

India's Energy Needs – Strategic Imperatives*

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I am delighted to be here and be asked to deliver Colonel Pyara Lal Memorial Lecture. I learnt from General Nambiar that Colonel Pyara Lal served this Institution for thirty long years from 1957 to 1987 and passed away while still serving the USI. That is really a remarkable sense of commitment. Institutions create a sense of continuity and the benefits are derived by future generations. This annual memorial lecture is a befitting tribute to the contribution that Colonel Pyara Lal has made to this great Institution.

We face real enormous challenges in meeting our energy needs. The country needs to grow by 8 to 10 per cent economically, if we are to meet our human development goals. We will also need to provide clean, convenient and reliable energy for all. We need to increase primary energy supply by three to four times. Our electricity is not the primary energy. Coal, oil, gas, wood etc. are primary energy sources and currently, we are consuming something like 425 million tons of oil equivalent worth of primary energy and we need to increase all these by three to four times over the next 25 years. Our electricity supply has to go up by five to seven times and we will have to improve the quality and the quantity of supply of all kinds of energy sources. It is also clear that coal shall remain the leading energy source in India for the next 25 years at least, if not longer.

If you compare India's energy consumption with other countries, you will find that our per capita energy consumption is very low. In comparison with other countries, the consumption per person of primary energy in India is one of the lowest in the world and much less than the World average. We consume one half of that of China and 1/20th of what an average American consumes in terms of primary energy. It is the same story in electricity consumption as well.

See Table 1.

Region/Country	Total Primary Energy Supply (TPES) Per Capita (kgoe)	Electricity Consumption Per Capita (KWh)
India	439	550
China	1090	1380
USA	7835	13070
World	1688	2430

kgoe stands for kg of oil equivalent

Some people also say that India is not very energy efficient, but if you look at it in a slightly different way you will find that we are quite efficient users of energy and it is understandable. Anyone who is as poor as we are and whose energy cost is so high is understandably using energy very efficiently. No one can afford to use energy in a wasteful manner.

If you compare how much energy we use for a dollar worth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) adjusted in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms, you can see that we are quite an efficient user of energy. See Table 2. We are using only 0.16 kgoe worth of energy for adding one-dollar worth of GDP in PPP terms whereas, the USA takes 0.22 kgoe. The world, on an average takes 0.21 kgoe and China takes 0.23 kgoe. Even in terms of KWh we are quite efficient. PPP corrects for the difference between actual purchasing power and the nominal exchange rate. One dollar costs nearly 40 Rupees, but if you go around buying things in the USA, what you can buy for one dollar you can buy that in India for about Rs 10. In a sense, the purchasing power of a rupee is much more than what our exchange rate indicates.

Table 2 : Energy Use Efficiency Per GDP \$: PPP-2000

Region/Country	Primary Energy (kgoe)	KWh
India	0.16	0.20
China	0.23	0.29
USA	0.22	0.37
World	0.21	0.31

We use large amounts of traditional fuels. Mainly women in rural households are currently using these. In fact, 90 per cent of the rural households continue to use firewood and dung cakes and 20 per cent of the urban households also use firewood and chips. Only five per cent of the rural households and 44 per cent of the urban households use LPG. Similarly, kerosene is used by only 2.7 per cent of rural households and 22 per cent of urban households.

Traditional fuels cause huge burden on health, particularly women's health. If you quantify the time that women spend in gathering fire wood, in gathering dung and so on, you will find that on an average, 3000 crore hours are spent by Indian women per year in just fire wood gathering in the country. They also cause all kinds of respiratory diseases and the symptoms are quite widespread. The economic losses that people suffer in terms of lost opportunities, sickness time, employment that they miss, the money they spend on medicines, etc have been estimated to be around Rs 30,000 crores per year. It also illustrates that you just cannot neglect to provide clean and convenient energy to our people in rural areas. This has to be an important objective of any kind of energy policy.

India consumed 121.04 metric tons (mt) of crude oil products (including refinery fuel) in 2005-06, whereas, domestic production of crude oil was only about 33.98 mt during the same period. We are virtually importing more than 70 per cent of our oil needs and this dependency on oil imports keeps on increasing. The total consumption of petroleum products has been growing at the rate of around 5.1 per cent between 1980-81 and 2005-06; though over the last five years it has grown at a lower rate of around 4 per cent because the crude price has gone up significantly in the international market.

For a long-term energy perspective, we have to make some assumptions about how much energy we would need around 25 years down the line and how fast our economy would grow, how fast our population would grow, what kind of measures can we take for energy conservation, what would be our energy policy, what would be the availability of different fuels etc? There are so many imponderables in making projections for the future that one needs to find a method that gives a broad idea of what our options are, what the feasible space is, what are the parameters within which we can act, and what all can we do?

One way to do this is to look at energy elasticity. The notion of energy elasticity is - if GDP grows by one per cent, how many percentage points would the energy consumption increase? If you look at the Indian data in the past then you will find that our GDP consumption elasticity for Total Primary Commercial Energy Supply (TPCES) is around 1.08 from 1980-81 to 2003-04, but it has come down slightly and we have now become a little more energy efficient. This is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3 : Energy Use Elasticity wrt GDP

(Percentage change in commercial energy use for one per cent growth in GDP)			
TPCES wrt GDP	1980-81 to 2003-04	Per Capita	1.08
	1990-91 to 2003-04		0.82
Electricity Generated wrt GDP (Utilities + Captive)	1980-81 to 2003-04		1.30
	1990-91 to 2003-04		1.06

Now let us take electricity generation. If you look at electricity generated, we are becoming a little more efficient. Earlier, we used to add 1.3 per cent of electricity for every one percent increase in GDP. Now we are adding only 1.06 per cent for every one per cent increase in GDP. We can also compare how other countries have done in this regard. If you look at them based on their per capita income, you can see that globally also, countries' elasticities keep going down once their per capita income increases and this is also true for electricity consumption. This is illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4 : Energy Use Elasticity wrt GDP from Cross-Country Data of 2003

TPES (kgoe/capita) wrt per capita GDP (\$ PPP 2000)	All Countries 2000 <GDP <8000 GDP >8000	0.83 0.79 0.76
	All Countries 2000 <GDP <8000 GDP >8000	1.24 1.25 1.09
Electricity Consumption (kWh/capita) wrt percapita GDP (\$ PPP 2000)		

Based on such elasticities, for growth rates of 8-9 per cent, we get the primary commercial energy required. It would be around 1500-1800 metric tons oil equivalent (mtoe) by 2031-32. By oil equivalent, I mean-1 Kg of oil gives you 10,000 kilo calories of energy whereas, 1 kg of Coal in India gives only 4,000 kilo calories. So one kg of coal equals nearly 0.4 kg of oil; in energy terms these are equivalent. One uses such energy equivalence numbers to aggregate all the different types of fuels and one gets the kind of broad numbers as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 : Total Estimated Primary Commercial Energy Requirement (TEPCER) in 2031-32 for 1.47 billion Population (mtoe)

GDP Growth Rate	8%	9%
GDP (Rs. in billion at 1993-94 prices)	122170	156689
TEPCER (mtoe) (Falling Elasticities)	1514	1823

Similarly, we can make projections for electricity requirement in 2031-32 as shown in Table 6. The installed capacity required would be around 800,000 to 960,000 Giga Wats (GW) or approximately a million GW (1GW = 100 MW).

Table 6 : Electricity Requirement 2031-32

GDP Growth Rate	8%	9%
Total Energy Requirement (billion kWh)	3880	4806
Energy Required at Bus Bar	3628	4493
Projected Peak Demand (GW)	592	733
Installed Capacity Required (GW)	778	960

Now, if we really translate this into plan-wise projected installed capacity addition, then we get a picture that for the 11th Plan we need 75,000 to 80,000 MW of additional capacity and you can see from Chart 1, how it is growing. When you look at these numbers, you do not really feel surprised that China, which has a much higher per capita income than we have today, is adding perhaps 50,000 MW of capacity every year whereas, during the entire 10th Five Year Plan, we added a capacity of 20,000 MW over five years. 75,000 MW may look large but it is not certainly difficult and certainly not impossible for us to attain, if we really mean to do so.}

Plan-wise Projected Installed Capacity Addition (MW)

The electricity requirement we have projected can be generated in many different ways. We can use coal, hydrocarbons or nuclear. So, to get a fix on how much of coal, oil etc we require, we first project what we require by way of coal, oil and natural gas for non-power and for non-transport modes. These are very small users and one can make fairly reasonable projections and this is what has been done based on the studies carried out by various researchers in India. Then we put this in a programming model, that is to say: I need to generate so much of electricity, so much of transport demand in terms of billion passenger kms and billion ton kms of goods movement and so many MW of electricity. And, for so many billion units of electricity generated, what is the best way to do so? What are our options?

Using the above model, we could develop various scenarios. These scenarios are extreme scenarios. One scenario says, everything will be coal-based development that would give you maximum demand for coal and minimum demand for others. Another scenario says, let us maximise nuclear, third scenario would be to say, let us maximise hydro, the fourth scenario would be, we maximise both hydro and nuclear together, the fifth scenario could be - along with hydro and nuclear, we say 25 per cent electricity could come from natural gas. The next scenario could be that we have demand management and energy efficiency to significantly reduce the demand for energy in the country. We know that options are available. Electricity consumption can at least be reduced by 20-25 per cent, if we really push for energy efficiency. Similarly, the next scenario says that we also work on the supply side i.e. improving its energy efficiency. For example, increase coal power plant efficiency. Today, bulk of coal (some 70 per cent) goes into generating power. We are burning coal with an efficiency of 30.5 per cent, i.e. if you take the energy of electricity produced and the energy of coal that is burnt, the ratio would be about 30.5 per cent. Now the best plants in the world today, for example, in Germany give an efficiency of 46 per cent. We cannot get the same efficiency as in Germany, their ambient temperature is lower and they have certain advantage. But even accounting for our higher ambient temperature, we should be able to achieve at least 40-42 per cent efficiency with the available technology. So, one could say that if we increase our technical efficiency from 30 per cent for burning coal in power plants to 40 per cent, we would achieve a significant reduction in coal requirement, because 70 per cent of the coal is going into power plants. Thus, we achieve 35 per cent reduction in coal that can be quite significant.

Then in another scenario, we could have a higher freight share of the railways. What happens is, if a ton of goods is moved from Bombay to Delhi by truck, it costs you five or six times the energy as moving it by train. So, if a larger share of the goods movement is carried out by train, you would have reduced the energy requirement and increased the energy efficiency. Of course, that would require making the railway services as efficient and reliable as the road transport but that can be achieved. We can also increase the vehicle efficiency so that oil demand would go down and, finally, we put a lot of renewables into the system. The above scenarios are summarised below-

- (a) Coal-Based Development
 - (b) Maximise Nuclear
 - (c) Maximise Forced Hydro
 - (d) Maximise Hydro & Nuclear
 - (e) Scenario (d) plus forced Natural Gas
 - (f) Scenario (c) plus Demand Side Management
 - (g) Scenario (c) plus higher Coal Power Plant Efficiency
 - (h) Scenario (f) plus higher Coal Power Plant Efficiency
 - (i) Scenario (b) plus higher freight share of Railways
 - (k) Scenario (j) plus increased vehicle efficiency
 - (l) Scenario (k) plus renewables
- We do everything to the best extent possible and the combination would indicate to us the space within which we can operate. See Table 7. What we get here is that the oil requirement towards the end of 2031-32 would be anywhere between 352-486 million tons. Domestic production, in a pessimistic sense, has been estimated to be around 35 million tons of oil only and the range of imports would be between 315-451 million tons, i.e. import dependence would be anywhere between 90-93 per cent. Similarly, for gas, our import dependence can be 0 per cent - 50 per cent, for coal 10-45 per cent and for total commercial primary energy, it could be anywhere between 30-60 per cent. So, we could be importing 0 per cent - 60 per cent of the energy; 30 per cent if you go for all the efficiency, all the renewables, all the hydro, all the nuclear and everything. We have to recognise the fact that India would be required to import large amounts of energy. Nothing wrong in importing energy, if we have the money, if we are exporting things and if we can buy this at reasonable competitive prices in the international market. Then one can say: these are my requirements, what are really my options, what can I really do and what can I do nothing?

Table 7 : Range of Commercial Energy Requirement, Domestic Production and Imports for 8 Percent Growth for Year 2031-32

Fuel	Range of Requirement inScenarios	Assumed Domestic Production	Range of Imports*	Import (Percentage)
Oil (mt)	350-486	35	315-451	90-93
Natural Gas (mtoe)	100-197	100	0-97	0-49
Coal (mtoe)	632-1022	560	72-462	11-45
# TPCES	1351-1702	-	387-1010	29-59

* Range of imports is calculated as follows:
Lower bound = Minimum requirement – Maximum domestic production
Upper bound = Maximum requirement – Minimum domestic production
TPCES stands for Total Commercial Primary Energy Supply

Generally, it is believed that we have a lot of coal in the country. The extractable coal that we have and the amount of coal that we can bring out from the coal mines at our current level of consumption would last for 86 years. But, of course, our coal requirement is not stagnant at the current level of consumption. If the economy is growing at 8-9 per cent, then our coal consumption would grow at five per cent per year and at five per cent growth rate of coal consumption, the reserves would not last for 86 years but only for 40-45 years. So, even the so-called vast coal reserves that we have will run out in 45 years. Now one can say that we have not exploited all the coal bearing areas and 30 per cent of the coal-bearing areas are yet to be explored. Add that 30 percent and instead of 45 years it will run out in 60 years. Coal is a finite resource. Apart from the concerns about climate change that coal imposes, we have to recognise that we would be short of even coal. Similarly, our current known reserves of oil, at the current consumption rate would last only for 23 years and gas only for 38 years. So, we are clearly short of these conventional energy reserves.

If you look at Uranium, even here we are very short of it. The total amount of Uranium that we have in the country is sufficient for only 10,000 MW of the first generation nuclear power plants called Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWR). These are the kind of reactors that we have built in Rajasthan, Madras and Nara. We are continuing to build these kind of reactors in the country. With these PHWRs, we can generate at the most, 10,000 MW of nuclear power. Put that 10,000 MW in the context of our requirement of 800,000 MW to a million MW, 25 years down the line and we have a clearer picture of our energy deficiency. Today, nuclear power is around 3000 MW and is contributing less than 2 per cent. If we rely only on our own natural Uranium, it cannot contribute more than 10,000 MW. But our strategy right from May day has been to install 10,000 MW of first generation nuclear power plants i.e. PHWR. This PHWR generates electricity and the Uranium we feed in comes out as depleted Uranium, which also contains Plutonium. We separate the Plutonium and the depleted Uranium, and once we have enough Plutonium available, we can build what is known as a Fast Breeder Reactor. The Fast Breeder Reactor has the characteristics that while it generates electricity it also converts some of the depleted Uranium into more Plutonium than we put in. So, it breeds Plutonium. But though the name is called Fast Breeder Reactor, its breeding rate is very slow and it takes number of years of operation before you get enough Plutonium to start another Fast Breeder Reactor. But we can do that and then after a while it grows very rapidly and we can have exponentially growing availability of Fast Breeder Reactors in the Country. The total capacity for Fast Breeder Reactors with the same Uranium that can give you only 10,000 MW of first generation plant, can give us 500,000 MW from Fast Breeder Reactors. Another advantage of Fast Breeder Reactor is that some of the more long lasting isotopes in the depleted Uranium are burnt into it. So what comes out in the end is somewhat safer and easier to dispose of as nuclear waste than what comes out from a first generation power plant. Our strategy is to go to third stage and use our Thorium reserves. But first we need to develop Thorium technology, which is 30 years down the line. With this technology, we can build very large capacity, may be around five million MW of additional nuclear energy.

Now, what is the importance of all this? What is called pessimism here means that we are not importing any nuclear power from anywhere? In 2030, that would give us only about 48000 MW out of a million MW. Now, if we are able to import some Uranium, say 8000 MW of nuclear capacity is imported in the next 10 years, then that 48000 becomes 63000 MW. It may not seem very large, but look at 2050 numbers. By the year 2050, 8000 MW of nuclear capacity we import today, creates the possibility of increasing nuclear power from 208,000 MW to 275,000 MW, and if we can have the 123 Agreement and can import not just 8000 MW but 16000 MW of nuclear power and process it, then may be, instead of 2,75,000, this would become 3,50,000 MW, and of course 20 years further down the line, it would be very large. So, the whole benchmark of being able to import nuclear power or Uranium today and representing it, is that it gives a huge opportunity to find an additional source. Since we will run out of coal and other things, this could be our insurance mechanism. We really need a fallback energy source and here is the one that is really feasible and that insurance becomes much better, if you are able to import Uranium. We can do that without importing but what we can achieve by the end of the 21st Century; with the import of small amount of nuclear power, we can achieve the same results by the year 2070.

Now let us look at the renewable energy resources shown in Table 8. Many people feel that while we do not have hydrocarbons but what about renewables? There are a lot of opportunities there. The main problem with renewables is that many of these are bio-mass based and require large amount of land and the country is also short of land. Let us look at the options. Suppose, I have 60 million hectares which is considered waste land and if we take 60 million hectares of waste land and convert it into productive fuel wood plantations and run them in an efficient and sustainable way, we can get almost every year 620 million tons of oil equivalent worth of wood which is quite large but that is the limit. The assumption is that we are using all 60 million hectares of wasteland, which is not really available, because 60 million hectares of wasteland also includes Himalayas and other places where it would not be possible to grow anything. But if we grow 30 million hectares of forests for wood plantation, we can get 300 million tons of oil equivalent of energy out of wood plantations; not a small quantity.

Table 8 : Renewable Energy Resources

Resources	Unit	Present	Potential
Hydro-power	MW	32,326	1,50,000
Wood	mtoe/year	140	620
Bio-gas	mtoe/year	0.6	4
Ethanol	mtoe/year	0.6	10
Solar Photovoltaic	mtoe/year	-	1,200
Solar Thermal	mtoe/year	-	1,200
Wind Energy	mtoe/year	<1	10
Small Hydro-power	mtoe/year	<1	5

Let us look at bio-gas. The dung availability is restricted and the quantity is quite small. Bio-diesel, with 20 million hectares (jatropa plantation) at today's level of yield can give us only about 20 million tons of bio-diesel from it. That is not to be neglected as it provides local renewable energy resource. Therefore, bio-diesel is not the magic bullet to solve our energy problems. Ethanol (sugarcane based) may provide about 10 million tons.

Take solar photovoltaic. While there are five million hectares of land covered with today's solar photovoltaic cell, which has 15 per cent efficiency, we can get 1200 million tons of oil equivalent worth of energy and if you have 10 million hectares of land, we can have twice as much. Solar, in a sense is a very large resource that we have. We have abundance of it. The only catch is that the cost is high. Today, a kWh of energy generated by solar photovoltaic costs about Rs 20 per KWh whereas, pithead coal based power plant generates at Rs 2 per unit. Now, if you say that since solar is available at the consumer's end, we can compare it with Rs 4 or Rs 5 per unit, we still need to bring down the cost of solar from Rs 20 to Rs 5 per unit, if solar energy is going to be a viable option.

With wind energy also, there is a problem that it operates only for part of the time. We get electricity for about 20 per cent of the time it operates. Our current load factor on wind power is around 18 per cent. Even if you assume that 20 per cent of wind power is available, all the 65000 MW of wind power potential in the country operating at 20 per cent is really no more than 20,000 MW of coal based power plant operating at 70 per cent load factor. This is very less. There is no other magic bullet other than solar energy, which is very expensive.

Currently in Brazil, people are using sugarcane to convert it into ethanol and run their cars on that. Ethanol can also be made from cellulosic bio-mass, i.e. rice straw and wheat stalk, the entire crop residue can be used to generate ethanol. If we can make cellulosic bio-mass ethanol, then we can have a large amount of ethanol. Since we have so much of crop waste that can be used, we can have 300 million tons of oil equivalent of ethanol, which is possible. Again, the technology is not currently economical but many people are working on it and may be, with time it would become economically viable a few years down the line.

So, what are our strategic imperatives? One thing has emerged very clearly that we are short of energy. We need to use all our energy resources. We need to push energy efficiency in demand management. We must augment our resources in whatever way we can, to get maximum out of what we have. We need to think about energy security, including that for the households, because the households do suffer a lot for want of clean and convenient energy. We need to worry about environment sustainability, see how we can improve that and we even need to think about a carbon free scenario, with the rising global concerns about climate change. Can we think of a scenario without emitting carbon? Finally, we should think about energy independence. Is it needed and is it a possibility?

Let us look at all these. The energy efficiency and demand management are one of the first and foremost options that we should really take. For every MW that is saved, or you can say every negativatt (negative watt) that is produced by saving a MW, it is even more than a MW that is produced, because the wastage in transmission and distribution is not there. There are many things we can do. We should promote urban mass transport system because that would really reduce energy consumption. We can increase the share of railway freight movement. We should benchmark our energy consumption for all energy intensive sectors in the country. There are many energy intensive sectors, an industry could be told that they were wasting a lot of energy. If we let the investors know-how efficient or inefficient a particular firm is, I think that should be sufficient motivation to make the energy sector efficient.

We can also have annual energy audits for specific energy intensive industries. To promote energy efficiency, we have a Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), which is now labelling products. It gives ratings of 1 star, 2 star, 3 star or 4 star etc. It is labelling the major energy products. What we need to do is that we should make it possible for government procurement agencies to buy a product with least cost on lifetime basis and not just first cost basis. For example, if you want to buy an air conditioner, then the procurement officer would call for tenders and would be required to buy one with the lowest quote. But if the lowest cost, let us say, consumes 20 per cent more energy than another one, he would not be able to prefer that one, because the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) would come after him. So, we need to develop a mechanism by which a rational choice can be made. It is not very difficult to do so. One can easily imagine and ensure that there is no CVC hassle involved and a person can take honest and correct decisions. I think we should promote this culture and these are the kind of measures we need to take.

The next strategic option we have is that we must augment our resources. We need to accelerate our exploration of coal, oil and gas. We must accelerate nuclear power because this is what really increases the availability of energy. We need to develop the Thorium cycle for nuclear power and also exploit non-conventional energy sources. We should go for in-situ coal gasification and also enhance recovery of oil and gas. For energy security, we should reduce our dependence on import of energy. In some sense, we must see that diversification is there; we ought to buy oil from as many sources as possible and not just one place. We should use, not only oil, but spread out our consumption over many different resources of fuels. We should set up buffer stocks. We need to provide clean fuel and electricity to all. How do we do that?

Currently, we are giving kerosene and LPG at highly subsidised rates. However, a part of the kerosene that is earmarked for households, at least 35 per cent, leaks out and goes out for adulteration of diesel. In spite of all kinds of measures that we have, these leakages continue.

Similarly, many people using LPG can afford to pay more than what they are currently paying, but they are used to getting subsidised LPG. I think what we need to do is to make sure that every household should have some entitlement of subsidised kerosene and electricity. For example, first 30 units of electricity a month or may be 8 cylinders of gas per year are made available at a subsidised price and the rest is available at a higher price. To prevent leakages, what we need to do is give everyone a smart card with which a person can buy the product from any dealer at the market price and the difference between the market price and the ration price is charged to the Government account, and the person only pays the ration price. That way, there will be only one price for the market and there would be no incentive to divert kerosene or diesel or LPG to other uses and that it will be available. However, we have to recognise the poor and evolve leak proof methods to subsidise them.

What about environmental sustainability? From the global point of view, carbon emissions are the main concerns but from the local point of view, we are concerned more about the air that we breathe in the cities. Degradation of local natural resources is important. If you dig a coalmine, then the land is carved. You need to worry about these issues as well. Sulphur or particulate emissions from power plants are also of importance. Our CO2 emissions would rise significantly. By 2031-32, it would be 5.3 billion tons per year in the high coal use projection, but if we use all the low coal technologies, putting everything together, it can be brought down to 3.8 billion tons per year. The USA's CO2 emissions today are in excess of 5.5 billion tons. So, 25 years down the line, even in our worst case scenario and with a much larger population of 1.5 billion people, we would not reach the USA's level. How can we think of a carbon free world? We should have adequate nuclear energy. We will use all our hydro, solar, wind and other renewables for electricity. This is possible even today, but the costs are very high. We need to bring down the costs of all these. For oil substitutes, we can go for electric traction, electric vehicles, cellulosic ethanol and bio-diesel. These are all technically feasible but their cost is high and they need technological breakthrough.

If we want to have energy security, we ought to develop all resources and need to go for energy efficiency and demand management, as strongly as possible. We also need to follow a strategy for energy saving. It will reduce carbon emissions and also help in achieving energy independence.

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Indo-US Strategic Relationship: China as a Factor*

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The international security environment is witnessing a power shift from the hegemonic power, the United States, towards the rising powers, China and India. This power shift will have a significant impact on global geopolitics. Power shifts have rarely been peaceful throughout history. The challenge before the USA, China and India, therefore, is to steer their triangular relationship in a direction that would avoid heightened security competition, which could potentially lead to conflict and instead seek ways to maintain peace and stability in Asia through constructive engagement. The US-China-India triangle is not sui generis since there are other major powers like Russia, Japan and the EU, which also play a part in the global strategic landscape. However, as the Brazil-Russia-India-China (BRIC) report by Goldman Sachs points out, China and India will join the USA as the three largest economies in the world, in the first half of the 21st Century, which would collectively give them greater clout than any other geometric configuration.

The origins of the Indo-US strategic partnership lay in the fall of the Soviet Union and the collapse of Indian economy in the beginning of 1990s, which forced India to reposition itself strategically. The sudden withdrawal of the Soviet security net meant that India had to reassess its security policy and especially, its relationship with the USA, the sole remaining superpower. At the same time, India also had to reassess its economic policy in the wake of near bankruptcy of economy resulting from the failed socialist policies of the past. As C Raja Mohan notes, “fundamental changes in foreign policy take place only when there is a revolutionary change, either at home or in the world.”¹ According to Raja Mohan, there were five changes in India’s foreign policy that followed. India made a transition from the collective national consensus on building a socialist society to a consensus on building a modern capitalist one. It also moved from the past emphasis on politics to a new stress on economics in the making of foreign policy. It shifted from Third Worldism to promotion of its own self-interest. It rejected the anti-Western mode of thinking. Finally, India made a transition from idealism to pragmatism.²

These changes would largely guide India’s relationship with the major powers in the 21st Century. The economic reforms initiated by the Narasimha Rao - Manmohan Singh duo in 1991 were crucial in lifting India into a higher trajectory of growth and advancing its claims as a major power. India’s decision to test nuclear weapons in 1998 was a product of the changing strategic environment in its neighbourhood and the close strategic cooperation between its two nuclear neighbours ie, Pakistan and China. This gave rise to UN Security Council Resolution 1172, backed by all the five permanent members, which demanded that India and Pakistan roll back their nuclear programmes. When President Clinton visited China soon after, a joint statement was issued condemning India and Pakistan, raising concerns of the USA colluding with China against India. It was a significant challenge for Indian diplomacy to overcome the sanctions imposed on the country by the international community, especially the USA, in the aftermath of the tests. The USA’s role in bringing the Kargil conflict to an end was a significant step in the process of bridging the trust deficit. The insistence of the Clinton Government, on India meeting the so-called nuclear benchmarks, including the signing of the CTBT and the adoption of strategic restraint, however, meant that the relationship could not progress to the next level.³

It was left to the Bush administration to enable the Indo-US bilateral relationship achieve its full potential. As early as 2000, Condoleezza Rice wrote in a Foreign Affairs article that: “There is a strong tendency conceptually to connect India with Pakistan and to think only of Kashmir or the nuclear competition between the two states. But India is an element in China’s calculation, and it should be in America’s, too. India is not a great power yet, but it has the potential to emerge as one.”⁴ George W Bush was also impressed with India’s democratic credentials, even before he took office as President. India’s support to the new US government on key strategic objectives like missile defence, which had little support even among US allies, helped create a new climate in bilateral relations, which received a further boost after 9/11 when India reached out to the USA with its offer of military bases. While the US decision to rebuild ties with Pakistan in the wake of 9/11 created a feeling of déjà vu in India, it did not significantly affect the progress of Indo-US relations, nor did India’s refusal to send troops to Iraq.

While the US National Security Strategy of 2002 acknowledged India as a “growing world power with which we have common strategic interests”, it was not until the second Bush term that the USA made a conscious decision in March 2005 to raise the stakes and decide to “help India become a major world power in the 21st Century.”⁵ The first step in this direction was the New Framework for the USA-India Defence Relationship signed in June 2005, which stated that “the USA-India defence relationship derives from a common belief in freedom, democracy and the rule of law, and seeks to advance shared security interests”, including “defeating terrorism and violent religious extremism”, “preventing the spread of WMD” and “protecting the free flow of commerce”. It also agreed to conduct “joint and combined exercises”, “collaborate in multi-national operations when it is in their common interest” and “expand two-way defence trade” among other things.⁶ The Indian Navy had even earlier provided support for US shipping through the Malacca Straits in 2002-2003 as protection against terrorist attacks.

This was followed in July 2005 by a joint statement on full civil nuclear energy cooperation, which cemented the growing strategic convergence between the two countries. It called for the separation of India’s nuclear facilities into civilian and military, and bringing India’s civilian facilities under international safeguards in exchange for nuclear energy cooperation. The deal opened the doors for India to participate in civilian nuclear commerce with members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) while allowing it to retain its nuclear weapons programme, despite being outside the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The inability of Pakistan to gain a similar agreement symbolised the de-hyphenation of the two countries, which President Bush confirmed with his remark in Islamabad that “Pakistan and India are different countries with different needs and different histories. So, as we proceed forward, our strategy will take in effect those well-known differences.”⁷ In her testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary of State Rice noted that “This strategic achievement will advance energy security, further environmental protection, foster economic and technological development in both of our countries, bolster international security, and strengthen the global non-proliferation regime. All of these benefits, however, must be viewed in a still larger and greater context: What this initiative does to elevate this relationship to a new, strategic height.” In December 2006, the US Congress approved the deal by passing the Hyde Act and in July 2007, both sides agreed on the text of the bilateral pact known as the 123 agreement. However, the agreement has run into domestic political opposition in India, although the government is still hopeful of seeing it through.

Apart from democracy as a shared value, economic complementarities, terrorism, and counterproliferation, another factor behind the emerging Indo-US strategic partnership is the maintenance of a stable balance of power in Asia. It does not suit the USA to have a major regional crisis but its strategy is to retain the ability for intervention, if such a crisis occurs. But considering that the USA has many other challenges, it also looks to encourage regional partners in security responsibilities. India fits in as a partner in ensuring stability. Rice elaborated on the role of the USA-India relationship vis-a-vis China in a speech in Japan in 2005: “I really do believe that the USA-Japan relationship, the USA-South Korea relationship, the USA-India relationship, all are important in creating an environment in which China is more likely to play a positive role than a negative role. These alliances are not against China: they are alliances that are devoted to a stable security, political and economic, and indeed, values-based relationships that put China in the context of those relationships, and on a different path to development than if China were simply untethered, simply operating without that strategic context.”⁸

In 2003, the then Secretary of State Colin Powell described the USA-China relations as the best since President Nixon’s visit to China in 1972. Jonathan Pollack of the US Naval War College has suggested that “Sino-American relations in the early 21st century constitute a strategic surprise.”⁹ The primary reason was 9/11 which has given the USA and China a window of opportunity to deal with their own pre-occupations, the war against terror and economic development respectively, and avoid confrontation in the short to medium term. However, official US documents view China’s growing military expenditure with concern. The Quadrennial Defence Review (QDR) released by the US Department of Defence in 2006 identifies China as having “the greatest potential to compete militarily with the United States” and states that “shaping the choices of major and emerging powers requires a balanced approach, one that seeks cooperation but also creates prudent hedges against the possibility that cooperative approaches by themselves may fail to preclude future conflict.”¹⁰ According to the US National Security Strategy (NSS) of 2006, “as China becomes a global player, it must act as a responsible stakeholder that fulfills its obligations and works with the USA and others, to advance the international system that has enabled its success: enforcing the international rules that have helped China lift itself out of a century of economic deprivation, embracing the economic and political standards that go along with that system of rules, and contributing to international stability and security by working with the United States and other major powers.” The NSS adds that “our strategy seeks to encourage China to make the right strategic choices for its people, while we hedge against other possibilities.”¹¹ The Pentagon’s 2007 report to Congress on China’s military power acknowledges that its goal of modernising national defence is proceeding on course.

The USA’s concerns were articulated by the then Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in a speech in Singapore in 2005 in which he asked: “Since no nation threatens China, one must wonder: Why this growing investment? Why these continuing large and expanding arms purchases? Why these continuing robust deployments?”¹² The USA remains dissatisfied with China’s stand on contentious issues like Iran and North Korea on which it expects a more cooperative response. The issue of the USA’s trade deficit with China, which crossed \$ 200 billion in 2005, and its associated job losses in the USA, also looms large. The Bush administration has resisted taking action against Chinese products, although there is pressure from Congress to do so, if China does not further adjust its currency and protect intellectual property rights.

If China is unable to make concessions on issues of interest to the USA, the trend of the USA hedging its bets by strengthening ties with other Asian powers is likely to continue. Dan Blumenthal makes a case that China’s military buildup is not a ‘peculiarly American obsession’ and that “Asia-Pacific countries are responding to strategic uncertainty characterised in large part by China’s rise through the traditional way of modernising their militaries and embracing America as the off-shore balancer.”¹³ The India-USA strategic partnership is at one level a reflection of the desire of both countries to maintain a stable balance of power in Asia. As Fareed Zakaria has written, criticising demands that India be made to cap its nuclear arsenal as part of the deal, “It has been American policy for decades to oppose the rise of a single hegemonic power in either Europe or Asia. If India were forced to halt its plutonium production, the result would be that China would become the dominant nuclear power in Asia. Why is this in American interests? Should we not prefer a circumstance where there is some balance between the major powers on that vast continent?”¹⁴

Although relations between India and China had a setback following the nuclear tests of 1998 and the subsequent suggestion by Prime Minister Vajpayee in a letter to President Clinton and other heads of state mentioning China’s role in India’s deteriorating security environment, both countries have moved on since then. Prime Minister Vajpayee himself made a trip to China in 2003, which went a long way towards the rebuilding of trust. As Jing-dong Yuan has pointed out, the visit was significant for marking the “growing consensus and converging interests between Beijing and New Delhi, covering a wide range of bilateral, regional and global issues,” especially “in developing a fair, equitable, international political and economic order.”¹⁵ Vajpayee’s recognition of Tibet as part of China was looked upon favourably by the Chinese government as a symbol of India’s desire to reach out to its neighbour. Both countries also decided to upgrade their negotiations to resolve the boundary dispute to the level of Special Representatives and eleven rounds of meetings have been held so far. The two countries went ahead and signed a Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity during the visit of China’s Premier Wen Jiabao to India in 2005. China reciprocated India’s gesture on Tibet by finally recognising Sikkim as a part of India. China also indicated that it was open to the possibility of India becoming a permanent member of the UN Security Council, although it did not give any firm assurance of support.

Economic engagement has also played a significant role in bringing both countries together. The complementarity of Chinese hardware and Indian software is a symbol of the vast possibilities that this process of economic engagement holds out. According to Premier Zhu Rongji in 2002, “India is No. 1 in software and we are No. 1 in hardware. If we put the software and hardware together, we together can be No. 1 in the future.”¹⁶ It has been said that “in view of the role that China-India bilateral trade and commerce have played in reviving and strengthening their rapprochement following India’s nuclear tests of May 1998, their bilateral economic engagement has finally established its credentials as the most agreeable, as also the single most reliable pillar amongst China-India confidence building measures (CBMs).”¹⁷ Bilateral trade has increased from US \$ 5 billion in 2002 to cross US \$ 25 billion in 2006 and China could overtake the USA to become India’s largest trading partner by the end of 2007. However, India’s trade surplus turned into a deficit in 2006 and the current composition of trade is asymmetrical with Indian exports consisting mainly of raw materials whereas, Chinese exports are mainly value added products.

India’s concerns over China relate to its relationship with Pakistan as well as other countries in the subcontinent. The transfer of nuclear and missile technology from China to Pakistan enabled the latter to carry out a proxy war against India in Kashmir over the last two decades. China’s so-called string of pearls strategy involving the construction of naval facilities in Pakistan, Myanmar and Sri Lanka has led to concerns in India about strategic encirclement and of China seeking a larger footprint in the region. China is also assisting Pakistan in conventional weaponry including co-production of the JF-17 fighter aircraft. China’s application to join the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) as an observer suggests that it is open to playing a greater role in South Asia. China is further developing its ties with Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar, although it is unlikely that any of these will approach the scale of the China-Pakistan relationship.

On the border issue, China has not budged on its claim to Tawang and also refuses to provide visas to Indian nationals from Arunachal Pradesh. China has a sophisticated approach of sending mixed messages at different forums. This pattern is part of a historical Chinese world view of how they should operate. At a strategic level the image is of a mature, rational player. There are reassuring statements made by the Prime Ministers of both the countries. But at the tactical level, there are-what appear to be irrational actions to keep the surface tension going. On the border issue, Chinese officers send periodic messages to their Indian counterparts to remove bunkers from territory in which Indian forces have always been present. Those who have interacted with China in war and in peace know of this double edged or two-track approach. China’s view of history and the future creates a dynamic strategy in which tactical aggression is combined with strategic stability which is seen in their pattern of behaviour. It works by creating fear, so much so that the Indian government has for the first time asked its ministers not to attend any reception for the Dalai Lama. However, China has to remain careful since the entire edifice that it has created as a rational, responsible player will come crashing down by creating a major conflict in its relationship with India.

The first quadrilateral US-Japan-Australia-India dialogue took place in Manila this year. This was an initiative of the then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. It was followed by joint naval exercises between the four countries and Singapore in September 2007. This led to some voices in China expressing anxiety about the possible emergence of an Asian NATO. Mohan Malik cites a commentary in the Chinese publication Huanqiu Shibao, which noted, “The fact is that Japan, Australia and India are respectively located at China’s northeast, southeast, and southwest, and all are Asian powers, while the USA’s power in the Pacific is still unchallengeable. Hence, should the “alliance of values” concentrating military and ideological flavors in one body take shape, it will have a very great impact on China’s security environment.”¹⁸

China’s concerns over the emerging Indo-US relationship are apparent from its opposition to the nuclear agreement. China has held that the USA-India nuclear cooperation must conform to the rules of the global non-proliferation regime, which should not be weakened by exceptions. If the deal goes through, China is holding out the possibility of striking a deal of its own with Pakistan. As an article in the official People’s Daily in 2005 stated: “Now that the United States buys another country in with nuclear technologies in defiance of an international treaty, other nuclear suppliers also have their own partners of interest as well as good reasons to copy what the United States did...A domino effect of nuclear proliferation, once turned into reality, will definitely lead to global nuclear proliferation and competition.”¹⁹ At the same time China also agreed to cooperate with India in civilian nuclear field during President Hu Jintao’s visit to India.

The nuclear isolation of India that had held its relations with the USA hostage for decades had to be ended.²⁰ This realisation in Washington and New Delhi was a major strategic turning point in the history of Indo-US relations. It was in fact the culmination of the process of re-positioning India, that had started after the collapse of the Soviet Union and India’s own near economic collapse. This repositioning with its strategic and economic shifts had been started by Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh. Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Jaswant Singh stayed on that course. It is in a way apt that Manmohan Singh brought that process of repositioning India in the new international order to its present advantageous juncture. Today, India is in the enviable position of having stable relations with all major military and economic powers. It is a condition that had been five decades in coming and one that is to be valued and sustained.

If, as Manmohan Singh reminds Indians frequently, the future lies in sustained economic and technological growth, India can ill afford to be without a solid relationship with the USA. The USA leads the world, and despite occasional spells of delusion about its military ability to set the world right, would continue to lead the world. Its real power, its capacity to do good, is an asset to Indian strategic needs. India on the other hand believes, to use Raja Mohan’s phrase, ‘in marching to its own drummer’.²¹ The two great nations will need to work on each other’s strengths. That is the strategic need of the future. The nuclear deal is one part of that larger strategic mosaic. India’s nuclear capability is in fact a reality, as shown by the underpinnings of the nuclear deal. It is evidence of India coming of age. There is confidence within India that it can play a role commensurate with its potential as an emerging power and that its nuclear capability will remain a source of stability in both the regional and the global contexts.

As a swing state being courted by all other major powers, India has to perform a balancing act. The Indo-US strategic partnership cannot be entirely free from the context of the Sino-US relationship, which will act as a cloud on India’s relationship with the USA because India has no control over US policies and China’s responses to those policies. This will in turn be influenced by the flux in the global strategic calculus, which is shifting rapidly, both due to changing power equations as well as leadership changes. The challenge before India lies in managing these two bilateral equations under this state of uncertainty and being able to build favorable relationships with both the USA and China. India will be cautious in playing the US card against China since it does not view its relations vis-à-vis both countries as a zero-sum game. This would also be in US interests according to Robert Sutter who suggests that “US Government leaders should seek to advance US interests in Asia without overt competition with China that would try to force Asian governments to choose between Washington and Beijing.”²² Indeed India is also participating in a trilateral dialogue with China and Russia, which has held two meetings in 2007. As Pranab Mukherjee has said, “We are no longer bound by the Cold War paradigm where good relations with one power automatically entailed negative consequences with its rivals.”²³ In this context, the view of Raja Mohan that India must offer reasonable assurance that its partnership with the USA is not directed against China in order to ensure that it joins the Asian balance of power without causing unnecessary turbulence is pertinent. An Indo-US strategic partnership that is built on the premise of confrontation with Beijing would deliver a serious blow to India’s hopes of emerging as a major power centre in Asia that is seen as a force for stability by the region as a whole.

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War in Our Time: Reflections on Iraq, Terrorism and WMD*

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'We're an empire now, and when we act we create our own reality'.¹
'...truth can be created by assertion, principle can be established by deception and democracy can be imposed through aggression'.²

In 2002-03, President George W Bush presented the world with an ultimatum: if the United Nations Security Council did not force Iraqi compliance on American terms, Washington reserved the right to launch a war on its own. This came after weeks of raging debate whether the war clouds were a genuine or fabricated crisis. Part of the publicity spin drew historical parallels with appeasement. Saddam Hussein was the contemporary Hitler (an evil dictator bent on aggression) and Bush was a modern-day heroic Winston Churchill, crying his warnings in the wilderness against a chorus of voices to the contrary. His international isolation was thus turned into virtue.

One of the great successes of the last century was the de-legitimisation of aggression. Once considered a normal condition of sovereign statehood, warfare has been so thoroughly stigmatised that the bar is extraordinarily high for aggressive war. Among other tragic setbacks to international order and justice, the neoconservatives succeeded in reversing the burden of proof. Opponents of war had to prove, to the warmongers' satisfaction, why war should not be waged or risk being tarred as wimps and peaceniks. When Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned against an illegal war, he was branded an appeaser like Chamberlain. Thus was virtue turned into evil.

Historical metaphors are powerful tools of political mobilisation. In 2003, the Munich and Hitler analogies proved useful in demonising Saddam Hussein (not a very difficult task). But how accurate was the analogy?

The lesson of Munich for the major powers was that you do not buy peace with fellow major powers tomorrow by giving in to their demands today. This merely whets their appetite. They live by the sword and shall perish only by the sword. Better, therefore, to confront them, including risking going to war, if necessary, at a time and place of your choosing. The lesson for smaller powers - most countries of the world - was different. Faced with the prospect of war with a major power, your allies and guarantors will sell you out rather than risk a war.

The logic of appeasement in 1938 was the wish to avoid war at any cost. The same logic has led to repeated efforts to appease the USA's appetite for war, with results no more promising than history's big lessons. In 2003 the US, not Iraq, threatened war. Saddam had been successfully contained and disarmed through UN inspections.

There were three pertinent attributes about Hitler's Germany at the time of Munich: dictatorship, major power status and territorial imperialism. Dictatorship in itself is irrelevant to appeasement; no one would contemplate giving in to bluster from a weak tin-pot dictator. In 1938, Germany was Europe's strongest power and bent on military aggression. The others were so terrified of war breaking out that they forced Czechoslovakia, the targeted victim, to cede to German demands as the only way of avoiding war.

In 2003, no credible analyst considered Saddam Hussein powerful enough to be a threat to any other nation in the region, let alone to the world. Rather, the USA as the world's strongest power threatened a war of aggression under the label of preventive defence. Regardless of the real motives which still are not clear, the world was so terrified of war that it wanted to force the intended target of attack, Iraq, to give in to US demands without a war.

The result? War in our time, yet again.

Fast forward to Iran today. European backing for 'tough' American policy towards Iran suggests that the age-old instinct for appeasing the predatory impulse of the great and powerful - another abiding lesson of history - is alive and well. Should we fault other countries for hoping for the best but preparing for the worst?

Wars are cataclysmic events. Taking a country to war is among the most solemn responsibilities that a government has. It puts one's soldiers at risk of death and injury, it asks them to kill complete strangers on government orders, it kills many civilians caught in the cross-fire, and the immediate and long-term consequences are grave yet unpredictable.

The Iraq war proper proved to be swift and decisive, but the mission of a stable and democratic Iraq - let alone the Middle East overall - remains far from accomplished. My intention in this talk is to examine how the Iraq War, far from enhancing, has damaged the capacity of the international community to fashion a robust collective response to the challenge of international terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). It has curtailed civil liberties, hardened sectarian divides, eroded America's moral standing and made the world less safe for all of us.

The United Nations and Iraq

Iraq shows that it is easier to win a war without UN blessing than win the peace afterwards - but victory in war is pointless without a resulting secure peace. Reasons for the failure of the world community to support the Iraq war included deep doubts over the justification for going to war, anxiety about the human toll, uncontrollable course and incalculable consequences of war in a volatile and highly inflamed region, and profound scepticism about the US capacity to stay engaged - politically, economically and militarily - for the years of reconstruction required after a war.

The fabric of orderly relations between nations, the health of the human rights norm and the struggle for a better world are all built on respect for international law. The belligerent countries insisted that the war was both legal and legitimate; others conceded that it may have been illegal but legitimate, as with Kosovo in 1999, in its largely humanitarian outcome; yet a third group insisted that the war was illegal and illegitimate.

There were three matching views on Iraq's significance for UN-US relations: that it had demonstrated the irrelevance, centrality or potential complicity of the UN. For some American neoconservatives, because it exists, the UN deserves to be disinvented.³

Saddam Hussein's reign of terror is about to end. He will go quickly, but not alone: in a parting irony, he will take the UN down with him... the fantasy of the UN as the foundation of a new world order. As we sift the debris, it will be important to preserve, the better to understand, the intellectual wreckage of the liberal conceit of safety through international law administered by international institutions.

A second point of view acknowledged the need to confront Saddam but ruled out acting without UN authorisation. From a test of UN relevance, the issue became a test of unilateral wars and what sort of world we wish to live in, who we wish to be ruled by, and if we wish to live by rules and laws or by the force of arms. Little evidence linked Saddam Hussein either to 9/11 or to Osama bin Laden. Saddam had been successfully contained and disarmed, and did not pose a clear and present danger to regional, world or US security.⁴ Two things were widely believed to follow from the contrasting US policies towards Iraq and North Korea: Iraq lacked nuclear weapons, North Korea does not have oil.

The third argument accepted UN authorisation as necessary, but not sufficient and preferred UN irrelevance to complicity. Had the UN been bribed and bullied into submission and sanctioned war, instead of UN legitimacy being stamped on military action against Iraq, that legitimacy itself would have been eroded. Arguably, the UN has already been 'reduced to the servile function of after-sales service provider for the USA, on permanent call as the mop-up brigade'.⁵

Goals Contradicted by Means

Washington had six great claims for the war on Iraq; each was badly undermined by the means chosen. Their collective damage to the Empire Lite enterprise is greater than the sum of their separate parts.⁶

Iraq's WMD ambition had been checked and contained by UN inspectors. Its arsenal of chemical and biological weapons was negligible, its nuclear weapons programme was virtually non-existent with little capacity for revival.

Second, how is it possible to achieve victory in the war on terrorism against American targets by inciting a still deeper hatred of US policy? Iraq became a hotbed of terrorism as a result of the war: 'There was no al-Qaida in Iraq before the arrival of the US and British troops. Now fundamentalists are descending like spores of anthrax on the gaping wounds torn open by the war'.⁷

Third, how does one plant democracy in an inhospitable terrain by punishing friends and allies who dared to exercise their democratic right to dissent from a war without justification, while rewarding dictators who lent ready support?⁸ Democracy cannot be imposed in Iraq by bombers, helicopter gunships and tanks, especially while other tyrants and dictators remain solid US allies. Madeleine Albright sadly concluded that 'democracy is getting a bad name because it is identified with imposition and occupation'.⁹ The global expansion of democracy has not been a pillar of American foreign policy; the rhetoric of democracy is an expedient justification in support of other more traditional goals. What answer to those who claim that aggression abroad was matched by repression at home, with serious cutbacks to many liberties of citizens, residents and visitors alike? The role of business cronies in shaping public policy had a corrosive impact on public faith in the government. 'The Russians were mocked for protecting their economic self-interest, while Halliburton positioned itself at the centre of Iraqi reconstruction'.¹⁰

Fourth, the legal basis for going to war continues to haunt the three belligerent governments. Did it amount to a crime of aggression? After all, Germany was punished for having started, not lost, WW II. Nor is it possible to promote the international rule of law or act as the world's policeman by hollowing out some of the most important parts of international law that restrict the right to go to war.

Fifth, against the backdrop of US rejection of the International Criminal Court and active efforts to undermine it, the denial of basic justice to prisoners at Guantánamo Bay and the history of supporting and arming repressive regimes in the Middle East and elsewhere, justice dispensed by such an occupying power has been 'of dubious legality and questionable legitimacy',¹¹ and that is being charitable.

Finally, how can Britain and the USA enforce UN resolutions by denying the authority of the world body, denigrating it as irrelevant and belittling its role in reconstruction efforts after the war?

Liberation as a Collateral Benefit

Saddam Hussein is gone and the people of Iraq are freed of his tyranny - that is a decided public good. But this does not trump all other considerations. He may be gone, but the death and disappearance squads are back on the streets with grimmer viciousness. Saddam's removal is a collateral benefit amid the carnage of destruction to the agreed principles and established institutions of the world order. I cannot rejoice at the descent from the ideal of a world based on the rule of law to that of the law of the jungle - though I can see why the lion in the jungle welcomes such a change.

Iraq risked re-legitimising wars of choice as an instrument of unilateral state policy. How are we going to prevent the proliferation of the unlawful and unjustified use of force? To argue that military victory bestows legitimacy is to say that might is right, and that ends justify the means: two longstanding Western taboos. It also begs the question: Will others politely accept the new US imperial order, or will they begin to arm and align themselves, so as not to become tomorrow's Iraq? Few will accept the doctrine that the administration of the day in Washington can decide who is to be which country's leader, and who is to be toppled. Nor is Washington famous for urging the abolition of the veto power of the P5 as an obstacle to effective UN decision making. Since the end of the Cold War, Washington has wielded the veto most frequently.

Not only were claims to justify the war false; the balance sheet also must include the damage caused by the war. First, the casualties; almost 4000 US soldiers killed and still counting. An even greater moral cost than the risks to the lives of one's own soldiers is asking them to kill large numbers of others on the basis of false claims. Are the total casualties one hundred thousand, one million, fewer, or more? What precautions should be taken to ensure that a coalition of the 'willing' does not become the coalition of the 'killing'? But I forget: they are Iraqi dead, not worth counting.

The UN stands doubly damaged. Many say it failed the test of standing up to a tyrant who had brutalised his own people, terrorised his neighbours and thumbed his nose at the UN for twelve years. Many more say it failed to stand up to the super power in defence of a country that had been defeated in war, ravaged by sanctions, disarmed and posed no threat to anyone else.

The UN-US relationship is badly frayed. Yet, they need each other in Iraq, Afghanistan, Haiti and elsewhere. A completely pliant UN would indeed become irrelevant, even to the USA.

Trans-Atlantic relations have been damaged. When the major European nations objected that the case for war had not been proven beyond reasonable doubt, instead of dialogue they got bad tempered insults. The neoconservative ideologues 'regard allies not as proof of diplomatic strength but as evidence of military weakness'.¹² If friends and allies are to be useful, they must avoid both slavish obedience and instinctive opposition; be prepared to support Washington when right, despite intense international unpopularity; but be willing to say no to Washington when wrong, despite the risk of intense American irritation.

European unity itself was shaken. The characterisation of the old and new Europe was, in fact, quite mistaken. Considering the past few centuries of European history, France and Germany standing together in resisting war is the new Europe of secular democracies and welfare states, built on peaceful relations embedded in continental institutions. The former Soviet satellites that sided with the USA represent the continuity from the old Europe built on balance of power policies that had led to the world wars.

The US reputation as a responsible global power has suffered a startlingly precipitous decline. The US soft power has been eroded. The problem of US credibility with the Islamic world is still more acute. Muslims are embittered, sullen and resentful of a perceived assault on Islam. After 9/11, instead of redoubling its traditional export of hope and optimism, America exported fear and anger and presented a very intense in-your-face attitude to the world. Its credibility suffered a calamitous collapse with the publication of photographs from Abu Ghraib. The abuses were not isolated incidents but reflected a systemic malaise. Washington is yet to regain the moral high ground lost with the pornography of torture.

Domestic American divisions have an edge that is disheartening for all well-wishers who recognise that the American role in world affairs as a great and virtuous power has been historically unique, essentially beneficial, generous to a fault, and both vital and necessary. The military has been damaged as an institution in a manner reminiscent of Vietnam. Marine Lieutenant General Greg Newbold (Retd) wrote that the decision to invade Iraq 'was done with a casualness and swagger that were the special province of those who have never had to execute these missions - or bury the results... a fundamentally flawed plan was executed for an invented war... while pursuing the real enemy, al-Qaeda, became a secondary effort'.¹³

The credibility of the Anglo-US media suffered a slow but steady erosion on their Iraq coverage. Media critics were held accountable for minor flaws and gaps in stories, but officials whose spin, dissembling and incompetence caused large-scale deaths and killings in an unnecessary war got medals of freedom. 'Embedded journalists' and 'Judith Millered' will be among the memorable journalistic legacies of this war.

Iraq contributed to a dramatic narrowing of the humanitarian space for NGOs. When soldiers are viewed as foreign occupiers, NGOs operating under their umbrella share the opprobrium.¹⁴

Finally, the net result of all this has been a distraction from the war on terror. The administration indulged its idée fixe on Saddam Hussein at the cost of letting many of the real 9/11 culprits get away.¹⁵ For months, with the focus sharply and almost solely on Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden in effect became Osama bin Forgotten, while Washington was drawn into fighting a war on the terrorists' terms. Al-Qaeda and their fundamentalist fellow-travellers were on the run, badly demoralised and universally stigmatised after 9/11 and the internationally supported war in Afghanistan. Iraq fragmented their enemies' military and political efforts, ensured the USA in a sandy quagmire, regained sympathy to their cause and fresh recruits to their ranks, renewed their sense of mission and purpose, and generally turned a strategic setback into a fresh opportunity.

Does the Line in the Sand Run from Iraq to Iran?

Those in favour of war dismissed doubters as wimps. Curiously, their self-sketched profiles in courage fail them in a frank and honest assessment of the consequences of their past choices. Iraq's legacy includes narrower policy options in responding to the nuclear challenge from Iran and North Korea, diminished Western credibility in highlighting the Iran threat, and an Iran that is simultaneously politically stronger in Iraq, richer from high oil prices, and more emboldened and motivated on national security. (The triple comment applies to Russia as well: as a combined result of rising oil prices, the calamitous collapse in US international reputation and authority, and the demonstrable US propensity to use force prematurely and recklessly, Putin's Russia has emerged emboldened, enriched and more strongly motivated to resist the USA). Washington kindly removed both of Iran's regional rivals from power in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁶ With an enemy like the USA, why should Iran wish for friends?

With nuclear neighbours to its west, north and east, a history of Anglo-American attacks and ongoing belligerent rhetoric, and large numbers of American military forces all around it, what is a prudent national security planner to recommend to the Iranian government: to abandon or accelerate the nuclear programme, if one exists? Tehran could cloak its actions in arguments, since the Kosovo war, that legitimacy is different from and on a higher plane than mere legality. In going to war against Iraq, the neoconservatives said that in the international jungle, international law, (if there is such a thing), cannot trump national security. A robust national posture is necessary because global regimes are unreliable instruments of security, international law is a fiction and the UN is an irrelevant nuisance. Countries have to rely on their own military might to avoid becoming the victims of others. The NPT was negotiated for another time and another world. In the harsh world of the international jungle, the only reliable route to ensuring national security is through national military might, including nuclear weapons.

Where we teach and lead, will others not follow? Iran's nuclear ambitions show unbroken continuity since the Shah. It was attacked by chemical weapons - a weapon of mass destruction - by Saddam during a war in which Baghdad's aggression remained unpunished by the West, but a commercial Iranian airliner was shot down with no penalty for the officers and the country responsible. How different would have been the region's and the world history, if the West had supported Iran in fighting and defeating Iraqi aggression in the early 1980s!

Tehran portrays its actions as consistent with its NPT right to acquire nuclear technology and materials for peaceful purposes. The NPT requirements reflect the technical and political world of a bygone era. Today, it is possible to stockpile materials and acquire the technology and skills to be a screwdriver away from crossing the threshold from peaceful to weaponised capability. More and more countries are bumping against the nuclear weapons ceiling, even while the world energy crisis is encouraging a move to nuclear power.

The NPT assumes that nuclear weapons themselves are illegitimate. Those who had them in 1968 promised to give them up in due course, while others promised not to get them. The five NPT-licit nuclear powers regard their Article 6 promise as rhetorical but treat nonproliferation as an enforceable obligation. The contradiction has come to a head. If any one country can justify nuclear weapons on grounds of national security, so can others. Given the spread and deployment of nuclear powers and hostile military forces all around it, and the history of belligerent statements directed at it, Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons as the ultimate deterrent is not beyond comprehension.

Curiously, those who worship the most devoutly at the altar of nuclear weapons are the fiercest in denouncing as heretics anyone else aspiring or applying to join their sect. If they are serious about checking nuclear threats, the nuclear powers must promise faithfully and act promptly to dismantle their nuclear stockpiles to a publicly declared timetable. If nuclear weapons did not exist, they could not proliferate. Because they do, they will.

Conclusion

The three optimistic assumptions behind Washington's Iraq folly can be summed up as: with the ouster of Saddam, the people of Iraq will welcome and love the Americans as liberators, the UN will fall flat on its face and the countries of the world will flock to join the coalition with the discovery and display of weapons of mass destruction, and Iraq will rebuild itself with petro dollars. All three proved to be wrong. What was meant as an awesome demonstration of limitless American might and will-power turned out to prove the limits of American power in defeating even a small band of insurgents fighting urban warfare with their own bodies as the primary weapon-delivery system. An Iraq meant to showcase the birthplace of the democratic crusade in the Middle East became its graveyard instead.

Iraq confirms that, as with terrorism, a war of aggression is an unacceptable tactic, no matter how just the cause. Saddam's ouster flowed from strategic, not ethical calculations of foreign policy. The USA is a great power and a great power has strategic imperatives, not moral ones. To accuse it of double standards and hypocrisy thus misses the point. The State Department and the Pentagon are not branches of Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International. Washington is motivated to act internationally, not because it cares about foreign people, but because it cares about its own interests. It is consistent in its foreign policy, remarkably so; but strategically consistent, not morally so.¹⁷

Fidelity to international regimes, laws and institutions must be required of all countries. Trashing global institutions and cherry-picking norms and laws based on self-serving convenience is incompatible with using them as compliance and enforcement mechanisms on others. To those who uphold the law themselves shall be given the right to enforce it on others.

All of which might put the ball firmly back in the UN's court. But has its authority been enhanced or diminished by the Iraq war? What is to stop other leaders from mimicking the bumper sticker argument about not needing a permission slip from the UN to defend one's country? Built to preserve peace, the UN is not a pacifist organisation. It was created on the fundamental premise that sometimes force will indeed have to be used, even to defend peace, against international outlaws. But if force is used unwisely, prematurely or recklessly, the possibility of its use plummets when it is necessary and justified. The UN cannot contemptuously be brushed aside as irrelevant and disposable in one crisis, only to be lifted out of the rubbish bin of history, dusted off and put to use in another.

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*Edited text of the talk delivered at the USI on 12 Dec 2007.
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China and Southeast Asia: The Future Perspectives

Dr Pankaj Kumar Jha

The principal foreign policy of the Southeast Asian states has been to preserve their sovereignty and autonomy. This has been the fulcrum of their greater engagement in the region owing to the active engagement of the military powers and the emerging powers in the region¹. Also the threat perception with regard to traditional and non-traditional threats has led to many Southeast Asian states entering into defence alliances and defence cooperation agreements with the external powers in the past and also the reactivating of the alliances (more specifically Five Power Defence Agreement and bilateral defence cooperation agreements). Most of the agreements were aimed at protection against the communist bloc ideological influx. But during the Cambodian crisis China did enhance its standing in the Southeast Asian countries and also became 'not an adversary' country for the USA, with the end to the Cambodian crisis and demise of the Soviet Union the situation changed. The most important issue was the Taiwan Straits crisis in 1996, which clearly demarcated the priorities between the USA and China. China's political and security relations with southeast Asian countries have improved significantly after the Taiwan crisis in spite of concerns in the region about the security implications of China's growing economic and military capabilities.² China had been perceived as a major security threat by many countries of the region because of the contentious issues like Taiwan and Spratly islands, but instead of merely adopting tactical or time-buying policies, key Southeast Asian states have actively tried to influence the shaping of the new regional order through engagement with China.

The threat perception with regard to China has gone through the usual cycle of crests and troughs but China as a threat "is never publicly articulated"³. The defence cooperation between China and Southeast Asia has not fructified to such a large extent but then China is making great strides in winning the support of its Southeast Asian neighbours through free trade agreement with ASEAN and other forms of economic aid. The resultant effect has been the mellowing down of Chinese position on certain issues and also showing signs of resolving differences on the contentious issues like Spratlys in an amicable manner, time and again China has been harping on constructive engagement and apart from providing military assistance to Myanmar, it has started giving military doles to the neighbouring countries. Prominent among the contributions made by the Chinese is the supply of military equipment to Thailand in return for 0.1 million tons of Longans (Thai fruit) and also providing military trucks, bulldozers and earth graders to the Philippines.

The question that arises is why is China providing economic and military aid and assistance in the form of equipment and friendly prices to its Southeast Asian neighbours? The agenda could be to create a strategic periphery of its own, which can act to its advantage for economic, energy and strategic security. This can be termed as China's "Spider Strategy"⁴ which means creating a web, which is flexible yet strong enough to thwart any US assertion in the region. These initiatives on the part of China have been well received in Southeast Asia but it is to be seen how much trust China can generate among the Southeast Asian nations in the next decade or so, especially when strategic thinkers have raised issues about the discrepancies in China's economic and defence policies⁵. It is true that China has shown potential to be a responsible power in the region but very few can commit themselves to China's charm offensive in the region and this gains importance due to the fact that whenever China has tried to garner political and diplomatic mileage in any multilateral forum, it has been nullified or balanced by to the presence of Japan, USA or India. The recent case of East Asian Summit is an example to quote in this regard. In this milieu, it is important to decipher the attitude of four countries of the region towards China and thereafter, the paper would discuss the present initiatives.

Singapore and China: Early Engagement

In the past, owing to its sense of insecurity, Singapore has refused to be a party to Chinese attempts to reduce the USA's military presence in East Asia. On the contrary, in January 1998, Minister of Defence, Dr Tony Tan, announced that the US aircraft carriers and other warships would be accorded access to a new Changi Naval base when ready for use at the turn of the century as an alternative to off-shore anchorages. Annually, about 100 US naval ships visit Singapore. Singapore has been realistic about the potential effects of China's growing power. Singapore Prime minister Goh Chok Tong conceded that since "a corollary of strong economic growth is strengthened strategic weight"; with China's growth, "some reconfiguration of the regional order, therefore, seems inevitable"⁶.

In fact, engagement of China in the region has been projected by Singapore as a two-way method because more entrenchment into the affairs of Southeast Asia, in both economic and political terms, would make it difficult for China to get out of the set-up and hamper its position in the regional power balance. In fact, Singapore has initiated contacts with China and India because its concept of two wings of Asia namely, India and China along with Japan would lift Southeast Asian economy to new heights. The engagement of big powers like India and China as well as Japan and the USA form a larger strategy on the part of Singapore for its economic and strategic security. On the same philosophy, Singapore has initiated a series of measures to engage India militarily and economically after the liberalisation process took off in India.

Indonesia and China: A Reluctant Partnership

The rise of energy consumption of China and the Chinese economic growth has been the potential catalyst for creating a change in Chinese policy in Southeast Asia. China, which was to an extent alien to Indonesia has also mended fences with the largest Muslim populated country. Indonesia's significant change of approach towards the People's Republic has not, however, erased a heavy historical legacy of encounters with China and ethnic Chinese, which predisposes the country's political establishment towards a deep suspicion and apprehension of China. The most recent statement of Indonesia's defence policy has pointed out that China's continuing growth will make it, at some date, "the pre-eminent country in the region, both economically and militarily". It also noted China's extensive claims in the South China Sea and the prospect of "military conflict with other claimant countries."⁷

Indonesia enjoys archipelagic status under the terms of the United Nations Convention on the law of the Sea. Under that convention, Indonesia is permitted to draw maritime baselines linking the outermost points of its innermost islands. It is perceived in Jakarta that should China ever be able to extend its jurisdiction so as to realise in full, its irredentist agenda in the South China sea, a revolutionary geo-political fusion of Northeast and Southeast Asia would occur⁸ and this would mean Indonesia's Natuna Islands coming under Chinese Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). This scenario is being viewed also from the west; to contain any such misadventures of China, Indonesia gains importance and for China, Indonesia is an important country for active engagement in the region. China has stared making investments in Indonesia in various sectors and has also offered defence cooperation agreement with the erstwhile adversary.

In terms of trade, China-Indonesia two-way trade volume surged to 16.8 billion US dollars in 2005 with an average growth of 20 per cent to 30 per cent in recent years. The two economies are also highly complimentary with Indonesia having advantages in raw material, agriculture and services, while China in manufacturing, human resources and market⁹. China has been trying hard to engage Indonesia more economically and the level of business and economic exchanges bear a testimony to that. China has also been exploring gas supply from Indonesia and secured exploration oil rights. It is sure that the ice has melted between the two countries but trade and investment has still to take off in a big way as compared to other Southeast Asian countries.

China and Malaysia: New Strategic Alignments

China's reluctance to devalue its currency during the financial crisis in 1997-98 has created a positive image of China in Southeast especially in Malaysia. In dealing with China, Malaysia clearly favours a strategy of engagement. As Abdullah Badawi, the then Malaysian Foreign Minister, put it in 1997, "The most important thing is engagement, not containment."¹⁰ In 2004, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi stated, "China is today creator of prosperity of the highest order. Political and social linkages are bound to eventually follow suit. It is therefore important to use every opportunity to establish ties."¹¹ To realise the peaceful rise, China is using a unique blend of trade and confidence building measures and even development assistance to establish itself as an important leader.

Though China is making its presence felt in the region through trade but in some sectors, China's expansion is not welcome namely in electronics, furniture, motorcycles and fruits and those traditionally produced in Southeast Asia and in both Indonesia and Malaysia, people complain that jobs are being lost to China. A growing Chinese economic presence could also fuel latent resentment against the sizeable population of Chinese economic elites in the region. The fallout of any such friction would be surely felt in the Malaysian civil society. In security terms, it is plausible that over time, China's message of non-interference, cooperative security and the diminution of the role of the USA that is implied by China's approach would gain popularity, although the USA may yet again broaden its approach to security and regain territory it has lost¹².

Though Malaysia has time and again dismissed the threat of China but has been harping on the fact that it has a few contentious issues vis-à-vis China; while with the USA it was adverse to the idea of propagating war on terror as the war on Islam. The constraints are there; it is to be seen that which way Malaysia goes while catering to its security objectives.

Chinese Overtures towards Vietnam: Economic Motivation

After tumultuous years of apprehension and doubt, China and Vietnam are infiltrating each other's markets. Also, China has somehow tried to put history behind and has initiated a series of measures to involve Vietnam in a more constructive way. Vietnam and China resumed their official economic and trade relations in 1991, ending a cold war stand-off between the two nations. In the post 1991 phase the bilateral Chinese-Vietnamese trade has grown from \$ 32 million in 1991 to \$ 8.8 billion in 2005. In terms of trade China is having a trade surplus of \$ 1.7 billion in 2004 which increased to \$ 2.8 billion in 2005 and was already \$ 1.8 billion in first six months of 2006¹³. The skewed trade relations has been due to the low technology products that China imports from Vietnam while exporting high technology goods to Vietnam.

In 2005, when Vietnam was celebrating the 20th year of Vietnam's Doi-Moi programme¹⁴, and Chinese initiatives in the form of outward looking policies put the foundation for further engagement between the two nations in economic front, there was friction on the issue of occupation of Mischief Reef and it did cause problems for the relationship to go ahead at a faster pace. The reasonable engagement saw the advent of economic investments in Vietnam from China; and as of mid-2006, China had 377 directly invested projects in Vietnam, with a total registered capital of US \$ 795.6 million ranking China 15th among the 74 countries that have invested in Vietnam¹⁵.

Chinese investments in Vietnam have focused on developing the energy and transport sectors, including the \$ 710 million Cao Ngan thermal power project, the \$ 340 million Hanoi-Hadong urban railway project, a \$ 64 million project to upgrade the signal system for three northern railway lines, and a \$ 2 million project to modernise the information and signal system on the Vinh to Ho Chi Minh City railway line. The Ha Bac Nitrogenous Fertiliser factory, which was gifted by China to Vietnam in the 1960s, prior to the differences between the two communist led governments, was given a \$ 32 million Chinese assistance for up-gradation¹⁶. The Chinese national offshore oil Corp signed an agreement in 2005 to explore jointly for oil and gas in Vietnam's Beibu Bay. A new highway connecting Hanoi to the Chinese industrial city of Nanning has recently been cooperatively completed. China has been seeking ways to facilitate a new economic corridor linking four of their border localities. In theory, the corridor would stretch from China's southwestern city of Kunming to Hanoi, and encompass the Vietnamese industrial town of Hai Phong as well as tourist attractions in the northern province of Quang Ninh.

Vietnam has been perturbed by the increasing imbalances of trade to the tune of US \$ 2 billion with China, which is unacceptable for long-term growth of Vietnam. Even strategically there are points of divergence between the two countries. China would like to support its manufacturing through cheap raw material from Vietnam and if in case Vietnam develops a similar manufacturing capability like that of China, then China is likely to loose the costs' advantages. This so when Chinese government wants to tone down its subsidies to the manufacturing sector. Apart from the active economic engagement with the four countries China has few irritants, which might create situation of confrontation in future.

Possible Areas of Confrontation

Southeast Asian nations would also be looking for signs of Chinese engagement as well as any adventurous tendencies in the long run. Few nagging issues, which might become central to future policy of China are listed below:

- Firstly, China's policy towards the resolution of the Spratly islands dispute with other contentious partners would give the futuristic vision to China policy in the coming decades. China has two options-either to jointly develop the South China Sea along with other contenders or should let the issue remain in abeyance. In case China tries to reclaim its sovereignty on Spratly then it might be a give away of its future policy. Though many western writers have stated that China might be waiting for an opportune moment and also look for strengthening its Navy for any such calculated risk.
- Secondly, China has intimidated Taiwan in 1996 through its coercive methods and in case Taiwan is coerced again in future by China especially in the wake of membership in UN and pursuit of independence, then Southeast Asian countries might see China in a new light and might vociferously seek US security umbrella against China.
- Thirdly, the rather nascent issue of diverting the course of rivers like Mekong and Brahmaputra¹⁷ for satisfying its own needs would show China's coercive methods to use its leverage with regard to river waters. Though Brahmaputra would be only affecting countries like India and Bangladesh but any such move with regard to Mekong is surely going to affect the countries of mainland Southeast Asia.
- Fourthly, China has time and again tried for securing its energy lines and the initiatives have found place in the writings of academic writers; like the 'string of pearls' strategy and also building up of energy security parameters through investments in Africa and also securing exploration rights be in Myanmar or even entering into joint ventures with the oil companies of Southeast Asia. Energy security might propel China to take on military measures for securing its supply lines and it is to be seen how China gets into the act or how it is forced by the circumstances to do the same.
- Fifthly, the USA has been taking a very status quoist stance with regard to China, be it the military cooperation with countries of Southeast Asia or for that matter giving military equipment to its neighbours. One thing is for sure that in the next decade it is to be seen whether the US human rights violations issue gets it more friends or annoyed allies; and also whether the USA overcomes engagements like Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, so as to engage itself in Southeast Asia.

These are few of the scenarios which might change the status quo in Southeast Asia and it depends which power would be accused for disturbing the calm strategic waters. China has a huge population and also economic momentum which might propel the country to seek security in terms of water and energy while it would be also imperative for her to maintain the status quo on contentious issues so as to reap the economic benefits. If, in case China adopts a revisionist policy then it would be the neo realists who would be calling the academic shots. but if China acts responsibly then constructivists would change the complete theory of international politics. Whatever may be the result but one thing is for sure that it would be China, which would be either making or unmaking the Asian Century.

Future Perspectives

China got the attention of Southeast Asian nations in the early 1990s when it codified into law the principle of the South China sea as sovereign Chinese territory. since a skirmish with the Philippines in Mischief reef in 1994 bloodied China's public image, China has backed off from those claims but simultaneously it has strengthened its outposts in the region, chief among them are the contested Spratlys islands. While none of the Southeast Asian nations are strong enough to counter Chinese power on their own, maritime powers in the region are working to expand their capabilities through a modernisation of their militaries and through closer relations with the USA. Although USA has been more entwined into issues in Afghanistan and Iraq and counter-terrorism figures more prominently in its strategic thinking, but one thing is certain that with the recent initiatives of giving military and logistics assistance to Philippines, the USA would not like to erase its footprints in the region. But as of date China is gaining more leverage than the USA. China has really taken great strides with regard to improving its relations with its Southeast Asian neighbours and the role of investment and trade has done it's due for the country. It is still to be seen whether China commits any mistake in Southeast Asia or would be forced into doing one due to certain external factors. These are the two sides of the coin, but as of now China is slowly catering to its economic growth, and only economic growth would contain its domestic vulnerability. The integrated economic growth with the four countries would also enhance the perception of China in Southeast Asia as a responsible power. On the other hand a country like Japan is initiating bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements with the countries of Southeast Asia to make itself more relevant and important than China for the countries of the region. Though China has been accused of engaging in raising its military strength but the scenario is same on both sides. China and Southeast Asia have devised certain institutional mechanisms for safeguarding their interests and this might go a long way in concretising China's footprints in the region in strategic terms.

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Short Wars - Creating Tomorrow’s Reality

Colonel Ali Ahmed

Introduction

Conventional wars have historically been resorted to with the intention of being kept short. Military history proves that as often as not, this is not how wars have turned out. The expectation that tomorrow’s wars will be short arises from the transition of South Asia into the Nuclear Age. However, if tomorrow’s wars are to be short, two aspects will need to be kept in mind. The first is regards the elements which keep conflict duration limited, and, secondly, are the factors that militate against this.

Most studies on Limited War suggest a deliberate limitation to politico-strategic aims, geographic spread, weapons and forces involved. Keeping conflict ‘limited’ is easier said on account of factors that stoke the conflict spiral. This article dwells on the drivers of conflict, through a look at military history and by analysing the current strategic reality in South Asia. The concluding recommendations are for working on the pre-requisites of a Short War during peace and in future conflict; these being, paradoxically, moderation of national passions, war aims and military means.

The lessons of military history

The key impetus to conflict initiation has been the expectation of victory. Strategic sense decrees that victory be obtained at the earliest and at minimum cost and risk. Political masters considering war initiation in an inter-state setting have historically been persuaded of war as an option only in case of a short duration war. Other than the nuclear factor, factors that lend themselves to Short Wars have been present earlier. These include the role of international organisations; international opinion and pressures; tacit understanding between adversaries; sensitivity of leaderships to the underside of conflict, such as escalation and extension; and finite military capabilities at the outset of war. But these have not proven consistently effective in keeping wars short. Recourse to military history would help identify factors that bring about a reality contrary to expectation.

A review of military history reveals that most wars in the modern age dating to the Napoleonic Wars have been long. Napoleon spent the better part of two decades at war prior to meeting his Waterloo. The inspired manoeuvres of the revolutionary French armies led to his opponents joining in concert, thereby prolonging the war¹. The American civil war is taken as the first war in which modern military systems, weapons and tactics made their rudimentary appearance. It was a long war with Lincoln preserving the Union through a time-consuming strategy of bringing the industrial might of the North to bear.

The relatively brief campaigns of the Bismarck-Moltke era were on account of Prussia having perfected the general staff system. Such momentary asymmetry can bring about quicker victory; however, German triumph led to French revanchism culminating in the Great War². The First World War was embarked on by all sides with the expectation that, troops would be home for Christmas³. The static front owed to Moltke the Younger losing his nerve in carrying through the Schlieffen plan, evidence that the art in war can confound any science in it.

The limitations of operational brilliance in the industrial age are revealed once again in the next war. Blitzkrieg heralded joint-manship of a high order that won campaigns, but could not withstand the test of war in the industrial age. Industrial capacity in case of Albert Speer’s Germany was not of the order required to impose Hitler’s will⁴. Likewise in the East, Admiral Yamamoto, who struck at Pearl Harbor, is quoted as saying: “In the first six to twelve months of a war with the US and Great Britain, I will run wild and win victory upon victory. But then, if war continues after that, I have no expectation of success.”⁵ Ultimately, the Total War doctrine of ‘unconditional surrender’ ensured a prolonged contest eventuating in the nuclear age.

The nearly half-century long Cold War, curiously dubbed ‘the long peace’,⁶ witnessed the Superpowers contending through proxies in the Third World, with individual conflicts lasting for decades. The three year long Korean War, energised ‘Limited War’ and escalation control theories.⁷ The wars of colonial liberation were also long duration ones in Africa and South East Asia. The Vietnam War, sustained in the belief that incremental application of force would ensure its early conclusion, was a decade long. So was the Afghan war. In the post Cold War era, wars, both conventional and sub-conventional, have largely been of long duration, be they in central Africa, the Balkans and, indeed, counter intuitively, the Gulf. The Iran-Iraq War that consumed half a million lives lasted seven years, being fuelled by all the Great Powers interested in its extension for strategic and commercial reasons.

The two Iraq Wars are taken as Short Wars and seen as heralding wars of the future. However, this case is based on the interim between the two Gulf Wars being taken as a period of ‘peace’- an arguable proposition in face of a decade long blockade, sanctions, air space restrictions and episodic intervention using missiles and proxies leading up to an assessed toll of half-a-million.⁸ Besides, the second Iraq War has self-evidently not quite ended. The latest Israeli month-long incursion into Lebanon against the Hezbollah was a short foray. That it cost the Army chief, General Dan Halutz, his job, indicates the limitations of Short Wars in gaining war aims.⁹ The only gain has been avoidance of the earlier outcome of intervention under Begin and Sharon of 1982; but the jury is still out as to whether Israel is more secure today on account of this military self assertion.

From the foregoing brief survey, certain lessons help identify the drivers of conflict. The first is that, aims that do not brook compromise, such as ‘unconditional surrender’, ending secession and regime change, presage a long haul. Keeping aims limited through a conflict is at best a difficult proposition. Second, from Napoleon through Guderian to Petraeus, the lesson is that operational level advantages cannot make up for strategic shortcomings. Thirdly, in the Age of Nationalism, political forces in society push for longer wars, thereby constraining autonomy of decision makers and impacting strategic rationality. Fourth, the form of the conflict embarked on could change, such as from conventional to sub-conventional. This would require viewing the conflict as one and its duration as a continuum. Periods of ‘phony war’, howsoever normalised in consciousness and discourse, also require being included as periods of conflict.

Next, there is no guarantee that external interests would converge to end conflict. International organisations, including the UN, are vulnerable to manipulation by the Great Powers; therefore any expectations of these would have to be suitably tempered. Lastly, the ‘stability-instability’ paradox is permissive of long duration LIC through which strategic aims other than the most desirable one of durable peace can be materialised.¹⁰ By this yardstick, even a conventional war can also be chanced in the stability afforded by nuclear deterrence, as Pakistani planners persuaded themselves to believe in the run up to the Kargil intrusion.

The sub-continental experience

An analysis of conflicts in South Asia does not unambiguously reveal an inherent propensity towards limitation from which it can be confidently extrapolated that wars of the future will be short. The Sino-Indian border war of 1962 was short, less due to the unilateral ceasefire by China than to India refraining from joining the contest in earnest. It need not have been so, especially as Western aid was requisitioned. The War was kept short by Pandit Nehru taking a considered political decision on not displacing India’s development trajectory, even if non-alignment suffered a momentary eclipse.

Earlier Indo-Pak wars have been taken as relatively gentlemanly affairs owing to shared legacy. Of the wars against Pakistan, the first was a long duration one lasting over a year. Marshal of the Air Force in hindsight reflects that the 1965 War ended prematurely as the full weight of air power could not be brought to bear.¹¹ It was restricted to the three weeks of intensive fighting. However, in case the Kutch incident of April, Operation Gibraltar of August, and subsequent violations of the ceasefire till the Tashkent Agreement of the subsequent January are included, then the conflict duration qualifies as long.

Likewise, the duration of the 1971 War need not be restricted to the two week ‘lightening campaign’. It should instead be dated to April that year when Sam Bahadur famously withstood political pressure for an early campaign. The Mukti Bahini period, migration of 10 million people, killings of hundreds of thousands within East Bengal and local border violations can be subsumed in the period of conflict.¹² Even the short campaign was fortuitous, in that, the view of Generals Jacob, Nagra, Sagat Singh and Inder Gill of going for Dacca prevailed in the last stages of run up to war, as against the original intent of salami slicing and time consuming capture of towns enroute’.¹³

The Kargil War, called a ‘short, sharp war’ by the Kargil Review Committee, is usually taken as forerunner of short duration wars of the future fought in the nuclear backdrop. According to the suspect Pakistani perspective,¹⁴ a long campaign of attrition was preempted through US intervention. President Musharraf’s claims in his autobiography have been credibly disputed on this score by former Chief, General VP Malik.¹⁵ However, a time-continuum can be discerned with Low Intensity Conflict across the Line of Control abutting either end of the mid-intensity Kargil Conflict. Conflating the two kinds of conflict into one would make the conflict a long duration one and part of the wider proxy war.

The lesson to be drawn is that India’s conflicts, like conflicts elsewhere, have an equal, if not greater chance, to be of long duration rather than short. Political heads took decisions to cease the conflict at a great personal and political cost on both sides of the border. The development of rival nationalisms and resulting politicisation of issues since, would impinge on future ease of settlement of issues. Secondly, these wars have not always yielded a meaningful result in terms of settlement of issues. A Short War in the future may also leave core issues unaddressed, begging the question of its utility. The ‘push’ for resolving issues militarily ‘once and for all’ may then make an appearance. Precautions require to be built into the preparation for and conduct of war to ensure a Short War.

An analysis of the present

Understandably, none of India’s sub-conventional conflicts have been short duration ones: Operation Pawan, Operation Rakshak, Operation Rhino and the LIC in Siachen.¹⁶ This trend is likely to persist into the future. To escape this strategic cul-de-sac, Short War thinking has arisen in which space in the conflict spectrum can be opened up for a conventional ‘Limited War’, with limitation being exercised in duration as against other parameters as extent of theater of engagement, weaponry used and targets engaged.

The tendency of conflict towards escalation, leading up to the ‘ideal’ state of Absolute War, has been conceptualised by Clausewitz in his discussion of the reciprocal actions between opponents.¹⁷ This tendency is accentuated by nationalism, intrinsic to modern nation states, that yields ground to hyper nationalism in times of crisis. Historical memories also impact the creation of the ‘Other’, resulting in stereotyping and dehumanisation of the opponent. This tendency can be exploited by fringe political formations to tie down the government to less palatable options. These factors conspire to dispel rationality.

The expectation that external powers, valuing stability and fearful of the nuclear genie, would intervene early for conflict termination is also shaky. Pakistan has persistently defended its untenable position on Kashmir in defiance even of the US. India mobilised its troops in response to the Parliament attack irrespective of the effect on the US led GWOT. The impact of external pressure is limited to what states are willing to tolerate. International organisations also have their own limitations, hidden agendas and a case history of limited efficacy in sub-continental disputes.

Lastly, a look at the nuclear question on conflict duration is in order. General VP Malik has it that there exists a window in the conflict spectrum below the nuclear threshold for conventional operations.¹⁸ This is elastic so long as the perceived ‘nuclear reaction threshold’ is not pushed. It is assessed that a threat to the threshold is more likely in a longer war in which comprehensive national power is brought to bear. However, the vulnerable state is also in a position to mobilise its national resources so as to preclude a lowering of the threshold. Against extant wisdom, it can be posited that a high intensity war, intended as a short one at the outset, poses the threat of stampeding the vulnerable side into premature nuclearisation to redress some or other emergent asymmetry. Therefore, the argument, based on the existence of a nuclear backdrop, is not entirely persuasive.

War termination would be dependent on like-mindedness of the adversary. In the Indo-Pakistani context, this may not be possible until Pakistan is able to pull off some gains either tangibly or psychologically. Its Army would require some face-saving action for holding onto power post-conflict within Pakistani political structure. This would likely result in Pakistan extending the war till its purposes - not amounting to ‘winning’ the war, but merely preserving itself from ‘losing’ abjectly - are achieved. Such a long war is in Pakistani interests for it will enable resort to external balancing and ‘extended depth’. Besides, it may ‘do an Iraq’ on an advancing India. In the event, India may end up with a partner unwilling to Tango.

India, on its part, would not like to be left strategically exposed lest a Short War not serve up its original aims. In trying to pull off a politically viable, strategically sustainable and militarily ‘decisive’ outcome, it may over-extend. Mission creep’ and ‘surge’ would then transpire, with uncertain outcome. Given the move of the discourse from Limited War¹⁹ to Short War,²⁰ the premium on duration would necessitate a corresponding compensation through leveraging national and military power along other dimensions and levels in which India would be deemed to enjoy escalation dominance. This would compromise the resulting peace in leaving a bitter aftermath and an unrequited enemy.

Concluding reflections

Short Wars are desirable as against long duration wars, in that they imply limited war aims; keep damage limited comparatively; do not deflect the national economy overly; do not providing enough time for passions to overtake rationality; and, resultantly, do not permit these to impinge unreasonably any future peace settlement. However, as seen here, the term Short War verges on an oxymoron. Therefore, measures need to be identified and implemented to bring about such an outcome. A few pointers to this end are recommended in conclusion.

At the political level, firstly, there requires to be a political consensus on the requirement, nature and aims of the war embarked on. In case this is not there, then self-interested political elements could whip up public passions forcing the leadership in unpredictable ways. Secondly, demonisation resorted to generally in peace needs to be tempered to the extent of permitting the adversary a locus standi on a vexed issue. This would enable easier assimilation by the polity and populace of the necessity for early war termination through compromise on mutually agreed terms.

On the military level, the first Principle of War, namely, ‘selection and maintenance of aim’ requires constant foregrounding. Second, the threat of escalation would require monitoring, particularly as the demonstration a capacity for ‘escalation dominance’, so as to influence enemy thinking towards conflict termination, may go awry. Thirdly, it must be borne in mind that operational brilliance may beget victory, but, paradoxically, victory is not usually a necessary and sufficient condition for subsequent peace. Lastly, the military would require conditioning to a half-fought war. Air power theory of ‘infrastructure busting’; land warfare concept of ‘decisive victory’; and the naval apprehension of ‘sitting out the war’ may require muting.

War is the least predictable social activity and the least controllable political act, and on outbreak is liable to truncate rational aims and pious intentions. Short Wars have to be brought about by creating the context and circumstance conducive to early war termination; best achieved, ironically, through war aims that belie the necessity of war. The purpose of military power in our context today is not to compel the enemy to one’s purpose; but to nudge the enemy to a mutually beneficial end.

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Unification of the Koreas:A Way Ahead

Brigadier Chandra B Khanduri (Retd)

On 4 October 2007 the two Koreas - the Republic of (South) Korea (RoK) and the Democratic Republic of (North) Korea (DPRK) made momentous announcement from Pyongyang. It said that they had “agreed to resolve the issue of the unification of the two Koreas on their own initiative”, in accordance with the “spirit of the Korean people themselves”. This then has set a milestone to what can clearly be seen to give an impetus to the beginning of the end of the current ‘armistice regime’, on the divided Peninsula since 1953, to which ironically, the Koreas were not the signatories. This historic future-setting accord was finalised after several days of parleys in Pyongyang, the DPRK capital between President Roh Moo-hyun of RoK and Chairman Kim Jong-II of the National Defence Commission of DPRK1.

From the past hesitancy, foot-dragging, an ambience of distrust and ambivalence, the two leaders, in sharp departure, said that they “recognise the need to end the armistice regime, and instead, build a permanent peace regime” as fulcrum of “reunification — oriented agreement” to achieve “co-prosperity”, at the same time, “transcending the differences in ideology and systems”. Important as these clauses were, the still vital component followed as the two antagonists agreed to “closely work together to end military hostilities, create a maritime peace zone, mitigate tensions and guarantee peace in the Peninsula”.

In yet another important extension of this newborn spirit of what may be called entente cordiale Moo-hyun and Kim Jong-II vowed to reunite the divided families and send a joint cheering team to the Beijing Olympics, next year.

Tour D’Horizon2

The signing of the historic agreement on 15 June 2000 at Pyongyang by the then South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung and the North Korean President Kim Jong-II had done more to the cause of the reunification of Koreas than the storming of the Berlin Wall by the Germans in 1990. For half a century, the four kilometre deep Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) astride the 242 km 38th parallel that divides the Koreas since the signing of the Armistice in 1953, the two countries have seen some of the worst tensions in their history. Often, it has been a slanging match in verbal propaganda.

To recall, in June 1950 as hostilities broke out, the UN established a Commission on Koreas for ‘re-establishing the national independence of Koreas and the withdrawal of the occupying forces’. Three years later the UN Commission replaced it for ‘Reunification and Rehabilitation of Koreas’. This curious set-up became a victim of the Cold War and achieved nothing and was wound up by 1972 when both Koreas agreed to explore the issue bilaterally. More developments took place as both the Koreas, till then with only ‘observer status’, were made full members of the General Assembly in 1991. Their signing of an agreement on ‘Reconciliation, Nonaggression, Cooperation and Exchanges’ followed this and yet the Peninsula remained one of the most ‘dangerous flash points’ in the world.

The story of the Korean effort to reconcile after 1991 has been one of deep distrust bordering on open hostility as also of melodrama. US President Bill Clinton threatened North Korea with ‘returning it to the stone age’ and the State Department branded it as one of the ‘rogue states’ with a ‘recluse’ head of state. In addition, the Americans insisted on their presence in South Korea through the Combined Forces Command (CFC) or UN Command.

North Korea also had its share of keeping the pot boiling. Having signed the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1991, it backtracked from honouring the commitments. Fuel to the fire was added when it sold its indigenously produced M-10 missiles to Pakistan, Iran and Libya. The USA retaliated by deploying the Patriot Defence System in the South. However, brokering by the former President Jimmy Carter improved the prospects of dialogue for reconciliation. Kim Il-Sung, the father of Kim Jong-II continued to outwardly appeal to the South to hold the ‘summit’, declaring that he, in reciprocation, would not only freeze his nuclear programme but also cut his military strength3. A similar gesture had also been made by the South as its President often said that he was always prepared for the ‘summit’, since it would change history.

There were other players who had roles to play in this drama. China, Russia and even Japan. China openly supported North Korea especially in its days of economic difficulties in the mid-1990s. It also refused to support the USA sponsored UN sanctions against the North and publicly reiterated its relations with North Korea, as close as ‘lips and teeth’4.

If the Chinese showed solidarity with the North, the Russians were not far back. From 1994, Russian President, Boris Yeltsin spared no effort to champion the Korean cause. So much so he demanded a new security system in the world where the one-up-man-ship of the USA could be contained and neutralised. His successor, Vladimir Putin, made a ‘quiet’ visit to Pyongyang in the first week of June 2000. The Japanese, nonetheless, were exacerbating their own fears of the North Korean intransigence owing to its missile tests in the Sea of Japan. The Peninsula had thus turned into skulduggery of international politics, akin, very much to the scenario that divided the two Koreas after World War II.

Although after the demise of the former USSR, and the supposed end of the so called Cold War, the Americans had assumed the role of the ‘Sole Super Power’ of the 1990s they, pragmatically accepted, what observers called ‘the New Asian Reality’, and began to covertly support the ‘Korean reconciliation’5. Accordingly, the USA was mellowing down its attitude towards China, North Korea and its old enemy Vietnam. Of utmost significance was renewal of the ‘Most Favoured Nation’ status to China, despite the Chinese rebuff of the so called ‘human rights violations in Tibet, Xinjiang and elsewhere in China’. Acknowledging the vital role the Chinese played in maintaining an essential equilibrium in Asia, the USA was banking on its support to even compel the DPRK to abandon its nuclear weapons programme and sign the NPT and CTBT. So a climate conducive to holding of the ‘summit’ for which both the Koreas had clamoured for the past 50 years, worked out in the new Millennium.

It became evident from the fact that by 20 June 2000 the US Government ended its 50-year-old sanctions on North Korea. In a dramatic overture it even played semantics and redesignated its so-called brand of ‘rogue states’ (that included DPRK, Iran and Libya) as ‘states of concern’! To formalise the on-going improvement a Pyongyang Agreement was also signed in mid 2000.

Achievements of the Pyongyang Agreement

The Agreement aimed at both short term gains and long term prospects of eventual reunification and included resolving the humanitarian issues, such as exchange of refugees and the POWs of the Korean War, cultural intercourse, inter-border movement of separated families and exchange of educational and technical know-how, besides plan for development of North Korea. It did more. It seriously began to discuss the broad concept of reunification of the two Koreas on the ‘tentative templates’ forwarded by the two countries – the ‘confederation’ and ‘federation’.

For, the Agreement had stated specifically, there was a ‘common element in South’s concept of ‘Confederation’ and North’s formula for a loose form of ‘Federation’. Thoughtfully, the Agreement refrained from introducing contentious issues of the US Military presence in the South and the nuclear programme of the North. It was observed that the ‘final reunification’ as and when agreed and implemented, would of its own accord, find a solution to connected issues.

The Steady March but often Stumbling

By July end, the news came of both the Governments having progressed further in their march towards reconciliation and unification. Hot line was established between the Army Headquarters of the two armies; the Korean citizens from both the North Korean and the South Korean side established a liaison office at the DMZ to facilitate crossing of the border. All these portended a keen desire between the two governments to progress and not stagnate, as for instance, in the current case of the Peace Process between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The largest gain for North Korea also occurred with incredible speed: the US removed trade and other sanctions; and it was admitted as the newest member of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), thus virtually ending the isolation of the country. Another step forward came when 180 athletes of two Koreas wearing their common crested ‘Unified Korea’ marched together at the Sydney Olympics. They set the pace for a sporting ‘integration’.

Then followed the award of a Nobel Peace Prize to South Korean President Kim Dae-Jung in October 2000 for, what his citation said, the ‘unprecedented effort for peace and reunification of the Koreas’. By the end of the year, railway line linked the two systems over the DMZ. That further helped reduce the DPRK’s 50 years isolation.

The UNO too played its helpful role in creating and coordinating the activities of the like-minded and influential groups, which came to be known as the ‘six-party negotiating team’ and was tasked to progress the talks. Consisting of the USA, Japan, Russia, China, DPRK and ROK, with UN playing its intermediary role, the ‘consortium’ of the ‘Six-Party’, began to resolve the diplomatic impasse on the denuclearisation of the North, restricting its missile programme, and even talks of general reduction in its Army. A non-nuclear DPRK, it was contended, would eventually join the democratic South. For the DPRK the lure of gains of economic stability and prosperity were offered.

Sadly, mutual distrust reappeared; as occasionally as flashes of hope and optimism. The Americans began once again to call the DPRK regime as ‘evil’ and renewed its threat to ‘decimate’ the North. In this uncongenial atmosphere, Kim Jong-II while on an official visit to Moscow, bluntly asked the USA to ‘withdraw its troops and missiles from the South, if it wanted to see the Peninsula de-nuclearised’. On his part, he promised to suspend the DPRK’s ballistic missile programme ‘until 2003’. Significantly, Russia supported the Jong-II’s move and generously agreed to extend the Siberian Railway to Pyongyang. The Chinese, the great ally of Pyongyang since the Korean War, continued to liberally help it.

In sum, the period between 2001 and 2006 has been one of ambivalence where allegations of ‘bad blood’, ‘axis of evil’, distrust and unreliability fluctuated between DPRK and USA on the one hand and the RoK often freezing its material support to an impoverished DPRK, on the other. In frustration, it seems in retrospect, the DPRK resumed its production of missiles and fired seven missiles on 5 July 2006. This was condemned by most of the Western World, India maintaining a discreet silence about the same. So tension ebbed and rose in the Peninsula, as of the earlier times. Reconciliation looked a distant possibility; reunification only a dream.

If the human negotiations thus far, precluded any tangible degree of success, nature seemed to play its silent part. There came the worst floods in the North in August 2006 that killed over 50,000 and rendered 2.5 million people homeless. The extent of damage was so voluminous that the DPRK needed urgent external economic help. Combined with it also arose the realisation that the country was running low on its fuel supply and some of the essential maintenance services had begun to suffer. The four members of the ‘Six-Party’ offered immediate help with a ‘price tag’: DPRK accept total ‘denuclearisation’, ensuring that the existing nuclear facilities are ‘disabled’ under IAEA within a specified time. As expected, with this demand, negotiations dragged on for another four to five months.

All the while, the ‘carrot and stick’ policy remained in vogue. Lured by a prodigious offer of economic aid, DPRK agreed finally in February 2007 to shut a key 5.5 MW nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, where it is believed to have produced six to ten nuclear weapons. The aid promised was 50,000 tons of fuel from the USA, China, Russia and South Korea for the denuclearisation, after inspection by the IAEA within 60 days. Another six months of frustrating negotiations continued. But finally DPRK agreed to ‘disable’ its nuclear facilities for nine lakh (9,00,000) tons of heavy fuel and other aids.

Then came the breath-taking news of the two Korean heads of states meeting in Pyongyang in early October 2007 and setting the tone and stepping up the pace for a durable peace and express their resolve to ‘reunify the Father Land’ – re-enacting thus, the scene one saw at the ‘Berlin Wall’ of 1989-90. The situations and the scenarios were different but the emotions, sentiments and the euphoria, if not the hopes, appeared much similar: the ‘Reunification of the Fatherland’.

What did the October 2007 Breakthrough Achieve ?

These are summarised in the succeeding paragraphs6.

Quest for Peace Treaty

In brief, leaders seek formal end to Korean War. The leaders of the North and South Koreas have signed a joint declaration calling for a peace treaty to replace the 1953 ceasefire and armistice. The DPRK agreed to end its nuclear plans, also seeks to expand projects to reduce tension across the world’s last Cold War frontier. They pledged to seek summit with the USA and China on formal peace treaty.

Economic Cooperation.

- (a) Set up special district in North’s port city of Haeju, regular maritime transport service with South and create joint fishing zone.
- (b) Expansion of Kaesong industrial park where 44 South Korean firms currently operate using cheap North Korean labour.
- (c) Transport Links. Resumption of regular freight train services between Munsan and Kaesong.
- (d) Repair of highway joining Pyongyang and Kaesong.
- (e) Refurbishment of railway between Kaesong and Sinuiju on the Chinese border.
- (f) Air Travel. Direct flights between Seoul and Mount Paektu-Peak, sacred to all Koreans.
- (g) Olympic Games. Inaugural run of the train joining Seoul and Sinuiju will transport joint North and South cheering squads to 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Final Objectives and Probable Time frame

In examining, three factors need to be taken into account: the common factor of culture, the ideological differences that have been set over the period and the suggested mode of political integration of the future.

Undoubtedly, there have existed the advantages of one language besides religious faith in latent form in the North, which is practised in full in the South. Then there are wide economic and trade differences. Over the years the social values have also grown to be different. But if events of June 2000 and October 2007 are an indication of change, then change in every sphere of a United Korea seems possible, despite hiccups and occasional border violations.

Inevitably, the real blocks to progress towards reunification limit to three major factors: the ideological barrier; the nuances and interpretation of ‘Confederation’ and ‘Federation’ and finally, the still pre-eminent role the USA would want to play in a unified Korea.

In the matter of ideological differences, it is Kim Jong-II who was expected to take longer to mellow down. He will be vulnerable during the period of transformation from his own diehard Communists, especially the military. Transformation of autocracy to democracy is often a long process despite the declared ‘transcending the ideological differences and systems’, but given a suitable climate it could be swift, as happened in Russia and East Germany.

The issue that would, in fact, need careful resolution is of an even ‘Confederation’, which will signify a union of Koreas where power sharing will be the central issue. Both the states will have to surrender their individual sovereignty to a designated central authority. How much of residual power each will retain would assume importance. Any ticklish issue might once again retard the final solution for years. Additionally, a unified Korea is strategically beneficial to the USA, not only for trade but also for containing China and improving its influence with it. The USA is, therefore, expected to insist on participation in the process. Properly managed, it might accelerate the reunification process too.

The positive role played by the four supporting powers besides the UNO in achieving an incredible and enviable breakthrough would also have to be durable, lending their positive and constructive role to achieving reunification. They have been inseparable to the cause and would remain indispensable to a bright future. Any effort to be myopic in this regard would embitter DPRK; shatter hopes of reunification and peace in the 54 year old imbroglio.

Dwelling on optimism and even clairvoyance7, we need to note with tremendous satisfaction that of the several milestones to be crossed for eventual peace and reunification, two most important ones have already been crossed. Reunification of the Hermit Kingdom, as DPRK has been known since 1950s, with democratic South Korea is conjecturally on the horizon by 2025. It is the year when the world hopes to see several atlas changing and map redrawing events. While the Middle East, Chechnya and other regions in conflict would meander through long and labyrinthine processes, the two Koreas, at least, would have ‘buried their history of war scars and pain of division’8.

At this moment, a quote from the US President John F Kennedy might facilitate summing up. Speaking during his inaugural address, he said: “there is a Chinese proverb saying that each generation builds a road for the next. The road has been built for us and I believe, it is incumbent upon us to build our road for the next.”

Now that Seoul and Pyongyang are connected, it is hoped, the DMZ will be moved into the dustbin of history. This feat in reconciliation and probable reunification of the Korean Peninsula has a lesson to offer. Frustrating though the road to success has been, it proved that ‘preventive diplomacy’, one of the goals of the UNO, could successfully find solutions to vexed and seemingly intractable problems. The future world has a lot to learn from this success.

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The Truth about Military Hardware in our Armed Forces

Lieutenant General SPM Tripathi, PVSM, AVSM (Retd)

While military experts have been pre-occupied with the deficiency in manpower, particularly the officer cadre in the Armed Forces, it is the poor state of military hardware that should cause greater concern. Modern warfare is all about weapons, equipment and support systems. Indian history is full of instances where our brave soldiers were defeated in battles because the enemy had the advantage of superior horses, rifles and guns. In the field of military hardware the state in the three Services today calls for urgent corrective action.

Dependence on a foreign power for military hardware can be as lethal as the weapon system itself. Foreign governments and arms manufacturing companies consider sale of arms a vital source of income. Sale of weapons and equipment forms an important part of their foreign policy initiatives. To make the deals attractive, terms and conditions are sugar coated with phrases like technology transfer and setting up facilities for production in our country. Thus, they not only sell weapon systems, they also make additional profits by providing production and repair facilities. There is hardly ever any mention of them buying back the weapon systems or equipment thus produced, at market prices. Normally, in the contract the first hundred numbers are bought outright and subsequently production facility and transfer of technology is included. By the time the whole process of setting up facilities for production is completed, the system is on the verge of becoming obsolete. The whole process begins again for the next generation weapons. We are thus caught in an endless cycle of purchasing weapons and equipments from abroad repeatedly.

An ambitious project of making Light Combat Aircraft (LAC) was undertaken by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) long time back. They did not have the capability of making a combat aircraft then and they also do not seem to have the capability now, though it is said that the project will fructify in five years. Meanwhile the Air Force, compelled to phase out MIG 21 air craft in large numbers, have fallen dangerously short of their authorised strength. This has necessitated in MoD floating a global tender of Rs 40,000 crores for buying 126 medium multi-aircrafts post haste. Despite the urgency, this contract will pass through many phases; trials, negotiations, acceptance in service and production etc. Therefore, the Medium Multi-role Combat Aircraft may not be inducted into the Air Force for another 3 to 4 years.

Navy and Army are also no better off. A deal of Rs 6,000 crores was signed with Russia in 2004 to supply Indian Navy with a refurbished aircraft carrier ‘Admiral Gorshkov’; with 16 MIG-29K ‘supersonic fighters and a mix of Ka-31 and Ka-28 helicopters to operate from the carrier’s deck. This aircraft carrier is already over age. Navy has been wanting to acquire Gorshkov for a very long time and it was scheduled to join the Indian Navy by August 2008. Presently, there is no information as to when the Navy will get this aircraft carrier. At the same time an indigenous 37,500 tons aircraft carrier is not likely to be in service before 2015. Meanwhile, the only aircraft carrier Viraat is also ageing.

The saga of an indigenous tank for the Army is well known. More than 25 years ago, a project was started to make an Indian tank named ‘Arjun’, which would match the lethality, protection and sustained mobility of a modern tank on the battlefield. Though a few tanks have been inducted into an armoured regiment, after an agonisingly long period, the Army is not satisfied with their performance. And in these 25 years, more than 100 times the original projected cost has been spent.

These are only three examples, one each from Army, Navy and Air Force; mentioned to show how inadequate deficient our weapons and equipment management is today. Numerous such examples can be quoted which when taken together make the picture extremely dismal. It is now sixty years, since Independence, that the management of military hardware became our own responsibility. Israel also gained their independence about the same time as our country. While we had Ordnance factories and other infrastructure already in place, Israel had none. Yet in the last sixty years, Israel has developed a capacity to export sophisticated weapons and equipment of about the same value as we have been importing. What are the reasons that have prevented us from becoming self sufficient and self reliant in military hardware?

Is our infrastructure faulty? In the MOD, the DRDO is responsible for assimilating the weapons or equipment requirement of the Services through a qualitative requirement floated by the latter. Thereafter, the DRDO prepares a project report obtains government sanction and the budget. The DRDO is then supposed to fabricate a prototype of the system, offer it to the concerned Service for trial, obtain their approval, make industrial drawings and transfer the system to Defence Production for meeting Service requirements.

Unfortunately, this arrangement has not worked at all. DRDO is headed by an eminent scientist, who also wears the hat of Scientific Adviser (SA) to the Defence Minister. DRDO has excellent laboratories in various disciplines like armament, vehicle, instruments, radio etc. The organisation also has excellent scientists. However, they do not have much practical knowledge about the battle field requirements of the weapon systems that they are engaged in fabricating. There is not much interaction with the Services. Also, the DRDO do not realise their limitation realistically. Taking on the project for Light Combat Aircraft (LAC) is a case in point. No aircraft have been fabricated in the country and to think that a LAC can be made which will match the technical specifications of modern combat aircraft seemed unrealistic. We have seen the result in this project.

The department of Defence Production is headed by a Secretary who is an IAS officer and all the top level decision makers in the department are from Civil Services. This department also works in isolation from the Services and has done very little either to improve the structure of Ordnance factories or modernise their facilities. Though coordination meetings are held to monitor the progress of the projects there is a lack of focus. The allocation of responsibility at the various stages of the project is not clearly defined. The DRDO has been unable to produce prototypes in time. Almost all the projects get delayed. Along with the work of DRDO the department of Defence Production should get involved in making industrial drawings of the system and setting up production facilities. Though coordination meetings are held frequently the expected results are not forthcoming.

Loss to the exchequer in these projects is enormous and calls for introspection to set things in the right perspective to safeguard National security interests. Indigenous manufacture will also cost money but foreign exchange will be saved and the infrastructure will be better utilised. More important, our defence forces will not be dependent on foreign manufacturers in times of emergency. Self-reliance is, therefore, a military necessity. However, except for missiles, our country has been unable to develop any major weapon systems without foreign components. For most of the weapon systems very large number of important components are imported from aboard. So, if we are not importing a weapon system as a whole we continue to import costly critical items like engine, fire control system etc.

The country cannot afford to continue paying large sums of foreign exchange year after year. Therefore, we have to shore up our indigenous capability. The need is to look at the whole system and make urgent changes. Mere patch work will not do; there has to be a total re-think on the whole subject, which may include major structural as well as procedural changes.

The Services have to reconcile to the fact that DRDO and department of Defence Production are not yet geared to produce modern weapons and equipment that are displayed in glossy magazines. Also, the technical expertise and the latest gadgets that include a wide range of facilities will take time. Therefore, the criticality of operational efficiency over mere sophistication is what the Services should look for. For example, the Fire Control System (FCS) in tank and naval ships have become very sophisticated. Having got an efficient stabilisation in the tank, the maximum errors occurred due to faulty range estimation. For a very long time the Israeli Army used hand held range finder and conveyed the target range verbally to the gunner. Till they were able to develop a computer driven fire control system, a hand held range finder was accepted by the Israeli tank men. On the other hand from the day project ‘Arjun’ was launched, our Armoured Corps insisted on a latest fire control system. The DRDO was in no position to fabricate such a system. While the DRDO was in the process of developing a modern FCS, the Armoured Corps should have accepted a simpler system.

So where do we go from here? First, we have to set our aim right. Not only should we aim to equip our Armed Forces with modern equipment, made in India, but we should also aim to enhance exports of our military hardware and earn valuable foreign exchange. The private sector can play a very important role in research, development and production of military hardware. Our country has reached a stage where the private sector can complement the Department of Defence Production in producing the most sophisticated weapons and equipment and indeed take off much weight from their shoulders. The MoD on behalf of the Armed Forces is considered one of the biggest arms buyers in the world market. This is a stigma that must be removed.

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Command Responsibility in Armed Conflicts

Wing Commander UC Jha (Retd)

The principle objective of the armed forces is to fight and win wars. The distinctive features of the armed forces are :

- (a) centralized command,
- (b) hierarchy,
- (c) discipline,
- (d) esprit de corps and
- (e) self-sufficiency. The centralized command structure ensures that a continuous chain of command links the very lowest echelon with the supreme headquarter. The Armed forces are arranged in a pyramidal hierarchy, each echelon owing explicit and peremptory obedience to its superior. From high to low, each member is subject to discipline. The chain of command is sacrosanct and everything is supposed to go through clearly established channels. The commanders at various hierarchical levels are responsible for ensuring that, while participating in an armed conflict, the forces under their command follow the laws of war or the international humanitarian law.

The modern doctrine of command responsibility can be defined as the responsibility of commanders for war crimes committed by subordinate members of their command or other persons subject to their control. The concept of ‘command responsibility’ in armed conflicts embraces two issues. Firstly, it concerns the responsibility of a commander, who has given an order to a subordinate to commit an act which is in breach of the law of armed conflict or whose conduct implies that he is not averse to such a breach being committed. It also covers the plea of the subordinate that he is not responsible for any breach because he was acting in accordance with the orders of, or what he presumed to be the wishes, of his commander, a plea that is more commonly described as that of “compliance with superior superior’s orders”. A subordinate putting forward such a plea contends that the superior alone is responsible.

Historical

Around 500 BC, Sun Tzu wrote in Ping Fa - “the Art of War” - about the duty of commanders- to ensure that subordinates conduct themselves with a certain level of civility in armed conflict. In 1439, Charles VII of France issued the Ordinance of Orleans, which imposed a blanket responsibility on commanders for all unlawful acts of their subordinates, without requiring any standard of knowledge. About two hundred years later, the Swedish King Adolphus ordered that: “No Colonell or Capitaine shall command his soldiers to doe any unlawful thing: which who so does, shall be punished according to the discretion of the Judges.” The first modern attempt to codify what could be described as the laws of war was made in the 1907 Hague Convention. Article 3 of the Convention (IV) provided that if there was a violation of the articles or regulations, the belligerent state so violating them would be responsible for the acts committed by its military and would be liable to pay compensation for the same.

In 1919, subsequent to the termination of hostilities in World War-I the Commission on the Responsibility of the Authors of the War and on the Enforcement of Penalties was established. The Commission recommended action against some 895 alleged war criminals. However, for political reasons, only 12 German officers were brought to trial before the German Supreme Court and the longest sentence was four years of imprisonment. The German Court accepted the defence of superior orders, which is the logical adjunct to the concept of command responsibility.

The trial of General Yamashita is perhaps the most frequently cited World War-II command responsibility case. It was the first international trial to find a commanding officer criminally liable for the crimes committed by his subordinates. Yamashita was Commanding General of the 14th Army Group between 9 October 44 and 2 September 45. He was also the Military Governor of Philippines. During this period, his troops committed widespread, brutal atrocities including acts of violence, cruelty and homicide resulting in the death of over 25,000 non-combatant men, women and children. Yamashita was charged with ‘unlawfully disregarding and failing to discharge his duty as a commander to control the acts of members of his command by permitting them to commit war crimes’. Although it was not alleged that Yamashita had actually issued illegal orders, in finding him guilty, the US military commission found that the public notoriety of the crimes was such that the accused ‘must have known’ of them and failed to take action to prevent them or punish those responsible.

In appeal, the US Supreme Court ruled that: “the law of war pre-supposes that its violation is to be avoided through the control of the operations of war by commanders who are to some extent responsible for their subordinates.” The Court held that there was an affirmative duty to take such measures as were within his power and appropriate to protect POWs and the civilian population. The standard applied by the court was that the atrocities were so widespread that Yamashita “must have known” of them despite no evidence of knowledge or direct connection to the accused.

Geneva Conventions of 1949

The Geneva Convention of 1949 lays down that each belligerent party bears moral responsibility under international law for the conduct of all members of its Armed Forces, and that the State is obliged to maintain discipline, law and order at all times. All members of Armed Forces are subject to the military and criminal codes of the states they serve, and in case of infraction, they are liable to be prosecuted before military or civil courts of that state. For example, the Third Geneva Convention (Article 129) states: “The High Contracting Parties undertake to enact any legislation necessary to provide effective penal sanctions for persons committing or ordering to be committed any of the ‘grave breaches’ of the present Convention.” The ‘grave breaches’ to which Article 129 refers are listed in Article 130 as :

- (a) wilful killing,
- (b) torture or inhuman treatment, including biological experiments,
- (c) causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, and
- (d) compelling a prisoner of war (POW) to serve in the forces of the hostile Power,
- (e) depriving a POW of the rights of fair and regular trial.

Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions (Common Article 3) states that in cases of armed conflict not of an international character occurring in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties, each party to the conflict shall be bound to apply, as a minimum, the provisions to protected persons, that is, those not taking active part in hostilities; members of armed forces who have laid down their arms; and members of armed forces who are horse de combat by sickness, wounds, detention, etc. The acts prohibited against such persons are:

- (a) violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture;
- (b) taking of hostage;
- (c) outrages upon personal dignity, in particular, humiliating and degrading treatment; and
- (d) the passing of sentences and the carrying out of executions without previous judgment pronounced by a regularly constituted court affording all the judicial guarantees which are recognized as indispensable by civilized peoples.

Geneva Protocol I

The Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, adopted in 1977, was the first international treaty to codify the doctrine of command responsibility, creating an affirmative duty to repress grave breaches of international law. The provisions relating to command responsibility are contained in Articles 86 and 87 of the Protocol. A commander is liable for grave breaches committed by a subordinate ‘if he knew, or had information which should have enabled him’ to conclude in the circumstances at the time, that his subordinate was committing or was going to commit such a breach and did not take all feasible measures within his power to prevent or repress the breach. Apart from being liable to be considered a party to war crimes committed by his subordinates, a commander has a general duty to maintain discipline and this includes a duty to take action in respect of war crimes committed, or about to be committed by his subordinates or by other persons under his control. Protocol I places the responsibility on the High Contracting Parties to ensure that commanders prevent breaches, train their subordinates and take action against offenders.

The commanders are to prevent and, where necessary, suppress and report to the competent authorities breaches of the Geneva Conventions and Protocol I. This applies in relation to members of the armed forces and other persons under their command. The commanders are also responsible for making members of the armed forces under their command aware of their obligations under the Conventions and Protocol.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia

In the wake of the human rights violations committed in the former Yugoslavia, the UN Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993. It has jurisdiction over four types of crime committed on the territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991:

- (a) grave breaches of the 1949 Geneva Conventions,
- (b) violations of the laws or customs of war,
- (c) genocide, and
- (d) crime against humanity. It can try only individuals, not organizations or governments. It was the first international criminal court to enforce the existing body of international humanitarian law, and in particular, judicially determine its customary law aspects.

Article 7(3) of the ICTY Statute states that the fact that the crimes “were committed by a subordinate does not relieve his superior of criminal responsibility if he knew or had reason to know that the subordinate was about to commit such acts or had done so and the superior failed to take the necessary and reasonable measures to prevent such acts or to punish the perpetrators”. There are two standards of knowledge encompassed by Article 7(3): “knew” and “had reason to know”. “Knew” refers to actual knowledge, which can be established either directly or through circumstantial evidence. The meaning of “had reason to know” has been the most contentious aspect of command responsibility before the ICTY. The Appeal Chamber (ICTY) has held that the ordinary meaning of Article 86 of the additional Protocol indicated that the commander must have some information available to him, which puts him on notice of the commission of unlawful acts by his subordinates.

The ICTY has set following legal and institutional precedents:

- (a) It identified and applied the modern doctrine of criminal responsibility of superiors, or command responsibility, clarifying that a formal superior-subordinate relationship is not necessarily required for criminal responsibility.
- (b) It removed uncertainty about the level of knowledge to be expected from a superior whose subordinates were about to commit crimes he did not prevent, or about crimes actually committed by them.
- (c) It expanded the legal elements of the crime of grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 by further defining the test of overall control.

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

The idea behind the establishment of an International Criminal Court grew out of the realization that domestic courts are often “insufficient” to deter crimes under international law. The doctrine of command responsibility has been codified in Article 28 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Article 28(a) imposes individual responsibility on military commanders for crimes committed by forces under their effective command and control if they ‘either knew or, owing to the circumstances at the time, should have known that the forces were committing or about to commit such crimes’. Interpreted literally, Article 28(a) adopts the stricter “should have known” standard. It is felt that this provision will serve as a deterrent, giving incentive to a commander to be aware of what his subordinates are doing. The offences dealt with under the Rome Statute are genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity. The ICC is complementary to national jurisdictions and will intervene only where States are unable or unwilling to act.

The doctrine of command responsibility plays a fundamental role in regulating the behaviour of superiors and their subordinates in times of war. In order to meet its international obligations, the UK has passed the International Criminal Court Act, 2001. The military manuals of the US, Canada and Australia have also been amended to incorporate provisions relating to command responsibility.

The Indian Armed Forces

The Indian armed forces have been involved in UN peacekeeping missions as well as in international and internal conflicts for the last 60 years. Though India is not a party to the Rome Statute of the ICC, and has also not ratified the Additional Protocols, it is imperative that the concept of command responsibility be analysed, keeping in view the existing realities of armed conflict and developments in international law.

In the last 20 years, the national legal system has made qualitative advances. This is due in large part to the impact of international human rights norms on national legislation. The international legal system now includes the concept of international criminal accountability for the commission of certain international crimes, and the emerging concept of the duty to protect the human rights of innocents. In March 2006, the UN General Assembly adopted the “Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law”. The UN document states that in cases of gross violations of international human rights law and serious violations of international humanitarian law constituting crimes under international law, states have the duty to investigate and to prosecute the person allegedly responsible for the violations. The Supreme Court of India has also, in a number of cases, tried to assimilate or incorporate the international standard into domestic law.

We ought to examine the possible methods available to incorporate the superior responsibility standard into domestic military manuals. The international standard should be incorporated so that it does not appear that our commanders have a greater degree of immunity in military operations than those from the rest of the world. If we are to hold ourselves out as an armed Force that supports the rule of law, the internationally accepted “knew or should have known” standard of command responsibility should be followed domestically. It is more likely to prevent war crimes because it places a greater burden on commanders to pay attention to the acts of subordinates, an affirmative duty to stay informed. Moreover, adopting the superior responsibility standard will bring the Indian courts-martial practice in line with the customary international law of war.

If Indian courts-martial practice is to conform to international law, the government would need to expand the culpability of commanders where their subordinates are committing violations of the law. Perhaps the best way to resolve the issue would be for the Parliament to amend the Army Act, 1950 (and also the Air Force and the Navy Acts) to comport with the international standard. One significant advantage in following the amendment approach would be that the international standard for command responsibility would be clearly codified as domestic law. Such an amendment would allow the armed forces to continue its preference and policy of trying service members alleged to have violated the law by a court-martial.

Conclusion

The most important factor in the reduction of war crimes is an assertive and proactive command structure that aggressively seeks to prevent its subordinates from committing atrocities. Recognising this fact, the international community seeks to hold commanders personally liable for the crimes committed by subordinates if the commander “knows or should know” that the subordinates are involved in criminal conduct and the commander fails to take action to stop such acts. The doctrine of command responsibility serves as a deterrent to the commission of war crimes by forcing commanders to internalise some of the cost for directing or acquiescing to atrocities committed by their troops. To conform to the international standard, the services’ Acts should be amended to create a basis of culpability for commanders equal to the international standard. It would perhaps be beneficial from a policy standpoint for the armed forces to try those who violate the laws of war as criminals under domestic law rather than as war criminals, which may trigger a host of international legal requirements based on treaty obligations. Moreover, asserting that domestic jurisdiction exists to cover alleged violations of the laws of war may prevent jurisdiction from being asserted by another country or an international tribunal.

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Geographic Information System,A Critical Infrastructure for Net Centric Operations

Colonel Raj Kamal Kapur

Throughout the history of warfare, geography and military operations have been inseparable; the knowledge of terrain, transportation networks, and troop placement has played a key role in the outcome of battles. The use of the maps and analysis of ground factors have been and are still being used widely. The earliest of these maps were hand drawn but now with the advent of technology maps draped with aerial photographs and satellite images are available. Today, the technology of Geographic Information System (GIS) not only provides military commanders with extremely accurate maps, but also gives them the ability to analyse many different layers of data and receive continuously updated information which could help them make vital decisions. It plays a pivotal role in military operations as they are essentially spatial in nature, the concept of command, control, communication and coordination in military operations are largely dependent on the availability of accurate information in order to arrive at quick decisions for operational orders. In the present digital era, GIS is an excellent tool for military commanders in the operations.

PART 1 - WHAT IS GIS

GIS is a system for capturing, storing, analysing and managing data and associated attributes which are spatially referenced to the earth. It is a computer system capable of integrating, storing, editing, analysing, sharing, and displaying geographically referenced information. It is an integrated system of computer hardware, software, data, trained personnel and procedures.

The core of any GIS is data. The data used in the GIS is essentially of two types, the first being the Spatial Data which is the data about the objects referenced to locations on the earth and this Geo referenced data is stored in Geospatial databases. The second type of the data is the Attribute data which stores additional information tied to the spatial data. The two types of the data sets of GIS require documentation about the data which is stored as Metadata.

The distinctive features of the GIS from other information / map display system are its ability to store and disseminate distributed spatial and attribute data, powerful analysis techniques to compress large amount of data into meaningful information and present a Common Operating Picture (COP). This is achieved by a library of spatial and A-spatial tools which are bundled with the GIS system and its ability to build additional tools as per the requirement. The spatial tools allow analysis of the spatial data such as number of wells around a village or the extent of the built up area. The query of stored attributes of the spatial data is facilitated by the A-spatial analysis. Calculations could be done on the queried data. These would give results like, all wells that have potable water or the total population of villages.

PART 2 - MILITARY APPLICATIONS OF GIS

GIS : A Critical Defence Infrastructure for Net Centric Operations (NCO).

Military operations planning and decisions require information of terrain, weather, cross country mobility, manoeuvrability, dispositions of enemy and own troops, details of communication infrastructure, population centres, location of natural and artificial obstacles, major logistics installation etc. These kinds of information are essentially spatial in nature. NCO characterised by situational awareness, compressed time frames for the commanders and precision attacks have further necessitated the seamless flow of the information between sensors, decision makers and shooters. The inputs from various sources must present a COP to all the entities in the battle space. The GIS acts as a critical defence infrastructure which aggregates the data from all the sources and helps command and control elements and shooters to understand the current situation. The fusion of data occurs because the spatial context between sensors and other entities is maintained. The variety of tools to analyse, assess, and plan actions provided by the GIS assists the decision makers in timelier and better decisions. Precision engagement by the shooters requires the detailed information about the targets such as location, type of target, time to engage etc. The GIS provides the information framework and tools to analyse such data. It coordinates the strike assets in time and space to achieve the desired effect and assists in passing precise information to the Shooter Grid. GIS thus provides the framework for distributed storage, dissemination, and exploitation of battlespace knowledge between the sensors, command and control elements and the shooters. It enables efficient management of geospatial data by fusion, sophisticated analysis and visualisation tools and assists the commander in maximising the combat power at critical points in time and space in the battlefield.

Specific Applications of GIS

Intelligence. The intelligence collection is the most important activity which is continuously carried out to paint a COP. The intelligence staff gets inputs from variety of sources such as Humint, Sigint surveillance devices like RADARs, sensors, satellite imagery, aerial reconnaissance, video streaming from Unarmed Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Special Forces (SF) patrols. This geospatial information is integrated using the base data of either maps, satellite / aerial imagery or the fused data of maps and satellite / aerial imagery and is further analysed by creating the overlays of enemy's threat, weather and terrain which results in production of COP.

Operational Analysis. The intelligence staff carries out an assessment of the enemy's objectives, capabilities and probable courses of actions. The operational staffs then analyses the important military aspects of terrain which include observation and fields of fire, cover and concealment, obstacles, key terrain features and avenues of approach using the powerful spatial and A-spatial tools provided by the GIS. The operational staff analysis is not only based on characteristics of the ground, but also on the enemy and the commander's intent. This assessment produces advice to the commander on deployment of own forces, selection of areas for shaping of the battlefield and development of the obstacle plan. The GIS can assist in planning for the following aspects:

- (a) Mobility of own forces.
- (b) Counter mobility of enemy forces.
- (c) Survivability of own forces.
- (d) Analysis of key terrain features.
- (e) Selection of axes of advance.
- (f) Cover and concealment along routes.
- (g) Going maps with obstacle overlays.
- (h) Three dimension terrain models of specific areas.
- (j) Navigation by use of GPS and hand held GIS devices.
- (k) Selection of bridge / ferry sites.
- (l) Alignment of vehicle safe lanes.
- (m) Alignment of operational tracks.
- (n) Obstacles on likely induction routes and axes of advance.
- (o) Flooding and flushing schemes on canals / ditch cum bunds
- (p) Signal communication planning and network management.
- (q) Stores management.

Fire Support. Management of fire support assets in support of manoeuvre forces include field artillery systems, mortars, and aircraft in support of tactical missions, army aviation units and offensive electronic warfare. These systems require accurate information of targets (location, type of target and time to engage), weather, location of own resources, air space management, trajectory analysis etc. The essential topographic survey and analysis for fire support in the Army is being provided by Surveillance and Target Acquisition Units and GIS can assist in the following aspects:

- (a) Acquisition of targets in area of operations.
- (b) Siting of weapon systems.
- (c) Flight-line-masking with vertical obstructions.
- (d) Mobility maps.

Logistics. Logistics is the provision of personnel, material, and other support required for maintaining and prolonging operations or combat until mission accomplishment. The art of logistics is integrating strategic, operational and tactical support while simultaneously moving units, personnel, equipment and supplies in timely execution of the commander's intent and his concept of operations. GIS can assist logistics units by providing information such as :

- (a) Mobility maps for different types of vehicles.
- (b) Choke points along supply routes.
- (c) Likely logistics support areas.
- (d) Possible re-supply routes.
- (e) Cover and concealment along routes.
- (f) Location of logistics facilities.
- (g) Casualty evacuation routes.
- (h) Location of hospitals.
- (j) Location of repair teams.
- (k) Requirement of recovery resources.
- (l) Provision of engineer support for logistics sustenance.

GIS and Special Forces (SF) Operations

GIS is a key enabler for Special Force (SF) operations involving small, mobile and dispersed forces over a wide area of operations. These SF require detailed GIS data over very large area in near real time. The ability to store this data electronically increases the efficiency and mobility of the SF.

GIS and Internal Security (IS)

Within the operating environment of modern warfare, internal security presents the greatest complexity of all, including terrain and infrastructure, wherein, the GIS inter-operability with local law enforcement, utility services, Para Military Forces (PMF), Central Police Organisations (CPOs), other government departments and intelligence agencies will become critical for a coordinated and effective response.

In Internal Security (IS), Armed forces will require a level of detail in GIS data that include not only physical structure but also power lines, telephone communication lines, water pipe lines, sewage system, building wall thickness and a range of other obscure but important data. For much of our Internal Security environment, this data does not exist and where it does exist, our ability to access the above mentioned data in a timely manner, in a format that is compatible with our own planning and command support system, remains a challenge. Since our national security will depend on GIS, all attempts to address this issue must be coordinated at the highest level by the government with Private Public Partnership (PPP) or Army Industry Partnership (AIP) programmers.

GIS for Management of Military Stations and Establishments.

The GIS can be very effectively utilised for managing the garrisons and other military establishments. This will include the following :

- (a) Asset management and tracking.
- (i) Allotment of accommodation.
- (ii) Inventory management.
- (iii) Layout of water, power and telecommunication infrastructure.
- (iv) Management of complaints and repairs.
- (b) Force Protection and Security
- (i) Management of security.
- (ii) Vehicle tracking.
- (iii) Monitoring critical infrastructure and high-risk targets.
- (iv) Management of emergency operations and disaster response teams

PART 3 - MILITARY GIS - ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

Inter-operability. Inter-operability of GIS for military applications is required to be addressed on two fronts. The first pertains to data inter-operability and the second is software inter-operability. The issues involved with each and the methods to achieve the same are as follows:

Data Inter-operability. The military use of GIS normally demands greater data requirements than other fields of GIS due to existence of varied systems in defence with varied set of requirements. Topographic data, digital terrain data, vegetation data, geological soil data, variety of sensors data and satellite / aerial images are used in a single application. The standardisation of object models, attribute data, data base structure, topology etc. is absolutely vital. Data inter-operability can be achieved by laying down of a common set of standards to be followed by all. Some initiatives have been taken in this direction. The Survey of India has laid down that all creation of digital maps would be conforming to Digital Vector Data (DVD) standards. These standards are published by it. This gives feature by feature digitisation standards. Each type of map feature has a separate DVD reference code. The features are grouped into 63 layers that are transparent to the user. The National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI) has published the National Spatial Data Exchange (NSDE) format, to be used by all GIS users in the country.

Software Inter-operability. There are large numbers of software which are available for various GIS tasks. There is no single software that can meet all the features. Software that is good at CAD can show 3D model of a place very well but may not be able to process satellite data accurately. A 3D rendering software could be able to show a fly through of a place very well but may not carry out GIS calculations accurately. For the developer of the software, the requirements of GIS need specialisation in each field. Hence, today, a large numbers of software are - commercially available catering for specific user needs. The issue of inter-operability between different software needs special attention so that there is no / minimum loss of data while using different software. Software inter-operability can be achieved by use of open technology. At the global level an initiative called the Open GIS Consortia (OGC) is being spearheaded by a group of vendors. This aims at enabling each of the software to talk to every other software without the loss of data. The users would be able to use any software and exploit each of the software to its full potential. The central issue while choosing software should be that it must support OGC (Open General Consortium) standards and is also easy to operate. The system has to be finally operated by soldiers on the ground; hence intuitive software with a gradual and less steep learning curve should be preferable.

Requirement Specifications. Many of the requirements of C4I system demand GIS functionality. Common GIS foundation must be specified at the inception stage of various applications. If the GIS requirement is not explicitly specified as a foundation component then one may be tempted to build a separate GIS for each application. This may meet the present requirements but is unlikely to meet the future enhancements and the user expectations. Standardisation of GIS will ensure that software components can be reused, spatial components of different applications can communicate with one another, geospatial data can be centrally managed and training requirements are standardised across all applications. All applications have a common look and feel. The GIS is at the centre of system capabilities and the design of the system must be based around the GIS

Training. The most vulnerable part of the GIS system is the human resource. The GIS System requires specialists, in the fields of geographic data management, geographic data creation and geographic data distribution, who require specialist training. However, user awareness remains the biggest challenge. It involves creating awareness among users about the capabilities of the system and putting the system to effective usage.

Conclusion

The Army in the coming years will operate in complex battle space in all kinds of terrain for both offensive and defensive operations. Communication networks at strategic, operational and tactical levels, common GIS platform and the applications software linking various entities, will allow dispersed forces to coordinate and integrate their battle actions, concentrate quickly when required and bring to bear maximum combat power at the point of decision. GIS is a force multiplier and any delay in employment of this capability would deny combat elements an advantage over the enemy.

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Nagaland — The Uneasy Ceasefire

Major Shailender Singh Arya

The Naga insurgency was the first major internal challenge to confront a young, socialist and somewhat dreamy nation. And the oldest insurgency of the independent India was the first blood for the Indian Army in dealing with insurgency, imparting some costly lessons, which the Army has not forgotten till date. Simmering from the pre-independence years, the insurgency finally erupted in 1955-56, and has kept the state on boil for decades, besides destabilising the entire Northeast region. The current insurgency led by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) is the dominant faction of the erstwhile NSCN, has been often described as the ‘mother insurgency of the northeast’ by the security experts. It was a formidable insurgent group with strong ideological foundations, which spearheaded the Naga insurgency since the early eighties. The Naga problem, with which the word ‘complex’ has become almost synonymous, today after years of bitter conflict has undergone a distinct shift and the peace talks are now inching towards a possible political solution. There has also been a marked change in the perceptions of the local populace, which has altered the ground realities and the dynamics of the region. Meanwhile, the once fierce guerrilla groups have made a near business enterprise out of insurgency while engaging each other in bitter turf wars. An intricate cocktail of these factors has made the ongoing ceasefire an uneasy proposition, leaving the Naga insurgency at a unique cross-road of conflict and peace. The understanding of this volatile cocktail is important to comprehend the dynamics of a protracted insurgency. The future of the ceasefire and the results of the ongoing peace talks will also have a profound impact on the stability of the entire Northeast region and could fundamentally alter our concepts of engaging and containing other terror movements.

Paradise Lost

The popular perception, except in the Northeast India, considers the Nagas to be an exotic, agile and fierce group of tribes with rebellion and head-hunting as their primary means of occupation. This sad but stereotyped perception is extended to most of the tribes of the Northeast, with some kind of variations. Truly, Sanjoy Hazarika describes these people as the ‘Strangers of the Mist’, a term popularised by his book bearing the same name. Naga is a fairly recent generic term attributed to a group of tribes of India-Mongoloid origins speaking Tibeto-Burman dialects of Sino-Tibetan family. This complex definition is inescapable, further defying a clear distinction of (and among) Nagas. Among few conflicting versions, it is commonly accepted that the word Naga is derived from the word Na-ka, which in Burmese means people or men folk with pierced ear lobes. They have been rarely understood, as more often than not, the various insurgent groups have hijacked their mild agenda, each proclaiming to be the sole arbiter of the Naga destiny.

The blue hills of Nagaland had lost their innocence to the sound of gunfire in mid-fifties. After decades of bloodbath, in which according to estimates, 25,000 people have lost their lives from 1947 till date, the situation at ground zero in Nagaland is yet to resemble normalcy. The sound of the gunfire still rattles the countryside on a daily basis, the only difference being that the insurgent groups are battling it out among themselves. Presently, the Khapsing faction of NSCN has joined hands with Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) to counter the dominant Isak-Muivah faction of NSCN and they routinely engage each other in prolonged fire-fights. The pie is quite lucrative; access to unbridled extortion in the dominated areas and a share in any possible political arrangement, which may be adopted upon conclusion of the peace talks. The inter-tribal rivalry, the Achilles’ heel of Naga insurgency, adds fuel to the factional fire. As a result, the state and the neighbouring areas have never seen lasting peace.

After over a decade of ceasefire, commencing with August 1997 ceasefire with NSCN (IM) and the subsequent April 2001 ceasefire with NSCN (K), the durability of peace is still suspect. Hope for a bright future is based on a surprisingly vague notion that finally the insurgent groups will come around and somehow the issue will settle by itself. Quite the contrary, the repeated extension of ceasefire with both the NSCN factions and endless rounds of talks with NSCN (IM) has heralded an environment of endemic factional politics, rampant extortion and interference by the insurgent groups in all the aspects of administration and polity. After carrying out considerable consolidation, it will not be incorrect to state that they now actually run a parallel government. They have the impunity to hold workshops, post propaganda videos on YouTube, advertise for vacant posts in newspapers and routinely publish their page-length statements and rebuttals in the vernacular media. Last year, the ‘Kilo (Home) Ministry’ of NSCN (IM) opened a new branch called Crime Suppression Department (CSD) to carry out polling duties, further assuming the role of a state. This so-called CSD often rounds up some unsuspecting drug-peddlers and releases them after levying fines. The ineffectiveness of the Kohima based Ceasefire Monitoring Group (CFMG) and the failure to revise the Cease Fire Ground Rules (CFGR) are giving more teeth to the security forces, has significantly contributed in this negative spiral. Today, in spite of the ceasefire with both major factions in place, the insurgency related incidents are considerably higher than many other northeastern states where similar arrangements are absent. According to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), insurgency related fatalities have increased from 97 in 2004 to 99 in 2005, to a further 147 in 2006. Incidents of insurgent violence have registered an increase from 180 to 192 between 2004 and 2005 and sharply to 309 in 2006.2 By all estimates, the toll for 2007 is likely to be higher.

The Great Game

The ongoing ceasefire between the Government of India (GOI) and NSCN (IM), which has been ‘indefinitely extended’ on 01 August 2007, is at best uncertain. Similarly, the ceasefire extension for another year has been obtained with NSCN (K) in April 2007. This fragile peace is hostage to the outcome of peace talks and the perceptions of the involved players. These perceptions have a tendency to harden in the current circumstances as the odds faced by both sides have subsided. In almost a decade of ceasefire, these groups have recouped, multiplied and are almost back to their old ways, basking in the satisfaction of re-establishing coherent insurgent organisations. NSCN (IM) in this period has been carrying out approximate 300-400 new recruitments per year and has raised a few more so-called new battalions with arsenal to boot. The dominant Isak-Muivah faction of NSCN and they routinely engage each other in prolonged fire-fights. The pie is quite lucrative; access to unbridled extortion in the dominated areas and a share in any possible political arrangement, which may be adopted upon conclusion of the peace talks. The inter-tribal rivalry, the Achilles’ heel of Naga tribes, and has turned them into their own terror organisations. The resultant credibility loss of these important bodies has further robbed the issue of few objective opinions. Most of the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) like the Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), Naga Mothers’ Association (NMA) and All Naga Concerned Citizens’ Forum too parrot the NSCN (IM)’s lines. In these happy circumstances, the idea of exchanging their AK-47s and easy money with the vagaries of a political process appealing to them is debatable.

The main demands of NSCN (IM) are integration of Naga-inhabited areas of the Northeast, a special federal relationship with New Delhi and a separate constitution for Nagaland. The NSCN (IM) claims that the total area of proposed Greater Nagaland/ or Naglaim is about 1,20,000 square kilometres against the present spread of the state of Nagaland which is 16,579 square kilometres. It blames the state for its past aggression against the Naga people and demands the return of the Naga lands. The NSCN (IM) also demands the return of the Naga lands, which constitute their Naglaim include Ukhrul, Senapati, Chandel and Tamenglong districts of Manipur, and Tripura and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh. In Myanmar, they claim large chunks of the administrative division of Sagaing and eastern parts of Kachin State. They also claim the forested areas of Assam on the foothills all along the Assam-Nagaland border, which are presently disputed and already under demographic aggression of the Nagas who have created new settlements. Indeed for NSCN (IM) whose many senior leaders including Thuingaleng Muivah are Thangulals (Khamti) from Manipur, this demand for Naglaim has assumed greater importance in the recent years. Understandably there is considerable resentment in these states, particularly in Manipur whose boundary demarcation with the Naga areas was clearly settled as early as 1872.

Its arch-rival, the NSCN (K) faction is more or less content with the current boundaries of the Nagaland state and demands independence as their main requirement. NSCN (K) also challenges the claim of NSCN (IM) to be the only representative of the Naga people. On this aspect, they again seem to be right. The third player is FGN, which due to incessant propaganda of insurgents carries the ‘positive legacy’ of Angami Zapu Phizo, the pioneer of Naga insurgency, as well as the ‘negative legacy’ of the Shillong Accord. Presently, it is a divided house with four factions and a few pockets of influence in the eastern parts of Nagaland. But if not suitably engaged, it has the potential to disrupt the peace process by misguiding and exploiting the sentiments of the people. In fact, it is banking on this possibility to revive its sagged fortunes.

Corporate Interests

The new generation of recruits in the NSCN factions and the FGN are a novel breed. While their predecessors from the previous generation may be children of deprivation; they are nothing but the children of opportunity who have made insurgency the most flourishing business in the region with ideology, ‘cause’ and businesses tossed aside. The core competencies of their business include organised extortion, nano-trade and arms running.

The perennial source of revenue for the NSCN factions has always been the organised extortion carried out from all possible sources. They call it taxation and in fact assert their right to it, as of a legal government. Phantlashing Shillong, a senior NSCN (IM) leader, who is also a self styled ex ‘Brigadier’ and the Convener of the officer’s Ceasefire Monitoring Cell (CMC), when asked about continuing tax collections by the group despite the ceasefire said, “It’s our right to... Will the Government stop collection of taxes during the cease fire?”4 The system is deep rooted; not unlike the Income Tax department, the tax notices go out every financial year and proper receipts are issued once payments are made. The collection rates are fixed; it is 24 per cent of one month’s salary per year in case of salaried employees, including all government employees, Rupees 120-150 as ‘House tax’ and ‘Census tax’ per household for all. Similarly the rates for all types of shops, commercial vehicles and other trading or business activities like saw-mills, coal mines, stone quarries, brick kilns etc are fixed. The annual collection is done centrally, a town’s tax union does it from the tax owners, the local Chamber of Commerce does it for all the shops, the Naga National Council Chairman collects the same from the villagers and the District Education Officer (DEO) may be required to collect from all the teachers. The money is deposited with the regional self styled Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) or self styled Regional Chairman in case of the Khapsing faction. At places it is collected by the self styled Town Commissioners. Finally, it is forwarded to the NSCN (IM)’s ‘Chaple’ (Finance) Ministry to be further distributed per the approved budget after being audited by their so-called ‘Comptroller and Accountant General’s Office’. The ‘Chaple Ministry’ also sets region-wise targets for income for the financial year. In areas where the influence of a particular NSCN faction is less than control, the rates may be subject to certain negotiations.

NSCN (IM) has managed a pie in every conceivable business, from smuggling of the precious Burma Teak and poaching of rhinoceros in the Kaziranga National Park, to the running of Volo Coaches, which ply between major cities of the Northeast. It controls the border trade at Moreh in Chandel district of Manipur, which is a major trading point between India and Myanmar. Here, according to estimates, the formal income per year is Rupees 100 million while the informal trade is the tune of Rupees 200 billion.5 The likely increase in the mobile penetration in the state is likely to be the next ‘sunrise sector’ for the NSCN factions. Many novel and rather amazing business models have been devised in their singular pursuit of greed. They have ‘forced partnerships’ in lucrative business houses- a self imposed business partner provides the capital and the NSCN faction provides the labour. The understanding of this volatile cocktail is important to comprehend the dynamics of a protracted insurgency. The future of the ceasefire and the results of the ongoing peace talks will also have a profound impact on the stability of the entire Northeast region and could fundamentally alter our concepts of engaging and containing other terror movements.

Their participation in the drug trafficking is a well-known fact, though the NSCN factions try to conduct this trade in a hush-hush manner by parcelling consignments abroad through Bangladesh and Myanmar rather than routing them through the Indian cities. After Afghanistan, Myanmar is the world’s second largest producer of illicit opium, with whom India trades 1,640 kilometres of unfenced border. The drugs are sourced from the Heroin and Speed Pill laboratories of the drug syndicates in Tiddim and Sagaing divisions of Myanmar and along the Chinwin River, while opium and ganja are procured in bulk from producers through their middlemen. The proximity of the region to the golden triangle of Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand naturally adds this lucrative nano-trade. Drug consumption in the Northeast has reached endemic proportions but the underlying drug trade goes unchecked and almost unadorned. However, the pivotal role of NSCN factions in arms running and training of other insurgent groups of the region is rather well documented. Like MNCC, they believe in providing complete solutions for running insurgents to their esteemed clients; procurement of weapons, training of initial batches, logistic needs, ideological guidance, provisions of venture capital and catering for an umbrella organisation. NSCN (IM) had earlier formed an umbrella organisation called United Liberation Front of the Seven Sisters (ULFSS) in 1993, which was later reconstituted as Self Defence United Front of Southeast Himalayan Region (SDUFSHR) in November 1994. On other hand, NSCN (IM) had formed an umbrella organisation of the Chin and Mizo peoples, Naga Myanmar and Manipur called India-Burmese Revolutionary Front (IBRF) at Manipur in May 1996. These associations were forged for common monetary interests rather than any ideological convergences inspite of grand designs to destabilise India.

Consequent to the nurturing of new insurgencies, the NSCN factions often outsource extortion to these surrogate groups. In Tripura, the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT) and the All Tripura Tiger Force (ATTF) have been armed and trained by NSCN (IM). In turn, they assist NSCN (IM) while transiting weapons and personnel to Bangladesh. In Assam, NSCN (IM) had armed and trained Dima Halam Doga (DHD) in the NC Hills. The DHD, fighting for the Dimas tribe, collaborates with NSCN (IM) inspite of the fact that their own areas of NC Hills and Karbi Anglong are within the map of NSCN (IM)’s Naglaim. In Assam again, NSCN (IM) has outsourced extortion activities to a lesser known group called United People Democracy Solidarity (UPDS) in return for training facilities and weapons.7 This surrogate group, which demands a separate state for the Karbis of Assam, has been armed and trained by NSCN (IM) as its rising in 1999. The Hmar Peoples Convention (HPC) is another surrogate group of NSCN (IM) in Mizoram. In Manipur too, the NSCN (IM) has forged ties with Kanglie Yawol Kuma Lup (KYKL), Zomi Reunification Army (ZRA) and even few traditionally rival Kuki groups like United Kuki Liberation Front (UKLF) and Kuki Revolutionary Army (KRA). These fledgling groups send their cadres to the training camps of NSCN (IM), which train them on a purely mercenary basis. In return for training and logistical support, NSCN (IM) demands a lion’s share of the extortion booty, sometimes as high as seventy to eighty per cent. This booty funds their vast military and civil wings, new recruitments, arms acquisitions, funding of front organisations and propaganda machines. Undiscovered amounts of funds are also channelled for running their offices in foreign locales and sponsoring jet-setting lavish lifestyles of many senior functionaries. As per a 2001 MEA report on Northeast militants, Th. Muivah, General Secretary of NSCN (IM), holds 124,550 shares, worth about US \$ 1,25,000, as an MNC in Ireland which is well known for its production of consumer goods. The linkages of the comparatively poorer NSCN (IM) are also evident; they have a marriage of convenience with United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), wherein they train ULFA cadres in their camps opposite the IB in Myanmar in return for money or weapons. As per the statement in January 2003 by NSCN (K) leader Zeluolu Angami, the group has also been providing armed training to the United insurgent groups like ULFA, Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) and People’s Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) for several decades in Myanmar.

The Global Trail

The foreign connections of the Naga insurgency date back to the 1950s when Naga Nationalist Council (NNC) was trying hard for recognition and support from the international community. They first succeeded in 1960 when A.Z. Phizo, with the help of Rev. Michael Scott, escaped to London via East Pakistan and Zurich. His popularity with the British press which printed stories of ‘Indian atrocities’ alarmed Pandit Nehru who then sought to negotiate with the moderate Nagas.8 The NNC need not have tried so hard. The ethnic similarities with Myanmar and the geographical location of Nagaland itself invite a host of foreign influences.

The insurgent groups of Nagaland demonstrate a distinct ideological connection with the Peoples Republic of China. Terms like ‘Collective Leadership’, ‘cadres’, ‘revolutionary’, ‘Socialist Council’ and ‘Government of Peoples Republic of Naglaim (GPRN)’ point in only one direction. The grand black and white photographs of severities of the Naga insurgents posing with the Chinese officials against the Great Wall of China and Tiananmen Square confirm the direction. In February 2000, there were reports that NSCN (IM) had established a ‘full-fledged liaison office’ in Chinese territories opposite Arunachal Pradesh. In the same year, a crossed cheque for US \$ 50,000 from an NSCN (IM) front was encashed by a firm in Beijing for an arms consignment of automatic rifles and machine guns. There are recent media reports (of October 2007) of Yunnan province of China emerging as a centre for procurement of arms by the insurgent groups of Northeast.9 But the official support from China has been on the wane since mid-eighties (cira 1987) perhaps a quid pro quo for their not supporting any armed resistance of Tibetans. The historical visit of Shri Jagu Gandhi to China in 1988, which was famously termed as ‘Breaching the Wall’ by the media, cemented his unspoken understanding between the Dragon and the Elephant. Furthermore, in a Christian majority state, where the Church plays an important role, an atheist communism did not find favour with the Church. Moreover, as the ties between the two giant Asian neighbours grow, the wily insurgent groups of Nagaland have reconciled to take China from their current calculations.

The Naga insurgency is deeply intertwined with the dynamics in Myanmar. The state of Nagaland shares 242 kilometres long international boundary (IB) with Myanmar, wherein the tribals are allowed to freely cross over under the free border regime. In addition, the Naga-dominated districts of Tripura and Changlang in Arunachal Pradesh and Chandel in Manipur too share a long boundary with Myanmar. Myanmar’s territory opposite all these areas in the Northwest part of that country is a densely forested and isolated region, virtually unadministered by the Central authorities from Rangoon (Yangon). It is no wonder that the areas contiguous to the IB in Myanmar shelter many training and administrative camps of both the NSCN factions. The criticality of these camps is more in case of NSCN (K) as they have their command and control structures located there due to the pressure of the rival group in the state. Their connections also run deeper as their Chairman SS Khapsing is himself a Hmu (or Hmei) Naga from Myanmar. The faction, therefore, enjoys support from the Hmu and Paganet settlements in Myanmar.

Bangladesh is now the most favoured sanctuary of all the insurgent groups of India’s Northeast. Dhaka is a secular terror hub where the religion is insignificant and no so-called ‘slash of cultures’ takes place. Here a Hindu dominated United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and an essentially Christian NSCN (IM), which proclaims ‘Naglaim for Christ’, hobnob with Islamic terror groups and government spy agencies with homely ease. Its ports of Chittagong and Cox’s Bazaar are the preferred entry points for the arms shipments from the arms markets of Southeast Asia and the Cambodian conflict spillover weapons. The largest training camp of NSCN (IM) too is based in the Chittagong Hill tracts of Bangladesh.10 Transit facilities for movement of arms and cadres are conveniently located at Sylhet in the north and Bandaban near Chittagong in south of Bangladesh. These links are not a seasonal development. FGN had a base in Dhaka since the early sixties when it was part of East Pakistan and their self styled General Kato Sena led a group of rebels through Jaintia Hills to the adjacent areas of East Pakistan.11 Presently, apart from maintaining safe houses, training camps and coordinating the move of arms and drug consignments; the ‘Aloo (Foreign) Government’ of NSCN (IM) is reportedly based in Bangladesh.12 They maintain contacts with the Directorate General of Field Intelligence (DGFI) of Bangladesh and Pakistan’s Inter Service Intelligence (ISI). It was in Dhaka that Pakistan diplomats handed over more than one map to the NSCN (IM) in 1995-96, as confessed by their arrested self styled finance secretary Kharay Hnuh. Bangladesh is also the safest induction route for the counterfeited Indian currency from Pakistan to India. It is the ubiquitous Bangla-connection which has made NSCN (IM) and ULFA go soft on the issue of illegal Bangladeshi migrants, which was incidentally one of the ration d’ e of ULFA and the very start point of the anti-foreigners agitation in Assam.

In the last few decades, while the NSCN (K) has confined itself mainly to Myanmar, it is the NSCN (IM) which is going global. The NSCN (IM) had almost succeeded in internationalising the Naga issue. They maintain offices in Manila, Bangkok, Geneva and Amsterdam and rely on the ‘Christian factor’ and human rights related propaganda to entice support and funds. NSCN (IM) has formed various international front organisations like UK based Naga Vigil and Amsterdam based Naga International Support Group (NISG). They have managed to ropo prominent personalities like ex US President Jimmy Carter to espouse their cause. I.e. in June 2005, wrote to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, encouraging him to move ahead to present an ‘acceptable solution’. Earlier, on 23 June 1993, dealing a major blow to India’s diplomatic efforts to isolate their opponents, NSCN (IM) was admitted as a member of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO) at Hague. It is also a member of the UN Working Group on Indigenous People (UNWIGIP). NSCN (IM) had earlier platform for anti-India propaganda when Isak Chishi Swu was allowed to address the UN Commission on Human Rights at Geneva on 24 April 1998. Predictably, the NSCN (IM) Chairman made full use of this opportunity. NSCN (IM) has also signed the ‘Deed of Commitment’ in October 2003 under Geneva Call, a Geneva based NGO for a total ban on anti-personal mines. These glossy actions are a bid by NSCN (IM) to equate itself with a government and gain some legitimacy. Sadly for them, the global perceptions on supporting terrorist movements; most of which were earlier called as freedom struggles, have undergone a paradigm shift post 9/11. This has undermined the NSCN (IM)’s attempts to put international pressure on India. But the international connections have not become completely irrelevant. NSCN (IM) sources weapons in Thailand which are then trans-shipped from southern Thailand via the Three Pagoda Pass opposite Karen state in Myanmar and later along the Rangoon coastline13. In spite of India’s diplomatic concerns, NSCN (IM) still runs its offices and administrative bases in Bangkok. On 19 Bangkok based tourist operator Rafiqe Khan, an ISI operative.

Religion has played its part. Pandit Nehru, an impeccably secular leader, conceded the same in a letter in 1952, wherein he stated that, “As India independence gradually approached, some of the British officers and Christian missionaries induced them to think in terms of ‘Naga Independence’”14. At the instance of Baptist Church leaders of North America, the celebration of 125th year of Christianity in Nagaland was organised in Atlanta in July-August 1997. All the insurgent factions were cordially invited for the same in an attempt to lure the rebels. The Hong Kong based Christian Conference of Asia and Geneva based World Council of Churches have also been contributing in keeping the Naga issue alive. The Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) and Council of Nagaland Baptist Churches (CNBC) receive considerable foreign donations. Kredsda, a Dutch Non-governmental Organisation (NGO) and England based Religious Society of Friends, commonly known as Quakers, are showing keen interest in Nagaland and their representatives regularly visit the state. Both organisations have strong religious undertones.

The Past Beckons

The chequered history of the Naga insurgency is littered with abrogated ceasefires and failed accords. While the Naga-Akbar Hydrat Accord of June 1947 became ineffective due to the different interpretation of its last (ninth) paragraph, the Sixteen Point Agreement between the Naga Peoples’ Convention (NPC) and the GOI in July 1960, which resulted in the formation of the state of Nagaland in December 1963, failed to carry the underground and the hardliners along. For many, the Naga issue was finally resolved on 11 November 1975 with the signing of the Shillong Accord between the representatives of the underground organisations and Shri LP Singh, the then Governor of Nagaland. The Hydrat Agreement of 1947, signed by Sir Akbar Hydari, the then Governor of Assam with the Naga was discarded to the detriment of history because of ambiguous interpretation of its ninth clause by the Naga hardliners. The insurgent propaganda lists various out-of-context quotations from Mahatma Gandhi, supposedly given in his meeting with Naga delegation led by A.Z. Phizo on 19 July 1947 at Bhangi Colony in Delhi. A reading of the entire conversation, as recorded by Pyarelal, an associate of Mahatma Gandhi is sufficient to dismiss the gimmick.16 They highlight the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) into its constituent republics but conveniently ignore the unification of Germany or the formation of the European Union (EU). The most current and perhaps the most glaring example of their shifting interpretation is the non-implementation of the CFGR.

A Fresh Perspective

In 1965, after extensive travels in Nagaland as a member of the Peace Mission, Shri Jayaprakash Narayan, had argued in his pamphlet called ‘Nagaland mein Shanti ka Prayas’ (The Prospects for Peace in Nagaland) that there was a civilisational union in India which antedates its political unity.17 Understandably, in a multi-cultural and secular society like India, mere ethnic diversity should be the last cause for secession. The ideological basis of the Naga insurgency is a carefully crafted myth which revolves against the basic foundations of the Indian Union. Their claims are replete with inherent contradictions. All of them claim in their propaganda that the Nagas have never been conquered. The recorded history begs to differ. After putting Assam under their control by the Treaty of Yandabon in 1826, the British had turned their attention to the troublesome Naga areas, which were the origin of fleeing raids to the adjoining tea gardens of Assam. A ‘Forward Policy’ was adopted and in next few years, a number of expeditions were launched, many with assistance from the Manipuri troops, to complete the conquest of Nagaland. Interestingly, these years were also the first blood for the Assam Rifles in dealing with the Nagas, which as then Cachar Levy launched the first expedition under Mr Grange in the Angami Naga areas in 1839. Later, towards the close of 1878, a formal decision was also taken to gradually extend British authority over ‘all independent tribes’. In their own confirmation of this fact, when the Simon Commission came to India in 1929, the Naga Club, a forerunner to the NNC, submitted a memorandum at Kohima in January 1929, wherein they requested to be left out from the proposed reform schemes of India and preferred “direct administration under British.” Quite simply, since India inherited the British ruled India, this area was a natural inclusion as per the provisions of the Indian Independence Act, 1947.

Furthermore, the basic unit or entity of the Nagas has always been a village. There has never any bigger political entity or any semblance of a kingdom. Fierce inter-tribal rivalry, inter-village rivalry and even intra-village rivalry (among different kheels of village) with the associated practice of headhunting caused no deviations. There was no unified dialect or homogeneous administrative system. Other features of political communalism like common currency / coinage or common laws were also simply absent. Therefore, unlike the numerous princely states which still had an option to secede, and the possibility of coercion or manipulation with its subsequent historical vestiges, the Nagas are on a non-existent historical and political foundation for their rebellion. Sending telegram of independence to the UN on 14 August 1947 and its clear acknowledgment by the UN does not constitute a ground for secession.

Even the anthropological position is not clearly defined. Till late fifties, the word Naga, which is of the 1920s origin, was resented by most tribes who preferred to be known by their own names. With the rise in political consciousness caused by the propaganda of NNC, they began sufficing Naga to the name of the tribe as a concession. The consensus on the number of tribes which can be classified as Nagas on the basis of certain common traits has not yet been reached. The claims of the anthropologists, British historians, government records, insurgent groups and the tribes themselves are at considerable variance. Even A.S. Shimray, in his pro-NSCN (IM) book ‘Let Freedom Ring, Story of Naga Nationalism’, lists 40 Naga tribes and states that investigation is still on to ascertain the exact number of Naga tribes.18 But the numbers have swelled as they are the most politically conscious and visible tribal group, and have attracted certain tribes which earlier belonged to the Kuki-Chin-Mizo group. The number of tribes which consider themselves as Nagas may further increase, if they manage to extract more concessions from the GOI.

Therefore, though it is devoid of any historical, anthropological or political sanction, the core issue as propagated here has always been the ‘fundamental resistance to integration with India’. The NSCN factions have not yet given up on this rhetoric. The basic thread of their argument is that Nagaland was never a part of India and therefore, the question of cessation or independence is per se meaningless. Their logic appealed to many Nagas who were till then indoctrinated due to the British adopting a policy of non-interference in their tribal matters. It is another story that the British adopted this policy as they found Naga Hills unproductive. It is yet another story that India too intended to leave, and indeed has left their tribal matters untouched. Thus, it was neither mismanagement, neglect or step-motherly treatment by the Union Government, nor was it brutal repression, religious divide or issues like rigging of elections, which precipitated the commencement of an armed resistance in Nagaland. The differences here went much deeper than Jammu and Kashmir – but they never caught the media limelight.

Many experts are hopeful about the weakening of the insurgent’s ability to fight the security forces after a prolonged ceasefire. It is true that most of the new recruits joining the NSCN factions’ rank and file have monetary rather than ideological considerations. It shall also be correct to state that the heady days of the insurgency with hostiles ‘living-off the land’ in thick jungles are past. The cadres now are used to a comfortable town life with modern amenities. Many of their Designated Camps have electricity and cable TV connections. There is a sharp decline in the discipline with most cadres resorting to petty extortion, the proceeds of which are pocketed. In a token attempt to check the corruption in their rank and file, NSCN (IM) had even opened a so-called ‘National Bureau of Intelligence’. However this decline in the jungle-bred guerrilla fighting ability and substitution of ideology by greed is not an end in itself. It may prove counter-productive in the long run. There is nothing to prevent the insurgency shifting its epicentre to the urban areas from the jungles and counties of Nagaland. The Naga insurgency is no less deadly. Similarly, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that corruption weakens insurgency. The insurgent groups prefer to keep the pot boiling even when most of their ideological demands have been rendered irrelevant by changed circumstances – merely to fund their lifestyles (read vices). Corruption also prevents a smooth transition to any political process, wherein the insurgents prefer status quo rather than to face voters to seek a mandate.

Today, the losses of the nineties have been largely made up by the NSCN factions. Still, the NSCN factions are in no state to resume the bush-war. In July 2001, the government rolled back its month-old decision to extend the ceasefire ‘without territorial limits’ due to violent protests in Manipur. The provocation and the opportunity were evident. But in spite of being stung by this major policy volte face of the GOI on the issue of Nagalim, NSCN (IM) did not ‘go back to the jungles’, as they routinely threaten. It only wait for the media to herald the success for them to do so. But they can continue this issue posturing as luckily for them, their bluff is unlikely to be called-off by the GOI which already has enough territorial incursions, insurgents and Naxalites to handle. Since the peace process is now irreversible, the only way left is forward. The violent history and the deep deficit between the two sides have definitely going to cast its negative shadow on the forward movement of the peace process. However, for any political solution to last, both the sides have to jettison the past. As writes Amartya Sen in The Argumentative Indian, “While we cannot live without history, we need not live within it either”.

The Peace Dividend

In Nagaland, after bloodshed for decades, ceasefire has been simply addictive. The once deep-rooted sympathy for the insurgent groups, wherein the people termed them as ‘national workers’ and willingly contributed, is now on the wane. The Nagas instead now aspire to share the rising prosperity of an emerging India. They wish to emulate the economic turnaround of Mizoram, which commenced after the Mizos abandoned a 20 years old insurgency. In fact, the economic aspirations of the comparatively smarter Nagas are much more as their benchmarks are Singapore and Thailand. In commerce, in spite of extortion notes, in banking and revival plans for sick industrial units are underway. Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC), after pulling out of Nagaland in 1994 due to threats and extortion demands is back with Canadian collaboration as Canoro-ONGC for commencement of exploration in a potentially oil-rich state.

The per-capita income and literacy rates are steadily rising. The girls now aspire to become an housewives and call-centre executives rather than unwillingly feed and nurse Mahala-beyr-turned-insurgents whose erstwhile ‘guerrilla glamour’ has given way to greed. The respite from violence has seen shops, which used to be shut by 2 PM, open till late evening and people stroll on the streets. Idle television, sick mobile phones and glaring Mahala-Indians Scripts can be seen in the remote interiors of the state. A recent spate of MTV style rock shows, band concerts and competitions like Naga Idol are a big hit in this culturally westernised state whose youth identifies themselves more with Jim Morrison and Ernesto Che Guevara rather than Sonu Nigam and Bhagat Singh. That too is now changing. In a small, yet significant symbol of cultural integration, Akumou Khezhie from Nagaland was declared the winner of the Femina Fema Fest and Sony My Miss India surlines in the recent Pantaloons Femina Miss India Contest.

For a political solution to be successful, there are certain pre-requisites. The insurgent groups have to realise that the peace dividend is much more than the conflict dividend. The people have already realised the same but in an area where insurgency was a part of the childhood and growing up, they are yet to find a voice in form of the gun-toting cadres. Nevertheless, the overwhelming public option in favour of ceasefire has ensured its repeated extensions. All the involved parties including NSCN (K) and FGN factions have to be a part of the peace process. The historical Naga Hills are a big hit in this culturally westernised state whose youth identifies themselves more with Jim Morrison and Ernesto Che Guevara rather than Sonu Nigam and Bhagat Singh. That too is now changing. In a small, yet significant symbol of cultural integration, Akumou Khezhie from Nagaland was declared the winner of the Femina Fema Fest and Sony My Miss India surlines in the recent Pantaloons Femina Miss India Contest.

The age of the ‘angry young Naga’ is over, not much unlike the decline of the Bollywood’s angry young man of the seventies. The people’s attitude is already on the horizon. But the once denied insurgent groups too require a safe and comfortable exit or ‘honourable solution’ as they ambiguously term it. The acceptability component is the key here. For every climbdown by the insurgent groups, the reciprocation from the Union government has always been quick. A statehood, granted in spite of serious reservations on the financial viability of the state and the clear acknowledgment by the UN does not constitute a ground for secession.

370 A of the constitution are already in place since 1963. Under this article, the Nagaland state continues to enjoy special rights and privileges, particularly with reference to customary tribal laws and land ownership. Furthermore, all laws passed by the Indian Parliament are required to be ratified by the Nagaland Assembly for them to be effective in Nagaland. Indeed, when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stated in Lok Sabha on 01 August 1960 while announcing the decision to create the new state of Nagaland – “Nagas are as independent as any other Indian citizen”, he was not far from reality.

The government has gone even further. The GOI, in a Joint Communique issued from Amsterdam on 11 July 2002, had recognised the ‘unique history’ of the Nagas. On 26 November 2002, the Centre allowed the ban on NSCN (IM) to lapse, paving the way for Th. Muivah and Isak Chishi Swu to resume negotiations. They flew on their own passport, but they did not want to pay for it. Their worst nightmare is being assigned the streets label of ‘some misgans’ on an time and all-encompassing favourite euphemism of Indian policy makers. At the same time, the fatality of violent means has been taken to a haler, the absence of any charismatic second-rung leaders in both the factions will put them against the wall when the time runs out. In fact, in NSCN (IM) the next important leaders after Th. Muivah and Isak Chishi Swu viz. R.H. Raising, Convener of Securing Committee and V.S. Atem, Special Envoys to Collective Leadership are complex hardliners who oppose any solution within the Indian Constitution. But inspite of their rhetoric, it will essentially be more money and more autonomy which shall constitute the solution. In the present circumstances, this may require some alterations to the Indian Constitution to satisfy their aspirations, unless of course organisations or political parties, more representative of the people, emerge on the scene making these insurgent groups irrelevant. The Union Government may also rename Nagaland as Naglaim, without altering any boundaries, as another concession. In this complex game of realpolitik, only one fact emerges as certain – Any further indication can only promote an uneasy peace.

Conclusion

The NSCN factions still retain some ideological moorings and unlike most of the other insurgent or terrorist groups operating on Indian soil, have not become complete slaves to the dictates of ISI. They fear the sheer resilience of the Indian state, wherein after six decades of violence has seen nothing but the steady rise of the Indian state. Their worst nightmare is being assigned the streets label of ‘some misgans’ on an time and all-encompassing favourite euphemism of Indian policy makers. At the same time, the fatality of violent means has been well understood by their ageing senior hierarchy. Indeed when a tired Th. Muivah reportedly said “Let us have a solution in our lifetime”, much was conveyed. This senior hierarchy; even as they preside over a systemic criminalisation of insurgency, understand that they cannot forever remote-control the insurgency from foreign continents despite handsome doles to the execution level operatives. They also understand that the current ceasefire, however uneasy, is nevertheless a fragile bridge between the Union Government and the NSCN factions. This bridge groups passage to the two sides having a seemingly intractable stance, is being used by the people of Nagaland and is changing their lives. The peace process may seem unimenable – but the side which demolishes the bridge will have to live with its consequences for the decades to come.

But sometimes the lion must roar; just to remind the horse of his fear. After all, the commitment of the people towards peace is to the people of Nagaland and not to the insurgents. The urgent need of the hour is to strengthen the CFGR and its monitoring mechanism to confine the NSCN factions to their designated camps. The delinking of extortion from insurgency is now not an option, but a necessity as this illegitimate extortion is a new conflict in its infancy. The use of force, as an option may be retained. Later, as and when the GOI and the NSCN factions walk the extra mile to converge on a pragmatic solution, one of the bloodiest chapters on insurgency in India may finally come to an end. The closing of this chapter will initiate a domino effect on other Northeastern insurgencies, which may find it difficult to operate and the deep deficit between the two sides are definitely going to cast its negative shadow on the forward movement of the peace process.

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Nelson – A Study in Military Leadership

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Why Nelson?

In the 202 years since his death, every action of the legendary British sailor, Horatio Nelson has been the subject of intense scrutiny by scores of historians, biographers and maritime tacticians, who generally ascribe heroic proportions to his virtues, while occasionally demonizing him for his failings. Nelson remains, not just a Royal Navy icon, but a British national hero, and his name has entered the lexicon of the English language as an adjective: "Nelsonian".

Nelson's victory at Trafalgar in 1805 is celebrated as Trafalgar Night annually on 21st October with solemnity, pomp and circumstance, in every Royal Navy wardroom afloat and ashore. Officers, in full mess kit, having dined off the ship's best silver and crystal, rise to drink a toast to "The Immortal Memory" of Horatio Nelson, and speeches are made in his honour.

A dispassionate study of Nelson's life would reveal that as a man he was ambitious, vain, arrogant and often insubordinate; many failings which would not be tolerated in the armed forces milieu today. It would also show that he was a naval officer who possessed strategic vision, tactical brilliance, patriotic fervour, physical courage, dogged perseverance and a warm human touch; a rare combination that made him a great military leader, and won for his country, a century of maritime supremacy.

The question may well be asked: why do we need to study the life of a British naval hero? Do we not have enough of our own? The answer lies partly, in the failure of Indian historians to document and analyse the life and times of our own military leaders in adequate detail. Moreover, the scope of Royal Navy's operations in that era was huge, and a bold and enterprising naval officer could achieve much for his country. Nelson had acquired a deep understanding of the use of sea power as an instrument of state policy; and no matter how Anglophobic one may be, his exploits are still worthy of study.

This article is an attempt to acquaint the reader briefly with Nelson's early rise in the Royal Navy (RN) and provide glimpses of his important sea battles, which have become naval folklore. He set exceptional standards of courage, initiative and professionalism which are still the touchstone against which the British measure their naval officers. Even in the current Indian environment, which is far removed from 18th Century England, Nelson's actions lend themselves to examination, analysis and perhaps even emulation, because I believe that (with all his shortcomings), he demonstrates many qualities which are the quintessence of military leadership.

Early Days

Born in September 1758 into the relatively modest family of a country rector in the village of Burnham Thorpe in south-east England, Horatio was the third of the Reverend Edmund Nelson's eight children. His mother having passed away when he was nine, young Horatio's upbringing was left to his father, who did his best to give the frail lad a decent grammar school education. In 18th century England (much as in 21st century India) influence in high places was essential for a young man, not only to enter a profession, but also to make reasonable progress in life. The Nelsons did not boast of many high connections, but necessary influence was found in the shape of Horatio's maternal uncle Captain Maurice Suckling, who was commanding a Royal Navy ship, HMS Raisonnable.

Uncle Maurice graciously responded to the Nelson family's appeal for help and found young Horatio a berth in the RN. The 12 year old boy was signed on in the books of the Raisonnable as "Midshipman" on 1st January 1771, rather than "Captain's servant" or "able seaman" which was the more common method of entry. A royal commission could follow the passing of an examination for Lieutenant, to be taken after six years sea service and not before the age of twenty.

Life on board the Raisonnable gave Nelson his first taste of the harsh living and working conditions in the sailing navy of that day. Having slung his hammock in the crowded mess-deck, he helped load the stores with salt beef, biscuits, butter and casks of beer. Within a few days, the butter would turn rancid; the beef would be infested by maggots and the biscuits with an insect called weevil. But this was the crew's diet for months at sea in that era, and disease was rampant due to lack of fresh vegetables.

Then the guns, powder and shot brought out by small boats had to be swung on board by tackles. Regular sail drill required the full ship's company to scamper up the masts in all sorts of weather. This would be followed by fire drill, gun drill, boat drill and weighing of anchor manually by capstan bars. Any slackness or inefficiency was a serious offence and could invite terrible retribution through lashings by a whip called "cat o' nine tails", after which salt water would be thrown on the victim's lacerated back.

At the age of 18 (two years less than stipulated) Nelson was examined by an Admiralty Board for promotion to Lieutenant, and passed with credit. Lieutenant Nelson was appointed to the frigate Lowestoffe and sailed for Jamaica. In 1778, France joined the American rebels in their war against Britain, and there was no dearth of action at sea in the Atlantic or West Indies.

Nelson's first chance to show his mettle came, when Lowestoffe chased and overhauled an American merchantman in heavy seas. It was the First Lieutenant's (second in command of a ship) duty to board the prize and a boat was brought alongside to convey him. The officer appeared to flinch at this hazardous undertaking, and seeing his Captain's exasperation, Nelson quickly jumped in the boat and successfully boarded the captured ship. He was soon promoted First Lieutenant and then given command of a small warship in the rank of Commander.

It was in June 1779, while still in the Caribbean, that Nelson was promoted to the post of Captain at the age of twenty-one. In the RN, this meant that future promotions would be automatic and by seniority in the Navy List. Then (as perhaps now) the perennial topic of conversation in ships' wardrooms was the prospect of promotion and command. There was no fixed age of retirement and vacancies were created only by death of senior officers from disease, ship-wreck or war. In fact, a common after dinner toast used to be: "to war and a sickly season". Therefore, becoming a Captain at the age of Twenty-one, in a Navy where Midshipmen sometimes reached forty, marked Nelson out for higher things. While his uncle's influence had helped to an extent, it was Nelson's zeal, devotion, initiative and competence which had seen him rise so rapidly up the naval ladder.

Spells of peace, though infrequent, were dreaded by RN officers, because they were sent ashore, and put on half pay. Fortunately for Nelson, there was no dearth of action at sea during this period due mainly to the instability generated in Europe by a revolutionary France and the military triumphs of the brilliant young General Bonaparte soon to be crowned Emperor Napoleon.

I will now attempt to illustrate the Nelsonian legend through his exploits in battle, leaving the reader to decide whether some of the attributes displayed by him in action can be counted as "military virtues" or not.

Initiative at the Battle of Cape St Vincent

With General Bonaparte's string of victories in the Italian Peninsula, Britain's situation in the Mediterranean became untenable, and towards the end of 1796, the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Sir John Jervis was ordered to evacuate his forces. Nelson (now a Commodore in command of a squadron) on detached service in his flagship, the 74 gun HMS Captain chanced upon a strong Spanish fleet bound for the West Indies. An opportune fog bank allowed Nelson to make a getaway, and he sped to rendezvous with his C-in-C off Cape St Vincent to warn him of the Spanish force in the vicinity.

At dawn on 14th February 1797, the two adversaries, confronted each other; thirty Spanish men of war in two loose formations, and fifteen British ships in a single column steering for the gap between the two masses of Spanish ships. Once through, the British fleet planned to turn around, and with the wind behind them, split into two divisions to engage the Spanish van and rear.

Nelson's ship the Captain was second from the rear, and had Jervis ordered the column to turn together simultaneously, he would have been near the head of the reversed British column, able to engage the enemy immediately. When the signal flags went up on the mast, it was seen that Jervis had ordered ships to turn in succession (or follow in the wake of ship ahead). This would be a much lengthier process, and Nelson saw that it would allow time for the Spanish divisions to join up. Without hesitation, he ordered his ship to haul out of line, and steer direct for the head of the leading Spanish formation in order to engage them and allow the British time to complete their manoeuvre.

The RN Fighting Instructions of the day were quite clear about not leaving the line of battle without orders, and Nelson knew that his initiative could cost him dearly (Flag Officers had been sentenced by Courts Martial, to death by firing squad for breach of Fighting Instructions). But he pressed on to engage seven of the Spanish ships including the world's biggest warship, the 140 gun Santissima Trinidad. Part of Nelson's confidence grew from the knowledge that his gunners could fire three accurate broadsides every two minutes against the wild and sporadic fire of the Spaniards.

Nevertheless, the Captain took heavy punishment, and being rendered incapable of manoeuvre, Nelson ordered her to ram the 80-gun San Nicolas which had herself become entangled with the 112-gun San Josef. Calling for boarders; Nelson, sword in hand, led the assault which resulted in capture of both the Spanish men of war.

This gallant action resulted in Nelson being knighted and promoted to Rear Admiral.

Boldness Brings Victory at Aboukir

In July 1797, Nelson received a serious injury on his right elbow from a musket ball while participating in an unsuccessful landing in the Spanish island of Tenerife, which led to the amputation of his arm. Earlier, a splinter injury had caused considerable loss of vision in his right eye. Somewhat depressed, he spent a few months at home, before sailing out with his fleet once again in March 1798 flying his flag on the Vanguard of 74 guns.

Since the withdrawal of the British from the Mediterranean the littoral had become a hostile area and the French were taking advantage of their dominance. Reports had been coming in, of a major expeditionary force of troop transports and escorting warships being readied in French ports. It was known that General Bonaparte was in command, but his ultimate destination remained a mystery. It would be Nelson's task to lead a dangerous reconnaissance mission into the Mediterranean. The danger proved to be not just from the French Navy, but also, the elements, when the British force was hit by a hurricane causing severe damage and loss of life in the fleet.

In the next ten weeks or so, Nelson's reconnaissance force, now heavily reinforced by ships of the line, scoured the seas and criss-crossed the Mediterranean many times in search of Bonaparte's expeditionary force. Whenever the sea state permitted, Nelson would call his captains over to the Vanguard for tactical conferences in which the various combinations of possible circumstances during an encounter with the French were discussed threadbare. Thus an enduring bond was created between Nelson and his Captains which ensured that the mental thought processes of the Admiral were understood by his Captains, and vice-versa. Nelson was to famously declare later in this context, "I had the happiness to command a Band of Brothers". The prolonged and agonising search for the elusive French was not just a pedantic chore for Nelson, but also an intellectual challenge. For his lucid understanding of the contemporary geo-strategic scenario enabled him to probe the enemy's mind and try to guess the French grand design. Intelligence was to confirm Nelson's own hunch that Bonaparte's ultimate destination was India, via Egypt.

On 1st August 1798, the lookouts on Nelson's scouts sighted the masts of the French Fleet in Aboukir Bay east of Alexandria. Thirteen ships of the line including the huge 120-gun ship L'Orient flying the flag of Admiral Brueys were at anchor close to the shore.

Nelson took stock of the situation, and with three brief signals, made his intentions known to the fleet. Brueys had little choice; he thought of putting out to sea, but then realised that his fleet had many working parties ashore, and would be short handed. He felt that the massed fire of his ships could handle the British attack, which would come from seawards. With two rows of anchored ships, there was neither enough water, nor room for manoeuvre in Aboukir Bay, and Brueys did not, therefore, order the landward side guns of his ships manned; a fatal oversight.

Close to sunset, Nelson ordered his ships to attack the van and centre of the enemy line before tackling the rear. The British ships swept up the starboard side of the anchored French line, raking them with fire, and then split into two groups; the leading five ships, on their own, rounding the head of the line and then turning in shallow, uncharted waters to engage the enemy from the landward side and the rest, engaging from the seaward. Thus sandwiched between two sets of attackers, the French came under devastating fire. Admiral Brueys and his celebrated Captain Casabianca were both killed.

At 10 o'clock that night, L'Orient blew up in a tremendous explosion, and with it went French hopes of an empire in the east. The British were in command of the Mediterranean and Bonaparte's army lay marooned on a hostile shore. Nelson had been instrumental in changing the course of history.

Turning a Nelson's Eye at the Battle of Copenhagen

In early 1801 Nelson was promoted Vice Admiral and after a few months ashore, joined the Channel Fleet as second in command to Admiral Sir Hyde Parker. Parker had received orders to proceed to Copenhagen and to try and persuade the Danes, either amicably or by force, to withdraw, from a French inspired alliance that they had joined along with Russia, Sweden and Prussia with the intention of breaking the British naval blockade of France. A powerful fleet of fifteen ships was placed at his disposal in order that he could take on any combination of force that the Northern Alliance might field, at sea.

Negotiations with the Danes having failed, it was decided to mount a direct attack on Copenhagen. The city had formidable defences, natural and man-made; a long line of moored ships and floating batteries lay beneath a series of shore batteries and heavy guns of Trekroner fort. The approach channel was narrow and full of shoals, and although the fleet had some merchant navy pilots to navigate the shallows, Nelson decided to conduct his own boat survey, before formulating the battle plan, which his C-in-C was happy to leave to him.

While the situation was somewhat similar to Aboukir Bay, the same tactics could not be repeated because of the powerful shore batteries. Nelson, in consultation with his captains, evolved a plan, relying on superior British gunnery, to concentrate overwhelming fire on the moored Danish ships at night; destroying the enemy piecemeal. Nelson was to lead the assault, while Parker guarded the approaches.

On the morning of 2nd April 1801, the British Fleet sailed into action, but within a short while, four of the ships had run aground. The rest of the attackers anchored by the stern, opposite their Danish adversaries and commenced bombardment. The Danish response was however devastating, and a number of British ships were soon set on fire. To the C-in-C watching from a distance, disaster appeared imminent. Believing that Nelson was in deep trouble, but unwilling to withdraw without orders, Parker told his Flag Captain, "I will make the recall signal for Nelson's sake. If he is in a condition to continue action, he will disregard it, and if he is not, it will be an excuse for retreat."

Nelson's signal Lieutenant saw signal No. 39 flying from Parker's flagship signifying, "Discontinue Action", and reported it to his Admiral. Since Nelson took no notice, the Lieutenant shouted again and was told to watch the Danish ships. The signal Lieutenant's dilemma now was whether to pass the signal to the other ships in company or not. He was told to merely acknowledge it and keep Nelson's signal for "Close Action" flying.

Nelson then said to his Flag Captain, "You know Foley, I have only one eye - I have a right to be blind sometimes" and putting his telescope to his blind eye, exclaimed, "I really do not see any signal!" After a furious exchange of fire lasting many hours, when the British and Danish guns fell silent, it was obvious that the Danes had suffered very serious losses in the Battle of Copenhagen and had to ask for a cease fire. The subsequent negotiations conducted by Nelson resulted in a situation totally favourable to the British in the Baltic and North Atlantic.

Victory and Final Reckoning at Trafalgar

Nelson took over as C-in-C Mediterranean in 1803 just a few weeks before Britain once again declared war on France; putting an end to the year long peace wrought by the Treaty of Amiens. The following year, Spain made common cause with France, and at the behest of Emperor Napoleon declared war on Britain.

The French plans for an invasion of Britain had to be postponed many times, first on account of the close blockade of Channel ports maintained by the RN, and then due to Russia having aligned herself with Britain. A combined Franco-Spanish fleet of 33 ships under Admiral Villeneuve had been lying at anchor in the Port of Cadiz awaiting the invasion, but due to the altered situation had been ordered to the Mediterranean in October 1805. Embarked on board HMS Victory, Nelson had for some time, been awaiting a break-out by Villeneuve, and had accordingly positioned his scouts off Cadiz to provide early warning, while keeping his main force some distance away, off Cape Trafalgar.

On the morning of 20 October 1805, Nelson's frigates saw Villeneuve leading all 33 of his ships out of Cadiz. His destination was not known, and to avoid frightening him back into port, Nelson ordered his fleet to steer a parallel course, keeping well out of sight. At four on the morning of 21st October Nelson turned his fleet towards the enemy, so that by dawn they would be a few miles to windward and in a good attacking position.

Nelson paced his quarterdeck in full uniform with four stars of different Orders pinned on his breast. A suggestion that he should remove them because they could mark him out for enemy marksmen was rebuffed by Nelson. He asked two of his Captains, whom he had called on board, to accompany him to his cabin, where they witnessed his will, which he had just drawn up. Nelson walked around the lower decks of his flagship, chatting with the sailors, and then went down to his cabin, where he knelt on the deck and wrote out a prayer, in which he asked that his country be granted "a great and glorious victory."

When he came up on deck, Nelson asked his signal Lieutenant to make the famous signal to the fleet: "England expects that every man will do his duty". In tactical discussions with his Captains before the battle, Nelson had emphasised the importance of concentrating force on the centre or rear of the enemy's line, so that it broke up his formation, and produced a confused situation. Thereafter, when the smoke of the guns obscured all signals, he advocated that "No captain could go wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy." This, in a nutshell, was the "Nelson touch".

As the Battle commenced, the Victory was one of the first ships to come under heavy fire. Nelson's secretary and his clerk were killed in quick succession, and then the Victory's wheel was smashed by a shot. While cutting across the enemy line, Victory collided and became entangled with the French Redoubtable and fierce hand to hand fighting commenced. Soon after one o'clock, a French marksman's bullet found Nelson, and mortally injured, he was carried down to the sick bay. He had been shot in the spine and paralysed below the waist, and was in great pain.

At four in the afternoon, Captain Hardy of the Victory came down to congratulate the wounded Admiral on "a brilliant victory". Nelson, who had been anticipating a gale, gave his last order to Hardy to anchor the fleet. Shortly thereafter, having suffered for three hours, Lord Nelson died.

It was indeed a brilliant victory. Eighteen ships of the enemy had been destroyed, with 6000 casualties and 20,000 men taken prisoner, including Admiral Villeneuve. The British did not lose a single ship and had just 1700 casualties. The Royal navy reigned supreme on the seas.

Epilogue

Vice Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson's body was placed in a cask of brandy mixed with camphor, for a week till the Victory reached Gibraltar under tow. There, the corpse was transferred to a lead-lined coffin filled with spirits of wine, (after sailors had sampled the brandy which had preserved it) and despatched by a fast schooner to England.

On 9th January 1806, Lord Nelson was accorded a state funeral, and buried in St Paul's Cathedral with every honour that a grateful and sorrowing nation could accord.

While history has, on the whole been kind to Nelson, many biographers have not glossed over his frailties. Pages have been written about his ambitious nature, his thirst for public acclaim, his greed for prize money and his vanity about his own accomplishments. Much scorn has also been poured over his head for his prolonged adulterous affair with Lady Emma Hamilton and neglect of his own wife. Notwithstanding all this, Nelson's legacy lives on, not just in the RN, but in the hearts and minds of his countrymen.

The string of successes that he gained in battle, by his unique combination of leadership, tactical genius, intelligence and aggression gave the nation in general and the RN in particular that unshakable self confidence, and the will to win. This, they demonstrated 177 years after Trafalgar, by sailing a Task Force 8000 miles from home to wrest the Falkland Islands back from Argentina, in 1982.

Admiral Arun Prakash, PVSM, AVSM, VrC, VSM (Retd) was the first Commander-in-Chief of the newly created Unified Andaman and Nicobar Command. He was the Chief of the Naval Staff from 31 July 2004 till his retirement on 31 October 2006. Journal of the United Service Institution of India, Vol. CXXXVII, No. 570, October-December 2007.