success and expansion in its power and influence. Unfortunately, while this may be acceptable to smaller countries in the Asia - Pacific region, countries with rising power status in the region such as Japan and India may find it difficult to go the whole hog with China's expanding global ambitions. That being the case, China's insistence on conditionalities and formulae for relations between these countries and the multilateral institutions is liable to be interpreted as amounting to 'Sino centrism', i.e., peace at Chinese terms.

In recent times, China's own perception of India has undergone from 'a benign neglect' to a rising great power with own sets of aspirations<sup>8</sup>. As India climbs up the power ladder and spreads its influence far and wide beyond the traditional perimeters, China sniffs more competition and a relative decline in its own influence amongst the comity of nations. The ideal solution for China would be to find ways and means to keep India boxed within the sub-continental politics of South Asia. Perhaps, this explains why China has been so welcome and magnanimous to the militaries of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

### **India's Response**

New Delhi may have managed to overcome the Chinese opposition in ADB and put an end to the polemics in vogue since late March this year, but the episode haunts both the countries. While China was furious at the ADB decision<sup>9</sup>, India, in a couple of belated reactions, used public as well as diplomatic means to convey its displeasure to China.<sup>10</sup> The Indian media has also reacted, highlighting the alacrity with which China has been denigrating India in recent times on a number of issues.<sup>11</sup> However, most reactions in India are characterised by ad-hocism and emotionalism and do not suggest a grand strategy against Chinese power politics. Perhaps this explains why China has excellent relations with most South Asian countries and the consolidated its presence near the Indian waters, much to the chagrin of India. This also explains why India has not been able to overcome the Chinese resistance and win a seat in the UN Security Council.

ADB or no ADB, China will continue to play power games as and when it sniffs an opportunity. The anti - China coalition that was available to India in Manila may not be available elsewhere since it was a stand alone case; in fact, at times, the same countries could turn the heat on India as witnessed by the recent focus of the NPT towards India. New Delhi has a real challenge to devise diplomatic ways and means to handle future Chinese obstacles or the balance of power games. Unfortunately, Sinologists in India are in no hurry to study a rising China and suggest policy feedbacks to the Government for handling ADB type cases. Often, this makes it easier for non-China experts to feed pessimistic prognosis on the future of China - India relations.<sup>12</sup>

### **Managing the Rivalry**

Since China and India are undergoing a power transition, there would be numerous occasions when the two countries would be tempted to compete with each other. Some of these challenges should remain dormant with increased mutual confidence and trust. Sino - Indian rivalry can be further managed by minimising competition and maximising cooperation between them. The theoretical literature is near unanimous on the gains from cooperation; the recent history of Sino - Indian relations is replete with gains from cooperation at bilateral and multilateral level; and there is no reason to doubt the potential yields in future.

Further, strategic coexistence being the defining feature of Sino - Indian relationship, both countries have to accommodate each other's rise and ensure a peaceful evolution of bilateral relations. Very rarely, history has witnessed two great powers, who are neighbours, rising peacefully, there being ample strategic space for both of them. China and India should not loose track of this opportunity. China - India game, in the coming days, will be played in different corners of the planet and in different segments of their relations. Cooperative instincts will be mutually beneficial for both of them as witnessed in few cases in Africa and Central Asia.

While the ADB has left India with a bitter taste, it must offer a sweet tooth to China and maintain an engaging relationship. The good thing is that even with episodes like ADB, the larger framework of constructing a healthy Sino - Indian relations remains intact and so does the political will on both sides of the Himalayas, as witnessed during the meeting of top leadership of the two countries at the Yekaterinburg summit of the BRIC countries and

at the 13th round of border talks at New Delhi. However, behind the veil, India must watch and study Chinese power projection in political, economic and military fields for the engagement processes to be meaningful. Perhaps, here-in lies the challenge for Indian policy makers.

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# Water Security in India's Neighbourhood\*

Vice Admiral Pradeep Kaushiva, UYSM, VSM (Retd)\*\*

## Introduction

It is almost uncanny that having sprung up thousands of years apart, in different geographical locations and completely unconnected with each other at the time; the Chinese, the Hindus, the Greeks and the Japanese all identified water, air and earth as primary elements essential for creation and sustenance of all life. All along history, bitter battles have been fought over earth, and continue to do so today, but air and water are more of modern day anxieties. Air, which had been freely available, has been contaminated equally freely. But it can be regenerated and the environment recharged, if determined steps are taken on a global basis. Water, however, is unique in that it has always had to be searched for because its global distribution is uneven and it directly shapes the lifestyle on a local basis.

The following underlying issues distinguish water from the other life critical elements:

- (a) Firstly, the UN Development Programme Human Development Report 2006 has brought out that "...scarcity at the heart of the global water crisis is rooted in power, poverty and inequality, not in physical availability..".<sup>1</sup> To this extent, the issue is not really of how much water is available, but more of how we manage whatever quantities are available.
- (b) Secondly, unlike other resources of the world, sharing of water resources has a unique feature of geographical connectivity inherent to it. Two human settlements a few hundred kilometers apart can evolve, mature and flourish with completely different languages, cultures and ideologies. On the other hand, the same two settlements will have their destinies scripted together, if there is a water body connecting them.
- (c) Thirdly, nations need to be sensitive to water-anxieties of their neighbours because of the immense potential for conflict on account of its economic, social, environmental and political impact on communities.

## Global Statistics

More than three quarters of our planet is covered with water but 97 per cent of the water on this earth is saline. Of the remaining 3 per cent, which is fresh water; 79 per cent is stored in polar ice caps or high mountain glaciers, 20 per cent is in ground waters, and barely 1 per cent is in the form of easily accessible surface freshwater.<sup>2</sup> All life on our good planet is sustained by this accessible surface freshwater, i.e. by less than .03 per cent of the total, and even of that only a fraction can be managed.

There is tremendous inequity in access to safe water. Today, more than 1.1 billion people have inadequate access to potable water (roughly one sixth of the world's population) and 2.6 billion people lack basic sanitation services (about one third of the world's population).<sup>3</sup> And, most of these people live in less developed and more populous countries. In order to meet the basic needs, every individual needs 50 liters of water per day, free from harmful contaminants. Just to compare, in the USA the average water use is 400 ltrs per person per day, in Europe it is 200 ltrs<sup>4</sup> and in the UK it is 148 ltrs per person per day with a high of 170 liters in south east of England and the government target is 130.5 And, it is estimated that 1.1 billion people worldwide get to use only about 5 ltrs of water per person per day.

## Indian Statistics

India has 2.4 per cent of the world's land area, 17.2 per cent of the world population and 4 per cent of the world's water resources potential. Average annual precipitation provides 4,000 BCM of fresh water to India. The natural cycle of seasons releases 75 per cent of the rain water during monsoons and 25 per cent during rest of the year resulting in floods and droughts all the year round. Impact of this needs to be viewed in the light that for the 183 million hectares of cultivable land in India, there is ultimate irrigation potential of 140 million hectares and out of 141 million hectares net sown area in 2003-04, net irrigated area was only 55.1 million hectares.

Most urban areas are serviced by a municipal water distribution system, usually originating from local reservoirs or canals. But in some cases water is imported through inter-basin transfer. Although the major cities in India enjoy access to central water supply systems, these schemes often do not adequately cover the entire urban population and are often inefficient and unreliable. In rural areas, access to water is even more precarious. Over 80 per cent of the rural domestic water comes from groundwater sources but in areas where water is scarce, rural women need to travel long distances to wells or streams to fetch water for their daily needs.

## Domestic Challenges

Modern India is a union of 35 states and territories whose population of 1.03 billion in 2001 had 28 per cent urban residents and 72 per cent rural dwellers in approximately 650,000 villages.

The management of India's water resources falls under the jurisdiction of a number of government agencies, although the primary responsibility for the development of water belongs to individual States. The Central government oversees implementation of national policy on resource development and exploitation, as well as manages inter-state and international rivers and river valleys. It also provides technical advice to individual

States on development, flood control, navigation, coastal erosion, dam safety, navigation and hydropower, if required.

Since the majority of rivers in India are shared between neighbouring States, the Parliament enacted Interstate Water Disputes Act in 1956 to adjudicate any disputes regarding the distribution or control of the rivers or the river valleys. The Act gives Central Government, the power to constitute Tribunals to serve as intermediaries in the disputes that can, and often do arise, because in a democratic set up there are divergent pulls based on public perceptions. The Tamil Nadu-Karnataka dispute about sharing of Cauvery waters is a case in point. In our set up, even considered decisions sometimes need to be reviewed in the light of popular sentiment. Some of these can delay or even derail reservoir creation projects such as Narmada Sagar dam.

## India and Her Neighbours

In 1960, Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, signed the Indus Water Treaty after nearly a decade of negotiations. History records that the basic framework of the treaty has withstood the test of nearly half a century including armed conflicts between the two countries. Leadership of both countries demonstrated immense maturity in not inflicting permanent or even temporary hardships on hapless civilian populations of each other. In peacetime, however, there has been a lot of back and forth on the utilisation of rivers - mainly in the form of objections from Pakistan. Some illustrative examples are :

- (a) Tulbul Navigation Project.** This was designed to retard the Jhelum flood within banks of the Wulur Lake through which the river passes, for the twin purpose of augmenting power output of Uri and Mangla projects in India and Pakistan and keeping the Jhelum navigable for longer stretch to provide cheap transport for fruit growers. This purely economic dividend was seen by Pakistan as a means to control the flow of the river to be used as a geo-strategic weapon - arguing that Tulbul would be a storage dam which is barred by the Treaty. Work on the project was started by the Jammu and Kashmir State Government in 1984 but was stopped at the request of Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.
- (b) Salal Project.** Due to silting earth and boulders, the bed level has risen upto three fourths of the dam height reducing the power generation to the order of 50 per cent. Desilting is possible by opening the gates of the dam but Pakistan is apprehensive that her low lying areas could be devastated.
- (c) Baglihar Dam Controversy.** The Chenab river originating in Himachal Pradesh, collects most of its water as it drops 4,000 ft in elevation and the remainder as it drops another 7,000 ft elevation before entering Pakistan near Akhnur. India has planned no less than twenty small and large projects to tap the energy reserves, of which Baglihar is designed to produce 900 mw power. Though Baglihar is a run-of-the-river project fully provided for in the Indus Water Treaty, Pakistan has sought to scuttle it by creating a controversy over its design, pondage, dam height and spillways. The project was referred to the Neutral Expert, Professor Raymond Lafill, who has endorsed that the project is not an infringement of the Treaty but said that freeboard height of the dam should be brought down from 4.5 to 3 mtrs, to which India has agreed. A Pakistani delegation visited the dam site on 01 Aug 2008 to satisfy themselves that India has abided with the Neutral Expert's decision.
- (d) Kishanganga Project.** This appertains to a tributary of the Jhelum on which India envisaged a concrete dam and diversion of some flows through a tunnel into the Madmati Nala, which empties into the Wulur Lake through which the Jhelum flows. Pakistan has one each of technical objection, apprehension and objection to certain design features. As a major concession to Islamabad, India has dropped the proposed dam and reconfigured the entire project.

India and Bangladesh share 54 common rivers between them and had set-up Indo - Bangladesh Joint River Commission in Nov 1972. In Dec 1996, the two countries signed the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty which addresses the heart of the conflict viz. water allocation during the five months of the dry season (Jan-May). Admittedly, there are factions in Bangladesh that believe India should not be drawing off any water at the Farakka barrage 18 km upstream from Bangladesh, just as there are factions in India that do not want Bangladesh to get any water at all. While this agreement does help reduce regional tensions, issues such as extreme events and upstream uses are not covered in detail. Nepal, China, and Bhutan who are not party to this Treaty, have their own development plans which could impact the agreement. In addition, the Treaty does not contain any arbitration clause to ensure that the parties uphold its provisions.

India also has treaties of 1954 and 1996 regarding Kosi and Mahakali rivers' water sharing with Nepal. Despite all the treaties being in place, there is a great divergence in perceptions on the ground and there is need for continuous dialogue and mutual accommodation in matters of sharing river waters. The arrangements entered into by India with her neighbours may not be perfect, but these provide a legal framework for mutual consultation and accommodation which is a whole lot better than no framework at all.

Looking north, Tibet's vast glaciers are the source of the world's greatest river system. Its river waters are a lifeline to the world's two most-populous states — China and India — as well as to Bangladesh, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal, Cambodia, Pakistan, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. These countries make up 47 per cent of the global population. Control over the 2.5 million km Tibetan plateau gives China tremendous leverage, besides access to vast natural resources. The Chinese plans to dam or redirect the southward flow of river waters from the Tibetan plateau, where major rivers originate, including the Indus, the Mekong, the Yangtze, the Yellow, the Salween, the Brahmaputra, the Karnali and the Sutlej; can be worrisome for the lower riparian states particularly if there is inadequate information sharing.

North China has 64 per cent of the cultivable land and 47 per cent of the country's population but only about 19 per cent of the fresh water resources.<sup>10</sup> Right from the days of Chairman Mao Zedong, northward diversion of the south flowing waters has been under consideration. Accordingly, a very ambitious, multi-billion dollar project has been drawn up. The first phase of China's South-North Project calls for building 300 km of tunnels and

channels to draw waters from the Jinsha, Yalong and Dadu rivers, on the eastern rim of the Tibetan plateau. Further, as per Beijing's assessment, large untapped reserves of water and energy exist at the bend where the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo to Tibetans) forms the world's longest and deepest canyon just before entering India. In the second phase, the Brahmaputra waters would be directed northward. Such a move by China may generate 40,000 MW of hydroelectric power for China, but will put a full one third of India's hydel potential in trouble. India has hydro potential of 1, 50,000 MW, of which 50,000 MW is in the North-East.<sup>11</sup> Mr Wang Shucheng, China's former Minister for Water Resources, publicly asserted at "Water Security: China and the World" symposium hosted in Beijing by the China International Institute for Strategic Studies 25-26 May 2009 that "China does not need to divert Brahmaputra waters, it was not feasible, it was not scientific and it would take 600 years". But the Director of the Yellow River Water Conservancy Committee is also on public record as having stated that the mega-plan enjoys official sanction and may begin by 2010. An approved project can start anytime in the future and that is worrisome. In this time and age, very little can be done surreptitiously. Every activity even deep inside national boundaries is visible globally. And, even developmental work is closely scrutinised by the directly affected parties for downstream consequences as well as by the global community for larger issues such as ecology, human rights etc. Presently, authentic information coming out from Beijing in respect of the massive inter-basin and inter-river water-transfer projects has been scanty. Likewise it is for other projects bearing on river water flows to India, Bangladesh, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand. But the internet has volumes of data, details, photographs, imageries, analyses and apprehensions about a whole lot of activities that are going on. Put together, these have immense potential for interstate conflict because every society is concerned, first and foremost, about its own survival and will push its government as far as is necessary to ensure this.

In year 2000, Himachal Pradesh experienced devastating flash floods in the Sutlej river. Sometime in 2004 China informed India that approximately 35 km upstream from the border, an artificial lake measuring about 230 hectares had been formed on the Pareechu river which is a tributary of Sutlej. The lake had formed due to landslides, causes of which remained mysterious, thereby causing much anxiety. After prolonged parleys, China agreed in 2005 to provide data on any abnormal rise or fall in the upstream level of the Sutlej. In year 2002, the two countries had drawn up an MOU for sharing hydrological information on the Brahmaputra. Accordingly, information relating to water level, discharge and rainfall at three stations, namely Nugesha, Yangcun and Nuxia from 1st June to 15th October every year; is being forwarded by Chinese authorities to the Central Water Commission. However, all attempts to get similar data for Lohit and Parlung Zangbo, which are Brahmaputra tributaries; have so far been in vain. This is a cause of concern to India as the larger economic, social, environmental and therefore political impact on communities which are dependent on this river system; has not been fully assessed. The sum total of all above is that China, the common upper riparian, has neither any commitment nor any legal obligation towards any of the lower riparians in the entire south and south east asian land mass.

## Conclusion

Water is a scarce resource that today needs to be managed much better than ever before. Whereas there is a lot to be said for conserving, recycling, harvesting, redistributing etc for each society, there is also a need to work out river water sharing between nations. Experience has shown that the principles of transparency, consultation, dialogue, agreement, management, monitoring and complaint redressal which are applicable between regions/states within a federal state, are equally applicable between different nation states.

Admittedly, India's treaties with Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal were all concluded before the 1997 UN Convention on Non-navigational Uses of the International Watercourses came into being. The time has now come to find ways to broaden the existing framework of India's treaties with her neighbours and include all co-riparians, including China, in their ambit. Pakistan and Bangladesh should also seek China's commitment towards transparency and cooperation because all Chinese actions, being further upstream, affect them in exactly the same way as do Indian actions. Nepal and Bhutan should seek it for the same reasons as should India - all are directly affected parties with additional responsibilities towards own lower riparians. Co-riparians of the Mekong river viz. Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam should be watching these developments with keen interest as the Mekong is the lifeline of these nations. And the Mekong River Commission, as it is constituted today, is really incomplete without China.

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\*Based on a presentation by the author at a symposium on "Water Security and China" held at Institute of Strategic Studies (CISS), Beijing on 25-26 May 2009.

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# Pakistan's Strategic Depth

**Brigadier MS Chowdhury, VSM (Retd)\***

## **Introduction**

It is axiomatic that ensuring the security of a nation is paramount for the people and the government of that nation. For nations which suffer from security paranoia the need for absolute security becomes an over-riding priority of the governing class.

The key aspect of adequate security is strategic depth which nations strive to achieve in a variety of ways. When Hitler invaded Russia, in addition to lebensraum, he was looking for strategic depth. During World War II, the gallant but poorly armed and ill equipped Polish Armed Forces were decimated and the nation perished quickly as it lacked strategic depth. In a sharp contrast even after the French forces were defeated, the nation survived because it had strategic depth available to it which provided time and space for organising resistance and counter moves against the Germans.

With reference to Pakistan, the topic of strategic depth was extensively debated by the intelligentsia and the strategic community on both sides of the divide during 1980s and 1990s. Then, in the next decade this issue got relegated and was removed from the radar screen and is now beginning to fade from memory. This leads to missing out the rationale for some of the actions/policy initiatives taken by Pakistan.

## **Aim**

The aim of this article is to review Pakistan's search for strategic depth along with its relevance considering the latest developments in the region.

## **Analysis of Pakistani Concerns**

Basic to national security is adequate strategic depth for the nation. In some cases this depth is geographically configured - Russia, China, India and the USA. Other nations have to contrive to achieve it - case in point being Israel and Pakistan. Very soon after inception, Pakistan developed insecurities - some real, some imagined - vis-à-vis its more powerful neighbour.<sup>1</sup> As a safeguard, it began to seek strategic depth. The term is open to a variety of interpretations. For Pakistan it implies territorial security, and as well as economic, socio-political and diplomatic security. The search for strategic depth has been a continuous process in Pakistan and was given impetus by successive military rulers. Strategic depth has wider implications than merely military connotations. For the military, strategic depth is provided by a buffer state or an ally which can provide it enough time to secure its vital interests and to enable its armed forces to implement its strategic plans. At national level it is more complex and is obtained by international relations both political and economic. Pakistan's security perspective has been centred on its search for iron clad guarantees to ensure permanence of the Pakistan dream.

A nation's need for strategic depth is an amalgam of its own threat perception, combined with its perception of its adversary. Here, basically the problem lies in Pakistan's geography and configuration. The core of the country is Punjab, which in the perception of the ruling elite, needs to be well protected. To the north, within North West Frontier Province (and Southern Afghanistan) are the Pakhtuns. Strategic depth in this direction implies that even in the face of initial reverses Pakistan would be able to continue the war from Pakhtun areas along with low intensity war in Punjab.<sup>3</sup> To the west of the core area lies Baluchistan. Pakistan needs a stable and strong Baluchistan for its strategic depth in the west. Little wonder then that Pakistan is sensitive to developments in that region and accuses India of fomenting trouble there. In so far as the East of the core is concerned, the need for strategic depth explains the proxy war in India's Punjab and Kashmir. One of the reasons for the 1947-48 war was to create strategic depth for Pakistan's National Capital Region that abutted Kashmir. At Shimla in 1972, it is believed that India was willing to convert the Line of Control as the International Border, tacitly accepting Pakistan's need for strategic depth (probably under Soviet advice). It is understandable as to why India was willing to be accommodative. Vital national interests of a weaker neighbour need to be considered in order to give peace and development a better environment. Possibly, this could have been an additional reason for Mr Nehru to call off further offensives in 1948 so as to leave a modicum of depth for Pakistan. But so deep seated was Pakistan's unease that they were unable to respond and went on to vitiate Indo-Pak relations.

Israel was in a worse situation - embattled from the very day of its creation - its need for strategic depth was even greater than Pakistan's. Its response was an alliance with western countries, technological superiority, its doctrine of counter attack in anticipation, its mobilisation technique and the elitism of its air force and armour. Pakistan - equally desperate for strategic depth - resorted to a variety of stratagems and policy moves. In its quest, it joined military pacts, bartered away real estate, emphasised the doctrine of offensive defence, meddled in Afghanistan, followed the controversial Islamisation policies, carried out proxy war, supported the mujahideen and accepted widespread fundamentalism. After some success, wide cracks began to appear to augment Pakistan's political and strategic predicament. Its support for Taliban and terrorism has resulted in world wide loss of credibility. Among others, Russia, Iran and some Central Asian States now regard Pakistan with apprehension. Internally, Pakistan is on the verge of a civil war with sectarian violence and terrorism engulfing the country.

In this concept, there is specificity to a prevailing environment and would depend on Pakistan's threat calculus and hence the security needs of the country.<sup>6</sup> Such a hedge is sought against a known/ envisaged adversary. Pakistan's search for strategic depth has always been India specific given its geophysical vulnerability and the proximity of its major cities and its lines of communication to the International Border. She sought to achieve strategic depth with Iran, Jordan, Turkey, Central Asian States, Islam, proxy war and terrorism. The last two forming part of war by other means. Some other examples of strategic depth are: strategic depth provided to Israel by Golan Heights, Hitler's need to seize oil and grain rich areas of Russia (economic), NATO's eastward pressure and the British policy of buffer states.

Though, while from the outset Pakistan sought strategic depth to counter a stronger India, this was specifically formalised under Mr Bhutto, whose emphasis was only on strategic depth eastward.<sup>7</sup> So insecure was Pakistan that it ceded 5000 sq km of Kashmir territory to China to ensure its security. After Bhutto, Pakistani rulers followed a similar policy and subsequently developed a strategy of containment of India by proxy (in the hope that Indian occupied Kashmir would fall under her influence and thus create strategic depth for her) and of gaining strategic depth westward by supporting Taliban.<sup>8</sup> The latter was to enable Pakistani control of Afghanistan and thereby preclude Pakhtun nationalist sentiment arising as a threat on either side of the controversial Durand Line.

Despite Pakistan's need for strategic depth in the west, relations with Afghanistan were bedevilled with suspicion. Afghanistan has denounced the Durand Line. The potential demand for Pashtunistan under Afghan influence fills Pakistan with unease.<sup>10</sup> The Soviet invasion substantially changed the whole geo-political situation of the region. Pakistan became a 'front line' state and the rise of religious fundamentalism accelerated. A host of developments followed. American peanuts became pistachios; Zia acquired international legitimacy; Pakistan's hopes rose for its aim to acquire enough influence in Afghanistan to solve the Durand Line and Pashtunistan problems; and as well reduce/end Indian influence there.<sup>11</sup> This would subserve its interest of strategic depth in the region.<sup>12</sup> With this Pakistan also hoped to develop stronger political and economic links to Central Asia.<sup>13</sup> Pakistan now felt close to its key objectives ,i.e. gaining leverage against a powerful neighbour by obtaining strategic depth in the west, in order to have greater security and having the option to concentrate forces on the Indian border.

Concept of strategic depth found maximum articulation when General Mirza Aslam Beg was Pakistan's Army Chief. The doctrine called for the need for dispersal of Pakistan's military assets in Afghanistan, beyond the Durand Line, and well beyond the reach of Indian military's offensive capabilities. To give effect to the doctrine, Pakistan needed the ability to field its military assets at a time and place of its choosing, which in turn required not just neutral areas around the Durand Line but also Pakistan dominated areas well within Afghanistan. The purely military aspect of strategic depth also attained full clarity post Exercise ZARB – E- MOMIN.<sup>14</sup> This offensive defence exercise was designed to test Pakistan's concept of strategic depth by extending the war into India by a combination of covert and conventional means and by having a pliant Afghanistan in the west.<sup>15</sup> In the eyes of Pakistani Army this exercise confirmed the military rationale of and ability to acquire strategic depth.

### **Withdrawal of the Soviet Forces**

With the withdrawal of the Soviets and their subsequent collapse, Pakistani leadership saw even brighter lights at the end of their strategic tunnel. But events took a turn quite different from what had been anticipated by Pakistan. Civil war led to the collapse of the Afghan State. Eastern Europe assumed higher priority for western countries and this area became an open field for regional power play. India, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey and some Central Asian States were embroiled in the Afghan mess. Out of this turmoil Taliban rose and began to take control of most of Afghanistan. And in Taliban, Pakistan saw a perfect solution for its India centric religion based strategic culture policies in Afghanistan.<sup>17</sup> Pakistan now felt closer to each of its objectives: strategic depth against India, access to oil and gas resources of Central Asia, solving the problem of Durand Line, negating Afghanistan claims of Pakistan's Pashtun majority areas, undermining Iran's influence in the region and obtaining recruits for the insurgency in Kashmir. In case of a war with India, such irregular forces could be used against India. Also, Afghan airfields and territory would be available for basing Pakistani wherewithal in case the situation so warranted.

Strategic depth in the east, though obtained at a cost, was beneficial to Pakistan. Its desire for strategic depth in the west received an impetus with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.<sup>18</sup> Pakistan garnered immense support from the USA to exert a westward pressure. But tables turned against Pakistan post Soviet exit from Afghanistan. In the turmoil which followed Pakistan nearly lost control over the situation, the situation getting compounded with the Taliban coming under the influence of Arab fundamentalists (Though this was partly by design as well). Pakistan's search for strategic depth in Afghanistan resulted in Pakistan itself becoming strategic depth for the Taliban, with considerable damage to the nation.

It was in 1989 that the situation became highly favourable for Pakistan in its quest for strategic depth. The Soviet Union was pushed out of Afghanistan, Iran had fought back the Iraqis and democracy had been restored in Pakistan. The three countries gravitated towards each other in an attempt to form a unit with common interest to deter (and if the need arose to defeat) their enemies.<sup>20</sup> This aspect of collective security provided the essential element of strategic depth to each of these countries. However, civil war in Afghanistan temporarily stayed the idea. Policy makers in these countries though deterred, continued to work to evolve the Pakistan-Iran-Afghanistan Union (PIAU) to provide strategic depth to each of the constituents of the union.

### **Current Situation**

Pro tempore India is developing her relations with Afghanistan, Iran and the Central Asian States, while Pakistani diplomacy faces serious challenges in combating India's growing influence in the region.<sup>22</sup> Pakistan's ambitious

strategic design for Central Asia to achieve her geo-political goal of gaining strategic depth vis-à-vis India, seems to be in tatters as of now.<sup>23</sup> This is in contrast to her earlier success. Linkage with Central Asia was an important aspect of policy for General Zia. He raised the slogan of Islamic fraternity with certain Muslim states in order to attain influence. Leaders of Pakistan have striven to retain control over south-east Afghanistan in the achievement of this goal.<sup>24</sup> Alternatively, a federation of Pakistan and Afghanistan would provide this strategic depth. In this quest Pakistan went a step further. It attempted to make Afghanistan a pliant state under its protégé, the Taliban.

For the present - other than strategic depth in the East and Islamic support - Pakistani effort in this regard is facing road blocks. But such international situations are ephemeral. It is known that Pakistan had moved or planned to move certain unspecified assets to Iran, Saudi Arabia, Jordan or Turkey. This option still remains. International law does not permit a strike on such targets. And even if it did, international opinion would not countenance such a strike. Besides, how would India solve the problem of target acquisition and collateral damage - something which the USA with all its technology has not been able to overcome in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

### **Post Nuclearisation**

The issue which comes to the fore now is: would the availability of nuclear weapons with Pakistan affect the requirement of strategic depth for that country in any way? The answer can only be a resounding "No". In this case the purpose of the strategic depth would be to protect this vital asset, till an appropriate moment when the use of these weapons is considered inescapable. This would have greater applicability with reference to India's strategy of cold start. At the same time, if nuclear armed Pakistan were to slip into uncharted waters, the rest of the world would react sharply.

The emergence of nuclear weapons has not made conventional forces lose relevance. Nor have traditional military principles been affected. Use of a nuclear weapon is not like firing an artillery barrage. It is a fateful decision which even strong American Presidents have balked at exercising. Pakistan's strategic partners will step in to stop Pakistan's first strike, knowing what consequences would follow. In fact, it is likely that Pakistan's proclivity in insinuating a low level of nuclear threshold is for blackmail and for the benefit of the USA and China. Obviously, a nuclear conflict initiated by Pakistan would have global overtones.

Even an irrational military leadership must ponder on a nuclear response in the face of India's arsenal. Pakistan's National Command Authority which controls nuclear weapons would hesitate. There may be mating problems. Where is the nuclear trigger? (Possibly with China). Pakistan's airspace is controlled by the USA. Apropos to these issues, strategic depth would be required all the more.

### **Crystal Gazing**

Which road should India take now that the whole region appears to be imploding and the environment lugubrious?<sup>26</sup> India and Pakistan are joined at the hip and each cannot wish away the other. We need a crystal ball to predict the full spectrum of possibilities in that hapless country and assess what would suit us better. A strong Pakistan which is militarily equal to India; or a weak, wounded, embittered and vengeful Pakistan; or a country caught in the throes of civil war; or a country in endless turmoil; or a balkanised Pakistan; or finally a stable Pakistan which does not fear to engage with India. To deal with any of these eventualities, India's strategic preparations cannot be patchy or irresolute.<sup>27</sup> Here one may either adopt a soft approach or a tough line. But it must be kept in mind that a smaller country which is assured security from a large powerful neighbour, would not need to seek strategic depth in order to preserve its strategic and economic independence. Hence, the two countries must shed the "enemy image" of each other. However, if the weaker or smaller country perceives threat to its national security, it will evolve national doctrines to defend its sovereignty - whatever be the cost.<sup>28</sup> While deciding on which approach to adopt, it must be borne in mind that a US Congressional Research Service Report has credited Pakistan with having nuclear parity with India. At the same time our pre-requisite for a no-first-use policy, i.e. a credible second strike capability, remains a question mark.

If as a more mature nation India were to understand Pakistan's fear psychosis and respond with sagacity, we could create a better world. After all Mexico, despite its juxtaposition with the world's greatest power, does not seek strategic depth. What do we bequeath to the coming generations; a ten per cent GDP growth or a possible holocaust. Can India and Pakistan not work together towards our common concerns? Form a confederacy? Prima facie this does sound utopian and inconceivable; yet a study of recent world events does point to the plausibility of such a proposition coming to pass.

Here perhaps one may recall the famous and well flogged quote, "...if you know yourself and know the enemy, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles....". It is true that Pakistan has been hitting out at us. By and large our response has been effete, probably because we could do no better. Public opinion in both countries should now ponder: for how long must this go on and to what purpose? Jingoism which was unbridled during pre World War I is dead and buried. Today is the age of rapprochement between nations. Besides, can India really deny that Pakistan does verily require strategic depth to ensure its survival and would pay a heavy price for it. As a larger and a better endowed nation, can India not give adequate guarantee to Pakistan so that it would realise that the price they have paid and would pay in the future to acquire strategic depth could not be justified. This would help India as well because the fallout of Pakistan's quest impinges on the security of the whole region. What is required is deft diplomacy to harvest the advantages which have accrued to India, so that Pakistan's strategic depth is adequately shrunk.

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# The Bangladesh elections and Border Guards Rebellion

Shri EN Rammohan, IPS (Retd)\*

## Introduction

The results of the Bangladesh elections were generally expected. This was because of the exemplary functioning of the caretaker government. It was clearly under the control of the Bangladesh Army. When the Army took over control, the general apprehension of Bangladesh watchers, especially those who had studied the sequence of military coups in Bangladesh starting with the coup that killed Mujibur Rehman was that, the Army would again be indirectly in control in Bangladesh. This did not happen. The way the Army conducted itself in two spheres clearly removed all doubts on this point. These two spheres were the assiduous work done by the Election Commission in preparing the voters list and the superlative work done in preparing the voter identity cards. With the massive population base of Bangladesh this was an incredible job by any standards. Incidentally India has not yet been able to achieve this. The landslide victory of the Awami League (AL) and the decimation of the Jamaat-e-Islami from seventeen to just two seats justified the neutral stand taken by the Army.

It is now clear that the Bangladesh Rifles rebellion was taken over by the same elements that were controlling the Army during the previous regime. It was a direct reaction to the victory of the AL and the possible establishment of a moderate regime in Bangladesh. To understand this, one has to briefly study the sequence of events after the killing of Mujibur Rehman and the series of coups that followed.

## The Bangladesh insurrection

The election of December 1970 in Pakistan produced a majority for the AL of East Pakistan. At that time, besides the two pro Russian and pro Peking Marxist parties there existed a third Marxist stream called the Jatiyo Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) or Jashod. The group was born in 1962, when a group of young men formed a nucleus in Dacca University. They felt that socialism was the only answer to East Bengal's vast poverty. The JSD joined the AL as its most radical and militant wing. At the appropriate time they would come out of the AL. When the election results were out in December 1970 the Pakistan Government, after dallying till March, finally announced an indefinite postponement for summoning the National Assembly. On 02 Mar 1971, there was a mammoth rally which was attended by Mujibur Rehman. ASM Abdur Rab, later a General Secretary of the JSD, ceremonially burnt the Pakistan flag and hoisted a flag of a 'red sun on a green background' - flag of the future Bangladesh. On the 07 Mar 1971, the Students League presented Mujibur with an ultimatum to declare independence or they would take an independent course. The Pakistan Army began a crackdown on 21 Mar 1971.

At that time, there were nearly six thousand troops of the East Bengal Regiment in East Pakistan. Three thousand of these and five thousand para military troops and policemen were massacred by the Pakistan army. Major Zia ur Rehman, then in the East Bengal Regiment, held Chittagong for several days and even declared Independence on Chittagong radio. As the Pakistan Army advanced, he retreated into Tripura with three thousand troops of the East Bengal Regiment. At that time there were a large number of military and civilian Bengalis in Pakistan. Two patriotic Bengali officers of the Pakistan Army, Major Taher and Major Ziauddin, managed to cross over to India near Sialkot and were taken by India's Border Security Force to Assam and Tripura and deployed with the Mukti Bahini in Tangail and Mymensingh sectors. The fight for independence lasted from Mar to Dec 1971, when the Indian Army advanced into East Pakistan, and liberated Bangladesh in a lightning campaign in Dec 1971. More than 90,000 troops of the Pakistan Army surrendered and were disarmed. Mujibur Rehman returned triumphantly to an emotional welcome in Dacca.

## The Mujib Era, 1971-1975

Mujib began well, with tremendous support from his people. Unfortunately, this was short lived. Mujib made several mistakes. Among the major ones was the patronage of Indian businessmen by his brother. He was the smuggling kingpin of Bangladesh. Another mistake was the creation of the Rakhi Bahini. Mujib distrusted the Army, because he had been imprisoned in a military prison in Pakistan. The Rakhi Bahini was not fully under the control of the government as the senior officials of the force went directly to Mujib who protected them.

All this was to be seen in the background of the ground situation in Bangladesh. The eastern sub continent was one of the poorest areas of the world. Each day, there were battles between those who owned land and those who worked on it. For the peasantry life was a knife's edge. A knife edge on which questions of food, land and water were constantly answered by cycles of revolt and suppression.<sup>1</sup> Though Mujib knew this well, the unholy nexus between Indian mahajans and the political leadership of the AL led to large scale smuggling of commodities from Bangladesh to India. Regrettably, it was Mujibur Rehman's brother who headed the smuggling network in Bangladesh. The food situation deteriorated, and within four years of Independence there was famine in the land and nearly a hundred thousand peasants died of hunger. The government resorted to deploying the Army to maintain law and order. This was a very wrong step. The rot in the administration became visible to the Army and the young officers began to question the unlawful authority being exercised by persons close to Mujibur Rehman. In the last days of Mujib's regime, following a period of severe famine in 1974, enormous popular resentment had developed towards India and Mujib's political identification with that country. Every village faced with starvation, listened to stories of massive smuggling and profit making, from the alleged shipment of rice and jute to India.

The black market operating across the border was a fact. India was no longer viewed as an ally who had fought the Pakistanis to give Independence to Bangladesh. It was instead viewed as a new sub imperialist power that was now bleeding Bangladesh white.

A serious mistake made by Mujib was in not giving pride of place to officers and men in the new Bangladesh Army, who had fought as Mukti Bahini after being trained by the Indian Army and paramilitary forces. Military and civilian personnel of East Bengali origin who were in Pakistan when the rebellion broke out were repatriated in 1973 to Bangladesh after India released the 90,000 Pakistani prisoners of war after the Simla agreement. A number of Mukti Bahini were recruited as officers and other ranks in the Bangladesh Army in 1972. They were all trained by the Indian Army. The military officers and other ranks of East Bengal origin left in Pakistan in 1971, when repatriated in 1973 were given their seniority. This caused a division in the Armed Forces.

## **Insurrections**

In 1975, two military putsches followed by an Army mutiny took place. The last was a soldiers uprising the like of which had not been seen in the subcontinent. On 15 Aug 1975 the government of Mujibur Rehman was brought down by an early morning military putsch led by six Majors and the troops under their control. They were from the only armoured regiment of Bangladesh and from an artillery regiment. The political organisers of this coup were from a circle within Mujibur Rehman's AL, which had for years been considered a pro-Pakistan and USA faction. The principal and identifiable figures among this group were: Mahbub Alam Chashi, former Pakistan Foreign Service officer, Taheruddin Thakur, Mujib's Information Minister and Khondakar Mushtaq Ahmed the Commerce Minister. The full extent of foreign involvement was not established but serious allegations have been made claiming prior knowledge and involvement by the US CIA and Pakistan, together with elements from the administrative, police and intelligence apparatus of Bangladesh who had remained unreconciled sympathisers of the old unity of Pakistan.

Between Aug and Nov 1975 an uneasy period of stalemate and tension set in. Former Commerce Minister Khondakar Mushtaq Ahmed took over as acting President. A man sympathetic to the United States, he was the Foreign Minister of the Provincial government in 1971. Together with his Foreign Secretary Mahbub Alam Chashi, Mushtaq had allegedly been the contact point for secret negotiations with the United States' State Department in late 1971 for a settlement of the East Pakistan crisis. A number of senior officers of the Bangladesh Army including Major General Zia ur Rehman, the Deputy Chief of Army Staff had apparently been approached to join the coup, but had held back from active involvement.

Barely three months after this coup, on 03 Nov 1975, a second coup was organised, led by Brigadier Khalid Musharraf with the help of the Dacca brigade. Major General Zia ur Rehman was placed under house arrest. There was a stand off between the six Majors who had carried out the first coup and Brigadier Khalid Musharraf. It was decided finally that they would be given safe passage and could be flown to Bangkok. Moments before their departure men under the command of the majors entered the Dacca prison and killed four senior Ministers of Mujib's cabinet. All of them would have been part of a pro Mujib restoration. It had been rumoured that Brigadier Khalid Musharraf's coup was engineered by India. This was not so at all.

When General Zia ur Rehman was put under house arrest, he telephoned his good friend Colonel Abu Taher, who along with Major Ziauddin had defected from Pakistan and led the Mukti Bahini along with Zia ur Rehman in adjacent sectors. Unknown to General Zia both Colonel Taher and Colonel Ziauddin were leaders of the Biplobi Shamik Shanga - Revolutionary Soldiers Organisation, a part of the JSD. Jointly operating with the Biplobi Gana Bahini - Revolutionary People's Army made up of guerilla fighters from the Independence struggle, the sepoy of Dacca cantonment took the lead in an immediate general revolt against Khalid Musharraf's putsch. The JSD was already planning this revolt when Mujib was assassinated. The revolt quickly gathered momentum and spread to cantonments outside Dacca even as Brigadier Khalid Musharraf and his group of officers were killed outside Dacca Cantonment. Meanwhile General Zia had been rescued and was given a list of twelve demands that the revolting soldiers had prepared. The main demand was that the Armed Forces would act as the defenders of the country's oppressed classes. The entire structure of the Armed Forces was to be changed. A committee similar to the Soldier Soviets of the Russian Army was to be established. The Calcutta weekly Frontier-Bangladesh State and Revolution wrote on 13 Dec 1975 - "The BD Army rose in a generalised insurrection with rank and file defying their officers calling for the implementation of the twelve demands. This constituted a radical departure never before seen in any South Asian Army."

When General Zia saw the twelve demands, he was taken aback and realised that he was on the verge of a precipice. He signed the paper of the twelve demands but managed to slip out of the request to speak on Dacca Radio to the Nation. Between the 8 to 10 Dec 1975, General Zia then turned the situation around. Taking the help of the Police, he directed the arrest of the leaders of the JSD including Colonel Taher, who was kept in Dacca jail and later tried and executed there. General Zia turned to the several thousand civil and military officials of Bengali origin who were repatriated from Pakistan to stabilise the country. Control of the administration passed into the hands of these officials. A number of JSD leaders were tried and executed. The group then went underground. General Zia re-established contact with the Pakistan Government. He raised the Directorate General Forces Intelligence (DGFI) on the line of the Inter Services Intelligence of Pakistan. After Bangladesh was liberated the leaders of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JEI) and other fundamentalist groups who had sided with the Pakistan Army had fled the country. General Zia allowed them to return to Bangladesh though cases of murder were registered against them. Very soon Bangladesh was declared an Islamic Republic. Insurgent groups of the Northeast like the Mizo National Front who were given shelter, arms and training by Pakistan and who had left Bangladesh in 1971 were welcomed back.

## **Bangladesh from 1976 to 2006**

From 1976 to 1996, Bangladesh continued in the same mode. In 1996, Sheikh Hasina and the AL were elected to power. Though she tried to take back Bangladesh to the Mujib period she was not successful. In 2001, the Bangladesh National Party started by General Zia came back to power under his widow Begum Zia. Then came the elections of 2006 under a caretaker Government and the Army taking control of running this Government after some hiccups.

Bangladesh Elections and Revolt of Bangladesh Rifles

Bangladesh went to the elections in 2008 under the watchful eyes of the United Nations representatives. When the BNP government tried to manipulate the election Commission and the Caretaker Government the United Nations stepped in and threatened the Bangladesh Government of withdrawing the considerable contingent of United Nations Peacekeeping Forces for Bangladesh. Two factors ensured good elections - a very neutral revision of electoral rolls and preparation of voter identity cards. General Moin, the Army Chief and his staff officers played a very important role during this period remaining strictly neutral. This was substantiated when the election results came out. The Jamaat-e-Islami got only 2 seats against 17 that they had. The fact that large number of women, particularly women from the minorities, voted freely was very significant and showed the excellent Police arrangements made.

The revolt of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) was the first expression of the pro Pakistan group that they were not taking the election results lying down. The BDR is a paramilitary organisation. Its officers are deputed from the Army. The BDR cadre is not entitled to perks that officers of the Army get. These perks are considerable, on the lines of Pakistan Army. That there was disgruntlement brewing in the BDR was known for some time. It was not correct for the DGFI to say that they were taken aback, when it happened. It has been established that unknown persons with weapons, neither of the BDR nor of the Army, had entered the BDR Hq Pilkhana and used these weapons against the BDR officers. Two binoculars recovered from the Pilkhana campus were of a make used neither by the Army nor the BDR. So is the case with some ammunition boots recovered from the Pilkhana campus.<sup>3</sup> It is not difficult to conclude that several officers in the DGFI who have links with fundamentalist groups like the JEI do not want the old cases of 1975 to be raked up; and they wanted to utilise the agitation in the BDR to assassinate Sheikh Hasina. When the killings of the Director General BDR and other officers became known, she sensibly refused amnesty for anyone who had killed these officers. General Moin, the Army Chief stood beside her like a rock. Her courage and good sense saved the situation for Bangladesh.

Hasina's huge electoral victory gave her confidence to purge 'reformist elements' in her own party. A relatively young cabinet, sans these tested leaders and with many women, gave her ministry a new look. Hasina decided to press ahead with her electoral promises and the trial of the 1971 war criminals. A unanimous resolution in Parliament for the proposed trial, of mostly top JEI leaders and some from the BNP as well, was followed by Hasina's vocal support for a South Asian anti terror Task Force that upset Pakistan and its allies in Bangladesh. Her government arrested Chittagong's leading arms dealer Hafizur Rehman and restarted the Chittagong arms seizure case in view of Rehman's confessions that the huge arsenal seized in the port city in April 2004 was meant for India's Northeastern rebel group-ULFA and that several BNP and Jamaat leaders were involved.

The massacres in Pilkhana, the BDR Hq was not sudden. The BDR chief Major General Shakeel Ahmed managed to speak twice to Hasina from the barracks after the mutiny started. Processions outside with slogans like BDR-Janata bhai-bhai involved opposition supporters. Hasina alleges the latter even provided vehicles to fleeing mutineers. The JEI which would suffer the most in any 1971 war crimes tribunal is believed to be the main conspirator with the shadow of Pakistan, whose President has appealed to Hasina to defer the trials.

There was also a matter which would have been troubling the Jamaat considerably - the government's decision to scrutinise the activities of NGO's which received approval during the rule of the four party government in which the Jamaat's Secretary General Ali Ahsan Muhammad Mujahid was the State Minister for Social Welfare. A total of 473 local and 25 foreign NGO's were approved during this period against a total of 2367 local and foreign NGO's approved since 1990. According to Bangladesh's Finance Minister AMA Muhith the objective is to find out if these have any links with terror funding. From this there is only a short step to scrutinising the gigantic business and industrial empire the Jamaat controls and which has kept it always flush with funds. In such a situation, the Jamaat can weather the crisis and retain its leadership only if the AL government is removed. Since the latter's massive majority in the Parliament makes a constitutional ouster impossible the only way out is a violent overthrow.

It is important to remember that some of the leaders of the mutineers are said to have been members of the banned Islamist terrorist group the Jamatul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB). Moreover terrorist groups like the JMB, Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-e-Islami Bangladesh (HUJI BD) are furious with the Army and the Rapid Action Battalion which have spearheaded governmental action against them. Significantly the mutineers at Pilkhana were reported to be looking for Colonel Gulzaruddin Ahmed one of the outstanding officers of the Bangladesh Army who had led the campaign against these organisations and played a key role in the arrest of Bangla Bhai, the operations commander of JMJB and Sheikh Abdur Rehman chief of JMB both of whom were hanged. Colonel Ahmed was killed most savagely.

The mutiny was not a spontaneous explosion of fury, but a carefully planned conspiracy. The Daily Star of 6 Mar 2009, quoting those investigating the mutiny revealed that telephone records of some of the suspects indicated that it was planned at least two months earlier. The FBI, assisting the Bangladesh authorities, is also reported to have said that the mutiny was the result of a conspiracy. The fact that so many Army officers were killed suggests that the aim was to provoke the Army to retaliate in kind potentially leading to countrywide clashes with the BDR. In such a situation there would be imposition of Martial law, facilitating the ouster of the AL government. One must appreciate two things in this drama. The first was the cool and courageous behavior of Sheikh Hasina and second, the leadership of the Army which acted with restraint and stood by the democratically elected

government.

## **Conclusion**

The dangers to Sheikh Hasina, the AL and democratic government of Bangladesh are far from over. The BDR revolt was the first desperate attempt of the Islamic fundamentalist extremists and the Pakistan ISI. They have not given up, although their first attempt has failed. They will try again and again. This time one factor, in favour of Sheikh Hasina and a democratic future for Bangladesh, is that the Army is not with the extremist groups. Over the years, after General Zia ur Rehman allowed the JEI to come back to Bangladesh, the Islamic fundamentalist groups which include the JEI, the Harkut-ul-Jihad-e-Islami (HUJI-BD), the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (JUM-BD), the Ahle Hadith Andolan (AHD-BD) and the Tablighi Jama'at (TJ) have flourished and grown roots in Bangladesh. Some of them, particularly the JEI, have invested in industries and have enormous economic power. The annual concourse of the TJ in Tongi boasts of a collection of nearly a crore of supporters. Sheikh Hasina will have to tread very carefully, but firmly in the face of this opposition. The saving grace is that in all probability the Army would be loyal to her Government. The Army officers who have close links with the Pakistan ISI have to be watched carefully. The DGFI must be gently but firmly cleansed of all ISI loyalists. The Government of India, while not being too overt, must send assurances from time to time that they are with her. The problems on the Bangladesh border; besides the main pending issues of six odd kilometers of the border yet to be demarcated, the issue of the enclaves and the cases of the adverse possessions should be taken up and resolved without embarrassing Bangladesh. As for helping Bangladesh in handling Islamic fundamentalists, we can help by tracking them when they try to cross over into India, when the pressure builds up in Bangladesh. The Government should set up a cell in the Home Ministry to handle problems in Bangladesh on priority.

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# Naxalism: A Threat to India's Security

**Major General Y K Gera (Retd)\***

## Introduction

The Prime Minister of India, Dr Manmohan Singh, on 20 December 2007, while addressing the Chief Ministers' conference on internal security minced no words in describing Naxalism as the "single biggest challenge"<sup>1</sup> and Maoists as "virus". He said the "Left Wing Extremism" (LWE) was of a 'unique nature' and it was time to have a dedicated force "just to tackle Naxalism". He urged the states to raise forces on the model of Andhra Pradesh "Greyhounds" anti-Naxal force which was set up by N Chandrababu Naidu when he was the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh. He added that such a trained, dedicated force would go a long way in assisting states tackle Naxalite groups. He resolved to implement a two pronged approach to tackle Naxalism, by ensuring development of regions breeding LWE, while maintaining law and order.

## The Tribal Nature of LWE

The roots of Naxalism, later termed as Maoism, or LWE as now officially labelled, pre-date India's Independence. The Tebhaga and Telengana movements in Bengal and the Nizam's Hyderabad took place in the mid-1940s. The issues were land reforms and rural exploitation. On 3 March 1967, a group of peasants armed with bows, arrows and spears swooped on a piece of land at Naxalbari a small village in North Bengal, planted red flags and declared that it belonged to the Kissan Sabha<sup>2</sup> (Farmers Community). Naxalism is home grown and we cannot point fingers at others for allowing it to flourish. Presently, it is said to extend across "15 states, with 170 districts under their influence, out of which 51 are seriously affected."

Despite the critical leadership, and ideological guidance, being provided by committed urban youth, LWE is largely a tribal phenomenon. An analysis of its spatial and geographical spread clearly highlights its correlation with India's forest cover and tribal district boundaries. It is the tribal nature of this movement that compounds the internal security threat potential of this insurgency. India has 533 tribes,<sup>3</sup> comprising a population of over 88 million which primarily inhabits India's forest tracts. 85 per cent of our Scheduled Tribes (ST) population resides in the forested tracts of central and peninsular India.

## Preview

The following aspects are proposed to be covered:-

- (a) Causes of Naxalism.
- (b) Ideology.
- (c) Strategy, organisation and tactics.
- (d) Steps to meet the challenges.

## CAUSES OF NAXALISM

### Support Base of Naxalites

Naxalite movement has its support among the landless, share-croppers, agricultural labour, Harijans and tribals. As long as these people are exploited and social justice continues to be thwarted, this support base of the Naxalites will continue. LWE succeeds where people are poor, they face oppression by certain segments of society, the government is indifferent to their plight, and there are little prospects that things will get better in the future. On the other hand, LWE fails when the reverse is true. Thus the root causes<sup>4</sup> are as under:-

- (a) Exploitation and oppression of Dalits, Adivasis, and landless people in interior areas.
- (b) Absence of developmental activities and virtual absence of health care, drinking water, roads, electricity and educational facilities in areas where Naxalism has taken roots.
- (c) Disillusionment of people living in interior areas with the Parliamentary democratic system of governance in India.
- (d) For tribals, forest, land, and water mean their livelihood. They have been deprived of these under various acts and orders.

### Forest Management and Livelihood of Tribals

**Reserved Forests.** Protected and reserved forests were created for the purpose of conservation as well as scientific extraction of timber for the state. This led to reducing the status of tribal inhabitants to encroachers. Tribals lived in the forests which provided them means of livelihood for generations. Suddenly they found themselves excluded. Their forest rights were reduced to privileges granted by the state. Tribals found forest officials and contractors waiting to exploit them and take their cut. They got squeezed in the process.

**Land Reforms in Remote Areas.** Remote areas by definition were less developed and in most areas, roads were not constructed. The 'Abhujmadh' area in Chhattisgarh is very large but has not been surveyed. It does not have roads, hospitals and schools. After Independence, land reforms in remote areas have not been particularly successful. The compensation paid to Zamindars (land lords) was mostly through bonds<sup>5</sup>, but proper records of

rights repatriated to the state were not kept. There was no clear knowledge on the part of officials regarding cultivation rights. Land settlements were held up over prolonged period which led to delays, evasion, litigation and poor implementation.

**Credibility Gap.** Due to poor records, details of compensation paid for land acquired, and settlement plans worked out, and implemented, did not lead to satisfactory results. This created a credibility gap. If a state representative or corporate body functionary promises compensation for a project or a dam, factory or an exclusive zone, people laugh and refuse to believe him. There have been cases of the same set of people being uprooted over and over again, as new projects got sanctioned. There has been illegality and manipulation in the process leading to harassment, deprivation and marginalisation.

**Vested Interests.** There has been a lack of political 'will' because the feudal class with vested interests<sup>6</sup> is occupying influential assignments in the political set up; bureaucracy in the government; judiciary; media and so on. They ensure that incentives for capacity building, generation of employment, development of roads and so on, are thwarted in order to safeguard their vested interests.

## **IDEOLOGY**

### **Marginalised Sections of Society**

Naxalites do not belong to any particular religion, or community, but largely are Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalised sections of society. They are led by people totally indoctrinated by the teachings of Mao. The basic issues are land reforms and economic development. The ideological dimension is provided by Maoism.

### **Party Programme**

In 2004, a document titled 'Party Programme' was issued. It contains ideological basis of Naxalism. Important aspects are given in succeeding paragraphs.

*The domination and control of the imperialist finance capital in every sphere of our life - economic, political, military and cultural- continues to increase further and further. Actually, the imperialists control the key sectors of the Indian economy and even the administration. Recently, the stranglehold of imperialist finance capital over agricultural sector also continued to tighten along with other sectors because of WTO and imperialist globalisation. - - Hence, India continues to be a semi colonial and semi feudal country under the neo-colonial form of imperialist rule, exploitation and control.*

Maoists envision that their revolution will result in changing the imperialist, feudal ideology and culture, and will establish socialist ideology. *For this it will be necessary to smash the State machinery and all other centres of power of the ruling classes thoroughly and build up the democratic power of the people based on worker-peasant alliance. In this way, our revolution will follow the path of the Chinese Revolution.*

### **The Threat**

The LWE in India poses a serious long term ideological threat through its potential to generate a serious rural-urban fault line. This fault line will become acute, once India's demographic bulge acquires a critical mass because of rising unemployment. It is the introduction of Maoist ideology that poses a long term systemic threat to India's democratic and liberal state developing at a fast pace, based on free market economy.

## **STRATEGY, ORGANISATION AND TACTICS**

### **LWE Strategy**

The focus of the LWE is on the tribals and lower caste people for support. The extremists generally identify the causes of the people's grievances against the state. Then, they convey to the people the government's acts of omission and commission that are responsible for their deprivation. After developing a support base, extremists proceed to pull down the structures of governance through threats and murders. An administrative vacuum is created wherein the writ of the state government does not run, and then they entrench themselves. Stress is on militarisation with hierarchy and building up of 'People's Guerrilla Army', capable of destroying the state machinery.

### **Organisation**

**Organisational Structure.** Naxalites have a 13 member Politburo and a 35 member Central Military Commission (CMC). There are five Regional Bureaus (RB) - North, Southwest, Orissa/ Chhattisgarh, Eastern and Central; which provide them the ideological support and guidance. As far as their armed wing is concerned, they have zonal military commissions, each with a few divisions (company equivalent) and Dalams (platoon equivalent). At village level they have what is known as 'Sangam' - these are overground active supporters who are ideologically committed to their cause. In addition, they have a large number of frontal organisations like 'All India People's Revolutionary Front' and a very effective propaganda outfit. Naxalites have some 10,000 armed cadres. The overground workers are estimated to be 45,000 to 50,000. Overall holding is 15,000 assorted weapons inclusive of 900 AK-56 rifles, 200 light machine guns, and 100 two inch mortars, besides local weapons and small arms looted from police armouries. Notwithstanding its ideological moorings, there is a view that in many areas, the Naxalite Movement has degenerated into an extortion racket through intimidation and terrorism.

**Dandakaryana and Abhujmadh.** It is located in Chhattisgarh and contiguous area of Maharashtra. The heart of

Dandakaryana is the thickly forested area of Abhujmadh, which covers approximately 10,000 sq kms. Of this 7,000 sq kms fall in Chhattisgarh and the remainder is in Maharashtra. The area of Abhujmadh has not been surveyed. Nearly 20,000 tribal families live in this area, in 237 villages, in a primitive manner with virtually no basic amenities. There are no roads and tracks. The Naxalites treat it as a totally liberated area. More than a dozen training and logistics camps are located in the area. The Politbureau and the CMC of the Naxalites meet here periodically. It is the nerve centre of Naxalite activities.

**Compact Revolutionary Zone.** The Naxalites say that the corrupt ministers and government officials have not been able to provide good governance to remote areas of the country. They seem determined to carve out what they call "Compact Revolutionary Zone" stretching from Pashupati Temple in Nepal to Tirupati Temple in South India. This will encompass the tribal areas of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Kerala and give them access to the "Bay of Bengal" and the Indian Ocean. This corridor has dangerous potential and must not be allowed to be established.

### **Tactics: Naxalite Violence**

**First Phase: Naxalbari.** Naxal violence started as an agrarian revolt in 1967 by Santhal peasants of Naxalbari in West Bengal. They formed the Communist Party of India- Marxist-Leninist [CPI (ML)]. It turned towards violent annihilation of class enemies through rural rebellions in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, and West Bengal. In 1970-71, there were 4,000 incidents of Naxalite violence. Concerted police operations were launched. These culminated in Operation Steeple Chase I (01 July-15 August 1971), in which the Army provided outer cordon in joint operations. This broke the back of the movement. During the period 1972-77, it weakened further. The Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) emerged in Bihar. This led to formation of caste armies like the Ranvir Sena and the struggle degenerated into caste violence.

**Second Phase: People's War Group (PWG).** In April 1980, various Naxalite groups got merged to form the PWG. It was realised that insurgency in the plains was easily combated by the security forces because of mobilisation, fire power and movement differential. The PWG shifted the struggle towards forested tribal areas in Andhra Pradesh. The terrain was better suited for guerilla warfare. Forest Committees and dalams were formed. The struggle also spread to Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa by 1991.

**Third Phase: Left Wing Violence.** From 1990 onwards, India began to globalise its economy. Liberalisation was opposed strongly by the LWE. On 21 September 2004, the PWG and MCC merged to form CPI (Maoists). The spread of LWE thereafter has been dramatic. Estimates put the number of districts affected at 170 out of India's total of 614. However, 51 districts are seriously affected. Naxalites have been targeting the government's buildings and infrastructure like jails, police stations, railway stations and so on. For economic development, 300 Special Economic Zones (SEZS) have been planned in India. CPI (Maoists) views it as an attempt to grab lakhs of acres of prime agricultural land by foreign and local sharks. Naxalites have called on the people to resist seizure of their lands. Focus on economic warfare enables Naxalites access to large sums of money through extortion and ransom. As per a newspaper report, Naxalites in Jharkhand alone, make about Rs 3.2 billion annually. In mineral rich states, Naxals impose levy on business houses, transporters, and contractors. Rs 70,000/- or so per annum are charged from coal firms and Rs 25,000/- or so per annum from transporters. Political parties are also known to pay protection money.

**Casualty Ratio.** A cause for concern is the adverse casualty ratio between the police, Central Police Organisations (CPOs) and the Naxals. During the period 1999 to 2006, it had ranged from 1:1.4 to 1:2. However, during the years 2007 and 2008, the ratio has become more adverse - 1:0.6 and 1:0.8, and tilted in favour of the Left Wing insurgents. High casualties are caused by extensive use of IEDs and landmines by the LWE.

### **SIMILAR INSURGENCIES IN NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES**

#### **Maoist Revolution in People's Republic of China (PRC)**

Mao Tse Tung had based his revolution in China upon the landless peasants in the country side. It was an agrarian revolution that overthrew the landlords and developed a three-phase model of People's Revolutionary War that defeated the Chiang Kai Shek Government and ushered in Communist rule in the PRC. The revolution started in the country side and later overwhelmed the cities. Mao enunciated the concept of three stage guerilla warfare. Its salient features are summarised in succeeding paragraphs.

**Stage 1: Strategic Defence.** A guerrilla organisation was set up. It gradually increased its influence by selective terrorist actions against the state functionaries and other supporters. Initially aim was survival and consolidation.

**Stage 2: Strategic Stalemate.** Platoon and Company size guerrilla bands were employed using hit and run tactics of raids and ambushes. At this stage, the aim was to break the will of the state to fight. It lasted for more than a decade.

**Strategic Counter Offensive.** Regular People's Liberation Army was formed. Conventional military operations were launched to defeat the armed forces of the state.

**Analysis.** In essence, the Chinese civil war was a struggle between the agricultural rural poor and the landlords as well as emerging industrial urban population. The revolution was led by the landless peasants of China. India is a democratic and liberal state that is based on free market economy. It is this parallelism that is casting a shadow over the march of LWE across tribal India.

## **Pakistan**

The tribes of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA) of Pakistan are in virtual revolt. Pakistan militarised and armed its tribal society to wage a jihad against the erstwhile Soviet forces in Afghanistan. The extremist jihad ideology nurtured by Pakistan is posing a serious threat to its very existence, as Talibanisation radiates outwards from the tribal regions and makes inroads into the Punjab and other provinces.

## **Maoist's Rebellion in Nepal**

The Maoist rebellion in Nepal has a number of similarities with the LWE movement in India. Its base was largely tribal (Magar, Gurung and Pun tribes of Nepal). The leadership was from the educated elite of Khatmandu valley. The Maoist insurgency in Nepal lasted for a decade from 1996 to 2006. The Maoists fought the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) to a standstill. However, Maoists prematurely, switched to regular military operations. Launching of frontal attacks on well fortified RNA positions caused heavy casualties that compelled the Maoists to seek an alliance with democratic parties. Maoists joined the main stream, participated in democratic elections, and formed Maoist-led government in Nepal for some time. It remains to be seen whether the LWE in India will follow a similar model and join the mainstream democratic process.

## **Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, Chakma tribes revolted in 1970s. The insurgency was contained by repressive measures. Even the demographic composition of the tribal areas was changed. Maoist style insurgencies are erupting among the other tribes as well.

## **Analysis**

The onset of tribal insurgencies is not just an Indian phenomenon. It is also endemic to neighbouring countries, and stems from a clash of industrialisation and modernisation taking roots in these countries, with the tribal legacy left over, as historical baggage. LWE is the outgrowth of the failure of the state to penetrate, control and administer its forested areas.

## **STEPS TO MEET THE CHALLENGES**

### **Credibility of Instruments of Governance**

Social, economic, religion and question of identity are important factors. These must be tackled in a sensitive and just manner. Any compromise, either by the political leadership or by bureaucracy including police, will lead to discrediting the instruments of governance. Due to multiple causes, there has been a failure of the administrative system at the grassroots level. Good governance would be the key to improve the situation. The Prime Minister of India while addressing the Chief Ministers' Conference on 20 December 2007, enunciated the "two legs" response, wherein the military pressure and development projects are pursued concurrently. A 14 point policy to combat Naxalism was also enunciated in this meeting. It included the need to distribute land to the landless poor as part of speedy implementation of land reforms and the development of physical infrastructure. The Planning Commission, under its Backward District Initiative (BDI) and Backward Regions Grant Fund has identified 250 districts for pumping in extra funds for accelerated development.

### **Redressal of Grievances**

Effective steps to reduce ethnic and social inequalities, disparities in educational and employment opportunities, and for creating effective machinery to redress grievances, are essential to improve the environment. Steps to reduce economic deprivation and improve the delivery of essential services can erode the base of public support on which the extremist movements survive. More than any thing else, it would be the economic policies that would determine the future of these movements. A thriving economy which gives hope and opportunity is more likely to defeat all types of extremist movements than any other strategy.

### **Rural Infrastructure**

Most strongholds of LWE happen to be poorly connected and difficult to access. Unfortunately, the tribal insurgency has reached a stage where the insurgents now have a vested interest and stake in the continued underdevelopment of this area. They are specifically keen to prevent infrastructural penetration of these jungle areas and, to that extent, have been doing their best to hamper road construction and developmental activities. There is a need to accord priority for construction of black topped road networks. Bharat Nirman Programme<sup>12</sup> launched by the Prime Minister in December 2005, has some of the following objectives and should be pursued vigorously particularly in LWE affected areas:-

- (a) Electrifying all villages and habitations.
- (b) All weather roads to all villages in the next five years.
- (c) Safe drinking water to all villages.
- (d) Providing houses as per Indira Awas Yojana guide lines.
- (e) Telecommunication voice coverage to all villages.

### **Providing Employment**

Land is shrinking because of growth of population and more extensive land use. There is a need to take people off

the land and provide jobs elsewhere. This requires education and training. Dalits and tribals will not oppose industrialisation, urbanisation, construction of dams and other projects, if they are equal beneficiaries and stakeholders<sup>13</sup>. Special packages with corporate houses should have inbuilt system of training tribals and dalits and enable them to avail of the new opportunities. The state and society must cater for adequate opportunities and facilities for enabling the tribals and dalits to live with dignity and improve their living conditions and quality of life.

### **Cooperation Between the State and Central Government**

In the states where the situation has gone beyond their control, the Centre, as laid down in the Constitution, is duty bound to intervene, notwithstanding the fact that law and order is, under the State List. The Union Government is charged with the responsibility of protecting the states from internal disturbances under Article 353 of the Constitution, even though law and order comes under List-II, the State List. Even if the Centre decides to intervene, the state's role cannot be minimised. The primary responsibility to deal with the security challenges must rest with the state governments. A situation should not be allowed to develop where the state government washes its hands off, or its forces instead of cooperating with the central forces, actually work against them. The internal security challenges can be met effectively with full cooperation between the central and state governments. The police, the paramilitary forces, the Army (in advisory capacity) and intelligence agencies must act in close coordination. The hostile foreign forces can, and will take advantage of the internal situation to destabilise the country in pursuit of their own agenda. All internal security problems, if not checked effectively, can develop an external dimension.

### **Security Apparatus**

**Need for a Composite Force.** There is a need for a well coordinated security apparatus comprising the police, the paramilitary forces, the Army (in advisory capacity), and intelligence agencies, even in those states where the internal security situation is not so serious. It is easier to deal with problems at the initial stages, rather than delay till the state police find it difficult to cope up.

**Security Responses.** The government has sanctioned Rs 800 crore for anti-LWE operations and to improve security and mobility. Raising of Combat Resolute Action Battalions (COBRA) under the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is in progress. With their raising, strength of the CRPF will increase by 10,000. The armouries at police posts, and in jails, are being strengthened, fortified and tactically sited to inflict deterrent casualties if attacked by the Naxalites. The Army is being closely associated with planning of operations, to be able to intervene, if the situation so demands.

**Recommended Strategy.** The authority of the state should be established in the 'Guerrilla Zones'. For this, the police force has to be reoriented for combat, specifically in counter-insurgency and jungle warfare. Security forces should be made more professional and provided suitable small arms, equipment, communications, and integral logistics support. The personnel must undergo robust physical and psychological training to meet the Naxal challenge and ensure success in operations. The police will be required to carry out a creeping reoccupation of the 'Guerilla zones'. After the area is secured, socio-economic activity should follow. The political leadership should step in, and psychological campaign should be launched, to wean away population from the LWE influence. It will be only with pressure from the security forces, politicians, and the population that Naxal leadership will come to the negotiating table.

### **Comprehensive Security Policy**

The Naxalism should not be treated as merely law and order problem. They have to be dealt with comprehensively in all dimensions and at all levels – political, economic, and social. They are all interlinked. At times, the required measures would be in conflict with each other. Going too far in one direction could be counter productive. Striking the right balance is the key in meeting these challenges effectively. We need a comprehensive security policy that will be implemented effectively at all levels.

### **Conclusion**

In a country of more than one billion people, there are bound to be successes and failures. It might be seen that as a nation, we have not done so badly. After all, at least it has been held together and is making progress, despite the prophets of gloom and grave problems. Considering that the USA faced a bitter civil war and the mighty Soviet Union has fragmented, the Indian Union has its basic unity.

Re-establishing control over Naxalite affected areas, their development, and enabling the marginalised people living there to lead a secure, dignified and better quality of life is vital. As a nation we should ensure that this objective is achieved. National 'will', commitment and focus are required.

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