

USI Strategic Year Book

2021

United Service Institution of India

Strategic Year Book

2021

Concept and Structure by
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Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	ix
The Year Book 2021 – At a Glance	xi
Section I India’s National Security Overview	1
1. India’s Strategic Security Scan in a Covid Impacted 2021	3
<i>Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd)</i>	
2. Emerging Paradigms of National Security: Threats & Responses	12
<i>Lt Gen (Dr) Prakash Menon, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)</i>	
3. Governance—Responsibility of the Polity and the Public Services	20
<i>Shri NN Vohra (Former Governor J&K)</i>	
Section II Internal Security Issues	
4. Challenges of Policing in COVID Pandemic and Roadmap for the Future	27
<i>Shri Jayanto N. Choudbury, IPS (Retd)</i>	
5. The Naga Conundrum: Way Forward	34
<i>Lt Gen Shokin Chauhan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, VSM (Retd)</i>	
6. The Use of Social Media by Terrorists: Analysis and Response	42
<i>Shri Ashok Prasad, IPS (Retd)</i>	
Section III External Security: India’s Strategic Neighbourhood	
7. The Emerging Geopolitics of Afghanistan: Implication for India-Afghanistan Relations	51
<i>Lt Gen GS Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) & Mr Gaurav Dixit</i>	

8. Wither Sub-Regionalism in South Asia? BBIN & BIMSTEC 59

Prof. SD Muni

9. Enhancing India-Nepal Relations: De Novo Approach towards Win-Win Paradigm 68

Dr. Pramod Jaiswal

Section IV External Security: Pakistan–China Strategic Challenges

10. Pakistan’s Dangerous Game Plan in Gilgit-Baltistan 77

Brig Nalin Kumar Bhatia (Retd)

11. People’s Liberation Army–Western Theatre Command: Role, Structure and Concept of Employment 83

Maj Gen (Dr) GG Dwivedi, SM, VSM & Bar (Retd)

12. China’s Nuclear Modernisation Trends: Implications for India 90

Dr. Roshan Khanijo

Section V External Security: Global Issues

13. Turkey’s Three Challenges: Islamism, Militarism and Erdogan 99

Brig Rumel Dahiya, VSM (Retd)

14. Re-Imagining India’s “Look West” Policy: West Asia in Crisis Offers Scope for New Initiatives 109

Amb Talmiz Ahmad, IFS (Retd)

15. Navigating the Russia-China Entente: A Perspective from India 117

Amb Ajai Malhotra, IFS (Retd)

16. Future of U.S.-India Relations 123

Amb Arun Kumar Singh

Section VI National Security Capacity Building

17. Infrastructure Development along Northern Borders: Planning & Prioritisation 131

Maj Gen Pradeep Kumar Mangal, VSM (Retd)

18.	Indian Air Force (IAF): Aerospace Capability Building <i>Air Marshal Anil Khosla, PVSM, AVSM, VM (Retd)</i>	140
19.	India's Nuclear Force Structure in China-Pakistan Strategic Calculus <i>Dr. Rajiv Nayan, Senior Research Associate, IDSA</i>	147
20.	Ideating India's Response to the PLA Strategic Support Force <i>Lt Gen (Dr) RS Panwar, AVSM, SM, VSM, (Retd)</i>	153
21.	Integrating Military Logistics for Future Security Challenges <i>Lt Gen Balbir Singh Sandhu, AVSM, VSM (Retd)</i>	165
22.	The Aircraft Carrier vs Submarine debate in the Modernisation of the Indian Navy <i>Rear Admiral DM Sudan, AVSM, NM (Retd)</i>	172
23.	India's Theatre Commands: the Drivers, the Challenges and the Way Ahead <i>Maj Gen Rajiv Narayanan, AVSM, VSM (Retd)</i>	180
24.	Air Defence Command – A National Level Decision <i>Lt Gen (Dr) VK Saxena, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)</i>	187
25.	Prognosis of the Chinese Economy: Challenges & Roadmap for India's Economic Response <i>Gaurie Dnivedi</i>	194

Foreword

The United Service Institution (USI) of India published its first Strategic Year Book in 2016, based on the overarching theme of comprehensive national security, with contributions from noted strategic experts. Continuing the tradition of insightful analyses, the USI Yearbook 2021 will provide readers a balanced and researched view of global strategic issues, India's evolving strategic interests, geopolitical developments in the strategic neighbourhood, measures for developing comprehensive national power and defence capability development.

The year 2020 has been an exceptional one on account of the Covid-19 pandemic. India, like the rest of the world, was deeply affected by its impact not only on the lives and wellbeing of its people, but much more on account of the negative impact on its economy. The lockdown from 24 March 2020 ostensibly kept the fatalities down in India in comparison to many other countries and was a cause of cheer, but by June 2020 a new situation arose concurrent to the easing of the lockdown restrictions. The clash with the Chinese at Galwan on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), in Ladakh, resulted in maximum casualties since 1967. It also vitiated India-China relations and brought India and China perilously close to war. The mobilisation of forces to Ladakh was no less than that for the Kargil war, rather it was more, and brought about a significant reorganisation, especially in the army. It also accelerated the deployment of the newly contracted Rafale jets as both countries postured for war and then were engaged in interminable talks at the military level to disengage. These still remain on, with a number of issues yet to be resolved.

The past year has also been a defining one for strategic affairs in the world. The US-Taliban peace deal and Brexit were divisive in many respects. On the other hand, the growing coalescing of the QUAD was obviously affected by the Ladakh tension and China's continuing belligerence in the South China Sea; one could say that it was affected positively. The US elections in November brought an end to uncertainty of the Trump Presidency and the shift towards 'America First' which had drawn the U.S. away from multilateralism. The Biden Presidency may change that though this is unlikely to happen in the immediate future. That uncertainty led to growing strategic footprints of Russia and even a middle power such as Turkey. In J&K, the revocation of Article 370 and reorganisation of J&K in 2019 continue to remain active issues. Slowly the uproar in Pakistan appears to be turning to a grudging acceptance of ground realities. The Kashmir insurgency continues to simmer but the boil is receding. Restoration of 4G broadband services is a pointed indicator of that. The ambush in the Bijapur district of Chattisgarh — after a hiatus — has again focused attention on Left Wing Extremism. It highlights that India still faces a multitude of vexed internal security challenges. Keeping this environment in mind, India should be prepared for contingencies both, within and outside the country. The consolidation and maturing of the institution of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) has led to the impending establishment of joint commands, with the Air Defence Command likely to be the first off, the block.

As in every year, the distinguished and learned writers of the articles in this issue of the USI Year Book will be read widely and generate informed debates leading to cross-fertilisation of varied perspectives. This recording of strategic events over the past year, regionally and globally, will continue to serve as a useful reference work for practitioners and students of international relations and strategic affairs.

Jai Hind.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke, likely belonging to Maj Gen BK Sharma.

New Delhi
25 April 2021

Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM** (Retd)
Director, USI

The Year Book 2021 – At a Glance

Thomas L. Friedman in his classic analyses of globalisation had stated that “the world is flat”. This was in the context of commercial interaction between States. To this one can add that the world is also much more dynamic than before: especially in the context of strategic interaction between States. Strategic affairs in the world have always changed through time. From hunter-gatherers fighting for their space to the clash of civilisations. What has changed profoundly is only the pace of change. Means of communication and transport, accelerated by technology, has meant that strategic affairs move and change fast, making it a VUCA world. In line with this, all those concerned with strategic affairs also must think and move fast to remain ahead of the opponent’s strategic moves or OODA loop. Being aware of strategic issues hence remains all important.

Keeping this aim in mind, this issue of the USI Strategic Year Book 2021 follows its format of placing contemporary strategic issues under sections. This year there are six sections.

The first section is **India’s National Security Overview**. Under this the lead article is in line with the dominant global threat of the year; the Covid-19 pandemic. This article on *India’s Strategic Security Scan in a Covid Impacted 2021*, by the Director USI Maj Gen BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd) provides a basis for the reader to join the dots between the other articles and sections that follow. Another article in the first section, which provides a different perspective is, *Emerging Paradigms of National Security: Threats & Responses* by Lt Gen (Dr) Prakash Menon, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd). The last article on *Governance — Responsibility of the Polity and the Public Services* is drawn from the talk by Shri NN Vohra (Former Governor J&K) delivered online as a ‘Centenary Year Sir Syed Memorial Lecture-2020’ at the Aligarh Muslim University.

The next section is **Internal Security Issues**. In this there are three articles addressing internal security starting with *Challenges of Policing in COVID Pandemic and Roadmap for the Future* by Shri Jayanto N. Chowdhury, IPS (Retd) followed by *The Naga Conundrum: Way Forward* Lt Gen Shokin Chauhan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, VSM (Retd) and lastly *The Use of Social Media by Terrorists: Analysis and Response* by Shri Ashok Prasad, IPS (Retd) an expert on the subject and adviser on cyber and social media in the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The third section is **External Security: India’s Strategic Neighbourhood**. In this section the restricted options for India in Afghanistan post the US withdrawal are analysed in *The Emerging Geopolitics of Afghanistan: Implication for India-Afghanistan Relations* by Lt Gen Ghanshyam Katoch & Mr Gaurav Dixit from the USI of India. While dynamic changes and decisions in US foreign policy post the election of President Joe Biden have an affect on the future course of events, however, the essence of the policy remains the same, exit from Afghanistan. *The Future of BBIN & BIMSTEC Initiatives* are viewed in detail by Prof SD Muni who is a Former Ambassador and Special Envoy and presently Professor Emeritus, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. The third article is by Dr Pramod Jaiswal from the Nepal Institute of International Cooperation and Engagement, he writes about the friction in the India- Nepal relations and how they can be resolved and handled in his article *Enhancing India-Nepal Relations: De Novo Approach towards Win-Win Paradigm*.

This is followed by the section dealing with issues of **External Security: Pakistan –China Strategic Challenges**. Here Brig Nalin Kumar Bhatia (Retd) an intelligence analyst with hands on experience looks at *Pakistan’s Game Plan in*

Gilgit Baltistan. The Role, Structure & Concept of Employment of PLA Western Theatre Command for an Indian Contingency is analysed by the former Defence Attache and China expert Maj Gen (Dr) GG Dwivedi, SM, VSM & Bar (Retd). This has become clearer and of greater relevance post the standoff in Ladakh. The issue of *Modernisation of China's Rocket Force: Implication for India* is researched by Assistant Director Research at the USI Dr. Roshan Khanijo. She lifts the veil off many existing ambiguities.

The next section is **External Security: Global Issues**. The first article is by Brig Rumel Dahiya, VSM (Retd) former Indian Defence Attache at Ankara and former Deputy Director General at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses. He writes about *Turkey's Three Challenges: Islamism, Militarism and Erdogan*, a very current subject about a country which is a regional power creating global ripples. *Re-Imagining India's "Look West" Policy: West Asia in Crisis Offers Scope for New Initiatives* by Shri Talmiz Ahmad, IFS (Retd) and *Russia-China Entente: Implications for India* by Shri Ajai Malhotra, IFS (Retd) and *Future of US-India Relations* by Shri Arun Kumar Singh, IFS (Retd) provide a viewpoint from foreign policy specialists.

The sixth and final section which rightly has the bulk of the articles in this issue is **National Security Capacity Building**. Under this section are the head are articles on *Infrastructure Development for the Northern Borders: Planning & Prioritisation* by Maj Gen Pradeep Kumar Mangal, VSM (Retd), an Engineer officer. Air Marshal Anil Khosla, PVSM, AVSM, VM (Retd) a former Vice Chief of Air Staff and AOC-in-C writes about *Indian Air Force (IAF): Aerospace Capability Building*. The all-important nuclear force structure is covered in *India's Nuclear Force Structure in China-Pakistan Strategic Calculus* Dr Rajiv Nayan, Senior Research Associate, IDSA. The very knowledgeable Lt Gen (Dr) RS Panwar, AVSM, SM, VSM, (Retd), goes into the critical issue of *Ideating India's Response To the PLA Strategic Support Force*. The logistics specialist Lt Gen Balbir Singh Sandhu, AVSM, VSM (Retd) with his vast experience in the field writes on *Integrating Military Logistics for Future Security Challenges*. The debate over aircraft carriers or submarines for the Indian Navy appears to have settled; or has it? What India requires depends on what we want to do and be in the Indian Ocean so the article *The Aircraft Carrier vs Submarine debate in the Modernisation of the Indian Navy* by Rear Admiral DM Sudan, AVSM, VSM (Retd) is a must read. The former head of the USI's Centre of Strategic Studies and Simulation Maj Gen Rajiv Narayanan, AVSM, VSM (Retd), covers the issue of *India's Theatre Commands: The Drivers, the Challenges and the Way Ahead*. The Air Defence Command, the first of the new joint commands is just around the corner as per statements. A former Director-General Air Defence Lt Gen (Dr) VK Saxena PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) writes on *Air Defence Command – A National Level Decision* to give us the big picture. Finally, we round off with *Prognosis Of the Chinese Economy: Challenges & Roadmap for India's Economic Response* by the journalist and economic affairs analyst Ms Gaurie Dwivedi.

Wish our readers an informative and insightful reading.

Lt General Ghanshyam Singh Katoch PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)

Group Captain Sharad Tewari, VM (Retd)

Dr Roshan Khanijo

Section I

India's National Security Overview

India's Strategic Security Scan in a Covid Impacted 2021

Major General BK Sharma, AVSM, SM & Bar (Retd)[@]

Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic should have logically evinced a collaborative international response from the comity of nations. Quite to the contrary, the pandemic has exacerbated the 'Cold War' between the USA and China. The evolving geopolitical milieu has impacted India's transition from a balancing power to a leading power. Covid-19 is posing a multitude of inextricably linked internal and external security challenges. Pakistan China strategic nexus has not only deepened but also acquired a real dimension of serious collusive hybrid military threat, fused with other forms of Grey Zone conflicts. Evolving geopolitical developments in our strategic neighbourhood and beyond are impacting India's strategic security interests, posing challenges and strategic dilemmas, and yet, offering a plethora of opportunities to us. A holistic horizon scan, therefore, is necessary to obtain a nuanced strategic perspective and apropos re-align and recalibrate India's response for the furtherance of national interests.

Introduction

The Black Swan event of the Covid-19 pandemic has emerged as a strategic shock that has disrupted every dimension of geopolitics, geo-economics, and strategic security. More than three million people have perished¹, globalisation is in a pause, economy is on a tailspin, global supply chains stand disrupted, and the countries are becoming more insular. This wild card event of humongous magnitude should have logically evinced a collaborative international response from the comity of nations. Quite to the contrary, the pandemic has exacerbated the 'Cold War' between the two main protagonists (USA and China); embroiled in a vitriolic contestation over trade, technology, domination of strategic locations, economic sanctions, diplomatic offensive, military muscle-flexing and in creation of alternate economic order and security alliance system. The 'Great Power' rivalry has put the 'Middle-level Powers' on the horns of dilemma and they are rebalancing their economic and security interest, intertwined with the two behemoths. As far other countries such as ASEAN and other small regional countries are concerned, they are continually hedging, balancing, and binding to protect their respective national interests. Broadly, we see at one end of the geopolitical spectrum the evolution of the contours of regional geopolitical frameworks such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) and its alignment with the Euro-Atlantic alliance and U.S.-China alignment with potential to morph into an expanded alignment with Eurasian states, at the other.

The evolving geopolitical milieu has impacted India's transition from a balancing power to a leading power. India is not only facing a vexed strategic security scenario wherein its internal security challenges are inextricably linked with collusive hybrid threats from China and Pakistan, besides other forms of Grey Zone conflicts also using multi-domain warfare. Internally, India is beset with a restive Kashmir and Northeast, a simmering Left Wing Extremism (LWE) and

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host of other non-traditional security threats. In India's strategic neighbourhood, China has embarked upon strategic forays to induce gravitational pull on the smaller nations to fall under its tutelage. In Eurasia, there is a congruence of strategic interests between Russia, China, Turkey, Iran and, to an extent, Pakistan. These developments marginalise India's legitimate aspirations in Central Asia. In the Indo Pacific, the great power rivalry has led to QUAD gaining traction. Consequently, while it has enhanced India's strategic salience but on the flip side, it puts a premium on India's strategic relations with Russia and China, who are opposed to QUAD. India is the only country in the grouping that is not a member of U.S.-East Asia Security Alliance, NATO or 'Five Eyes'² grouping. New Delhi also remains conscious of its much valued strategic autonomy in calibrating its Indo-Pacific outreach. India, by virtue of having a contested border with China, remains vulnerable to China's pushback against the QUAD. In the light of the evolving geopolitical scenario, it is incumbent to undertake a strategic security scan with a view to identify challenges and opportunities, make informed policy choices and adopt a strategic direction that can best serve India's strategic security interests.

Evaluating National Security Interests and Strategic Guidance

At the heart of India's national security interest lies the safety and the well-being of its citizens. It is imperative for India to embark upon comprehensive national development that is predicated on a peaceful and conducive internal and external security environment. India's national security has to be based on the pillars of development, deterrence, diplomacy and propagation of a credible national narrative. Transformation of India into a smart and sharp power that optimally combines hard power, soft power, dispersed power and coordinated power is a *sine qua non* for a buoyant and aspirational India. India's strategic direction towards these lofty goals is encapsulated in the Prime Minister's visionary epithets: *sabka sath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas*³, NARA (National Ambition and Regional Aspiration) and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region), the last being synonymous with the goal of a free, open, resilient and inclusive Indo-Pacific Region. India remains averse to confrontationist zero-sum geopolitics, creation of blocs or hegemonic order, use of force to change the status quo, violation of international law or sanctity of international institutions. It also strongly advocates reforms in the United Nations (UN) and other international institutions. During the recently concluded 'Raisina Dialogue', our Prime Minister, during his keynote address, advocated India's role as a responsible global stakeholder and trustee of the future generations.⁴ The Indian leadership has taken the centre-stage on many issues, be it the climate change, WHO, forging an international solar alliance or taking a lead in supplying Covid vaccines to needy countries. India is much sought-after for its soft power appeal and cultural heritage. It was no surprise that India's proposal for an International Yoga Day to be celebrated every year on 21 Jun was adopted by the UN. India's growing international stature and influence notwithstanding, the country persistently faces many endogenic, exogenic and asymmetric environmental challenges lurking in which are a multitude of strategic opportunities. These are elucidated in the succeeding paragraphs.

India's growing international stature and influence notwithstanding, the country persistently faces many endogenic, exogenic and asymmetric environmental challenges lurking in which are a multitude of strategic opportunities.

Endogenic Strategic Environment

Covid Pandemic. The ever-increasing hike in Covid-19 cases is posing a major stress on economic growth, employment and health in India. Economic contraction has significantly dented our ambition to become a \$ five trillion economy by 2025. The worst affected are industrial growth, hospitality, agriculture, and the services sector — which are the mainstay of employment for a huge youth bulge. If unaddressed, India will face a major youth unrest that could lead to serious law and order problems and civil society unrest. On the positive side, strong international urge to diversify China dominated manufacturing hubs, and supply chains, provides India opportunities for attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and to emerge as an alternate centre of global growth and trading system. While protecting India's huge population against the Covid pandemic is a daunting task, India being the largest vaccine manufacturer places her

in a favourable position as a net vaccine provider to rest of the world. India is already supplying vaccines to more than 100 countries and the world accords more reliability to the Indian vaccine vis-à-vis that of China. As part of QUAD global vaccine initiative, India is well - poised to play a central role in checkmating China's vaccine diplomacy.

Societal Cohesiveness. *Chanakya's* sagaciously postulated four dangers to national security, viz., one of external origin and external abetment, of external origin and internal abetment, of internal origin and external abetment and last, and most important, of internal origin and internal abetment, hold universally true for the present-day Indian state. Therefore, India's internal security environment is closely intertwined with external security threats. India is well regarded for its secular and pluralistic character, for its unity in diversity, and for its benign soft power appeal. However, due to a variety of reasons, some strains are appearing in our national fabric and our societal fault lines are showing more cracks. The trend of civil society movements, farmer's agitation, and the like, sap our national energy and distract an aspirational India from investment in comprehensive national development and enhancing its international image. These challenges, together with vitiated political culture, preclude national consensus on the core national security issues. In a hyperactive social media climate, simmering contestation on the emotive issues such as Citizens Amendment Act and National Register for Citizens get unduly politicised, cause societal dissonance, and reverberate beyond India's border, thus, complicating pursuance of foreign policy, particularly with reference to religious sensitivities and human rights record. India's media handling, strategic communication and narrative propagation need review and refinement.

Calamities. India is highly susceptible to natural calamities such as earthquakes, tsunamis, cyclones, climate change, water stress, pollution, pandemics, global warming etc. High population density, fragile infrastructure, inadequate capacity in the health sector makes the country highly susceptible to loss of human lives and damage to infrastructure. On the positive side, India has gained appreciable capacity to predict hurricanes and its National Disaster management response has significantly improved. Therefore, India can be a net security provider to its neighbours in dealing with non-traditional security threats.

Cyber warfare is being effectively used by our adversaries for espionage, subversion, sabotage, and crimes. Many surveys indicate that China has been hacking sensitive websites, phishing our databank, and targeting critical infrastructure.

Cyber Security. In the arena of Grey Zone conflict, non-contact warfare, cyber-attacks, become weapons of choice. Cyber warfare is being effectively used by our adversaries for espionage, subversion, sabotage, and crimes. Many surveys indicate that China has been hacking sensitive websites, phishing our databank, and targeting critical infrastructure such as stock exchanges, medical research hubs, and power grids. India has also seen Pakistan and its proxies effectively using information and cyber space for building up a cyber-terrorism eco-system and periodically unleash social engineering attacks. India needs to create a robust cyber warfare capacity to not only ensure information assurance, information dominance, and protection of critical infrastructure but also audit and certify imported cyber software, hardware, and digital applications. At the same time, India's exponential cyber skills need to be harnessed to develop strong cyber offensive capabilities in the domain of non-contact warfare.

Left Wing Extremism. The recurring incidents of sensational ambushes by the Maoists in India's tribal heartland are indicative of the Maoist resilience to recoup and strike. The crux of defeating LWE lies in reclaiming the Dandakarnya⁵ Region that spans five states, from the Maoist stranglehold. It demands a sustained operational campaign with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the lead in planning and execution of a 'National Action Plan' that entails comprehensive strategy, intra and interstate/agency coordination, improvement in Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), leadership targeting, superior counter terrorism training and use of modern technology. If need be, as part of the surge capacity, the assistance from the Indian Air Force and Indian Army should be sought in terms of advice, training, and technical assistance in setting up a robust security and logistics grid. Concurrent with these kinetic efforts, it is paramount to undertake credible non-kinetic measures to win the hearts and mind of tribal population who are facing

a sense of relative deprivation. A sustainable peace in the tribal areas is paramount to harness the rich mineral potential of the region and plough the dividends back in for making the tribal population stakeholders in development process.

Kashmir Conundrum. The security scenario in Kashmir, post abrogation of Article 370 remains a cause of concern. While the terrorist ecosystem has been considerably disrupted, issues of radicalisation, alienation and residual terrorism persist — albeit on a diminishing scale. Pakistan, in the meanwhile, is finding new ways and means to keep the terrorism pot on the boil in the Kashmir Valley. It is in the process of exploring new routes of infiltration south of Pirpanjal, particularly in the International Border (IB) sector, and across the porous borders of Nepal and Bangladesh. It is using tunnels and quadcopters to supply weapons to the beleaguered terrorists operating in the hinterland. It is complicit in naming a new umbrella organisation named ‘The Resistance Front’ that combines terrorist organisations such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Hizbul Mujahideen, Al-Badr under a common non-religious name with a strategy to unleash terror attacks against soft targets⁶. Turkey has emerged as the new epicentre of anti-India propaganda, ISI backed Kashmiri secessionist intellectuals are at work to depict India as an oppressing occupier and a gross violator of human rights. These encumbrances notwithstanding, the people by and large have reconciled to the new reality and have responded to political rebooting by actively participating in the District Development Council elections. It is certain that with implementation of ‘Naya (New) Jammu & Kashmir’ package of Rs 80,000 crore, good governance, fast-paced development, crackdown on corruption, job creation, engagement with youth, and along with this — a better atmosphere — will get created for ushering peace in the restive region. Concurrently, work must assiduously continue to complete delimitation, encourage new nationalistic and aspirational young leadership while creating safeguards to protect genuine fears about demographic inversion and loss of land to outsiders. The hope that the statehood will be restored, and assembly elections held, must be strengthened by undertaking tangible and time-bound steps in that direction. The Kashmir imbroglio should be addressed from the perspective of strategic security imperatives and not from the prism of political one-upmanship.

It is certain that with implementation of ‘Naya (New) Jammu & Kashmir’ package of Rs 80,000 crore, good governance, fast-paced development, crackdown on corruption, job creation, engagement with youth, and along with this — a better atmosphere — will get created for ushering peace in the restive region.

Pacify Northeast. The Northeast is India’s gateway to Southeast Asia and a springboard of the ‘Act East’ policy. Therefore, security and development of this region must be coterminous. The region continues to face simmering ethno-regional conflicts such as ethnic strife in Manipur, Nagaland issue, other forms of low intensity conflict and international crime. Likewise, there is a need to develop multimodal connectivity by interlinking states and developing transit corridors across to Bangladesh and Myanmar as also to our northern borders. The ethno-regional fault lines are highly prone to the abetment of insurgency and terrorism by China, thus, posing a serious challenge to our national security. More attention needs to be accorded to the security of Siliguri corridor and effective defence and security of porous borders that region shares with five neighbouring countries. There is a need to create a regional national security framework and structure with a mandate to plan, coordinate and monitor time-bound implementation of security and developmental projects.

Pakistan-China Strategic Nexus

The most formidable challenge to India’s national security comes from collusive hybrid threats from China and Pakistan. Post-abrogation of Article 370 and with the launch of China’s China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the strategic nexus between the two adversaries has further deepened. China’s increased propensity to make a military push towards the 1960 claim line in the Eastern Ladakh and altering the status quo at the border has larger implications on the strategic security of India. The possibility of a military scenario, wherein, China and Pakistan launch a coordinated military offensive in the Eastern and Northern Ladakh distinctly exists. In a similar manner, they can cooperate in the Arabian Sea. Limited dis-engagement and symbolic de-escalation at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and a temporary ceasefire

on the Line of Control (LoC) notwithstanding, the contentious issues remain very much alive. China is dragging its feet to disengage from Gogra, Hot Spring and Depsang plateau. Likewise, after making certain conciliatory overtures, the Pakistan Establishment has returned to the rhetoric of restoration of Article 370 as a pre-condition for dialogue with India. In the meanwhile, Pakistan-China strategic nexus is also manifest in the geopolitics at the U.N., Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. It is, therefore, imperative for India to take a long-term view of this nexus and build its capacity to deter and balance it. Admirably, India has shown strong national resolve to safeguard its territorial integrity as was seen from India's rapid response and adoption of a forward military posture to not only contest China's ingress but also undertake quid pro quo operations into the Chinese Territory. Likewise, India has drawn the new red lines vis-à-vis Pakistan and has shown firm determination to undertake punitive lethal strikes in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Pakistan's hinterland.

India's Immediate Neighbourhood

Barring Bhutan, all our neighbouring countries are signatories of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Maritime Silk Route (MSR). China is developing China Myanmar Economic Corridor, China Pakistan Economic Corridor and China Nepal Economic Corridor. Besides them, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Maldives have joined the MSR. In the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), China is developing many critical infrastructure projects that have the potential for military use. With its main military base at Djibouti, these projects have the potential, when completed, to significantly enhance China's maritime capabilities in the IOR and alter the strategic balance in its favour at the cost of India. The military takeover in Myanmar that is being tacitly supported by Beijing has created a dilemma for India to balance its realpolitik with a principled stand on the virtues of democracy. Another security challenge for India is how to deal with the Karen Army in Myanmar that is determined to impede the progress of Kaladan project and its further extension into the trilateral highway; the *sine qua non* for the successful implementation of India's Act East Policy. China is determined to undermine the status of Bhutan and Nepal as India's strategic buffers and drive a wedge in the Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Sri Lanka relations. New Delhi must show urgency to implement its 'Neighbourhood First Policy' in letter and spirit by invigorating initiatives such as Act East Policy, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN), Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Trilateral Maritime Security Initiative with Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar and expansion of platforms such as Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). We need an effective strategy to balance China's strategic investments in Nepal and Sri Lanka and insulate Maldives and other IOR littorals from China's charm offensive. India must leverage its strategic geography, economic heft, cultural appeal, and people to people contacts to assume a leadership role in the IOR and rest of South Asia. With a sound strategy and its speedy implementation, India can consolidate its position as a pre-eminent power that is well-poised to become an anchor of regional economy, harnesser of blue economy, a net security provider and a regional soft power hub. Development of Island territories, entering into logistics support agreements with U.S., Japan, Indonesia, France and even Russia, together with the conduct of bilateral and multilateral military exercises will consolidate India's maritime posture and restore the maritime balance in India's favour.

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Eurasia

The geopolitical developments in Eurasia do not augur well for India's 'Connect Central Asia' policy, engagement with Russia and strategic sustenance in Afghanistan. China has consolidated its influence in the economic space, whereas Russia holds sway in the security arena. India's geographical connectivity to Central Asia has been impacted due to fall out of US sanctions on Iran. Non-operationalisation of International North South Corridor and Chahbahar-Zaranj-

Delaram Axis is impeding India's outreach to the region. Strategic alignment between China-Russia-Iran-Turkey and Pakistan has further compounded India's Eurasian challenge. More worrisome for India would be a Post 11 September 2021 scenario — after the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan. There is a strong possibility of Pakistan-China-Taliban nexus emerging in Afghanistan. Such a turn of events will impact India's diplomatic presence and ability to fulfil various projects being undertaken as part of India's peace building endeavour in Afghanistan under the rubric of an Afghan owned, Afghan led and Afghan controlled peace process. In post U.S. and NATO troop withdrawal scenario, the Taliban supported by Pakistan and China is likely to acquire a dominant position in a power sharing arrangement. The proposals such as extension of CPEC to Afghanistan and creation of a condominium of Pakistan and China for capacity building will be pushed forward to marginalise India's role and influence in a Taliban controlled Afghanistan. Our missions and projects will be subjected to heightened security risks. However, the silver lining for India is its popularity amongst the masses, cutting across the ethno-regional divide. A vast majority of Afghanistan leadership — leaving aside Pakistan proxy of Haqqani network — may welcome India's continued participation and assistance in building a new and prosperous Afghanistan. India must not dither to assist Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in their fight against Taliban. Efforts to reach out to moderate elements in Taliban and leaders of erstwhile Northern alliance must continue. Diplomatic engagement with Russia, Iran and Central Asian states must continue to balance Pakistan-China-Taliban strategic nexus.

West Asia

India's strategic interests in West Asia devolve around energy security; India imports about 2/3rd of its energy requirements from the West Asian countries. Further, security of eight million diaspora⁷ and billions of dollars of remittances sent home by the Indian workers. Also, India must balance its interests between Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran and checkmate Pakistan's nefarious agenda at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Recently, India's relation with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries has significantly improved. Nonetheless, a new Islamic bloc that comprises Pakistan, Turkey and Malaysia needs deft diplomatic handling. India also needs to take extra measures to balance growing influence of China in the region. India must be extra vigilant on the import of Wahabi ideology and Daesh radicalised Indian youth.

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Indo-Pacific

The Indo-Pacific is the centre of gravity of global power shift. At the heart of strategic brinkmanship in the region lies contestation between an assertive China and the US over the trade, technology, domination of locations, and military muscle flexing. China aspires to create a China-centric Asia operating on a twin strategy of economic allurements and military coercion. China's BRI and creation of an alternate China led economic order on one hand and its growing military influence manifested its 'Two Ocean Strategy' or 'Anti-Axis Anti-Denial (A2AD)' strategy seeks to create a favourable strategic balance vis-à-vis the US domination. The region is saddled with several flash points such as Taiwan, nuclear North Korea, China's Salami Slicing strategy in the South China Sea and East China Sea. The ensuing arms race, dangerous military manoeuvres by the contestants in an environment of deep strategic mistrust and absence of conflict prevention and resolution mechanism make the risk of conflict escalation real. During the Corona pandemic period, China has demonstrated propensity to show belligerence and force to alter the status quo in its favour. This has led to a group of democratic countries to bind together to balance China. There is a near congruent Indo-Pacific vision of QUAD countries — UK, France, and Germany — all vouching for a free, open, resilient and inclusive Indo-Pacific Region. Post the March 2021 QUAD summit, a geopolitical framework has come into being that seeks close cooperation to mitigate Covid challenge, address climate change, cooperation in technology, infrastructure development, supply chain management and comprehensive maritime security. Though not stated explicitly, the underlining motivation for

the QUAD to become active is to balance China. Creation of QUAD has irked both China and Russia; the block being seen as an *avatar* of Asian NATO, purportedly created to contain China and harm Russia's strategic interests. Both these countries perceive India as a lynchpin in the Indo-Pacific strategy with a potential to swing balance of power. Therefore, India's QUAD ambition has certain attendant challenges. India needs the US waiver on 'Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)' to acquire S-400 AD system from Russia. Moscow, on the other hand, plays the Pakistan and China card to dissuade India from wholeheartedly bandwagoning with the US. India is not part of US led security alliance — as are Japan and Australia. Moreover, India is susceptible to China's military adventures at the LAC. Therefore, India must do an exceptionally fine balancing act to steer its strategic interests in a complicated milieu. India, however, enjoys excellent relations with not only remainder QUAD countries, but with the European democracies, ASEAN, and other middle level powers. India's MALABAR series of exercises and its bilateral military exercises enhance India's salience as a credible maritime power in any new geopolitical construct that could fashion a non-hegemonic and multipolar international order. India, therefore, must work assiduously to vector the concert of middle level power that is so very essential for a polycentric Asian order.

Defence and Security

India's strategic security environment is characterised by Grey Zone conflicts and a hybrid two front war scenario. Our adversaries have developed niche capabilities to prosecute new generation warfare with a high level of sophistication. Pakistan, since its inception, has used irregular warfare and cross-border terrorism as effective tools to bleed and destabilise India. China, on the other hand, under the façade of maintaining harmonious relations with India, has left no stone unturned to not only checkmate India strategically but also resorted to military coercion at the LAC. Beijing is assiduously building Pakistan's deterrence and war fighting capabilities on land, air, sea, nuclear, outer space, cyber space, and information space. China's military reforms, particularly the restructuring of the Central Military Commission, operationalisation of theatre and functional commands, application of disruptive technology in war fighting and refinement of military doctrine and war zone campaign concepts are noteworthy. China's Rocket Force and Strategic Support Force provide it considerable military edge in the non-contact kinetic and non-kinetic warfare vis-à-vis India. Likewise, China's Public Works Department enables the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to undertake sustained influence operations. China's economic heft and defence spending; about 5 times that of India, and its investments in stealth technology, AI, autonomous vehicles, machine learning, cloud computing, robotics, hyper velocity gliding projectiles, UAVs/drones etc. gives the PLA a tremendous competitive advantage to prosecute multi-domain warfare against India. The military-centric decision-making and authoritarian rules enables both adversaries to undertake pre-planned and coordinated actions to perpetuate India's national security dilemmas.

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Indian Armed Forces as an instrument of last resort have effectively protected India's sovereignty and territorial integrity against asymmetric and conventional threats. However, low allocation of defence budget, high military arsenal import dependency, sub-optimal investment in R&D, relatively inert Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), low performing Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and Ordinance Factory Boards, inadequate civil-military cooperation and perfunctory jointness are some of the issues that have constrained India to achieve a favourable military balance to deter and defeat aggression from its adversaries. With the appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), creation of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and the *Aatmanirbhar*⁸ initiative in the defence sector, it is hoped that some of the lacunae in our national defence and security management will get addressed.-

Conclusion

In conclusion, one can be optimistic that Post Covid our Higher Defence Organisation (HDO), under an evolved and refined DMA, will be able to give more considered strategic direction to national security to combat the new form of security threats to the country. Multi-domain warfare demands discarding of mental maps and attitudinal change to brace India and its armed forces for new generation future warfare of the 21st century. The HDO must focus attention on the urgent need to prepare a National Security Strategy, Joint Military Strategy, Multi-Domain Warfare Doctrine, inject better synergy in the National Security Architecture and review and refine structures such as the Cabinet Committee of Security (CCS), National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), Strategic Planning Group, Nuclear Command Authority, Defence Planning Committee and the Defence Acquisition Council. Likewise, intra / inter-ministry coordination, jointmanship within the Services, cross-agency interfacing, intelligence management system, and the border management will need constant review and refinement.

Militarily, a lot more needs to be done to bridge the combat power asymmetry between India and its adversaries, particularly in the domain of disruptive technologies and force multiplication platforms. These will be key drivers in the revolution in military affairs (RMA). India can ill-afford to ignore this domain and must shun our inertia and fast-track capacity building in this critical area. Our approach to military modernisation, force structuring and development merits de-novo look to overcome of the trap of preparing for past wars. Force optimisation and pivoting to our northern borders while maintaining a balanced military posture vis-à-vis Pakistan is essential. In the overall military balance, the maritime capabilities in the IOR need a boost to deter China's competitive edge on the continental border and in other non-linear frontiers such as cyber space, outer space, and information space. India also needs to develop Non-Contact Warfare (NCW) capabilities and judiciously leverage them across the entire spectrum of conflict. Finally, at the grand strategic level, India should take steps to perpetuate Pakistan's two front dilemma on the Durand line with Afghanistan and that of China in the Western Pacific.

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Endnotes

- 1 World Health Organisation, WHO *Coronavirus (Covid-19) Dashboard*. As of 6:43pm CEST, 17 April 2021, there have been 139,501,934 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 2,992,193 deaths in the world. Accessed Apr 18, 2021 from <https://covid19.who.int/>
- 2 The Five Eyes is an intelligence alliance comprising Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- 3 Which can be translated as — [With] Everyone's support [there will be] everyone's development and [winning of] everyone's trust.
- 4 Press Information Bureau, Govt of India. *Prime Minister's Office*, Address by Prime Minister at the inaugural session of Raisina Dialogue 2021, Posted On: 13 APR 2021 8:33PM by PIB Delhi. Accessed Apr 18, 2021 from <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1711594>
- 5 A physiographic region in east-central India. Extending over an area of about 35,600 square miles (92,300 square km), it includes the Abujhmar Hills in the west and borders the Eastern Ghats in the east. The Dandakaranya includes parts of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh states. It has dimensions of about 200 miles (320 km) from north to south and about 300 miles (480 km) from east to west. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Accessed Apr 19, 2021 from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Dandakaranya>
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- 7 Kadita Pethiyagoda, "How India's diaspora affects its role in a multipolar Middle East", *Brookings*, June 15, 2017. Accessed Apr 18, 2021 from [How India's diaspora affects its role in a multipolar Middle East \(brookings.edu\)](https://www.brookings.edu/research/how-india-s-diaspora-affects-its-role-in-a-multipolar-middle-east/)
- 8 Self-Reliant.

Emerging Paradigms of National Security: Threats & Responses

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Abstract

With the rise of China, and the deepening contestation between several powers, the international order is in a state of flux, searching for equilibrium. India's relationships with internal and external political entities are now increasingly complex and elastic, with dynamic variances between cooperation and conflict. The rise of China and its disputes with the U.S. have unleashed multiple tensions due to shifts in the tectonic plates of global geopolitics. These shifts have manifested in the reworking of relationships that impact the sources and characters of threats. This article brings out that In India's national security paradigm, all threats that have the potential to impact its core interests and developmental progress substantially and negatively, would be issues of concern for national security.

Introduction

National Security paradigms are generated from the interplay of external and internal environments. For India, important changes in both the environments, have been picking up pace over several decades. The broad trajectory of these changes is characterised by a mutation in relationships between political entities. Externally, with the rise of China, and the deepening contestation between several powers, the international order is in a state of flux, searching for equilibrium. Presently, it seems, the world is between orders. The major alterations in India's internal environment, meanwhile, relate to sustained, albeit inequitable, economic growth for three decades, despite setbacks in social harmony.

Earlier, India had to navigate the muddy waters of global power shifts while promoting and protecting its fundamental aspiration of pulling its people out of poverty, illiteracy and ill-health. Post Kargil, security was redefined as the peaceful management of change in an orderly way and the harmonisation of conflicting interests, as also understanding the views and perspectives of different groups within the nation and internationally. Dogmatic attitudes, whether political, religious, sectarian, or ethnic, and the resistance to necessary, non-violent changes are considered the biggest threats.¹

The aim of India's national security paradigm framework has been to focus on responses to threats that impede the pathways to its fundamental goals. While the paradigm itself remains unchanged, the context within which it operates keeps changing, due to varying tensions in relationships, both externally and internally. India's relationships with internal and external political entities are now increasingly complex and elastic, with dynamic variances between cooperation and conflict. Ties are also constantly pounded by pressures generated in bilateral and multilateral contexts. This is further complicated by the maze of networks produced from global connectivity. Old associations are giving way to new

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groupings that are better described as partnerships, since cooperation and conflict are becoming increasingly contextual. For instance, India could cooperate with China on climate change and with the USA on nuclear proliferation while disagree on trade. In particular, India's relationships with most world powers are ever-changing.

Among the emerging downstream national security paradigms is the draining of the energy and resources of India's political, economic and security forces due to an increase in external and internal threats. Resource availability for developmental goals has decreased and the situation has further worsened due to the impact of Covid-19 on the Indian economy. The extent of progress made in national security and developmental goals will depend on how India responds to the threats and opportunities of the strategic environment that are going to present themselves during what is likely to be the stormy 2020s.

India's Strategic Environment

The rise of China and its disputes with the U.S. have unleashed multiple tensions due to shifts in the tectonic plates of global geopolitics. These shifts have manifested in the reworking of relationships that impact the sources and characters of threats. Simultaneously, the means enabling both the threats and the responses to them are constantly evolving, driven by a combination of human ingenuity and technological progress. The interaction of the changes in the means used to achieve objectives in the context of changing relationship equations underpins the ambience of India's strategic milieu.

At the global level, superpower competition has deepened. Sino-U.S. relations have worsened; Russia and China have moved closer to each other and the European Union's relations with the U.S. have weakened. Global, multilateral initiatives, structures and institutions like the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organisation (WTO), Nuclear Arms Control and Climate Change Treaties have been rendered fragile due to dilution in international cooperation. In addition to military tensions, the relations between major powers are being defined and driven by trade frictions, including coercion through economic leverage and technological disruption and denial. Increased Sino-American military tensions, especially, in the maritime space in the Asia-Pacific, have drawn several nations including India, Japan, Australia, Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), South Korea and most nations of the Indian Ocean littoral, closer together. Cyber and Space technologies are increasingly being used for surveillance, subversion, exploitation and coercion in international relations.

The extent of progress made in national security and developmental goals will depend on how India responds to the threats and opportunities of the strategic environment.

China's impressive economic growth has facilitated the use of economic statecraft, as a weapon to increase its influence across the globe. Its flagship project, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), includes digital connectivity as an important component. Though justified in its economic logic, BRI has significant geopolitical consequences that will impact the entire Eurasian land and maritime space through control of connectivity and infrastructure. Ironically, distaste for globalisation has spread in the U.S., while China champions its cause. Though there is talk by many countries of economic decoupling, it is easier said than done given China's status as the manufacturing hub of the world and its impressive strides in cutting-edge technologies. Technology has thus, emerged as a major actor in geopolitical rivalries.

For India, the shadows cast by the superpower rivalry continue to challenge the firming up of its geopolitical stance. India's relations with the USA, China, Russia, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Japan, Australia, South Korea, the African nations, and the West and South Asian countries are in a state of transition. In 2020, relations with China and Pakistan worsened with increased potential for conflict. India's influence in its neighbourhood is facing the headwinds generated by China's use of its economic clout to incorporate India's neighbours in a Sino-Asian sphere. This quest is part of China's wider play for influence in the Eurasian land and maritime space, in which Russia is its major

partner. Russia's growing proximity to China has complicated Indo-Russian relations. Worsening U.S.-Russia relations have also had some impact on Indo-Russian relations, as evidenced by the fall out of the S-400 deal.

India's growing proximity in defence cooperation with the U.S. is a concern for China. India's participation in the QUAD and its indications of moving towards a QUAD plus arrangement, have been opposed by Russia and China, and described as an attempt to create an Asian NATO. China's aggression on the Sino-Indian border and the loss of lives in the Galwan incident on 15 June 2020, have buried the hopes for stable Sino-Indian relations in the foreseeable future though an easing of tensions is becoming slowly visible. For India, two implications are evident. First, it is saddled by seemingly never-ending military confrontations on its borders with China and Pakistan. This will add to India's resource constraints that will weaken its quest to be a maritime power. Second, India may no longer continue to hedge its bets regarding its geopolitical stance and continue to sit on the fence, as its present posture does not inspire confidence among its possible partners.

External Threats

There should be no doubt that China presents the greatest threat to India's developmental agenda. China's attitude to India is conditioned by its geopolitical rivalry with the U.S.. The sensitivity arises from India's geopolitical heft, impacting the global power balance. In particular, the maritime space of the Indian Ocean, as part of larger Indo-Pacific, presents a geographic dilemma for China, which is anchored in the strategic logic, of the need to secure vulnerable trade routes, especially, those of energy, raw materials and manufactured goods.

Impeding India's growth and keeping it confined to the South Asian sub-continent has been on China's geopolitical agenda for several decades. Earlier, Pakistan was China's primary cat's-paw to keep India distracted. Since 2012, the Northern border and India's neighbourhood, including parts of the Indian Ocean littoral countries, have been added to China's strategy to contain India. Threat from China is fundamentally fuelled by the tyranny of geography and will last until alternatives open up through the Arctic or overland through Eurasia. For India, throughout the next two to three decades threats in varied forms from China, supplemented by Pakistan, can be expected to continue. The lethality of threats can also be expected to sharpen due to XI Jing Ping's authoritarianism and ambitious proclivities. This will be her primary national security challenge.

The military paradigm with China and Pakistan would thus, be one of Confrontation – Crisis – Limited Conflict – Confrontation. While Confrontation with both countries would be the default condition, crises could be frequent and sometimes prolonged.

The nature of the threat from China is manifold: military, economic, diplomatic, and technological. Militarily and diplomatically, this threat clearly is in nexus with Pakistan. A prolonged, low-level conflict on the Northern and Western borders would provide pathways for achieving the higher-level strategic aims of China and Pakistan, which is to keep India contained within the sub-continent. Salami Slicing on the Northern borders and improving naval capability in the Indian Ocean can be expected to be China's core military activities. Pakistan is likely to continue to use terrorism and sporadically, light up the LOC as a tool of foreign policy. However, any attempt at application of force by either power would have to take into account, the nuclear factor. The military paradigm with China and Pakistan would thus, be one of Confrontation – Crisis – Limited Conflict – Confrontation. While Confrontation with both countries would be the default condition, crises could be frequent and sometimes prolonged. Limited conflict could consist of short and sharp exchange of force and may simultaneously involve both China and Pakistan.

Diplomatically, China can be expected to play spoiler in India's international efforts towards counterterrorism measures, obtaining membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group, setting norms for a free and open Indo-Pacific

region and the use of cyber and space technologies. Pakistan and China could also be expected to side-line India in the Afghanistan peace process and block its efforts for permanent membership in the Security Council.

Technologically, China's presence in India's critical infrastructure in communications, financial technology, defence and governance could pose serious threats to national security. The transfer of nuclear and defence technology to Pakistan by China, which has been going on for long, poses an additional national security threat.

Internal Threats

India's internal security challenges are either standalone or linked to external support. Terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir and other parts of India continues to be orchestrated by Pakistan. Violent uprisings in the Northeast, use Myanmar as the conduit and have China's patronage. Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in the tribal belt of Central India has indigenous socioeconomic roots. Going forward, with China's increasing influence in Nepal, the probability of a Nepal conduit for LWE has increased. The political objective of interference in India's internal affairs will be to contain India by drawing its political energy inwards.

The machinations of external actors are converging with a churn in India's domestic polity. India's social harmony, based on a plural and secular outlook, is under pressure from forces that believe that India's appeasement of minorities has disadvantaged the Hindu majority. This phenomenon is now coupled with an exponential surge in unemployment, due to inadequate economic growth that must accommodate the burgeoning numbers entering the job market. Unemployed youth are fodder for extremist views in a society that can be radically networked through social media. The prospects of radicalism could be carried on the shoulders of unemployed youth and given wings by the calls for global Jihad and Hindu majoritarianism. This combination could present a lethal threat to India's internal security.

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Responses

National Security Strategy. For India, in a material sense, equitable and speedy economic growth is an indispensable condition, to develop the tools of power. But developing various forms of power requires political sagacity that has to contend with the pushes and pulls of the political economy. Without strategic guidance, capability building lacks political direction and oversight. An essential first step in India's security responses is carrying out a strategic review that will identify threats and opportunities within the framework of the basic paradigm of securing India's growth. This must be followed by crystallising a National Security Strategy (NSS). Nearly three years ago, the Defence Planning Committee, headed by the National Security Agency (NSA), was tasked to evolve the NSS, but is yet to complete the task. Surprisingly, the Home Ministry was not represented on the Committee. Logically, the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) which was established for such purposes should be hosting it.

As stated earlier, India should no longer hedge its bets on global geopolitical rivalries. India's political leadership will have to decide the type of bilateral and multilateral relationships it wishes to establish with various international actors, even if these are contextual. Specifically, India's geopolitical stance towards Sino-U.S. rivalry must no longer be ensconced in ambiguity. This is not about jumping on to the bandwagon with one or the other, but about adopting a strategy that will expand India's range of choices while preserving its strategic autonomy, thus enabling the achievement of security and development goals with a certain amount of flexibility. The dilemma is that even though China is a geopolitical adversary, economically, India cannot disengage itself due to critical dependencies. On the contrary, China's

dependence on Indian markets is minimal though India's market size cannot be ignored. India needs USA, Russia and other powers, like Japan and Israel, for strengthening its defence capability, diplomatic support; trade and provision of technology. The U.S. has been coveting India's participation as a counter-balancing force for a long time now, as signified by the nuclear deal in 2005. Though considerable progress has been made in these relationships, especially in the defence arena, India's ambivalence regarding China has been a cause of disappointment to the U.S. and others.

The on-going Sino-Indian border crisis should serve to disabuse India's political leadership of the fancy notions of China seeking a friendly relationship between the elephant and the dragon. India's political leadership must accept that contemporary Sino-Indian frictions are not a purely bilateral construct. It is, in fact, embedded in a multilateral landscape that makes them prisoners of geography. As long as China views India as a potential spoiler in achieving its goal of becoming a Number One global power, applying varied types of pressure to influence India's strategic behaviour can be expected. Such an acceptance will provide clarity on the nature of relationships India must seek with USA, China, Russia and other powers, including its immediate neighbours. Without doubt, this will be a balancing act that will put to test the efficacy of Indian statecraft.

In the international arena, continuous application of the instruments of power is required to support foreign policy. Political engagement through diplomacy, which is backed by hard and soft power, has to absorb changes in the form and use of specific tools that may require modification over time and space through human agency and technological innovation. Human agency, it must be noted, is the abiding shaper and mover of the strategic actions of political communities. Notably, the leaders, as the practitioners of power, cannot be free of human frailties, even when blessed with highly desirable human qualities.

What is likely to characterise the future of security strategy is the speed of change in the means used. These means rest in tools, whose application is guided by strategy. Intelligence, diplomacy, hard and soft power, technology, strategic communications, and economic strength are the tools of strategy that must be nurtured endlessly.

Intelligence. With the relentless increase in the pace of change in the methods, the inability of India's national-level political and bureaucratic decision-making systems to foresee and respond to threats is a cause for concern. The weakness in our strategic intelligence assessment capability has been repeatedly exposed, most recently by China's aggressive moves on the Northern border. It is also a basic principle in national security decision making that intelligence acquisition, assessment and policy formulation must be kept separate. The 2018 reconfiguration of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the apex committee for assessment, seems to have violated this principle. The methodology being followed requires review. Also, although technical intelligence is rapidly progressing in the Cyber and Space front, human intelligence retains its utility and must not be neglected.

Diplomacy. Fostering sound relationships is the touchstone of diplomacy. India's diplomacy has a distinguished history and the human capital of its diplomats has been the subject of global recognition and acclaim. The expansion of India's engagement with the world as also the exponential growth in diplomatic activities, call for considerable expansion in the size of the diplomatic cadre. This problem has been acknowledged, but for several reasons, the required expansion has not materialised, with attempts at lateral induction being stillborn. The need is for political intervention to address the issue. Recognition of the importance of soft power in foreign policy has resulted in it being accorded due importance by the Ministry of External Affairs. Cultural exchanges, educational support programmes and deepening people-to-people contact have been the main activities. A major weakness is in the inadequacy of scholarship and research work on China,

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and the limited availability of Chinese language interpreters that limits our understanding, analysis and ability to respond to the challenges posed by China. The decision by the education department to stop teaching Chinese in schools must be reversed as it is a retrograde measure. However, despite the presence of nuclear weapons, politics and diplomacy can still fail and resorting to hard power may become inevitable.

Hard Power. The growth of India's hard power has been handicapped by lack of political direction. The problem emanates from the absence of a NSS and is reflected by incoherent military strategy. With the institution of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Department of Military Affairs and Permanent Chairman of the Chief of Staff Committee, the incoherence should be addressed better. Broadly, three areas require clarity and they can be achieved only through an institutionalised civil-military dialogue. First, given the likely availability of resources, what political objectives should the Armed Forces be prepared to achieve against potential adversaries? Second, the answer to the first query will allow for a clear focus of our nature and scope of our military makeup and posture. Third, a balance between continental and maritime power should follow, which will indicate the military instruments which require building up. Once these issues are decided, the structural conception and the establishment of the future Theatre Command System should be carried out.

Cyber and Space are the emerging 'geographies' that are gaining pervasive influence in war. Although the strategic logic of war is indifferent to geography; the character of war is unique to differing geographic environments. Technology is expanding the material aspect of warfare through platforms and devices. But given the instrumental nature of technology and the contestation of its utilisation in warfare, demands on human agency for successful outcomes would still endure.

The major areas of weakness are in the aeronautics and the maritime domains. Developing state-of-the-art technologies, and their application and production as military gadgets, calls for a consistently-comprehensive governmental approach.

Strengthening military effectiveness must also involve the development of joint doctrine and training. Importantly, it must be accompanied by addressing long-pending insufficiencies of the Defence Research and Development, Defence Industrial base and the Defence Acquisition systems. The major areas of weakness are in the aeronautics and the maritime domains. Developing state-of-the-art technologies, and their application and production as military gadgets, calls for a consistently-comprehensive governmental approach that improves the ecosystem which includes the following: a sturdy academic and research base; level playing fields for public and private sectors, both Indian and foreign; a vibrant start up ecosystem that is backed by easy access to capital and a regulatory framework that favours functional speed and equal opportunity to vendors.

Strategic Communications. In the ultimate analysis, seeking political influence is a mind game which is about affecting or changing the will of the other. The human will is shaped by beliefs that are in turn influenced by narratives. Therefore, effective strategic communications are indispensable. Judged from the long periods of official silence during the Ladakh crisis, it is an area that has considerable room for improvement and needs to be addressed on an urgent basis.

Meritocracy. The ultimate strength of responses will rest on the quality of human capital that populates the structures in the wider systems of the government. While the private sector continues to become increasingly meritocratic, government structures are unable to privilege meritocracy as the prime vehicle for selecting key persons and leaders. Entrenched political and bureaucratic interests, coupled with the grip of a generalist civil services cadre on key appointments, has created a system that has undermined the linkage between performance and promotion. A parliamentary commission should examine this issue.

Conclusion

In India's national security paradigm, all threats that have the potential to impact its core interests and developmental progress substantially and negatively would be issues of concern for national security. While there is always the danger of overemphasising security concerns that could be better dealt with as development issues, it is also important not to ignore the security aspects of development while preserving constitutional values of individual liberties, privacy and human rights. Similarly, India should never endanger its economic growth, social harmony and political democracy. National security threats can no longer be responded to only by acquiring greater hard power. National security is deeply and intricately linked to the knowledge society and the knowledge economy, which at its core is multidisciplinary and highly collaborative.

The role of technology in engineering changes in support of diplomacy must be acknowledged. Further, force, intelligence and strategic communications is reliant on economic and scientific strengths, that are grounded in the twin factors of resource availability and the knowledge ecosystem. India's emerging paradigm of national security has to align its response to threats, by prioritising the building of capabilities in the domains of diplomacy and hard and soft power. It must be accompanied by concomitant efforts to strengthen intelligence, technological capability and strategic communications. Moreover, one should never forget the instrumental nature of power, that relies on wisdom, to achieve its purpose. In statecraft, as in other modes in human affairs, seeking to maximise cooperation without conflict, is an eternal goal, that has to often confront the reality, that force in a variety of forms could be used for coercion, in the pursuit of political objectives. The ultimate purpose of power is to endure even as the means of its realisation changes. In imagining India's security paradigms, one must not conflate purpose with the means.

Further, force, intelligence and strategic communications is reliant on economic and scientific strengths, that are grounded in the twin factors of resource availability and the knowledge ecosystem.

Endnotes

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Governance—Responsibility of the Polity and the Public Services

Shri NN Vohra[@]

Abstract

This article is an edited extract of the online 'Centenary Year Sir Syed Memorial Lecture-2020' on 'Governance-Responsibility of the Polity and the Public Services' organised by the Sir Syed Academy of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) delivered on 10 Sep 2020. In this extract the relevance of good governance and security are elaborated.

Introduction

In any discourse on the governance of India it would do well to remember that we are a vast country of sub-continental dimensions and a land of awesome geographical dissimilarities. We have large desert areas, the highest mountain ranges in the world, land and sea borders of nearly 23,000 kms, over 1200 island territories and an Exclusive Economic Zone of several million square kilometers. Even more daunting is the heterogeneity of our population. Our people, nearly 1.38 billion today, comprise over 4600 communities which practice all the world religions, speak 122 languages and nearly 2000 dialects. Their vastly diverse traditions and practices are imbedded in thousands of years of history. Because of this vast complexity it is the Union of India's crucial responsibility to ensure that national security is effectively managed at all times, and on all fronts.

For the past many years now, the geo-political environment in our immediate neighbourhood has been generating unceasing security challenges. Pakistan's proxy war in J&K has now continued for nearly three decades and, side by side, terrorist groups and adversary external agencies have been vigorously pursuing their agenda to destabilise our country by spreading religious fundamentalism, inciting communal conflicts and perpetrating violent disturbances. Along with this the unresolved boundary dispute with China creates added challenges to security. This article attempts to flesh out the contours of this security challenge with particular reference to internal security.

Centralisation of Counter Terrorism Organisation

It is regrettable that, despite the continuance of serious security threats to our country, the States have been questioning the Union's authority in the arena of national security management. Among other matters, the States have been perennially raising issues about the competence and jurisdiction of the National Investigating Agency (NIA), the only central institution which has been investigating and prosecuting terrorist crimes since its hurried establishment in 2009. It may be recalled that following Pakistan's terror attacks in Mumbai, on our Parliament and on the Air Force Base in Pathankot, there was heightened concern, all over the country, to enlarge and strengthen the national security management apparatus. While there have since been several positive developments, we are still in the process of establishing the required pan India legal and logistical frameworks which would enable the Union and the States to

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set up and efficiently operate a country wide network of inter-connected institutions which shall be responsible for effectively safeguarding both internal and external security which have got inextricably intertwined ever since Pakistan launched its proxy war in J&K.

The States and their Responsibility

The State governments should know that terrorist networks do not recognise geographical or territorial boundaries; even if operating from long distances they can strike at their will, with lightning speed. It is necessary that the Union Government loses no more time in securing the essential understandings with the States to urgently establish the required security management framework and, particularly, to enact a comprehensive anti-terror law which has pan-India jurisdiction. Side by side, we must have a competent federal agency, manned by highly trained personnel, which can take immediate cognisance and forthwith proceed to investigate any terror offence, no matter in which part of the country it takes place, without having to lose any time whatsoever in seeking clearances from any quarter. Further, no more time should be lost in establishing a powerful central agency, and a country wide network of competent counter-organisations, to combat cyber offences and protect all our vital establishments and national assets against cyber-attacks from any quarter. In fact the establishment of a National Counter Terrorism Centre has also not fructified due to resistance from the States.

Post-Independence Experience of Importance of Security

Experience in the post-Independence period has amply demonstrated that, other things being equal, meaningful growth and development is achieved when there is political stability and public order is maintained in the country. Needless to mention, domestic entrepreneurs and foreign companies shall make investments and be able to function profitably only if peace and normalcy prevails in the land. For securing such an environment it is imperative that the governance apparatus works with speed and efficiency, law and order is effectively maintained, corruption is controlled and the well-being and safety of all our people is safeguarded. Thus, briefly, if progress is to be achieved on all fronts and our country is to advance rapidly towards the attainment of its avowed goals, then it is of the highest importance that clean and efficient governance is delivered and an environment of trust, safety and security prevails across the land.

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Internal Security and It's Connect with National Security

For calm and normalcy to obtain in the country the Union Government shall need to ensure that the States effectively maintain law and order and see that no incident is allowed to occur which can disturb communal harmony, trigger internal disturbances or adversely impact national security in any manner. However, in the arena of security management, as the situation has evolved over the years, the States have not been adequately mindful of the advisories which they receive from the central agencies. In this context, the Union Government shall need to take timely initiatives for forging sound understandings with all the States, irrespective of the complexion of the political parties in power in various parts of the country. Towards this objective, it would be beneficial if the Union, making full use of the constitutional instrumentality of the Inter State Council, initiates dialogues with the States for timely resolving all obtaining and arising problems.

First and foremost, if stability and public order are to be maintained and rapid advancement achieved on all fronts, we just cannot afford to have recurring incidents of communal disturbances of any the kind. It is a cause for grave concern that, as widely reported in the media, these disturbances occurred because the beliefs and socio-cultural practices of one community were allowed to be questioned and derided by political elements of another community, essentially with the objective of creating religious divisiveness. Whenever questioned about the failure of governmental

functioning, it has become customary for the Ministers, particularly in the States, to lay the entire blame on the misdeeds of the “bureaucracy” or “civil servants”, by which they actually intend to refer to officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS).

Accountability of the Administrative Structure

We have a total of about 5200 IAS officers who are deployed all over the country. While accurate figures are not readily available it is assessed that perhaps there are about 40-50 million functionaries in the country who are employed by the Union Govt, State Govts, Union Territory Administrations, Central and State Public Sector Undertakings, Public Sector Banks, Defence Services, Municipalities and Urban Local Bodies, Panchayati Raj Institutions and varied other institutions which are supported by State or Central funds. For the purpose of discussion I would call the entire lot of these employees as “public servants” as all of them, from the village level Patwari to the Union Cabinet Secretary, get paid from public funds. Of the total strength of public servants in the country perhaps less than 1% are generalists, like the IAS and the State Civil Services, while the entire remainder lot represent professional cadres which contain school, college and university level teachers, police forces, defence services, bankers, engineers, scientists, technologists, doctors, foresters, judges and magistrates, and all those who work in various other professional arenas.

All public servants, belonging to different services in the States and at the Centre, are deployed in various departments and organisations which function under the control of the concerned Ministers who are members of the Union or the State Cabinets. Thus, briefly, it is the elected or the political Executive, headed by the Chief Minister in the State and by the Prime Minister at the Centre, which is constitutionally responsible for the governance of the country and, consequently, answerable for any failure in the functioning of the administrative system within their respective jurisdictions. The entire gamut of public servants, including the senior most IAS officers, work under the control and direction of Ministers, who may hold charge of one or more departments. Thus, if there is any fault or failure in the functioning of a given department, it would be the concerned Minister who shall be answerable, individually and collectively as a member of the Cabinet. In case the Secretary of the Department or any other functionary is found to be at fault, then he shall face due punishment, which could even include removal from service.

Accountability is the foundation of the rule of law and constitutional governance. The working of the governmental apparatus shall become efficient only when the functioning of every Minister, and of all the officials who work in the departments under his control, becomes accountable.

Accountability is the foundation of the rule of law and constitutional governance. The working of the governmental apparatus shall become efficient only when the functioning of every Minister, and of all the officials who work in the departments under his control, becomes accountable. However, as it happens, barring a very small percentage, most of the elected persons who become Ministers have no earlier experience in administration, much less of formulating and implementing policies. Also, sadly, most of them do not have the urge, and perhaps not even the capacity, to put in the required effort to adequately understand the working of the departments placed under their charge, identify problems which require solution, take sound decisions and ensure the timely achievement of the targeted goals. Many of the serious problems which face us today, including worrying internal security challenges, arise from corruption, mismanagement and unaccountability. It is, therefore, of prime importance that the Executive functions are specified constitutionally and measures taken to ensure that all programs for developmental and welfare work are efficiently implemented to alleviate the lot of people who are needy. Lack of attention to this aspect impacts internal security adversely.

In this context, it may be recalled that Naxalism, which at one time was labelled by the Union Home Ministry as the most serious threat to the Indian state, was born and took root in several parts of the country where the tribal and other local communities had faced neglect and severe economic deprivation for long years. Having been denied access to resources, even to the natural produce of the forests in which they lived, these people took to extremism and rose against the established system. Several decades have since elapsed and the Indian state is still combating with its own people, whom we call the Naxals.

We have no more time to lose in putting our house in order. The millions of our long neglected, oppressed and poverty stricken people may not wait endlessly for their sufferings to end. Their anger and despair may lead them to the path of confrontation. And if such an unfortunate consequence emerges, it may not be possible to control the arising disorder merely through the application of force – an approach which has been unsuccessfully followed for decades now.

Good Internal Security- An Aid to Integration

In recent years, in the search of jobs, young men and women in different parts of our country have moved far away from their homes. Today, we have Mizo, Naga and Manipuri youth working in the mountains of J&K and in the deserts of Rajasthan and Panjabis and Haryanavis working in Kerala and the Andamans. This is a most welcome development as it helps to promote cultural integration. We must educate all in our country about the background and cultures of the people from all corners of our vast country some of whom they may have never seen before. They must learn to respect not only their religions, cultures and languages but also the eating habits, clothing styles and even the hair-cut patterns of the many new faces we are getting to see and meet every day. In the recent years, there have been ugly incidents arising from discrimination of people from the North East on account of their different looks, lifestyle, eating habits etc. No government must allow such incidents to recur ever again. I would re-iterate that hatred and intolerance provide an assured route to disruption and chaos.

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Conclusion

We must recognise the dangers which lie ahead if the faults in the functioning of the governance apparatus are not remedied. Taking stock of the existing failures and the arising challenges, the Executive and the Legislature must urgently commence discharging their true constitutional roles. And the Judiciary should not wait any more to fully regain its supreme responsibility to defend, protect and fearlessly enforce the Constitution. The very long pending electoral reforms, which are required to remedy the many ills from which our democratic framework is suffering, must be implemented with the highest priority. Side by side, the polity must accept the need for self-purification, a thorough cleaning up of the entire administrative machinery and reforming the functioning of the multitudinous minions of the state. It shall require enormous political will and unflinching determination to carry through the required reforms, without which we cannot deliver satisfactory governance – and attendant security – to the people of India.

Section II

Internal Security Issues

Challenges of Policing in COVID Pandemic and Roadmap for the Future

Shri Jayanto N. Choudhury, IPS (Retd)[@]

Abstract

When Prime Minister Modi announced the lockdown in March 2020 its implementation rested with 16,000 police-stations countrywide. The police were tasked to ensure that everyone stayed at home, to prevent movement of people or traffic, and prohibit gatherings, in short, shut down all normal social and economic activity. The objective was to prevent the pandemic escalating to community-transmission stage. This article brings out how the Indian police dealt with this totally different policing task, and what lessons have been learnt for the future.

The Challenge

The ‘War on COVID’ is a deadly global struggle that has claimed 150,000 lives in India alone. On 24th Mar 2020, at 8 PM, the police were given 4 hours’ notice to enforce a countrywide lockdown covering 1.3 billion people spread over 3 ½ million sq kms. There were no precedents or (SOPs), nor time for even basic training. The Prime Minister made the surprise announcement, but implementation was by 28 states and 9 UTs, constitutionally responsible for policing and public order. Through 16,000 police-stations countrywide, the police were tasked to ensure that everyone stayed at home, to prevent movement of people or traffic, and prohibit gatherings, in short, shut down all normal social and economic activity. The objective was to prevent the pandemic escalating to community-transmission stage. There was conflicting expert advice on what the right balance was to minimise pandemic fatalities, while, mitigating economic consequences. What was clear was that India’s testing capacity was limited and clinical facilities were inadequate.

Leave alone SOPs, there were no health safety guidelines, and little provision for ‘Personal-Protective-Equipment’ for police. The better resourced defence forces and (CAPFs) were not called upon. It was the state police — the worst resourced, the most overworked and least trained — who faithfully implemented the governments’ directives.

Experts’ estimated that up to 30 lakh cases of infection and 80,000 deaths were averted because of effective implementation of the lockdown from end-March to June. Even if draconian, this gave time to plan a systemic response, though, at a cost to frontline workers, whether from health or the police. Over 1,000 police personnel have died in-the-line of COVID duty. Many field personnel stayed away from their homes for months, to safeguard their families since almost 200,000 police personnel were infected.

Lack of global template

There wasn’t any global template to follow. Confusion prevailed worldwide on the police role. China the origin of the COVID-19 pandemic has a different political system. The way that Wuhan and other cities in Hubei and neighbouring provinces were fully sealed off, is not possible in democratic societies. In the UK, Chief Constables of several Counties

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had to rein in, over-assertive enforcement in the initial stages and urge the use of ‘common sense’. The “Coronavirus Act 2020” in the UK gave emergency powers to the police to detain and screen people suspected of being infected with the virus, order them into quarantine and impose punitive fines on lockdown violators. In the US, states have considerable autonomy and responded differently. However aggressive enforcement of restrictions were few, because of fear of monetary damages freely awarded by US courts for abuse of authority. Also significant sections of the US population believe that their Constitution does not allow the government to enforce lockdown restrictions that infringe on individual liberties.

The conventional role of the police is to protect people against criminals and to maintain public order. During the COVID lockdown, this changed to enforcing rigorous health-directed precautions that went against normal human behaviour. There were questions as to what the legal limits to police authority were? Violation of lockdown restrictions by public gatherings, clearly endangered human life since these could be ‘super-spreaders’, justified appropriate use of force for dispersal. There were other ‘grey areas’ for intervention, such as, individuals out for a walk/drive or shopping for essentials. In the early stages 1000 people were fined in Israel for being 100 meters away from their homes; in Australia people sitting alone and drinking coffee were threatened with jail. In Kenya passengers waiting at a ferry terminal were teargassed and baton-charged. The Philippines President asked the army and police to shoot lockdown violators. In most countries, the public complained about inconsistency. Individual police personnel determined whether to take action against those who violated restrictions and severity of penalties.

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Lockdown Experience in India

In the first phase of the lockdown, lakhs of cases were registered under the Disaster Management Act, Epidemic Act, and Indian Penal Code, and tens of thousands of vehicles were seized. The role of the police varied from state-to-state. Some local authorities directed the police to take action against those not wearing face masks or maintaining social distance. In others, the police were directed to ‘challan’ even those improperly wearing masks. In some states, police were asked to physically check social distancing not just in offices but in events like weddings. In later phases of the lockdown, when a differential zonal plan was implemented with ‘containment’ and ‘buffer’ zones, the police were expected to use greater discretion.

There were incidents of egregious use of force by the police, several reported to (NHRC). Visuals of police beating up migrant workers crossing state boundaries as they walked many hundreds of kilometres from urban workplaces to return to their villages evoked public criticism. In June, a father and son died in Tamil Nadu after a night in police custody where they were brutally tortured. Their crime? Defying orders to shut shop a few minutes after closing time. There were also incidents where lockdown violators attacked and severely injured police personnel.

However apart from health workers, the police were the few functioning institutions and hundreds of instances were reported of ‘compassionate policing’. In ‘Maan ki Baat’ the Prime Minister commended “the human and sensitive side of policing ... that has touched our hearts”. Officers across the country, helped the elderly isolated in their homes, delivered food and medicines to those in need, and transported to hospitals those needing medical help. Babies were reported delivered in PCR vans rushing expecting mothers to hospital. Police officers at all levels contributed not just their salaries but blood/plasma. Even last rites of COVID victims were arranged, when families stayed away fearing infection. With support of local philanthropists, police helped stranded out-of-state workers with food and shelter. Creative communications were prepared in-house by police personnel to persuade compliance with health precautions. Technology platforms were adapted to facilitate issue of movement passes or to enable contact with the police for any

other help. In some states, local communities were effectively engaged to ensure quarantine. SOPs, health and safety manuals for police personnel, and good practices in lockdown enforcement, were compiled by various states.

A humane approach using soft skills was found more effective, since lockdown violators were not hardened criminals, just members of the public — restless over restrictions — or who had a genuine need. Independent surveys have affirmed that the public welcomed this change

Colonial Legacy

A review of the policing culture in India provides an insight into challenges of the changed role. A professional military tempered by combat experience in World Wars, was a great legacy left to independent India by the British. However, imperial objectives about policing were clear — to ensure that British rule continued unchallenged, and to maintain internal order at minimum financial cost, regardless of human cost. The army was freely called out to suppress civil unrest, but at ground-level the police enforced the writ of the colonial rulers. Police Stations were feared as symbols of state power, not seen as centres to deliver policing services. The organisational structure of the police was a mass of lowly paid, poorly trained constabulary with minimum facilities at the base, an intermediate grade of ‘native’ officers, and a thin elite of superior officers at the apex, mainly British. Excessive use of force was usually ignored and even torture was winked at. Probity was not expected. This is reflected in colonial-era laws that endure even today, under which confession to any police officer is inadmissible as evidence in court.

The legacy of colonial policing has, to a significant extent, carried over in independent India. Indiscriminate use of force, misuse of arrest, and poor accountability for abuse of authority is not uncommon. There is a belief that public order is better maintained if the police are feared. The recent directive by the Supreme Court on installing CCTVs in all police stations in the country reflects the continuing suspicion of the police and apprehensions of abuse of authority.

There is a belief that public order is better maintained if the police are feared. The recent directive by the Supreme Court on installing CCTVs in all police stations in the country reflects the continuing suspicion of the police and apprehensions of abuse of authority.

On the other hand, fundamentals of a modern system of policing endorsed by UN guidelines includes policing by consent, respecting the dignity of all and upholding the rule of law. Serving the community and delivery of services to the people is the desired paradigm shift from a feudal/colonial policing role, which was primarily to uphold the authority of the regime or state. The rights of the individual were secondary.

Lessons from the COVID Experience

Does the experience of policing during COVID offer hope that it is possible to transform policing culture in India, to one that is more citizen-oriented? Some key takeaways are shared below:

- **Community engagement.** Enforcing restrictions in the public interest is easier, with greater engagement with local communities. Outreach achieved in many areas demonstrated that a changed relationship is possible and soft-skills were found effective. It has given hope that it is possible to break free, of the colonial legacy of a police — feared as a slavish instrument of rulers; “brutal, corrupt and unprofessional” in public dealing.
- **Technology applications.** A feature in the services sector of the response to the COVID lockdown, is increased use of digital applications. In many states digitised policing services were also expanded to avoid personal visits to police stations. Courts functioned online — though minimally — to avoid physical contact. Video-conferencing from prisons helped avoid prisoner escorts that drain limited manpower. The experience has

demonstrated potential synergy by Information and Communication Technology (ICT) connectivity between different components of the Criminal Justice System. Developing platforms for online delivery of policing services can be systematically pursued, as also digital avenues for public grievance redressal. IIT Mumbai has set up National Centre of Excellence in Technology for Internal Security (NCETIS) funded by the Central government. It is opined that identifying technology applications, to improve delivery of policing services to citizens and capacity building of field police should be added to its terms of reference.

- **Invest in states' policing.** There has been an unprecedented negative impact on the economy. Government budgets will shrink and there will be an inevitable increase in expenditure on social services like health. Yet expenditure on civil police needs to increase, if the positive policing experience during the lockdown is the desired goal. Today expenditure on civil police in India is less than USD \$ 1 per capita per year compared to \$ 350 in the USA. In most states, the armed police is over-deployed and under-equipped, while civil police are understaffed and thinly spread. Improving civil police-to-population ratio, accommodation and ensuring off-duty time are investments that can reduce stressors that impact on behaviour. Burn-out and Post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD) are occupational hazards in field policing where a 14-16 hour workday without a weekly off, is normal. The trend over the past 40 years has been to address policing problems by enlarging and spending limited resources on CAPFs and CPOs. A pivot back to States' policing is needed if citizen-centric policing is a national objective.
- **Capacity Building.** Good leadership paid off at field levels and practical planning at the granular level while factoring in uncertainties of the 'big-picture'. Effective inter-departmental liaison and close interface with neighbouring jurisdictions, repeated briefing of field personnel incorporating their feedback, and wide community outreach helped. Also holding credible media briefings to combat fake news was found to be very useful.

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COVID policing was primarily local, but a systematic approach to evolving national guidelines based on research and best practices would avoid 'reinventing the wheel'. The Union War Book is an example, of how the almost 700 districts in India follow common procedures and priorities, and set-up inter-departmental coordination in event of a national contingency. An outline of the desired policing response needs to be integrated into the 'Crisis Management Plan for Biological Disasters', recently issued by the Union Ministry of Health. This acknowledges that health is a Constitutional responsibility of the States' (just as policing is), yet articulates a response at different levels, from the national and state down to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)

Frequently the lowest ranks decided action on-the-spot on against individual lockdown violators. So, the experience has underscored the urgent need for capacity-building at the base — the constabulary. Training needs to be less militarised and develop skills such as ability to bridge the police-public gap. An important training outcome is for every policeman to see their role as a 'protector/guardian' to serve the public, understand that only a minority are criminals — and to conduct themselves accordingly.

Scientific research to upgrade policing methods is negligible. The Modernisation of Police Fund (MPF) managed by MHA has a modest budget. Even this is spent mostly by CAPFs. Moreover, the procurement process is cumbersome, and the expenditure limited to hardware, though modernisation is also a process of change from older attitudes, methods and technology. The lockdown has affirmed the importance of behavioural change and review of processes.

- **Accountability.** Once standards are established, SOPs formulated, and police personnel adequately trained, individual personnel and their supervisors need to be accountable for deviations. “I was only obeying orders” is unacceptable as justification for unlawful conduct. Efforts at change are sometimes resisted by police personnel who believe that ‘outsiders’ lack competence to judge police actions. This can be changed only by consistently applauding positive behaviour, as demonstrated by many police personnel during COVID. The media and public have a significant role in encouraging this.
- **Public Image/Self-Esteem.** Over 1000 police personnel have made the supreme sacrifice as COVID heroes in 2020. These unsung brave-hearts will be added to the roll of honour of 35,000 police personnel killed in the line-of-duty in the past 60 years. Yet the public image of the police is that of a ruthless instrument in the hands of power centres, rather than as an impartial ‘servant of law’. A visit to a police station is an ordeal. The poor conviction rate in many states is attributed to declining competence; mishandling of riots is seen as reaffirming the lack of an objective and professional leadership and a well-trained, appropriately equipped force.

However only a positive image can get proactive public support, which is essential for upholding the rule-of-law. Opinion-makers need to be more actively engaged in reviewing policing policies and processes. At the same time, a high-stress work environment, poor hygiene facilities and an excessively hierarchical culture that extends to a culture of subservience, contributes to a poor self-image. Only with an identity as ‘protectors’ of the people, and with greater pride in service to society, can abuse of authority be reduced. As also a more positive attitude is expected when dealing with the powerless.

An important training outcome is for every policeman to see their role as a ‘protector/guardian’ to serve the public, understand that only a minority are criminals — and to conduct themselves accordingly.

Challenges Ahead

A demographic youth bulge, increased rural-to-urban migration and widening inequality increases the probability of increased social tensions, now aggravated by the economic consequences of COVID. The police will need to manage public protests without excessive force, that is instantly communicated worldwide on social media.

For the ordinary citizen, the main expectation is that the police prevent and detect crime, maintain public order and manage traffic efficiently. The 5 million cognisable crimes recorded annually are estimated as only 10 percent of actual crimes committed. This reflects not just challenges relating to case-registration and investigative skills, but a loss of faith in a criminal justice system, with a seemingly never-ending trial process. 30 million cases clog the courts with decreasing conviction rates; India has one of the highest proportion of Under Trial Prisoners (UTP). During the lockdown the Supreme Court had to issue directions for release of UTPs to reduce overcrowding in prisons. Even then spread of infection among inmates was high. For most citizens, particularly in urban areas, the most common interface is with the traffic police. There are now 250 million registered vehicles in India. Consequently, an important parameter for police image is the conduct of police during traffic stops and capability to scientifically investigate crashes, that account for 150,000 fatalities each year.

Below-radar policing tasks include executing a huge volume of processes (warrants and summons) from courts across the country, repeated appearances in multiple courts and undertaking a wide range of enquiries for the public, whether relating to passports or verification of antecedents of domestic help or tenants. Many of these seem mundane, but require close community interface and unless carried out efficiently and with probity, negatively impact on police image.

Emerging ‘New Age’ threats like cyber-crime and white-collar global crime syndicates increasingly impact on the ordinary citizen. This has taken on a new dimension, with an upsurge in digital crimes due to increased online financial

Internal Security Issues

transactions during the COVID pandemic. Also, Interpol has warned of a 'dark market' in COVID vaccines, because of the huge sums that are expected to be invested and the potential for counterfeit vaccines.

Transformation

Reform of policing systems is acknowledged as essential to economic and social progress. UN Resolution 2151 states, "Good governance and the rule of law are essential for sustained economic growth and development." Achieving this requires a criminal justice eco-system that gives confidence to investors and encourages enterprise at MSME levels, without fear to person or property. Capacity building of the states' police is on the Union List of the Constitution and only by adequate investment in the state police can the country move toward a desperately needed 'Revolution in Police Affairs'.

There are police officers who feel that systemic changes need sustained support of power centres that is not forthcoming. They point to failure of earlier reform recommendations driven by the Supreme Court and various national Commissions and Committees. However, there are many others who believe that meaningful changes (even incremental) can be made by practical innovations at ground level and by the conduct of police leaders themselves. Treating all citizens with dignity and proactively encouraging positive behavioural changes, is one such beginning.

No one knows when the COVID pandemic will end. The world will take a long time to recover, even if an affordable vaccine on a mass scale is available soon. Untold numbers of livelihoods have been lost, and the impact of the economic downturn on public order and crime is still unknown. This is a challenging time, but is also an opportunity to help move toward a policing system that is professional and with a culture of public service. In years to come, 'COVID Warriors in Khaki' will remember their role with pride, that their committed handling of a difficult role initiated a new chapter in Indian Policing. As Mahatma Gandhi said "be the change you want to see in the world".

Meaningful changes (even incremental) can be made by practical innovations at ground level and by the conduct of police leaders themselves. Treating all citizens with dignity and proactively encouraging positive behavioural changes, is one such beginning.

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The Naga Conundrum: The Way Ahead

Lieutenant General Shokin Chauhan, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, VSM (Retd)[@]

“The Naga insurgent groups hold that theirs is an independence movement and not secessionist. The argument is that they lost their freedom to the British as did India and that the colonial power ruled both from Delhi as a matter of convenience, even as they fragmented the Naga peoples by placing them under different administrative jurisdictions within India and Burma, which was long administratively part of India until 1937. Hence, when the British departed in 1947 both India and the Naga people became independent.”

– BG Verghese, 2010

Introduction

Northeast India is the easternmost region of India and comprises eight states: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura. The Siliguri Corridor in West Bengal, with a width of 21 to 40 kms, connects the North Eastern Region with Mainland India. The region shares an international border of 5,182 kilometres, with the neighbouring countries, 1,395 kilometres, with Tibet Autonomous Region, China in the north, 1,643 kilometres, with Myanmar in the east, 1,596 kilometres with Bangladesh in the south-west, 97 kilometres with Nepal in the west and 455 kilometres with Bhutan in the north-west. It comprises an area measuring 262,230 square kilometres, almost eight percent of that of India. The region's population results from ancient and continuous flows of migrations from Tibet, Indo-Gangetic region, the Himalayas, present Bangladesh, and Myanmar. What distinguishes these states from the rest of country is the sensitive geopolitical location with the existence of diverse ethnic groups with different historical backgrounds.

The North East as a whole is not a single entity with a common political destiny; rather it comprises eight states. The Tribal communities in Northeast India are living on the fringe of three great political communities, India, China and Burma.¹ The Northeast Indian States are predominantly inhabited by tribal people with a degree of diversity even within the tribal groups. Historically, some of them played roles of buffer communities, and others the roles of bridge communities. This region is of great geo-political importance to the Indian sub-continent due to its terrain, location and peculiar demographic dynamics, and is one of the most challenging regions to govern.² However, its 40 million population accounts for only 3.1% of the Indian population. Post-independence, the history of this region has been marred by bloodshed, tribal feuds and under-development. Protracted deployment and operations by the army and the Assam Rifles have been instrumental in the reducing of the levels of violence and restoring the security situation to ensure that civil governance elements can function.

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The westward policy of expansion pursued by Burma at that time the most powerful kingdom in Southeast Asia had begun in the 1780s when Burmese troops occupied the independent Kingdom of Arakan and reached for the first time the eastern border of the British Indian Empire, which corresponds fairly exactly with the present-day borders of Bangladesh and North Bengal. In 1817, the Burmese empire invaded Assam and in 1819, annexed the independent Kingdom of Manipur. In 1823, they also annexed the Kingdom of Cachar, a strategic area for invading Bengal. In March of the following year, Britain officially declared war on Burma, a war which ended two years later with the signing of aforementioned Treaty of Yandabo. Nagas emerged as a political entity on 24 February 1826, the day representatives of the Kingdom of Burma and the British military signed the Treaty of Yandabo, in which Burma renounced all claims to Assam and Manipur. Gradually Britain occupied the whole of Assam and intensified its diplomatic and military relations with Manipur, which was intended to have a key position in monitoring and if need be defending the border between Burma and the British sphere of influence.³

Origins of the Naga Insurgency- Understanding the Past

“If the British government, however, wants to throw us away, we pray that we should not be thrust into the mercy of the people who could never have conquered us themselves, and to whom we were never subjected but leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times.” Naga Club memorandum.

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The origin of Naga dissent or the beginning of the thought of an insurgency is traceable to colonial patronage, and probably manifested itself in the British backing of a rudimentary “club” in 1918. It was called the “Naga Club” and consisted informally of some Naga government officials, which submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission on 10 January 1929. All 20 signatories were mainly from Kohima, mostly from the Angami tribe. No representative of any other Naga tribe met the Simon Commission, wherein they explained that “*You (British) are the only people who have ever conquered us and when you go, we should be as we were*”. Socio-economic issues raised pertained to poor education, small population and fear of an impending “alien” rule. They feared that their minority presence in the Council of the Assam province would be politically inconsequential. The text of the memorandum showed the emergence of “ethnic-solidarity.”⁴

The Naga Club further induced the birth of several tribal based Naga councils, the Lotha council 1923, the Ao council 1928 and several others by the mid-1940s. British officials persuaded the Nagas to change the name of the Naga Club to the “Naga Hills District Tribal Council” in 1945.

The Birth of the Naga National Council and Phizo

This Council acquired a new name, “*Naga National Council*” (NNC) in 1946. The NNC initially advocated a simple approach of protest though it matured as a viable political organisation representing the “genuine grievances” of the Naga tribes. The NNC submitted a four-point memorandum to the government on 19 June 1946, and desired to be constitutionally included in an autonomous Assam with local autonomy and “a separate electorate” for them.

Hyderi- Naga Agreement 26-28 June 1947

The NNC was a pro-government moderate body intending to improve the economic condition of the Nagas through constitutional means. The NNC, in a landmark move, signed a “Nine-Point Understanding” with the Government of India, represented by the British Governor of Assam, Akbar Hydri during 27-29 June, 1947. Clause 9 of above Understanding mentioned the “renewal” or the “re-negotiating” of a new agreement after 10 years. Various historical

events contributed, in different ways, to the growth of Naga dissent and the subsequent start of the “insurgency”. Phizo’s calls for independence provided a direction to the movement, mainly to the faction he led. Thus, the small NNC “Independence group”, which declared, with Phizo, Naga independence on 14 August 1947, consisted mostly of members from Khonoma village and the southern and east Angami group, most of them being “relations” of Phizo. Despite Phizo’s declaration of Naga independence, there was no furious outbreak of movement or insurgent activity. Rather, in a peaceful atmosphere, on 15 August 1947, the NNC only insisted on the implementation of the “Nine-Point Understanding between Akbar Hydari and the NNC signed in Kohima on 26-28 June 1947”, which the Government of India did not accept.⁵

Growth of Violence and the Start of an Armed Insurgency

By June 1955, a rift between Phizo’s extremist group and the moderates widened and inter-factional assassinations commenced. Many of those who opposed Phizo were assassinated, prominent among them being the distinguished T Sakhire, Imkongliba and “General” Kaito Sema. At this juncture, a small section of the supporters took Phizo to Zeliang Naga area and thence to Dacca on 6 December 1956. The then Pakistani government arranged for an El Salvador passport for Phizo, and he reached Zurich in May 1959. Michael Scott, who was once a member of the peace mission, reportedly helped Phizo get to London on 20 June 1960.⁶

The 16 Point Agreement and the Birth of the State of Nagaland.

In 1956, the NNC declared formation of the underground “Federal Government of Nagaland”. Armed Insurgency began in March 1956. Rapid mobilisation began, and due to differences of ideology, Nagaland was just a district (Naga Hills district) of Assam until 1957.⁷ In order to change this status, some Nagas, who were earlier with the NNC, informally discussed other avenues and started the Naga People’s Convention (NPC) and chose Imkongliba Ao as its president. NPC remained very active and organised three Naga People’s Conventions during 1957 and 1960. In its very first session held at Kohima from 22-26 August 1957, the NPC proposed for a larger administrative unit by merging the Naga majority Tuensang division of the then North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) with the Naga Hills district. In July 1960, following discussions between the PM Nehru and the leaders of the Naga People Convention (NPC), a 16-point agreement was arrived at whereby the Government of India recognised the formation of Nagaland as a full-fledged state within the Union of India. This 16-point agreement was unique in many ways. It acknowledged the distinct status of the Nagas within the India federal system. It ensured that no act or law passed by Parliament would affect the religious and social practices of the Nagas, their customary laws and procedure of criminal justice would have no influence in the new state unless passed by a majority vote of the Nagaland legislative assembly. The 13th amendment of the Constitution by which the state of Nagaland was created, not only showed that the Indian democratic system could be flexible but also revealed the accommodative capacity of the Indian Constitution. Gradually a significant section of the Nagas came to concede that the 16-point agreement fulfilled most of their aspirations. But the NNC argued that the 16-point agreement was a complete “sellout” of the Naga political cause. Ultimately the growing animosity between the NNC and the NPC resulted in the assassination of Imkongliba.⁸

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The establishment of the state of Nagaland led to another turning point because by this time, a sizeable group of “overground” Naga leaders had emerged, who chose to participate in the electoral democratic political system, which resulted in the formation of the Nagaland Nationalist Organisation (NNO). A second political party emerged in the shape of the Democratic Party of Nagaland, which was formed by those who differed from the NNO leadership and harboured sympathy for the secessionist underground group. In the aftermath of the total boycott of two Indian

general elections of 1952 and 1957, the NPC and the Interim Body confronted the first test of “democracy” and successfully organised the general elections in Nagaland during January 1964. Amazingly, over 70% of Nagas exercised their franchise. This set-in motion the growth and maturing of electoral politics in Nagaland and caused a setback to the insurgency. This has continued ever since, right till the national elections of 2019.

The Naga Peace Process Amid Factionalism

The ongoing Indo-Naga peace process has continued over the past several decades and still eludes culmination. The peace talks of the 1960s, had resulted in several Naga People’s Conventions, the 16-point agreement and the establishment of the “Peace Mission” consisting of Michael Scott, an Anglican pastor, Jayaprakash Narayan, and B P Chaliha the then chief minister of Assam which resulted in a “Cessation of Fire” or a Cease Fire, which first commenced from 23 May 1964. By 1966-67, the venue of the peace talks shifted to New Delhi where six rounds of talks were held, but meanwhile the NNC, the Naga Federal Government (NFG) and the Federal Army aggressively increased their bloodshed. On 3 August 1968, “General” Kaito was assassinated. On 8 August 1972, chief minister Hokishe Sema had a miraculous escape and his daughter was seriously injured.

By the end of 1968, an anti-communist faction calling itself the “Revolutionary Government of Nagaland” came into being, and then followed a series of splits within the NNC and NFG, largely along “tribal” lines. The government did not extend the ongoing cease fire and active hostilities restarted. The Nagaland Peace Council was formed again at the initiative of the church leaders and a liaison committee was formed, which succeeded in persuading underground leaders, who sent six representatives to have discussions. More than five rounds of talks were held which resulted in the signing of the “The Shillong Accord”.

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Shillong Accord and Why it Failed

This Accord was signed at Shillong, Meghalaya, on 11 November 1975; The Naga leaders who signed represented the NFG and NNC where they accepted the surrender of their arms and personnel. The outcome of the discussions was compiled into three-point agreement which was as under: -

- The representatives of the underground organisations conveyed their decision, of their own volition, to accept, without condition, the Constitution of India.
- It was agreed that the arms, now underground, would be brought out and deposited at appointed places. Details for giving effect of this agreement will be worked out between them and representatives of the Government, the security forces, and members of the Liaison Committee.
- It was agreed that the representatives of the underground organisations should have reasonable time to formulate other issues for discussion for final settlement.

Many of the Naga National Council (NNC) leaders abroad didn’t agree to endorse the agreement. They even criticized the agreement saying that the agreement was signed by “representatives of the Naga underground,” rather than the organizations like NNC or the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN).⁹ During the negotiations prior signing the agreement, Isak Chisi Swu, then-NNC Vice-president, and Thuingaleng Muivah, then-NNC General secretary, with 150 insurgents were in Burma, returning from China. They rejected the agreement terming it as a “betrayal” by the NNC and censured it as a complete “sell-out” of the Naga rights, and swore to fight for unquestionable sovereignty;

this led to the creation of a group called the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) breaking-up from their old organization NNC on 2 February 1980.

The Birth of the NSCN and the Present Situation

The Shillong Accord did not lead to peace but instead led to a split within the NNC, which further led to the creation of the NSCN in 1980. The manifesto of the NSCN was based on the principle of “socialism” for economic solution backed by a spiritual outlook of “Nagaland for Christ”. Later, animosity developed within the leadership of NSCN and two factions, the NSCN (I-M) and NSCN (Khaplang) emerged by April 1988. The NNC, too, post Phizo’s death split into two factions, one led by Adinno, daughter of Phizo and the other by Khadao Youthan, an old associate of Phizo. Clashes amongst these factions became very frequent and a large number of Nagas, including those not connected to these groups, were killed. NSCN (K) further split in 2011 to form a splinter group called NSCN (Khole- Khitovi (KK)) which further split into NSCN (Khitovi-Neokpao) (NSCN (KN)). Prolonged violence gave way to hope of peace when NSCN (IM) signed a cease-fire (CF) agreement in 1997 followed by NSCN (K) in 2001. NSCN (KK), on formation, signed a CF with the Government. In 2012, NSCN (K) also entered into a CF Agreement with Government of Myanmar. Several attempts for peace in the past have not borne the expected results. The progress of talks between UG groups and GoI suffered a setback in 2015 with NSCN (K) unilaterally abrogating the CF Agreement. This decision of the group led to another split and resulted in the formation of NSCN (Reformation). NSCN (K) further went on to join hands with ULFA (I), NDFB (S) and KYKL to form the United National Liberation Front of Western South East Asia (UNLFW).

In short, over the years, every group further split into smaller factions, some more rabidly violent and extreme. This made the prevailing situation even more difficult to deal with.

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The Framework Agreement 2015

Termed as “historic” by PM Modi, this agreement was signed after over 80 rounds of talks between the government and various stakeholders. The details of this agreement haven’t been declassified. In a statement, the government said it “recognised the unique history, culture and position of the Nagas and their sentiments and aspirations and hoped that ‘Through the Agreement, the GOI assured its pledge not only ‘to heal wounds and resolve problems’ but also to be the partner of the Nagas in their’ pride and prestige’. To the leaders and the people of Nagaland, the Prime Minister had a special message ‘You will not only build a bright future for Nagaland, but your talents, traditions and efforts will also contribute to making the nation stronger, more secure, more inclusive and more prosperous; further, You are also the guardians of our eastern frontiers and our gateway to the world beyond’¹⁰. Later a similar framework agreement was signed with the NNPGs (Naga National Political Groups) with consists of seven groups including the NSCN (Reformation), the NSCN (NK) and the splinter group of the NSCN (Khango).

NSCN (IM) signed a ‘Framework Agreement with GoI, which though unclassified till now, apparently lays down the ‘framework’ for future talks/resolution. Unfortunately, the Naga tribes remain divided and this has allowed peripheral issues to be highlighted. Some of these peripheral issues include the demand by the Eastern Naga People’s Organisation (ENPO) for a separate ‘Frontier Nagaland’ state and the growth of several other organisations, each more radical than the its earlier parent.

This framework agreement too has not as yet led to a permanent peace and in August 2020, the NSCN IM released copies of the confidential Framework Agreement and insisted on changing the interlocutor and Nagaland Governor Mr

RN Ravi. Later in October 2020, the current chief of NSCN IM Muivah expressed strong reservations against moving forward with the agreement in an interview with Karan Thapar.

View of Past Leaders

Jayaprakash Narayan (JP) who, in his interactions with the Nagas, showed incredible comprehension and empathy about their history and origin. He traversed the length and breadth of Nagaland, later bringing out a book, “Nagaland Mein Shanti Ka Prayas” (The Attempts to Forge Peace in Nagaland). He was perhaps one of the first national leaders to argue about a civilisational unity in India which preceded its political unity. JP was speaking about all the tribes inhabiting India’s easternmost periphery, much before the term “India” was coined to define this country. Even today, the tribes of this region are not influenced by the “Indian” culture. They are proud inheritors of their own unique culture.¹¹

Anthropologist B K Roy Burman in 2004 had suggested a solution through a non-territorial jurisdiction with legislative, administrative, judicial and development-oriented powers by constituting coordinating bodies. In October 1993, Roy Burman proposed “internal self-determination” for people like the Nagas, which implied the right of people to determine their own social, economic and political system, to depose their resources and to create conditions for their own development within an existing state.¹²

Epilogue

It may be argued that ever since the signing of the ceasefire in August 1997, several rounds of talks have been held in India and abroad. NSCN (I-M) had held their last discussions in December 2020 and would probably be re-joining these talks again in 2021. The ongoing talks, led by the government appointed interlocutor, Mr Ravi, the Governor of Nagaland, since August 2015, have still not concluded. “The Union government broadened the scope of the peace talks by roping in six other Naga armed groups, who later formed the umbrella organisation Naga National Political Groups, (NNPGs). In 2019, post the death of Khaplang, the Khango Konyak-led splinter faction of the NSCN (Khaplang) accepted the Cease Fire and joined talks along with the NNPGs. While the involvement of these groups in the talks, offered the Union government a better bargaining position, the NSCN (IM) felt that it was done to undermine its influence. During the current phase of ongoing negotiations, the NSCN (I-M) ‘s insistence for a separate flag and constitution for the proposed Nagalim has emerged as the major stumbling block in inking the Naga accord.”¹³ As a consequence, the NSCN (IM), started losing trust in the interlocutor by July 2020 and refused to interact with him thereafter. Later the government appointed senior officials of the Intelligence Bureau to continue the talks.

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The main issue, “sovereignty” to include a separate flag and constitution has become difficult to resolve. Can our government deal with this vexed sovereignty in a more flexible manner? Can the NSCN dilute their stand? The answers to these questions to my mind, lie in our ability to trust each other. We have had innovative solutions in the past, and we certainly can come up with an acceptable solution now. However, what needs to be asked is whether such a political solution is possible within our constitutional federal system? The fact that the Naga leaders have almost moved away from original demand for “independence” brings great hope for peace. The federal principles enshrined in the Constitution allow a great deal of flexibility relating to “autonomy” of areas and people. We need pragmatism and the imperatives of peace, demand that the aim of a permanent agreement should not be derailed again. In fact, the need for circumspection is greater now than ever before. The current phase of peace parleys should not be left half-way for yet another future futile failed accord. There’s no doubt that an end to “Naga insurgency” will have an enormous impact on

Internal Security Issues

the prevailing peace within tribal north-eastern societies. The success of our Look East policy too will depend, in the long run, on success of these peace talks.

What is clear that that the mainstream Naga society and its youth has in itself undergone a huge transformation over the last 30 years and today's educated Naga youth identifies with the idea of India and are increasingly looking both at economic and political advantages of being part of the larger federal democratic system of India. Unfortunately, concerns about the the vast number of weapons held by the insurgents, increased militarisation and brutalisation of its society, fuelled by six decades of continuous armed conflict and the continuous imposition of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) need to be addressed and rectified. What is further essential is that regardless of a political solution, we must find a way to re-assign and convince the approximately 4000 armed cadre of the various groups to give up their weapons and accept a handsome stipend and job oriented training instead. This will remove the armed cadre and the weapons from the hands of the leadership and hopefully force an 'acceptable political solution'.

What also is clear that the threat from China is real and has affected and altered the external and internal security environment of the North East. Further, coupled with its use of cyber - warfare, increased cross-border terrorism, the emergence of non-state actors, the growth of Islamic fundamentalism, the narcotics-arms nexus, illegal migration and left-wing extremism, gravely impact upon the security of our already fragile North East. Permanent peace in this region is absolutely necessary and cannot be delayed any further.

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The Use of Social Media by Terrorists: Analysis and Response

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Abstract

Social media is very effectively used by terrorist and other anti-national elements. This article will examine the subject in respect of the problems which arise due to use of social media in a negative and offensive manner against people or the State. It looks at the challenges of the problem for the counter-terrorist, and lastly, it will go into the response so far, what is happening in the rest of the world, how effective or ineffective have we been in its usage.

Introduction

Social Media has emerged as a key component of the terrorist arsenal. However, it must be borne in mind that it is also available to the Counter-Terrorist. On the face of it, it is a tool wielded with greater effect by the terrorist because of ease of access, lack of regulation, vast potential audiences, and fast flow of information.¹ It also allows communication with a target audience without the scrutiny of regulatory authorities as is in the case of formal mainstream media. This article will examine the subject under three categories. Firstly, it will look at the dimensions of problem, secondly, it will examine the challenges of the problem for the counter-terrorist, and lastly, it will go into the response so far, what is happening in the rest of the world, how effective or ineffective have we been in its usage.

What is Social Media?

- Social Media is an all-encompassing term for digital platforms for user-generated content and sharing Text, Video, Audio & Pictures.
- It is a digital means of interaction among people known or unknown, across geographical boundaries. Through it, one can contact people anywhere in the world, even if you don't know them, as if they are sitting across you.
- It is the media through which the users create, share, and exchange digital information and ideas in virtual communities. On social media, communications between people are of a personal nature this generates a sense of belonging and personal bonding.
- It has the capability to reach small or large audiences across cyberspace. The significant thing is that users can reach large or small audiences instantaneously. This enables the ability to generate flash mobs so evident during the 'Arab Spring', instigated stone pelting that we saw in Kashmir, anti-China protests in Hong Kong and the latest Myanmar anti- coup protests. In fact Social media 'flash mobs' are becoming integral to the organisation of protests which may be justified or even unjustified.

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The Importance of Social Media

Social Media has become an indispensable part of life like food or water. Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Twitter, You Tube, emails etc , all based on the internet have become the lifelines of our societies. There has been a massive explosion in its usage because of the following reasons:

- There has been an exponential growth of mobile networks. These networks cover the complete globe.
- There has been an exponential growth of connectivity in the form of hand held devices in the form of smart-phones.
- There is instant access to data.
- There are a huge numbers of sensors which collect data leading to a massive growth of data availability. This poses a major national security challenge because of the seeming inability to sift through mountains of data lurking within which are messages and images designed for subversion.
- Mobile phones even of the lowest configuration have the means to use social media.

The Characteristics of Social Media

The characteristics of Social Media are that firstly, it Involves individuals, mutually acceptable content, networks and communications, secondly, it generates a sense of belonging and personal bonding in areas of mutual interest, thirdly, it provides unfettered relationships, anonymity, privacy and a sense of security and lastly given the highly personalised environment, the platform enjoys a high degree of credibility and acceptability within the group. Certain other relevant points are that the users are the creators of the contents which they exchange, distribute and receive. The relationship that the users have with each other is dependent upon their common interests based upon which they can form communities and sub-communities. In all this interaction the anonymity of social media leads to a situation where the identity of the user may or may not be real. A person can project himself with ease to be what he is not. A man can pose to be a woman or vice-versa and a terrorist to be a law abiding citizen.

The characteristics of Social Media are that firstly, it Involves individuals, mutually acceptable content, networks and communications, secondly, it generates a sense of belonging and personal bonding in areas of mutual interest, thirdly, it provides unfettered relationships, anonymity, privacy and a sense of security and lastly given the highly personalised environment, the platform enjoys a high degree of credibility and acceptability within the group.

There is a great deal of attention being given to the development of applications which are used on the internet and social media. They make our life simpler but also make us more dependent. In case the battery of the mobile is down a person feels cut off from the world. There is more data being generated per user than it is possible for him to cognitively handle. This leads to development of more applications which help a person reach and view the data which is applicable to him. Social media in that sense is addictive. We see this all around us. The internet is the way towards empowerment, probity, progress and speedy growth. Yet, we need to be aware of the strengths of, and problems with social media as we head toward the digital age.

Social media rides on the internet. The internet provides anonymity in the sense of security because though every digital device leaves a digital signature, this signature can be traced only with the willing assistance of the service provider. There are a number of 'dark' ways in which even this trail can be obfuscated. In this highly personalised environment, anyone making a statement enjoys a very high degree of credibility within the group. This is a vital part of social media. People will listen to those who are within the group and if the security agencies have to get hold of

terrorists and radicalisers then any intervention has to be very well planned. If not properly planned, the likelihood of influencing and weaning away those who are being subverted is not very high.

The Magnitude of the Spread of Social Media

Global. As of Jan 2020 (all data from Hootsuite, the acclaimed social media marketing and management dashboard) More than 4.5 billion people now use the internet, while social media users have passed the 3.8 billion mark. Nearly 60 percent of the world's population is already online, and the latest trends suggest that more than half of the world's total population will use social media by mid 2020.² Of the total world population of 7.7 billion (55%urban dwellers), 5.9 billion people are users of mobile phones out of which 3.80 billion are active social media users. This means that social media has penetrated to 49% of the world's population. While the penetration of mobile phones purely for voice communication is reaching a peak, in the case of use of social media on mobiles it has not yet reached a plateau. In the data upto Jan 2020 the biggest social media platform by far is Whatsapp (Now owned by Facebook), Facebook, Facebook Messenger, followed by Tencent and then by Instagram (again owned by Facebook). The other five in the top ten are all Chinese platforms.³

India. As far as India is concerned as of Jan 2020 (all data from Hootsuite) out of the estimated population of 1.38 billion, 687.6 million people were the users of internet which is 49% of India's population. The active social media users were 400 million people which means that social media has penetrated to 29% of India's population. However, usage of mobile phones is high at 79% of India's population or 1060 million people, however, out of these users of social media are much lesser. This is a understandable phenomenon in poor countries with a poor landline infrastructure. In line with world trends in India too use of mobile phones purely for voice communication is reaching a peak.⁴

Nearly 60 percent of the world's population is already online, and the latest trends suggest that more than half of the world's total population will use social media by mid 2020.

The Challenges of Social Media

A Tool of Propaganda. The reason why social media is successfully used as a tool of propaganda is primarily because of it can be used from home also and this renders a great deal of anonymity. The government of a country has very little control over it as the servers are not located with it and in addition neither do the service providers provide willing cooperation to investigate or block content. At the same time social media provides instant connect to huge worldwide audiences, with a fast flow of information which can include text, audio, photo or video. This medium while being cheap to establish and maintain is also interactive so that there can be an equally quick decision making or sharing of ideas. On this media it is very easy to place and disseminate black and provocative media. Some examples from India are :

- **Provocative Speeches.** Such as those of the Indian Muslim evangelist Zakir Naik which were reportedly instrumental in motivating the attackers of the Dacca café attack on 01 Jul 2016.
- **Mobilising People.** Examples are the mobs in the stone pelting in Kashmir, anti CAA protests in Delhi and the farmer's agitation.
- **Hate Comments.** While hate comments can target specific individuals, statements by politico-religious leaders and organisations propagating fringe ideologies of all hues, can easily instigate their followers and opponents thereby creating serious national security threats and public order issues.
- **Misinformation.** An example is the mass exodus of migrant labour after the lockdown for Covid -19 was announced.

- **Misrepresentation of Facts.** As what happened in the Muzaffarnagar riots in 2013 where what was apparently a law and order issue was turned into a communal riot.

Policing Challenge. The following are the challenges that are created by Social Media:

- **Threats to VIPs.** These can be abusive, threatening messages, location disclosure of VIP etc.
- **Financial Fraud and Cyber Crimes.** Ponzi/fake schemes to trap users to commit financial frauds. Other practices are spamming, impersonation, phishing, vishing (phone based phishing), identity theft, cyber stalking and bullying, etc. a common vishing is impersonating bank communication to make people give their internet banking details inadvertently.
- **Porn and Human Trafficking.** Circulation of porn clips for blackmailing. Morphed images to defame people and undertaking prohibited practices like child pornography and online grooming of children for sexual exploitation or other illegal activities.
- **Law & Order Problems .** Flash Gatherings based on circulation in social media. An example of which was seen in the mobilisation of *Dera Saccha Sauda* followers in Aug 2017 by their proclaimed Godman.
- **Sale of Contraband Items.** Drugs and arms sales through Darknet groups / closed social media groups.

Social media can be used very effectively in endangering a nation's security. While imagination is the only limit to how this can be done, a common method is misrepresentation of facts.

National Security Challenge. Social media can be used very effectively in endangering a nation's security. While imagination is the only limit to how this can be done, a common method is misrepresentation of facts. Other means which endanger national security are leakage of documents of national security importance (as had been done by Julian Assange's Wikileaks in the case of confidential US diplomatic cables), enticing and honey trapping government functionaries and then blackmailing them to get classified information, creating technical challenges in the operation of national strategic installations and radicalisation.

Technical Challenges. Access to content is widespread. A low rung government functionary will have the number of his superior in his contact list. In a hierarchical setup everyone will have the mobile number of his senior. These contact lists are perforce shared through a number of applications. Once an application has your contact list almost all numbers of the hierarchy can be traced right to the top man. It is virtually impossible to track where your data is going. This is the manner in which data is sold out in the market for commercial purposes evident through the soliciting calls/mails that we all get. The anonymity that the internet provides adds to the technical challenges.

Radicalisation. The ISIS used social media to radicalise people all over the world as well as in strategic communication to project its viewpoint. Its pattern of usage was not only in the local language but the radicalising content is translated into a number of languages. These are then used to build up nodes everywhere and reach a wider audience. The *modus operandi* of ISIS enrolment has been that someone very well-known contacts a person who has got moderately radicalised. They then through messages compromise the targets' computer. Thereafter, influencers are used to pull the radicalised person deeper into the morass. Earlier the influencers (as happened in Syria) used to ask the radicalised people to come to the theatre of war, now the concept is that of the 'Lone Wolf'. This is that the theatre of war is where you are and the Lone Wolf is free to do whatever he wants as long as it is in conformity of the philosophy of the ISIS.

The Use of Social Media by Terrorist Organisations and Counter Measures

Social media enables even small terrorist organisations to create large footprints. Terrorist organisations like the ISIS have demonstrated a remarkable capability to use social media for radicalisation, communications, profiling, hacking, recruitment and fund raising. The practices of the ISIS have become the new gold standard in propaganda and psychological warfare, networking and information gathering and in cyber-terrorism as a whole. This is being replicated in a copycat fashion by terrorists everywhere including in Kashmir.

Social Media in Kashmir. The Middle Eastern terrorist groups and later the ISIS have made effective use of social media for fomenting terrorism. The practises refined there have been picked up by the Pakistan supported and trained terrorists for propaganda, gathering mobs, motivation and recruitment and for enabling safe communications across the border through VPN. India like any democratic government faces problems in regulation of social media in J&K. Post the abrogation of Article 370 in Aug 2020 in J&K, the government shut down 4G mobile internet till Feb 2021. This had been effective in curbing foreign instigated unrest to some extent. While the government shuts down the services during particular periods of heightened terrorist activity there cannot be prolonged shutdowns. Such shutdowns lead to huge outcry by intellectuals and also trouble the population as a growing number of private, public and administrative services are managed through the net.

Countering Terrorism on Social Media. Data Analytics is essential for situational awareness and response as the volume of data grows. Counter-messaging through multiple dispersed hubs would be required to spread a counter-narrative. There is a requirement to leverage cooperation from tech companies to prevent encrypted technologies from being misused. At the same time there is a need to encourage the global tech industry to develop new technology and tools for data analytics and algorithmic monitoring. The best talent and capability to devise means to counter terrorism on social media is available with the developers of social media platforms.

There is a need to encourage the global tech industry to develop new technology and tools for data analytics and algorithmic monitoring. The best talent and capability to devise means to counter terrorism on social media is available with the developers of social media platforms.

Social Media Monitoring Concepts. The method for this is continuous monitoring. Those monitoring should look out for negative/positive distortions of any sensitive topic. They should be able to detect a crisis in the making before it builds up and spirals out of control. The approach to be followed for monitoring is to select the subject to be monitored, identify relevant keywords and user IDs and thereafter keep a continuous watch on them. There are a number of open source tools also available for monitoring. Examples are ‘Socialmention’,⁵ a search engine that searches user generated content such as blogs, comments, bookmarks, events, news, videos etc and ‘Carrot2’ which is an open source search results clustering engine.

Cooperation with Social Media Platforms. There is requirement for close cooperation with social media platforms for countering terrorist actions. We have to understand the commercial constraints on the platform providers. We have to accept that the providers in case they give permission to screen their data will give it to very few people, and they will provide only specific content as per the law. Even this requires permissions at all levels. Post the use of social media very effectively by the ISIS, important providers such as Facebook, Google, YouTube are using sophisticated technology to remove terrorist content from their sites. With the coming on board of some US based social media platforms to control ISIS content on the internet, there was a substantial reduction in ISIS content. However, this is not as easy as it seems since platforms like YouTube and Twitter have no means to block uploading of material. They can only start searching after the content has been uploaded and even after it has been removed they cannot stop it from being re-uploaded under a different name. However some suggested steps are:

- Ensure comprehensive monitoring and swift response to contaminated individuals, content and groups, including provision of enhanced resources for this purpose by social media providers.
- Create “trusted reporting agents” including Government and certified private agencies to identify and report terrorist content which can then be passed to the provider.
- Ensure streamlining, transparency and quick reaction in reporting and response procedures.
- The provider should name and shame identified egregious extremist accounts.

Conclusion

Social media provides credibility, anonymity, ease, speed and mechanisation of dissemination of information. This is what gives it an edge over other content on the internet such as blogs etc. As brought out above, policing social media is an extremely complex issue. As long as the definition of terrorism is not universally agreed to there will remain problems in policing the internet as one man’s terrorist can be another man’s freedom fighter. Increasing use of new technologies and artificial intelligence is making social media even more potent. Earlier the Al Qaeda used to release half an hour long videos. The ISIS had not followed this mean. They used social media to send hundreds of messages at one click. Bots have been created which send content on their own on the net which leads to massive proliferation. In fact, real people get exceeded by bots. As cyber-terrorism and use of cyber-space to indulge in terrorist acts evolves into new forms, so will the counter-terrorist have to evolve his counter-measures.

As long as the definition of terrorism is not universally agreed to there will remain problems in policing the internet as one man’s terrorist can be another man’s freedom fighter.

Endnotes

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Section III

*External Security: India's Strategic
Neighbourhood*

The Emerging Geopolitics of Afghanistan: Implications for India-Afghanistan Relations

Lieutenant General GS Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)[@] & Mr Gaurav Kumar[#]

Abstract

The unending turmoil in Afghanistan even in the wake of an unconventional peace agreement is a grave challenge not only for the U.S. but also for the region. This article looks at the emerging geopolitics of Afghanistan consequent to the change of administration in the U.S. While jettisoning the Trump era peace deal the Joe Biden administration will attempt to implement the deal with a changed perspective. For India the challenge will be to forge a Afghanistan policy which can best meet its security interests while preserving the gains and goodwill it has invested into in Afghanistan.

Introduction

The political and security dynamics in Afghanistan are incumbent upon several matrices, some outside the purview of the region, and some directly related to the internal scheme of things. The evolving geopolitics of Afghanistan are being shaped by few dominant factors and scenarios — the change of guard in the U.S., the waning interests of the international community to support and aid the war in Afghanistan, and the churning in the international order. These are some of the issues that are beyond the control of one country or the other. The volatility in the Taliban's approach to violence and peace, its growing offensive capability, the political factionalism and infighting within Afghanistan, are some of the other factors that are shaping the enduring turmoil in Afghanistan. The emerging global scenario has undoubtedly cast its shadow on the peace process in Afghanistan. The current political reality in Afghanistan is merely reflective of these changes.

The Change of Guard in the U.S. and the International Community's Response

The United States. There is no denying of the fact that the President Joe Biden administration will have a monumental task ahead as far as Afghanistan is concerned. On the table, he does not have many options to exercise. The Taliban has not fulfilled its share of the Afghan peace deal to cut down the level of violence. The intra-Afghan dialogue is at best at its formative stage, and the U.S. government has jettisoned the May 2021 deadline — the complete departure of the U.S. troops from Afghanistan, and moved it to a symbolic 11 September 21. The political and diplomatic willingness to counter the surge in violence with an increased troops level appears to be out of question for the U.S. It is quite clear that no administration in the U.S. has the appetite or willingness to get mired into the internal politics of Afghanistan. Therefore, the Biden administration will try to achieve maximum gains from the limited political and diplomatic choices it has in Afghanistan.

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At the outset, the newly elected Democrat administration has hinted that they will review the U.S.-Taliban deal and possible future action will be taken based on the advances made and commitment fulfilled under the agreement. According to the readout released by the U.S. State Department on the Blinken-Ghani conversation, the U.S. government was planning to review the U.S.-Taliban agreement¹. On the other hand, the Pentagon press secretary John Kirby conveyed the Biden administration's commitment to last year's U.S.-Taliban deal. He, however, underlined the fact that the Taliban has not yet lived up to its commitments under the deal, and it could be difficult for the U.S. to move forward with the agreement if that does not change². This has dramatically changed with Joe Biden's announcement of 14 Apr 2021. Though the U.S. administration wants to make sure the Taliban was "living up to its commitments", including reducing violence and cutting ties with terrorists, it is a difficult point to monitor. President Biden's new national security adviser, Mr Sullivan, had earlier contacted his Afghan counterpart Hamdullah Mohib and "made clear the United States' intention to review" the deal to check the Taliban was living up to pledges it made³. This is a big announcement coming on the back of recent developments in Afghanistan, where the Taliban has ramped up violence and has no more limited its attack to the Armed Forces but have started targeting civilians too. The Afghan Vice-President Amrullah Saleh has recently in an interview suggested that the U.S. administration has conceded too much to the Taliban.

The alternate scenarios that the U.S. administration has — to retain the force level in the Afghanistan or meet the May deadline, are fraught with peril. If the troops withdraw, there will be little political incentive for the Taliban to comply with every commitment made under the agreement with the U.S.. It would rather try to extract maximum gain using violence and out of the political instability in Afghanistan. If the U.S. troops along with its international partners decides to stay back somewhat longer — something effectively negated by the present announcement— the Taliban will continue to act aggressively unleashing a series of violent incidents to maintain ascendancy. It will use the decision to stay back as a betrayal by the U.S. of the Doha agreement, justifying a political plea to its supporters, to continue with violence.

Joe Biden has been a major proponent of a strategy he called "counterterrorism plus." Which at the policy level means using small bodies of troops backed by aggressive airstrikes to deal with terrorist groups in foreign countries including Afghanistan.

David Petraeus, former commander of U.S. and NATO forces along with Vance Serchuk, Executive Director of the KKR Global Institute, in his article "Can America Trust the Taliban to Prevent Another 9/11?" has precisely highlighted the dilemma of the U.S.-Taliban peace deal. He suggests at one level, the agreement makes the Taliban one of the principal guarantors of the U.S. counterterrorism interests; at the other level, the rising violence presents a grim picture because of the underlining asymmetry at the heart of the agreement, such that the more Washington implements its obligations under the deal, the less constrained the Taliban will be to keep its own⁴.

It is pertinent to recall some of the major views Joe Biden has forwarded during his presidential candidate speeches and also earlier as a vice president, which gave an indicator of his approach on shaping U.S. future engagement in Afghanistan. These are:

- Joe Biden has been a major proponent of a strategy he called "counterterrorism plus." Which at the policy level means using small bodies of troops backed by aggressive airstrikes to deal with terrorist groups in foreign countries including Afghanistan⁵.
- Biden much like Trump has emphasised on ending the forever war and bringing back the troops. He has suggested that his government will bring most of the troops home from Afghanistan and narrowly focus the mission on Al-Qaeda and ISIS⁶.

- Initiate and resource a high-level diplomatic effort to end the war including regional players like Pakistan, Iran, China, India, and Russia⁷.
- Clearly articulated that the U.S. should not engage in a nation-building exercise in Afghanistan. Something similar was stated by the former President Donald Trump during his 2017 strategy for South Asia speech⁸.

The Joe Biden views suggest no major shift away from the Afghanistan Policy of the Trump administration. The U.S. administration under Biden is expected to be more consultative and less impulsive in its Afghan policy. However, given the fact that there is consensus within the U.S. on the futility of deployment of large number of troops, the Biden administration will certainly still try to have an honorable exit. It may, come up with its own set of ‘national interests’ in Afghanistan, and would aim to limit its engagement in protecting its claimed interests. Steve Coll in his article, clearly suggests, “Biden risks stepping into a similar trap, in that he has defined a narrow goal, counterterrorism, even while it is evident that containing Al Qaeda and the Islamic State depends in large part on whether the Kabul government survives and seeks to help the U.S. and Europe against its enemies”⁹. To balance its interest and try to steer clear of the internal political mess without destabilising the democratic institutions in Afghanistan will be a daunting challenge for the Biden administration, which at this point of time does not appear to be possible.

The international donor’s meet during the Afghan Conference 2020 in Geneva witnessed donors pledging an expected \$12 billion in civilian aid to Afghanistan over the next four year. However, the international community including the U.S. made it conditional on various socio-political gains that the international community wants to see including protecting human rights, women’s rights and making progress on peace talks. This appears unlikely in a Taliban driven peace agreement.

The European Union/ NATO. The EU Delegation and the diplomatic missions of many western countries have recently in a joint statement condemned the continuation of assassinations, kidnappings and destruction of vital infrastructure¹⁰. The problem with the European Union engagement in Afghanistan is two-fold: it was never the warring party to the Afghan conflict; and European involvement in Afghanistan was orchestrated by the UN and NATO; there was no European (Union) strategy or consensus for Afghanistan¹¹. EU provides financial aid and invests heavily on various projects jointly with many organisations. At stake for EU are the gains of the last 19 years made in Afghanistan. It is equally worried about the spreading out of the terrorist networks from Afghanistan to many parts of Europe as also the stream of refugees into Europe from unstable regions, especially Muslim refugees. The European countries have faced many terrorist attacks in the last two decades and are not oblivious to the detrimental impact of jihadi networks to its peace and stability. However, lack of independent policy and dwindling support for war in Afghanistan by majority of the population amidst rising violence has left the EU with little option but to gather political and diplomatic support to censure and warn the Taliban.

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As the U.S. and its western countries alliance’s interests are shifting towards other emerging security threats, so has been the shift in NATO’s policy towards Afghanistan. In its new report titled ‘NATO 2030: United for a New Era’, Afghanistan is rarely mentioned. The report suggests NATO to adapt to meet the needs of a more demanding strategic environment marked by the return of systemic rivalry, persistently aggressive Russia, the rise of China, and the growing role of Emerging and Disruptive Technologies (EDTs)¹². Clearly, NATO may not be engaging in Afghanistan as it did till last year.

All this adds a fundamental question to the existing security problem in Afghanistan—how will and for how long will the Afghan forces be able to handle the Taliban onslaught without international military support?

Internal factors in Afghanistan

The conflict in any region including Afghanistan, is a product of vicious cycle of hostility, suspicion, lack of trust, biased communication, and lack of multilateral thinking, in which stakeholders are often involved in reinforcing these again and again¹³. The internal fragmentation of Afghan society at ethno-political level and external geo-political pressure makes harder to reach at any conclusive agreement in Afghanistan. The ethnic and political structure of Afghanistan only adds to these uncertainties by nurturing and incentivising conflict.

The two dominant political players in Afghanistan: The Afghan Government and the Taliban understand the complication related to the ongoing peace negotiation; they at the same time realise the fact that neither of the two can function in isolation of the international community. The two parties engaged in the long and convoluted talks for a peaceful stable Afghanistan are aware of the fact that the Afghanistan of 2020 is not the Afghanistan of 1990s, and therefore both the Taliban and the Afghan Government, are showing some flexibility, despite a rigid public posturing. In fact, an aspect of the U.S.-Afghan peace deal was a signal of a distinct flexibility shown by the U.S. for the first time. By signing the agreement, the U.S. gave much sort after legitimacy to the Taliban; on the other hand, it partially eroded the legitimacy of the Afghan government.

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Unfortunately, what the U.S. wanted to achieve politically was lost militarily. The current level of violence is reflective of the worsening security situation in Afghanistan. The country remains the deadliest country of the world. Despite the fact that overall civilian casualty figure for the first nine months (July-September) of 2020 dropped by around 30 percent compared to the same period in 2019, the July-September quarter witnessed 876 civilian deaths and 1,685 injuries, a rise of 43% compared to last quarter¹⁴. The Afghan interior ministry claimed in December 2020 that the Taliban had killed 487 civilians and injured 1,049 others by carrying out 35 suicide attacks and 507 blasts in across the country over the past three months¹⁵. The overall fatality rate is more than 3,000 civilians and over 5,500 others wounded in the conflicts in Afghanistan in 2020. The most important aspect of the renewed Taliban attacks has been the targeted killing. The New York Times has documented the deaths of at least 136 civilians and 168 security force members in targeted killing. These attacks are mainly directed against civil servants, members of the media, human rights workers and the security force¹⁶.

A contrarian view is that not all is lost due to surge in violence. The Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) has said that the surge in violence after signing of the deal doesn't mean the deal has failed yet. But it is at the period which is going to be most difficult where the Afghan Government, which is feuding within itself has to find a solution with the Taliban¹⁷. The level of violence unleashed by the Taliban is indicative of the political hostility and differences it has with the current Afghan government. On the other hand, the violence has given little optimism to the Afghan Government to trust the Taliban leadership. The differences and the born trust deficit is only reinforcing hostility towards each other.

The intra-Afghan dialogue was seen as an institutional arrangement to provide interactive conflict resolution mechanism. However, the two sides are stuck to translate the agreement on paper into some concrete actionable policy. It is clear that the two sides have no easy choices to make, and it requires rigorous, time consuming engagement to chalk out a path to peace and stability. The end of dispute or conflict will only be possible when there is a military and political

solution of the conflict, which translates into a settlement and outcome of the dispute. The output of the dispute is the military solution whereas the settlement is political in nature¹⁸.

External Geo-Political Factor

Afghanistan since times immemorial has been caught in geopolitical rivalries of many countries including regional and global powers. Presently, the most complicated rivalry is between India and Pakistan. Both India and Pakistan have used different strategies to garner support from the Afghan Government and political parties. India's presence in Afghanistan has been benign and inclusive in nature. India's engagement in Afghanistan is largely developmental and civil society oriented — providing aid, funding infrastructure projects, and capacity building. On the other hand, Pakistan's presence has more been destabilising in nature — supporting political forces like the Taliban and meddling in internal political matters. Geographical contiguity, and common ethnic group across the border has allowed Pakistan to wield enormous influence in the internal matters of Afghanistan.

The U.S. interests despite being strategically similar to India, had to tilt towards Pakistan in order to bring peace and stability in the region. During his Presidential candidature days, the former President Donald Trump had said, “Pakistan is probably the most dangerous country in the world today. The only country that can check Pakistan is India¹⁹.” Unveiling his New South Asia Strategy in August 2017, Donald Trump had shown a hardline approach towards Pakistan. He had talked about a new strategy, which would bring in new approach to deal with Pakistan.²⁰ However, the Trump government later pursued a more conciliatory approach towards Pakistan as soon as it tried to reach out the Taliban for a peace agreement. Since then, in order to garner support from Pakistan, U.S. special envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad made numerous visits to Pakistan to seek support and update the military and political leadership about the progress in the Afghan peace process. Later, U.S. administration and Khalilzad praised the Pakistan for facilitating the Afghan peace process and providing solid cooperation.

The peace talks process in contrast to the desired framework has turned out to be irretrievably disingenuous. One of the main reasons has been the delinking of the Afghan process with other neighbours who have strong interests and are crucial players.

The peace talks process in contrast to the desired framework has turned out to be irretrievably disingenuous. One of the main reasons has been the delinking of the Afghan process with other neighbours who have strong interests and are crucial players. At a regional level, exclusion of some of the major players including India have led to failure of comprehensive peace process. In the past, there has been a broad congruence between Indian interests and coalition political-military activities in Afghanistan in preventing the return of the Taliban, defeating al-Qaeda, and trying to stabilise Afghanistan around a non-Taliban order²¹.

Similarly, from a strategic perspective, the rising profile of a democratic country as a donor that shares many of the same strategic and developmental objectives is beneficial for Afghanistan²². Apart from these factors, India's involvement in Afghanistan is crucial for larger regional security. Professor Avinash Paliwal, SOAS University of London and Professor Harsh Pant in a joint article for the magazine *The Foreign Policy* have suggested that India's Afghanistan policy is driven by a desire to limit Islamabad's influence in Afghanistan. This is because increased Pakistani influence in Afghanistan may not only lead to a reduced Indian presence but will also make India more susceptible to Pakistani-inspired terrorism and be marginal in the wider region²³. The region has faced a similar situation during the late 1980s and early 1990s which has led to regional instability and serious tension between India and Pakistan over the Indian union territory of Kashmir. It is, therefore, imperative that India plays a crucial role as a regional stakeholder to balance Pakistan.

Implication for India

Recently, the Indian NSA Ajit Doval visited Afghanistan. He met President Ghani and all other high-ranking ministers and officials.²⁴ The discussions largely revolved around bilateral relation and peace process. Although India has supported the ongoing peace process, it still is worried about Pakistan's influence on the Taliban, and possibilities of Afghan soil being used against India in future. India has officially been shy of engaging with the Taliban. It has never held a one-on-one dialogue with the insurgent group. On 09 November 2018, India had sent two former diplomats at non-official level to participate in the Moscow led dialogue on Afghanistan, which was attended by the Taliban. The Afghanistan Government had boycotted the event.

India's consistent policy has been that peace efforts should be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned, and Afghan-controlled. Similar, stand has been reiterated by the U.S. and the international community. However, major concerns related to the implication of the current peace process on the minorities in Afghanistan, particularly the Hazaras and women rights remain. The problem faced by minorities under the Taliban rule were largely different (inter-ethnic) from the problems faced by women (patriarchal), and they had to face mass scale massacre in 1998. The future scenario of Hazaras and other ethnic minorities like Tajiks and Uzbeks being targeted and prosecuted in Afghanistan remain a possibility if there is a return of Taliban, partially or with alliance with other Pashtun factions in Kabul. At the same time while India will want to not antagonise the dominant Pashtun community in Afghanistan. It would like to balance its ties with the ethnic minorities of Northern Afghanistan which had been the backbone of its Afghan policies before 2001 U.S. invasion, as well as with the Pashtun. The strong influence of Pakistan on the powerful Pashtun section will be one thorn in its policy towards Afghanistan. It will take a great deal of creative thinking and imaginative refashioning of New Delhi's policy towards Afghanistan for India to recover lost ground *vis-à-vis* the Pashtuns²⁵.

Major concerns related to the implication of the current peace process on the minorities in Afghanistan, particularly the Hazaras and women rights remain.

Therefore, India should work for a resolution to conflict that supports a constitutional order in Afghanistan, which would protect the interest of all sections of Afghan society, including the Tajik and Uzbek communities that it has supported in the past. It should attempt to work with and through the Taliban and the Pashtun community to achieve this. In case its efforts are stymied by the Pakistan-Taliban combine, its best strategic interests lie with supporting the ethnic minorities in Northern Afghanistan.

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Wither Sub-Regionalism in South Asia? BBIN & BIMSTEC

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Abstract

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)'s inability to facilitate regional integration in South Asia has led India to seek new options. Encouragement to sub-regional cooperation is now being pursued vigorously in relation to Bhutan-Bangladesh-India and Nepal (BBIN) grouping as well as through Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) as one of the ways out. Both these groupings have reassuring potential and promise but they have not yet progressed up to expectations. The difficulties are inherent in the structural imbalances and political mind-sets in the region. China's assertive push has further complicated India's challenge. Suave and sustained diplomacy with adequate resources need to be invested in meeting these challenges. India also must facilitate projects based on trade, energy and people-to-people contacts to help yield concrete benefits to the neighbours and her own self. The progress in BBIN and BIMSTEC will largely be India driven and it will call for patience, accommodation, and sustained efforts.

Sub-regional Cooperation

Co-operative regionalism in South Asia has not been a great success, at least not yet. The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation SAARC achieved much less than its expectations and is presently lying almost in an organisational coma, notwithstanding sporadic attempts to keep it live and revive its spirit, such as SAARC initiative in fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. Pakistan's obduracy is the main obstacle. Its refusal to stop its cross-border terrorism against India and join connectivity projects, just to obstruct India from reaching out to the people in Afghanistan, are the main reason for the present crisis. However, overall, mainly Pakistan and generally all other neighbours have been hesitant in integrating their economies with that of India's despite its obvious benefits. To rescue regional cooperation from the present impasse, India started emphasising and promoting sub-regional cooperation.

Sub-regionalism is not in conflict with SAARC. The basic principles laid down in the SAARC Charter clearly state that it is neither a "substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation" nor is it "inconsistent" with such other co-operation initiatives (Principle No. 2 and 3). The Male SAARC Summit, in 1997, clearly endorsed and encouraged sub-regional cooperation saying:

"With the objective of enhancing regional solidarity and promoting overall development within SAARC, the Heads of state or Government, encouraged under provisions of Articles VII and X of the Charter, the development of specific projects relevant to the special individual needs of three or more member States."¹

It was the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)'s idea of Growth Triangles that inspired sub-regional cooperation under SAARC. Growth Triangles conceived under ASEAN were territories of the regional group's members

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that had strong synergy in location, resources, connectivity, and the levels of development potential in joining hands with each other.² Under SAARC, the number of countries participating in such initiatives was left open and not fixed at three or four. There also existed a conducive political atmosphere in South Asia for such initiatives unleashed primarily by the then Indian Prime Minister IK Gujral who had launched his 'Gujral Doctrine' based on non-reciprocal approach to cooperation with smaller neighbours. This approach had invoked extensive support from all the neighbours and they were willing to enhance regional cooperation, which was not progressing satisfactorily under SAARC. Sub-regional cooperation was a boost to SAARC.

BIMSTEC and BBIN

The resolution for sub-regional cooperation adopted in 1997 SAARC Summit led to the establishment of South Asian Sub-regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) in 2000 under which BBIN countries were designated for cooperation based on specific projects. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) came forward to provide necessary financial support. BIMSTEC was also born around the same time. The process was initiated by Thailand to reach out to its western neighbours under the new 'Look West Policy'. India welcomed the initiative as it was compatible with its then evolving 'Look East Policy'. As a result, a group of four countries joined hands to promote their economic cooperation under the rubric of Bangladesh-India-Sri Lanka and Thailand (in alphabetical order) Economic Cooperation (BISTEC) in June 1997. Myanmar joined this group in December 1997 to make it BIMSTEC. This group was extended at India's initiative and Nepal joined first as an Observer in 1998 and then as a full member along with Bhutan in 2004. The group was then renamed from alphabetical order to Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation i.e. BIMSTEC. Both, BBIN and BIMSTEC groups failed to make any concrete progress for a decade till 2014. BIMSTEC has had fourteen meetings at the ministerial level and three Summits by then, deliberating on the agenda and strategies of cooperation but nothing substantial could be achieved on the ground.

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India decided to activate and energise both, the BBIN and BIMSTEC, and the trigger came from its two adversarial neighbours, Pakistan, and China. At the Kathmandu SAARC Summit in November 2014, Pakistan refused to join regional connectivity proposals that could help India to reach out to Afghanistan and Central Asia. India's new Prime Minister Modi, who had emerged as a strong leader because of the massive electoral victory of his *Bhartiya Janata Party* (BJP) and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) led by it, decided to find a way out of the Pakistani obstacle. He had already been alienated by Pakistan because despite his 'Neighbourhood First' initiative, trade talks with Pakistan had to be cancelled on the issue of Pakistani support to the separatist *Hurriyat* Conference of Jammu & Kashmir, and Pakistan's consistent refusal to stop cross-border terrorism against India. In response to Pakistan's resistance to the SAARC connectivity proposal, Modi underlined India's commitment to regional cooperation at the Kathmandu Summit by saying:

"There is a new awakening in South Asia; a new recognition of inter-linked destinies; and a new belief in shared opportunities.

The bonds will grow.

Through SAARC or outside it.

Among us all or some of us.

We can all choose our paths to our destinations. But, when we join our hands and walk in step, the path becomes easier, the journey quicker and the destination closer.”³

The message of bypassing Pakistan, and putting SAARC on the back burner, was clearly inherent in the address. Pakistan was blocking India’s connectivity with Afghanistan on the western side. India, therefore, decided to push on the eastern front. This was also imperative for the Look East Policy that had been redefined as ‘Act East Policy’ in response to ASEAN and US expectations. India’s immediate and extended eastern neighbourhood could not be neglected as China was fast expanding and consolidating its influence in South and Southeast Asia through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as well as its PLA-Navy outreach in South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. It may be recalled that China has been showing keen interest to join SAARC. Some of the SAARC members, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, have been strongly pursuing China’s case. China has been an Observer in SAARC since 2005.⁴ The critical hurdle for India in linking up with Southeast Asia was connecting through the North East Region, which had been identified as the focus area for development also under the Act East Policy.⁵ Earlier this region had been neglected on account of its precarious security location, being not only adjacent to China but also vulnerable to ethnic insurgencies. China’s BRI projects as part of Maritime Silk Road, covering Sri Lanka, Maldives, Myanmar, and Bangladesh, had also raised serious security concerns for India in the Bay of Bengal Region and Indian Ocean as a whole. Both, BBIN and BIMSTEC have been considered by many as supplements to SAARC. They have two distinct features as compared to SAARC; exclusion of Pakistan and no stated proclivity for China to get associated with.

The critical hurdle for India in linking up with Southeast Asia was connecting through the North East Region, which had been identified as the focus area for development also under the Act East Policy.

BIMSTEC Region incorporates BBIN. It is a considerably big region of nearly 1.85 bn people accounting for close to 25 percent of the global population. The combined GDP of the region according to World Bank’s 2019 estimates was almost US \$ 4 trillion. The region is rich in energy, agricultural and fisheries resources and constitutes an ideal space for connectivity between South and Southeast Asia. It has organisationally evolved, as noted earlier, from a small group to a larger one at the initiatives of India and Thailand. From a Ministerial group in 1997, it was raised to the Summit level in 2004 and has held four Summits so far in 2004, 2008, 2014 and 2018, respectively. The fifth Summit is expected to be held in 2021 in Sri Lanka. Its priorities for the sectors of development cooperation started with six areas, namely trade and investments, transport and communications, energy, tourism, technology, and fisheries. In the 8th Ministerial meeting in 2005, it was decided to add six more areas, i.e., agriculture, public health, poverty alleviation, counterterrorism and transnational crimes, environment and disaster management, people to people contact and cultural cooperation. Again, at the 11th Ministerial meeting in New Delhi in 2008, ‘climate change’ was also included in its priorities for cooperation. All these areas are led by specific countries, with most of the burden being undertaken by the bigger members of the grouping. India and Thailand are lead countries for four and three developmental sectors respectively, Myanmar and Bangladesh in two each and Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka have taken the responsibility for one each.

India may be credited for pushing in areas related to security cooperation like counterterrorism, transnational crimes and maritime security. India also introduced the idea of BIMSTEC meetings of the National Security Chiefs and hosted the first such meeting in 2017. Under this initiative, sub-groups are exploring areas of cooperation in the fields of cyber-security, counter radicalisation, regional and maritime security, and coastal security. At the Kathmandu Summit in 2018, Prime Minister Modi emphasised the role of capacity building in diverse areas and India took the lead in hosting BIMSTEC Military Exercise and Army Chief’s Conclave in Pune in September 2018.⁶ Inaugurating the BIMSTEC Workshop on Coastal Security, India’s senior official, the Secretary East, said:

“Cooperation in the security domain has been considered of special salience under BIMSTEC. The Meeting of BIMSTEC National Security Chiefs has been structured as an annual feature. They have met thrice; in 2017 in New Delhi, 2018 in Dhaka and 2019 in Bangkok and have underscored the importance of recognising the Bay of Bengal as common security space and agreed to collectively work to deal with challenges. In the last three years, close security cooperation has not only continued but has also diversified and it now includes maritime security cooperation, cyber-security, harnessing emerging space technologies for addressing security challenges, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief; among others. Under BIMSTEC, cooperation against terrorism has been formalised...”⁷

The strategic community in India has followed up this official initiative by identifying many sectors to be explored for strengthening security cooperation under BIMSTEC mechanism.⁸ Vivekanand International Foundation (VIF) organised a conference on BIMSTEC and Maritime Security in January 2020, which asked for sharing actionable information among BIMSTEC member states and networking with other regional organisations like ASEAN and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). The conference also devoted effort on suggesting how to fight Islamic radicalisation.⁹ BIMSTEC has also taken initiatives on undertaking disaster relief and humanitarian assistance projects.

BBIN is a project based cooperative venture. It has been operating through the Joint Working Group of senior officials of all the member countries. In pursuance of the decision taken at the highest political level, an Agreement for the free movement of Motor Vehicles across international borders among these four countries was signed on 15 June 2015 by their respective Transport Ministers. The objective of the quadrilateral Motor Vehicles Agreement (MVA) was explained as:

BBIN is a project based cooperative venture. It has been operating through the Joint Working Group of senior officials of all the member countries.

“This BBIN-MVA will allow the BBIN countries to move forward with exchange of traffic rights and ease cross-border movement of goods, vehicles and people, thereby helping to expand people-to-people contact, trade and economic exchanges between them. The BBIN-MVA would make cross border trade and transport in and through the north eastern region of India to and from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal more efficient.”¹⁰

The Agreement was to come into force after ratification by the member countries. While three of the four signing countries have ratified the Agreement, Bhutan's Upper House withheld its ratification, even after the approval by the lower house, on the ground that free movement of vehicles from Bangladesh and Nepal would add to environmental pollution and adversely affect employment opportunities of the Bhutanese truckers. Clarifying this, Bhutan's Prime Minister Lotay Tsering told an Indian News Paper:

“If our infrastructure improves, our economy improves, trade improves at some point, we would definitely want to be a part of the BBIN-MVA, but currently, given our current infrastructure, we cannot even cater properly to our own local needs. As a result, we cannot consider this plan despite its economic potential for Bhutan. As you know, we are a carbon negative country and today motor vehicles are the biggest emitters of greenhouse gases. This is the reason we can't have too many visitors, and we can't be a part of BBIN-MVA. This is the essence of Gross National Happiness (GNH), not to measure what you have in monetary terms alone.”¹¹

Possibility of other considerations like border security weighing on Bhutan's decision to stay out of MVA cannot be ruled out. Bhutan has a bilateral agreement with India for free movement of vehicles. Its refusal to accede to BBIN-MVA will affect the movement of Nepal and Bangladesh vehicles into Bhutan and vice-versa. To ensure that the BBIN-MVA is not stalled over Bhutan's refusal to join it, Bhutan has asked other members to proceed with it as it will

continue to be a part of the group as an observer. This has facilitated movement on the MVA project. Two years after the meeting of the group in January 2018 in Bangalore, the BBIN group met in New Delhi on 08 February 2020, with Bhutan joining as an Observer. Draft proposals on the movement of cargoes and passengers were discussed and it was decided to meet again in May 2020 to finalise them. Bhutan agreed to continue with its ‘internal discussions’ for working on the MVA projects.¹² This meeting, it seems, could not take place owing to Corona pandemic.

Outcome

Both BIMSTEC and BBIN groupings have considerable potential for cooperation. Ministerial meetings of BIMSTEC have already added different areas to its priorities and started working on them. BBIN has reiterated cooperation in the areas of trade, economic cooperation and people to people contact through connectivity. The progress on the ground has, however, been far below the expectations of possibility and potential promised of these groups. BBIN’s MVA project has been delayed, as noted earlier, owing to Bhutan’s reservations.

There is considerably more activity in BIMSTEC. Its meetings have regularly taken place and four of its Summits have already taken place. Organisationally, BIMSTEC now has a functional Secretariat in Dhaka. The fifth Summit was expected to be convened in 2020 but it could not be held due to the Corona pandemic. Hopefully, 2021 will see the Summit organised in Sri Lanka under its Presidency. Some of the Senior Officials’ Meetings (SOM), at the level of foreign secretaries of the member countries, were held even under pandemic conditions. The last such meeting was held in September 2020, where the appointment of a new Secretary General, Mr Tenzin Lekphell of Bhutan, was endorsed. This meeting also finalised the drafts of the Charter of BIMSTEC and Memorandum of Association on the establishment of various centres and entities.¹³ To keep BIMSTEC’s functioning on track, the current Chair of the grouping, Sri Lanka, has proposed the adoption of a ‘Troika System’ of the past, present, and future Chairs of the organisation.¹⁴

Countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are acutely conscious of their identity distinct from India and have no national consensus on ‘how close to India is not too close’.

On the areas identified for substantive cooperation, progress in BIMSTEC, however, has been far less than satisfactory. This is evident from a close reading of the 4th Summit Document issued in Kathmandu in 2018 which has an annexure attached reviewing the various sectors of cooperation ranging from Poverty Alleviation, Connectivity, Trade and Investments etc. to People to People Contacts and Cultural Cooperation and Tourism.¹⁵ At the last SOM held in September 2020, Nepal’s Foreign Secretary, in his assessment of the progress made so far “underscored the need for taking strong measures to make a headway in the identified areas of cooperation, including trade and connectivity”.¹⁶ An assessment made in 2015, by some analysts in Kolkata, that BIMSTEC may not make faster progress on account of uneven economies and lack of political will of its members seems to be emerging as valid.¹⁷

There are three important factors that stand out in slowing down the progress in BBIN and BIMSTEC. One, is the lack of infrastructure and resources to carry out capital intensive connectivity and related projects. The 4th Summit of BIMSTEC took notice of the resource crunch in carrying out desired projects. Besides hardware of connectivity, procedural matters related to trade facilitations, non-tariff barriers also need serious attention. Many stakeholders and think tanks have produced valuable reports identifying relevant obstacles in BIMSTEC and BBIN progress.¹⁸ Second, there is structural inequality in-built into these two groups that generate a host of difficulties not only related to resources to be committed and gains to be expected, but also of political identities. India and Thailand are the biggest and strongest members, but their smaller and poorer colleagues have not been comfortable in closely integrating themselves with the bigger and powerful members. Countries like Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are acutely conscious of their identity distinct from India and have no national consensus on ‘how close to India is not too close’. In every BIMSTEC document, the importance of sovereign equality and non-interference is underlined to reassure smaller members that

they would not be dominated by the bigger ones. There has been a tendency on the part of India's smaller neighbours to treat their engagements with India in a bilateral, unequal, and imbalanced context, even when they are cast in a regional and multilateral framework. This was an unstated concern in relation to SAARC and if SAARC could not resolve that concern, how BBIN and BIMSTEC could? Recall the question of Bhutan's reservations on BBIN-MVA project.

Third, and lastly, the invisible impact of China's assertive push into South and Southeast Asia is also adding to the hesitation of smaller neighbours in integrating with India. They do not want to be counterbalancing China in the region through greater proximity to India. They are also hesitant in joining any move with India that may appear to be mobilisation against China. Nepal did not join the counter-terrorism military exercise of BIMSTEC called upon, and organised, by India soon after the 4th Summit in 2018. The decision was changed at the last moment, at the highest political level, in view of reservations voiced from within the ruling Communist Party of Nepal that was being patronised by China in pursuance of its BRI projects.¹⁹ There is a general hesitation on the part of all other members that any cooperative BBIN or BIMSTEC initiative led by India, particularly in security, should not become, or even appear to be, a front against Pakistan or China. Economically, India's smaller neighbours have experienced that support extended by China under BRI far outweighs what India can offer even generously.

The Future

Both BBIN and BIMSTEC are smartly conceived sub-regional groupings, and they have considerable potential and promise to emerge as powerful instruments of regional integration for development and security in the region. India has vital stakes harnessing this potential and realising the inherent promise. They not only will help India integrate with her immediate neighbours but also become a link with its extended neighbourhood in the Indo-Pacific Region. In his message on the 20th Anniversary of BIMSTEC, Prime Minister Modi, on 06 June 2017, said:

Both BBIN and BIMSTEC are smartly conceived sub-regional groupings, and they have considerable potential and promise to emerge as powerful instruments of regional integration for development and security in the region.

“Our collective resolve to impart fresh momentum to BIMSTEC has provided hope and optimism. BIMSTEC not only connects South and South-East Asia, but also the ecologies of the Great Himalayas and the Bay of Bengal. With shared values, histories, ways of life, and destinies that are interlinked, BIMSTEC represents a common space for peace and development. For India, it is a natural platform to fulfil our key foreign policy priorities of ‘Neighbourhood First’ and ‘Act East’”.

Within days of his taking over as Minister of External Affairs, Dr S Jaishankar underlined India's increasing preference for BIMSTEC over SAARC in his observations at the 7th Growth Net Summit, on 06 June 2019, saying:

“SAARC has certain problems which are known to all. Even if you put the terrorism issue aside, there are trade and connectivity issues...BIMSTEC leaders were invited for the swearing-in ceremony because today we see an energy and a possibility in BIMSTEC and a mind-set which fits in with that very optimistic vision of economic cooperation that we want”.²⁰

India has accordingly invested heavily in BIMSTEC and BBIN both, diplomatically and financially. Despite Bhutan's reservations, BBIN has been pushed forward. Analysts wonder if by capping the number of vehicles entering Bhutan, its concerns for environmental pollution can be met and its participation in the project facilitated. India has also proposed to spend \$1.08 bn for upgrading roads with Nepal and Bhutan to facilitate implementation of MVA. ADB may be coming forward to meet 50 percent of the project cost. In BIMSTEC, most of the initiatives have been taken by India including in security sector, as noted earlier.

India, however, may have to do more than investing financial and diplomatic resources. It must bridge the trust deficit with her smaller neighbours that arises out of internal political turbulence within these countries. There are serious constitutional and power-sharing issues among the ruling elites in these countries, where India is seen as a partisan and divisive force. India will have to respond to these issues to raise its clout and credibility within these countries. This would be a challenging task as China has also started getting engaged with the domestic politics within these countries to ensure that a friendly and pliant regime is in power to facilitate its BRI projects and its overall strategic thrust into the region. It would be unrealistic to assume that BIMSTEC or BBIN can replace the significance of SAARC but by carefully responding to strategic, economic, and sensitive political issues in relation to BBIN and BIMSTEC neighbours and by employing its considerable stock of cultural and social ties, India can help them unfold their real potential and make them credible instruments in pursuance of its critical regional interests.

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Enhancing India-Nepal Relations: De Novo Approach towards Win-Win Paradigm

Dr. Pramod Jaiswal, PhD[@]

Abstract

India and Nepal are two countries which because of their geography, history, ethnic and religious commonality, and deep people to people contacts should be the proverbial “brothers”. However, periodically missteps create tensions in their relationship. This article carries out a recapitulation of the high points in their relations especially in contemporary times and suggests means by which their relations and bonds can be strengthened.

Introduction

India and Nepal are two countries bounded closely together in a complex web of linkages and contiguities that span across civilisational, historical, sociocultural, economic, geostrategic, and political terrains.¹ The bedrock of India-Nepal ‘unique’ relationship lies in the 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship that acknowledges the ancient relations and intend to take it to greater heights.² The major contours of India-Nepal relations are guided by treaties, trade and transit, people-to-people connectivity and development cooperation.³ However, periodic tensions take place between them which have exacerbated in recent times. These need to be recognised for what they are, and steps taken to keep the relations warm, productive and mutually beneficial.

High-Level Exchanges

There has always been a regular visit by the heads of the state and heads of the government from Nepal to India. However, the first state visit by an Indian President to Nepal after 18 years was made by Pranab Mukherjee in November 2016. Similarly, unlike his predecessor, Dr. Manmohan Singh, who failed to visit Nepal even once in his decade-long tenure, Narendra Modi visited Nepal four times — in August 2014, November 2014, May 2018, and August 2018 — becoming the first Indian Prime Minister to visit the country in 17 years. He is also the first Indian PM to visit Nepal four times. During his first visit to Kathmandu in August 2014, he enchanted the Nepalese people with a rousing address in Nepal’s parliament, which was the first such address by a foreign leader. His visit in November 2014 and August 2018 was to participate at the SAARC and BIMSTEC Summits respectively.

During the high-level exchanges, India assured its commitment to Nepal’s economic development and announced a soft loan of USD 1 billion and assistance in several infrastructure development projects in Nepal, railway connectivity between Raxaul (India) to Kathmandu, cross-border oil pipeline, USD 250 million post-earthquake reconstruction, and others. The most significant was signing a deal worth USD 1.6 billion to build Arun III, 900 MW hydropower plants, which is being built by state-run Indian firm Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited, making it the single biggest foreign investment project in Nepal.⁴ Among these, Motihari-Amlekhganj cross-border oil pipeline was completed much before

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the stipulated time making it the first trans-national pipeline in the South Asia region.⁵ Similarly, a direct bus service connecting several cities of India and Nepal — such as Janakpur-Ayodhya and Kathmandu-Delhi were unveiled. Both the countries are also working to promote the Ramayana Circuit and the Buddhist Circuit to revive cultural links and promote tourism.⁶

Trade and Aid

India and Nepal have a history of longstanding relations in trade and commerce. India is Nepal's largest trading partner — both in terms of import and export trade — where India accounts for over two-third of Nepal's merchandise trade, about one-third of trade in services, one-third of foreign direct investments, 100 percent of petroleum supplies, and a significant share of inward remittances on account of pensioners, professionals and workers working in India.⁷ The trade between India and Nepal is governed by three legal instruments — Bilateral Trade Treaties, South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) and South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA). The total trade between India and Nepal has expanded from USD 2.41 billion in 2010-11 to USD 8.27 billion in 2018-19. India accounted for 61.44 percent of Nepal's total import trade and 71.75 percent of its total export during this fiscal year.⁸

India also stands among one of the major donors of foreign aid in Nepal.⁹ It has supported several connectivity and infrastructural projects in Nepal such as hospitals, schools, colleges, roads, bridges, etc. It is constructing Integrated Check Posts (ICPs), cross-border railways, postal highways, and several other mega projects for Nepal's development. Among all these, the most ambitious is the cross-border railway project as India has proposed to build six rail links with Nepal from Raxaul, Joghani and Jayanagar in Bihar to Birgunj, Biratnagar and Bardibas in Nepal; Nautanwa of Uttar Pradesh to Nepalgunj in Nepal and Jalpaiguri of West Bengal to Kakarbhitta of Nepal. The first phase of the cross-border railway connectivity, 17 km Jayanagar-Bardibas railway project is completed with the cost of INR 5.5 billion. Raxaul-Kathmandu railway link is the most recent announcement by India made in April 2018. A cabinet meeting held on 9 March 2021 gave approval to the Nepalese Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transport to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with India to create a detailed project report for the proposed USD 3.15 billion project.

India and Nepal have a history of longstanding relations in trade and commerce. India is Nepal's largest trading partner — both in terms of import and export trade — where India accounts for over two-third of Nepal's merchandise trade, about one-third of trade in services, one-third of foreign direct investments,

Approximately 150 Indian ventures are currently being operated in Nepal, accounting for over 30 percent of the country's total FDI. These Indian firms cover sectors such as manufacturing, banking, insurance, education, telecom, power, tourism and various other sectors.¹⁰ Some large Indian investors include ITC, Dabur India, Hindustan Unilever, VSNL, TCIL, MTNL, State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, Life Insurance Corporation of India, Asian Paints, CONCOR, GMR India, IL&FS, Manipal Group, MIT Group Holdings, Nupur International, Transworld, Group, Patel Engineering, Bhilwara Energy, Bhushan Group, Feedback Ventures, RJ Corp, KSK Energy, Berger Paints, Essel Infra Project Ltd. and Tata Power, India etc.¹¹ In order to attract more Indian FDI inflow and boost bilateral trade and investment, Nepal has signed the Bilateral Investment Protection and Promotion Act (BIPPA) Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with India.¹² Moreover, Nepal is one of the earliest recipients of the development operation, channelised through direct support, and technical assistance and training initiatives.¹³ The Development Cooperation Report 2019, illustrates that India ranked fifth amongst the top five bilateral development partners of Nepal for the financial year 2018-19, with USD 58,944,224 million in Official Development Assistance (ODA) disbursements.¹⁴ Government of India's development assistance in recent years has been focusing on creation of infrastructure at the grass-roots level, under which various projects have been implemented in the areas of infrastructure, health, water resources, education and rural & community development.¹⁵

External Security: India's Strategic Neighbourhood

India has also been promoting the development of human resources in Nepal. According to the Ministry of External Affairs of India, India provides around 3000 scholarships annually to Nepalese students for various courses at the Ph.D/Masters, Bachelors and plus-two levels in India and in Nepal. These scholarships cover engineering, medicine, agriculture, pharmacology, veterinary sciences, computer application, business administration, music, fine arts, etc.¹⁶ Similarly, India was the first country to aid Nepal during the massive earthquake that shattered the country in 2015. In January 2021, the Government of India provided USD 50 million as reimbursement of expenses on rebuilding schools in the earthquake-affected districts.¹⁷ India also supported 50,000 housing beneficiaries in Nuwakot and Gorkha districts as part of earthquake reconstruction project.

During the initial phase of the pandemic, PM Narendra Modi pledged the creation of USD 10 million SAARC Emergency Fund to fight COVID-19. This was followed by the supply of various medical supplies, testing equipment and sanitisers among other items. India donated 825 thousand dosages of essential medicines including 320 thousand dosage of Paracetamol and 250 thousand dosages of Hydroxychloroquine.¹⁸ Likewise, as a part of India's vaccine diplomacy, India provided one million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield vaccine to Nepal as grant assistance to generate goodwill among the Nepalese people.¹⁹

Strategic Partnership

The security interest of Nepal and India overlaps as both enjoy an open border. This is clearly reflected in the treaty of 1950 Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Interestingly, the Chief of Nepal Army acts as honorary Chief of Indian Army and vice versa. These are unique features of India-Nepal relations which indicates the close defence ties between the two countries. Both the countries have wide-ranging cooperation in the defence sector. India has been assisting the Nepal Army (NA) in its training, modernisation and supply of equipment's. The Indian Army regularly aids during disasters, conducts joint military exercises, adventure activities and bilateral visits. Many defence personnel from Nepal Army attend training courses in various Indian Army training institutions. Similarly, huge number of Nepalese join the Indian Army in the Gorkha regiments.

Recently, India was also caught into major controversy due to the Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh-Kalapani dispute. Moreover, India is allegedly refusing to accept the report prepared by the Eminent Personal Group, who were given the task to review all the past treaties between India and Nepal.

Irritants in Relations

Despite harmonious relations, India-Nepal relations, however, has had some frictions throughout their history to the present times. These have arisen subsequent to some policies being pursued. Nepal expressed strong dissatisfaction in 2015 as they saw a hidden Indian hand during the 'unofficial blockade' imposed by the Madesis of Nepal to pressurise the Nepal government to address their demands in the newly promulgated constitution. India is often accused of micro-management and interference in internal affairs of Nepal. In fact, India has played a decisive role in almost all the major political transformations of Nepal. Nepalese political forces have always invited Indian intervention; some in Nepal entertain it while others curse it. Indian intervention has always pleased some, but disheartened others. As a result, India has always been part of domestic politics creating grievances among certain political parties/ groups. Recently, India was also caught into major controversy due to the Limpiyadhura-Lipulekh-Kalapani dispute. Moreover, India is allegedly refusing to accept the report prepared by the Eminent Personal Group, who were given the task to review all the past treaties between India and Nepal, which has become another irritant in bilateral relations.²⁰

Win-Win Cooperation

India has emerged as one of the major economies of the world, placing itself as the world's fifth largest economy. It has made dramatic economic progress and its infrastructures along the India-Nepal border has drastically improved. With

the rise of India, there is also a rise in the aspirations of Nepal. Nepal, that lies in-between the world's fastest growing economies, also hold similar dreams and desires. India should be a partner in fulfilling such aspirations of Nepalese people. Failing to meet such aspirations, it would obviously seek support elsewhere.

Nepal is rich in hydropower power. It has the capacity to generate more than 43,000 MW of electricity, out of which only around 1000 MW has been produced. India has technology and capital, and it can be potential market for the surplus produced. Similarly, Nepal is a beautiful country and a rising middle class in India can be the potential market for its tourism industry. India ought to support Nepal in meeting its aspirations by sustaining the development of these two sectors that will accelerate its economic development. Many times Nepal has also politicised several India funded hydropower projects, which it should refrain from.

One of the major factors for the snail paced development of Nepal is lack of connectivity with either of its neighbours. Similarly, it borders with the poorest regions of both its neighbours and has failed to reap the benefit from their rising economy. Thus, Nepal strives for connectivity projects. During the 'unofficial blockade' imposed by India, Nepal started looking for the alternative transit routes. Hence, there is an urgent need for India to speed up its cross-border railway connectivity and other connectivity projects to accelerate its economic development by integrating itself into the fast-growing Indian economy. Moreover, the huge trade deficit faced by Nepal every year with India is unsustainable in a long run. In order to decrease the trade deficit, India needs to remove structural and procedural impediments to the entry of genuine Nepali goods into Indian markets. India needs to be more accommodative.

India should refrain from interfering into Nepal's internal affairs, as it intensifies anti-India voices in the country. Hence, India should state its interests in Nepal but should avoid getting involved into internal manoeuvring.

While India has been successful in winning the hearts of Nepalese many times, it has also often been trapped into controversies. While Nepal appreciated the Indian role during the massive earthquake, the role of India media was strongly criticised for its insensitive reports on Nepal. India, many times has become unpopular in spite of its huge contribution to Nepal's development, because of its flawed interventionist policies in the past. As a result, anti-India elements have taken benefit from such hostile situations.

Moreover, India should refrain from interfering into Nepal's internal affairs, as it intensifies anti-India voices in the country. Hence, India should state its interests in Nepal but should avoid getting involved into internal manoeuvring. Doing so will allow Nepalese political parties to evolve themselves, which will bring peace and stability in Nepal, which is also in India's interest, in the long run. In recent years, there is some realisation among the Indian policymakers which is reflected on their policies as well, resulting in a decline of anti-India voices. Similarly, Nepal as a friendly neighbour, should also address the sensitivities of India. Nepal should understand that if it fails to address the genuine concerns of its neighbours, it is bound to face interference, which will lead to its instability.

Conclusion

It is of utmost importance that India should resolve its pending border disputes with Nepal. It is not in India's interest to have a border dispute with Nepal, a neighbour with which it enjoys special relations. Both the countries should sit together, look at the historical facts and figures and resolve this issue once and for all, else it will further aggravate the situation, which can have serious security implications on each other.

Nepal has time and again, accused India of not delivering on the promises made. Some of the Indian projects are long delayed. Hence, rather than making new promises, it should speed up the awaiting projects, complete them before announcing the new ones. There is lack of adequate progress in several hydropower projects such as Pancheshwar multipurpose project, postal highways, post-earthquake reconstruction, irrigation, power and transmission lines,

External Security: India's Strategic Neighbourhood

construction of the Nepal Police Academy, the Ramayana and Buddhist circuit for tourism, HICDPs (high impact community development projects), motorable bridges over the Mahakali River, etc.

Lastly, Nepali media is overly critical of India. As a result, even tiny events are blown out of proportion. Thus, India needs to manage its perception in the Nepalese media and people to contain the rise of anti-India propaganda. On the other side, India should also restrict the Indian media for generating provocative media reports that can further fuel anti-India feeling in Nepal.

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Section IV

*External Security: Pakistan–China Strategic
Challenges*

Pakistan's Dangerous Game Plan in Gilgit-Baltistan

Brigadier NK Bhatia, SM (Retd)[@]

Abstract

Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) has remained a bone of contention between India and Pakistan since the day it was annexed in a deceitful manner led by a British Army officer. Since its annexation, the territory has been at the mercy of Pakistan's ruling establishment and its people have been denied their basic political rights. Chinese prompting to Pakistani establishment to set things right in GB to enable China to execute its ambitious 'One Belt One Road (OBOR)' initiative by execution of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passing through GB seems to have prodded Pakistan to initiate series of political moves in the last one year to bestow legal status to the province by making it its fifth Province.

Introduction

GB lies at the convergence of three highest mountain ranges on earth; the mighty Himalayan Ranges, Karakoram and Hindu Kush mountains. It has a large landmass and is spread over an area of 72,496 sq km (27,99 miles). It has a population of 1.9 million, of which approximately 40 per cent are Shias. Its geographical location provides it a strategic advantage, being at the confluence of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan and India.

GB has been under occupation of Pakistan since 1947-48. However, the most important geographical aspect of its location is its boundary to the north east, called Shaksgam Tract, a strategically important area of over 5180 sq km that it had (provisionally) ceded to the People's Republic of China in 1963 and now it forms part of China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

Brief History

GB became part of princely state of Jammu and Kashmir in 1846 and remained under its rule until 1947, when it was surreptitiously occupied and annexed by Pakistan, consolidating Islamabad's dominion over the region after the first Indo-Pak war for the control of Kashmir that followed English decolonisation.¹ Pakistan's occupation of Gilgit Wazarat and Gilgit Agency — more famously known as Gilgit-Baltistan — was outcome of disloyalty of British officers, led by Major Brown of the Gilgit Scouts.² As per historical records, it is known that British Army officers seconded to the local *rajahs* of GB had engineered a revolt so that it did not become a part of India.

From 1947 to 1970, the Government of Pakistan established and administered the *Northern Areas* through a resident at Gilgit taking care of the day to day administration of entire Gilgit-Baltistan.³ In 1970, the then Pakistan Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, established the 'Northern Area Council' and set up a single administrative unit by combining Gilgit Agency, the Baltistan District of the Ladakh-Wazarat, and the states of Hunza and Nagar and

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rechristened these as Federally Administered Northern Areas (FANA) under the administrative control of Pakistan's Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas.

The last so called reform introduced by Pakistan government was promulgation of the 'Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order 2009', ostensibly to grant self-rule to the people of the 'Northern Areas', and renamed the region as GB. This move resulted, among other administrative changes, to establish an elected legislative assembly.⁴ The move was criticised and rejected by Gilgit Baltistan United Movement that demanded an independent and autonomous legislative assembly for GB.

During the last one year, wide spread political and other developments in GB have brought the region into focus and will have far reaching consequences on Pakistan's internal dynamics with relation to status of GB and, consequently, on the strategic landscape of the region, with added dimension of Chinese prominence in the state.

Holding of Elections in GB

The Pakistan government passed a Presidential proclamation on 16 May 2020 to conduct elections in GB on 24 June 2020 following a Pakistan Supreme Court directive to hold elections in the province. The elections were later rescheduled to August 2020 but postponed due to Covid Pandemic. The elections were finally held on 15 November 2020 with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf party, mentored by Prime Minister Imran Khan, winning 22 of the 33 seats. The two opposition parties of Pakistan, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League (N) (PML-N) alleged poll rigging.

The move to hold elections in GB was also protested to by India and it issued a 'demarche' in May 2020 after Pakistan Supreme Court issued its order directing Pakistan's federal government to hold elections in GB.

The holding of elections in GB saw simmering discontent amongst the locals who felt that as it would pave the way for mainstream political parties of Pakistan to foray into the region at the cost of indigenous political groups now operating under the umbrella of Gilgit-Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), which represents fringe groups such as the Balawaristan National Front, Karakoram National Movement, Gilgit Baltistan United Movement, the Bolor Research Forum, and the Gilgit Baltistan Ladakh Democratic Movement. The people of the region have been protesting against denial of fundamental rights and policies of successive Pakistani governments.

The move to hold elections in GB was also protested to by India and it issued a 'demarche' in May 2020 after Pakistan Supreme Court issued its order directing Pakistan's federal government to hold elections in GB. The Government of India's position in the matter is reflected in the resolution passed by the Parliament in 1994 by consensus as India has always considered complete Jammu and Kashmir including GB and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) as an integral part of India.

Political Move to Grant Status of Fifth Province to GB

In another significant decision, Pakistani Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan, Ali Amin Gandapur, in September 2020 reignited the contentious issue of grant of provincial status to GB by stating that the province would be elevated as the fifth province of Pakistan with all constitutional rights enjoyed by four other provinces of Pakistan, including representation in the upper and lower houses of the Pakistan parliament.

The sudden announcement of inclusion of GB as fifth province of Pakistan and underlying reasons for changing the political framework of the region have much wider ramifications. The implications of this move are bound to exacerbate tensions both internally and in its immediate neighbourhood with India, coming immediately after the events that unfolded along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) on Indo China border. The move to make Gilgit-Baltistan as the

fifth province of Pakistan has also been opposed by people of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir who fear that the move will make the demand for a united Jammu and Kashmir irrelevant.⁵

Increasing Chinese Footprint in GB

Beyond the political moves, the increased Chinese engagement in GB has been inviting increasing global attention. In a significant development for the region, Pakistan concluded an agreement between China Power and Pakistan Army's Frontier Works Organisation, a commercial arm of the Armed Forces of Pakistan, in May 2020 for the construction of US \$ 8.1 billion Diamer-Basha Dam in GB Region. The Chinese contribution for the project will be 70 per cent while Pakistan's share in the project would be only 30 per cent.⁶ The dam is China's first major infrastructure project in Kashmir, and part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is tied into China's massive Belt and Road Initiative.⁷

Daimar-Basha is only 1 of the 5 proposed dams planned as the Northern (Indus) Cascade. The 5 dams together will have potential for 22000 MW of energy. The significance of the construction of Diamer-Basha Dam is worrisome from two aspects. One, its location is in a region claimed by India and another is the increased Chinese hold over Pakistan, and the region, allowing it to expand its footprints. The dam project had so far not seen any progress due to expert opinion from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank which had advised Pakistan to go in for smaller dams due to adverse environmental impact of large dams, its location in a fragile seismic zone, and inability to fund the project.

As per known inputs, China's National Energy Administration (NEA) would oversee funding of the project. It's Three Gorges Corporation, that runs the world's largest hydro-electric project at the Three Gorges Dam in China, will be the lead contractor to build all 5 proposed dams in the region. Daimar-Basha would be the first project. China is likely to deploy 13,000 Chinese workers on the project although Pakistan claims that the project would employ 16,500 Pakistanis. The Chinese economic stake is in addition to its pledge to invest over US \$ 50 billion for the CPEC that is a vital link for President Xi's ambitious BRI project on which he has staked his reputation since coming to power in 2013.

The locals see the move to allow Chinese personnel into their region as an onslaught of Chinese cultural practices, erosion of the local cultural values, and loss of their land

The increase in Chinese activities and construction of the dam would definitely result in enhanced presence of Chinese military and construction personnel with wide cultural and security implications on the region. The locals see the move to allow Chinese personnel into their region as an onslaught of Chinese cultural practices, erosion of the local cultural values, and loss of their land due to Pakistan's plans to build five mega dams with Chinese assistance in hydrographically rich area, which the locals assert is in violation of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP).

China Pakistan Economic Corridor

GB is the gateway to CPEC. Although touted as "[lifeline of CPEC](#)"⁸, GB has not reaped the economic benefits that the people of the region were promised. At the time of inking the CPEC deal, the locals had been made to dream of employment and jobs, economic upliftment, setting up of industries, and an overall improvement in their living standards.

GB, that has enjoyed the status of a semi-autonomous region, was ignored at the time of signing of the CPEC and its people left out of any consultations. The promised jobs remained elusive and employment for locals is still a dream. Instead, the province has been inundated with Chinese construction labour, forcing the people of the region to carry out menial tasks for the Chinese. Instead of the promised economic revival of the local economy, it is the Chinese that have benefitted from the CPEC. Even the contracts for local resources like mining, which were managed

by the indigenous people, have been cancelled and allotted to the Chinese companies giving them exclusive control over mining activities. The locals have been displaced and their land acquired for projects associated with CPEC. Most displaced locals have been left out of relief or rehabilitation packages leading to untold miseries.

Although passing of CPEC through GB facilitates connectivity through implementation of road projects, it also envisages setting up of four Special Economic Zones (SEZ) for trade and businesses. One such SEZ, Moqpondass is planned to be set up in GB. The SEZ is spread over 250 acres and planned for trade in marble/granite, fruit, mineral, and leather processing. It is located on Skardu - Gilgit highway, 35 km from Gilgit and 160 km from Skardu airports. The Sust dry port is 200 km. The setting up of the SEZ and need for land has again infringed on the livelihood of locals with contracts for mining passed on to the Chinese.

Another worry of the locals is the impact of CPEC on the environment of the region. “The Chinese are known for implementing development projects without caring much about environmental issues” lament locals from Upper Hunza in GB. Once the CPEC is completed, “Over 70,000 trucks will pass through this region daily emitting a large amount of carbon. The government will also lay railway tracks in this mountainous area by building a number of tunnels. This will likely cause landslides and disturb the region’s ecological balance” they say.⁹

Underlying Reasons for Political Changes in GB

Most observers feel that CPEC is the main underlying reason for Pakistan’s attempts to bring about political changes to the semi-autonomous region of GB. China, too, has been wary of political instability in the region where locals have opposed its implementation of CPEC due to large scale entry of Pakhtoon and Chinese workers, the land of locals being acquired, and non-fulfilment of promised jobs to locals. However, more importantly, the need to amalgamate GB within Pakistan is outcome of Indian assertions of its claim over complete Jammu and Kashmir. Indian move to annul Article 370 on 05 August 2019 in Jammu and Kashmir and reorganise the state to integrate it with itself has forced Pakistan to assimilate Gilgit Baltistan within itself as fifth province so as to prevent India from ratcheting up its claims.¹⁰

Most observers feel that CPEC is the main underlying reason for Pakistan’s attempts to bring about political changes to the semi-autonomous region of GB.

There would be bigger challenges that would emerge once the planned change in the political amalgamation of GB is undertaken. The people of PoK, an area almost one sixth in comparison to GB but with a population of 4 million, twice that of GB, and with a greater say both politically and vocally, have protested the move and feel that integrating GB as fifth province would dilute the cause of a united Kashmir. Pakistan’s political leaders have been countering the same by stating that GB is separate from PoK on the plea that it had risen in revolt against the *Maharaja* much before the *kabailis* (pathan tribesmen) had invaded the areas of PoK and Pakistan had taken administrative control of the territory prior to annexing PoK.

The demand to integrate GB with PoK has been opposed by people of GB as they feel that there are major differences between the two groups and its people are distinct from Kashmir and belong to separate ethnicity, have different language and culture.

Currently the political dispensation in Pakistan has been calling the move to make Gilgit-Baltistan as fifth province as “provisional” since Pakistan’s constitution in Article 1(2) (a) refers to the territories of Pakistan to comprise of Provinces of Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunwa, Punjab and Sindh.¹¹ Any move to make GB as fifth province would, therefore, require an amendment to its constitution. So far, Pakistan has exercised control over the region since 1947 through administrative directions. Under what constitutional provision it subsumes GB into itself would be another interesting aspect of creation of its fifth province.

Social, Political and Economic Issues Impacting GB

GB is a naturally endowed region with abundance of minerals, precious and semi-precious stones, and water resources. It has huge tourism potential. Social, political and economic issues have continued to impede its progress.

Socially, population belongs to minority Shia sect who has generally faced challenges in integrating with mainland Pakistan. The social affinity and proximity of its population with Muslims in adjoining Xinjiang Region of China, with which it shares common boundary, has forced their persecution by the Pakistan government to please the Chinese. Another major reason of social unrest has been the forced imposition of Chinese culture, including introduction of Mandarin in the local schools at cost of indigenous languages, leading to discontentment amongst the locals.

Politically, the locals had limited political say even in their own province since constitutionally they were not part of Pakistan and were administered through federal rules imposed on them. With a population of only 1.9 million, the significance of locals and their say in their own affairs as well as national affairs was negligible. It is, yet, to be seen how inclusion of GB as fifth province impacts their political fortune.

On the economic front, GB has been unable to develop despite having great potential due to abundance of natural resources. CPEC was to be a game changer and bring about transformation to the economic well-being of the people. To the contrary, it has led to China's exploitations of its resources wherein, all contracts for mineral exploration have been taken by Chinese leaving the locals at their mercy for jobs. The exploitation of natural resources has had a negative impact on local environment and ecology leading to natural calamities. As per a report Gilgit Baltistan is already facing serious environmental problems in relation to climate change because of air and water pollution, inadequate waste disposal, natural resources depletion, deforestation, loss of biodiversity and glacier melting.¹² Researchers have concluded that the current rise in temperatures will dry up glaciers of Karakorum and Himalayan Region within a century.

India has been quick to express its concern to Pakistan's moves to change the constitutional status of GB as, for India, the development poses a formidable challenge to its long standing claim to whole of Kashmir including GB and PoK.

Indian Concerns and Options

GB's location makes it strategically important and a bridge between China and Pakistan. It denies India direct access to Central Asia and softer underbelly of China, 'Tibet and Xinjiang'.

India has been quick to express its concern to Pakistan's moves to change the constitutional status of GB as, for India, the development poses a formidable challenge to its long standing claim to whole of Kashmir including GB and PoK. As has now been accepted, Pakistan's move to grant 'provisional status of a province' to the region is due to the prodding of China to fix the legal status of GB to absolve it from risks of operating in a disputed territory, and of its consequences thereof. India has opposed China's OBOR project and development of CPEC only because it passes through territories on which India has its legitimate claim. It will continue to do so more forcefully.

The contiguous boundary of GB with China, and its ceding of areas claimed by India to China, has been major point of dispute between the three countries. Increased Chinese activities in the region, more prominently the execution of CPEC and other multiple Chinese aided hydro-electric projects have made China a stakeholder in GB. India's attempt to assert control of the area, even through legitimate means, is a potential flash point and threat to regional peace and stability.

The region is already simmering due to Chinese belligerence and its stand-off with India to alter status of LAC. Having usurped Tibet and culturally annihilated Xinjiang, it may next be the turn of GB to face Chinese decimation with the help of its 'Iron Brother' Pakistan.

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People's Liberation Army - Western Theatre Command: Role, Structure and Concept of Employment

Major General (Dr) GG Dwivedi, SM, VSM & Bar (Retd)[@]

Abstract

The People's Republic of China has periodically reorganized the defence forces to prosecute its war fighting doctrines. The process of on-going path breaking military reforms was initiated by President Xi Jinping in 2013, wherein 'Central Military Commission' was revamped and erstwhile military regions restructured into 'Theatre Commands'. The 'Western Theatre Command' is responsible for the defence of complete border with India. Its primary role is to maintain dominant posture along the 'line of actual control'; secondary to keep restive states of Tibet and Xinjiang under effective check to ensure conducive periphery. Given the strategic importance, Western Theatre has a well-balanced orbat and its formations are suitably equipped for high altitude warfare. It is feverishly engaged in scaling up its war waging potential for contingencies along our Northern borders. There is need for to decrypt PLA's grand design in the Western Theatre and formulate holistic plans to meet the current and future challenges.

Background

The strategic community of 'People's Republic of China' (PRC) has periodically reviewed its war fighting strategies in consonance with the emerging security environment and evolving national interests. The Chinese military underwent major reorganization post 1979 Sino-Vietnam War as sequel to its poor performance. '1992 Gulf War' provided further impetus towards transformation of People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a modern fighting force.¹

The recent phenomenon of path-breaking military reforms commenced in 2013, after President Xi Jinping assumed power. There was visible sense of urgency due to geo political considerations; US strategy of rebalancing towards Asia being the key factor². The underlying rationale behind radical reforms was two- fold; prepare the PLA for China's expanding strategic interests and establish firm control of 'Communist Party of China' (CPC) over the military. To this end, Central Military Commission (CMC), the highest defence body with President Xi as its Chairman was revamped and armed forces underwent major restructuring.

Xi's grand design seeks to usher China into 'new era', advocating greater role in the world affairs.³ To realise its global ambitions, PRC has formulated a long drawn strategy with well- defined national objectives. These are safe guarding 'sovereignty' which entails territorial integrity, ensuring 'stability' implies unchallenged authority of CPC and 'modernity' connotes sustained economic progress. Towards achieving the above objectives, Cdefence forces are envisioned to play a critical role. At the Third Plenum of 19th Central Committee of the CPC held in October 2020, one of the 'developmental goals' was building of modern Army by 2027 (coinciding with PLA's Centenary) at par with

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US Army.⁴ Taiwan, Tibet and East Turkestan alongside territorial cum maritime disputes in South and East China Seas remain PRC's major security concerns. Consequently, PLA has suitably refined its war fighting doctrines and reorganized erstwhile 'Military Regions' into 'Theatre Commands' (TCs) to meet the emerging challenges.

PLA-Doctrinal Shift and Restructuring

The Chinese strategic culture advocates that the best way to deal with threat is to eliminate it. Hence, PRC's repeated use of force in pursuit of its strategic intent comes as no surprise. Its current military doctrine of 'Local Wars under Informationised Conditions' envisions swift military engagements to achieve crucial political objectives.

During President Xi's first term, 'White Paper on National Defence' titled 'China's Military Strategy' was published in 2015, the theme being 'Active Defence'. It entailed major doctrinal shift; change of naval strategy from 'off shore water defence' to combined strategy of 'off shore water defence and open sea protection' and Army was to orient from 'theatre defence' to 'trans- theatre mobility missions.'⁵ China's future war fighting was to draw balance between 'war preparation' and 'war prevention'. Salient facets to operationalize the strategic guidelines of 'Active Defence' were: ⁶

- Respond to multiple security threats ensuring flexibility, mobility and self-dependence.
- Employ integrated combat forces to prevail in 'system-vs-system' operations; featuring information dominance, precision strikes and joint operations.
- Undertake strategic deployment and military disposition.
- Constantly modernise and enhance capabilities with 'Chinese Characteristics'.

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In pursuit of strategic guidance, modernization of armament has been designed to achieve domination in the field of information warfare, anti-radiation missiles, electronic attack drones, direct energy weapons, airborne early warning control system and anti-satellite weapons. Towards reengineering systems and revamping organizational structures across the spectrum, deep rooted changes have been instituted, with focus on civil-military fusion, jointness and decision making process.

As per the latest defence White Paper titled "China's Defence in New Era" released in July 2019, the CMC is responsible for formulation of the national defence policies and strategies as also higher direction of war. Erstwhile 17 odd single service military regions were reorganised into five Theatres Commands (TCs) reporting directly to the CMC. In addition, 84 corps level organizations were created including 13 Group Armies (GAs) as well as training and logistics installations. Broad 'areas of responsibility' of the reorganised TCs is as under:⁸

- Eastern (Nanjing) - Taiwan, East China Sea
- Southern (Guangzhou)- Vietnam, South China Sea
- Western (Chengdu)- India, Internal Security
- Northern (Shenyang) - Korean Peninsula and Russia
- Central (Beijing)-Reserve and Internal Security



(Adapted from <https://googleweblight.com>)

Western Theatre Command

The Western Theatre Command (WTC) is most expansive, created by amalgamating erstwhile Chengdu and Lanzhou Military Regions.⁹ Its ‘Area of Responsibility’ (AOR) covers almost 40 percent of China’s landmass; includes the sensitive border regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, besides provinces of Sichuan, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai and Chongqing; accounting for 22 percent of population. The terrain in the AOR is generally rugged, characterised by high mountains and desert. WTC is responsible for entire 4057 km Sino-Indian border, starting from Siachen Glacier to the Tri Junction-Diphu Pass in Arunachal Pradesh.

General Zhang Xudong assumed the command of WTC towards end December 2020. He is known to be mechanised warfare expert and rising star, having been appointed commander of a sensitive Theatre at a young age of 58. Even the Political Commissar Gen Wu is especially selected. The other key commanders include Lt Gen Xu Qiling-Ground Forces, Lt Gen Haijiang Wang-Tibet Military District (TMD), Lt Gen Liu Wanglong-Xinjiang Military District (XMD), Major General Liu Lin-South Xinjiang Military Region (SXMR) and Lt Gen Wang Qiang-head of Air Force.¹⁰

Mission/Tasks

The WTC’s operational role is primarily India specific. Its envisaged key tasks encompass the following:¹¹

- Ensure sanctity of the border with India by maintaining aggressive posture.
- Launch limited offensive to secure claimed areas along the LAC.
- Undertake coordinated operations along with Pakistan Army in POK-Ladakh.

External Security: Pakistan–China Strategic Challenges

- Maintain high state operational preparedness through combined arms training in ‘High Altitude Warfare’ and capacity building to facilitate speedy employment of combat potential.
- Respond to contingencies in the ‘Central Asian Republics’ under the auspices of Shanghai Corporation Organization (SCO).
- Undertake trans-theatre contingencies
- Maintain internal stability in Tibet and Xinjiang regions by supporting ‘People’s Armed Police Force’.
- Organize disaster relief operations in conjunction with the civil administration.

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of WTC is based on combined arms concept, with vast in- built resources, lending flexibility to take on multiple tasks at a short notice. In terms of equipment it is on high priority, evident from the high tech systems like Type 15 tanks, PCL-181 howitzers, multi barrel 370 mm rocket systems, Z-20 helicopters and GJ-2 drones.

Ground Forces

Almost 30 percent of the PLA’s ground forces are on the orbat of WTC. 76 and 77 GAs constitute the main offensive component of the ground forces, headquartered at Xining and Chengdu respectively.¹² These are organized into heavy, medium, light combined arms brigades besides special operations, artillery, air defence, engineers and service support brigades. TMD and XMD are both corps size formations organized into infantry/mechanised divisions and border regiments. These are primarily meant for defensive role and internal security duties wherein exercise operational control over the sensitive Tibet and Xinjiang regions respectively. XMD is sub- divided into North and South Xinjiang Military Regions. Orbat of major formations is as below.¹³

Almost 30 percent of the PLA’s ground forces are on the orbat of WTC.

76 GA (Xining)	77 GA (Chengdu)	TMD	XMD
12, 17 & 62 Heavy Combined Arms Brigades, 149 Medium Combined Arms Brigade, 56 & 182 Light Brigades, 76 Special Operations Brigade, 76 Army Air Force Brigade, 76 Arty Brigade, 76 Engineering Chemical Prevention Brigade, 76 Service Support Brigade	139 Heavy Combined Arms Brigade, 181 Medium Combined Arms Brigade, 39 Medium Brigade, 40 Mountain Combined Arms Brigade, 150 Light Combined Arms Brigade, 77 Special Operations Brigade, 77 Air Defense Brigade, 77 Engineering Chemical Prevention Brigade, 77 Service Support Brigade	52 & 53 Mountain Infantry Brigades, 54 Mechanized Infantry Brigade, 308 Artillery Brigade, 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5 Independent Battalions, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 9 Border Defense Regiments	6 Mechanized Infantry Division*, 4 Motorized Infantry Division*, 8 Motorized Infantry Division, 11 Motorized Infantry Division *Part of SXMR

Air Force

PLA Air Force (PLAAF) formations on the orbat of WTC are 6, 33 & 37 Fighter Divisions located at Yinchuan-Ningxia, Dazu and Urumqi respectively. Besides there is 36 Bomber Division at Lintong-Shaanxi, 4 Transport Division at Qionglai-Sichuan and 109th Aviation Brigade at Urumqi.¹⁴ The air infrastructure in WTC has witnessed sharp increase

especially after the 2017 Doklam stand-off. It includes building and upgrading airfields and helipads at Xigaze, Lhasa-Gonggar, Qamdo- Bamda, Nyingchi and Urumqi. New heliports have been built at Lhasa- Gonggar and Ngari. An airstrip has also been constructed East of Doklam. As per the satellite imagery reports, the air assets based at various airfields are as below:¹⁵

- Lhasa- Gonggar: KJ-500 AEW aircrafts, J-11, J10, SU 27 Fighters and MI17-IV helicopters.
- Xigaze - J10, J11 Fighters, EA -03 UAVs,
- Ngari Guns-a-J11, SU 27 Fighters
- Hotan-J10, J11 Fighters.

56th Rocket Force Base is at Xining (Qinghai); reported to house 12xDF-21 (2150 km)/DF-31(7000 km) missiles.¹⁶

Training and Logistics

WTC has vast 'combined arms tactical training bases' (CATTB) in Xichang and Qingtongxia for conducting live fire drills. Qingtongxia CATTB besides urban warfare training village also has mock-up of Aksai Chin (1:500 scale and dimensions 900mX700m).¹⁷ Frequency of PLA's joint exercises has increased over the years, generally scheduled during January-February. The new 'Strategic Logistics Support Force' of PLA has one 'Joint Logistics Support Centre' in each theatre; in respect of WTC it is at Xining.¹⁸ Considerable infrastructure development is taking place in the AOR of WTC including underground oil storage facility coming up at Golmud. Construction work Chengdu-Lhasa railway line has also started. Once completed by end of this decade, it will take only 15 hours to cover the 1629 km distance.¹⁹ Significant road building and infrastructure upgrade is underway in the Karakoram Pass area as well.

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Concept of Employment: Vis-à-vis India

The basic concept of employment of force in the WTC is in consonance with its designated role and PLA's ways of war fighting. Given the terrain advantage, well developed infrastructure and integrated organizational framework, the strategy adopted by WTC has been of 'offensive defence' to further China's expansionist policy. It entails aggressive posturing through pre-emptive deployment to gain initiative by well-planned actions.

Going by the pattern over last few of years, the PLA has pursued 'low cost-high dividend' approach i.e. tactical actions yielding strategic payoffs. Incidences of transgressions in disputed areas like Depsang-2013, Chumar-2014 and Doklam-2017 are cases in point. Even the incursions in early May 2020 leading to the recent standoff, although scaled up in size and scope, followed similar design. The 'nibbling tactics' to prosecute 'bullet less skirmishes' as part of its 'Grey Zone Warfare' will remain preferred option of the WTC to maintain ascendancy. Alongside, construction of habitats in the disputed areas as forward bases and change the demographics to legitimise territorial claims will continue to be actively pursued. Recent reports about newly constructed village in Tsari Chu River area in Arunachal is essential dimension of the border management modus operandi.²⁰

The Chinese leadership does not intend to engage in a full scale war as it will take heavy political and economic toll which could prove cost prohibitive. Therefore, instead of major engagement, calibrated escalation and force projection through speedy posturing is likely to be the preferred option of WTC. In case situation does spin out of control, probability of limited confrontation can't be ruled out. In such an operation PLA is likely to resort to cyber warfare,

precision strikes by the ‘Rocket Force’ and employment of combined arms formations in a telescopic time frame to go in for quick tactical gains.

In the wake of growing collusion between China and Pakistan, the ‘two front scenario’ is a stark reality. There are reports of China building new road linking Karakoram Highway with Astor, in Pak occupied Gilgit-Baltistan.²¹ Once this 33m wide road is complete, it will enable China to channel heavy artillery into Gilgit Baltistan, posing threat to Indian positions in Ladakh. The ‘New Defence Law’ (NDL) introduced wef from January 2021 has the provision to protect China’s overseas assets thus giving PLA an extended role.²²

As regards the recent standoff in Eastern Ladakh, WTC team led by Major General Liu Lin has played out the old game of prolonged negotiations without yielding tangible ground. From the on-going disengagement process, it is evident that the Chinese side has reconciled to some trade off on the Northern bank of Pangong Tso in return for our pulling out from Kailash Ridge. PLA is expected to bargain hard against make major concessions in the Galwan and Depsang areas towards restoration of pre standoff status quo ante. The reports of the Chinese beefing up on the LAC by relocating troops and heavy equipment not only in Eastern Ladakh but also in other areas like Lipulekh in the Central Sector and Tri Junction in the Eastern Sector indicate Chinese larger design.²³

Implications

PRC has blatantly pursued policy of asymmetric coercion to settle territorial disputes. Large scale incursions undertaken by the formations of WTC in Eastern Ladakh last year, violating all the past agreements, were part larger political design. Even if the current crisis is diffused, it is not China’s to resolve the border issue any time soon.

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In view of the above, there is an urgent need to formulate national security policy and ‘joint military doctrine’ to prosecute ‘limited war’ based on realistic threat assessment, factoring the ‘two front scenario’. This requires rebalancing the deployment of military assets on our Western and Northern borders. Some measures appear to be in the offing. Process of structuring tri service ‘theatre commands’ ought to be fast tracked. Today, seven Army and Air Force commands are facing PLA’s single WTC, which is a serious lacuna.

In the wake of prevailing situation, top most priority needs to be accorded to strengthening own positions in the contested locations and vulnerable areas across the entire stretch of the LAC. Improvement of infrastructure and logistics management issues needs to be addressed simultaneously. Alongside, current complicated structure of border management with multi layered control involving numerous agencies requires to be streamlined with all elements being placed under the army control. Local militia units must be raised on priority and deployed on the border to effectively counter Chinese intrusions.

Given China’s expansionist policy and WTC aggressive posturing, active LAC is likely to be the new normal. Therefore, our Armed Forces need to be fully prepared to blunt any misadventure by PLA, which demands sustained capacity building and pro-active approach.

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China's Nuclear Modernisation Trends: Implications for India

Dr. Roshan Khanijo[@]

Abstract

China's current 'strategic thought' is the result of a decade of philosophical discourse and cultural traditions, both of which have been emblematic of China's desire of establishing itself as a major power. China's Rocket Force has played an extremely important role in shaping their military capabilities. It adds the dual advantage of ensuring strategic deterrence while simultaneously providing coercive leverage. A large reason for China's emergence as a great power, therefore, must be attributed to the modernisation of its forces, including nuclear. This modernisation has been quantitative – in terms of the number of missiles added/developed – as well as qualitative – improvements in warfare designs. Adopting niche technologies has also provided them with a superiority as far as the theatre of modern warfare is concerned. This paper thus, attempts to analyse China's nuclear modernisation trends and its implications for India.

China's Strategic Thought

China's strategic thought is a cumulative result of its cultural traditions and philosophical discourse. The teachings of generations of China's most famous thinkers such as Sun Tzu, Sun Yat Sen, etc. can all be found distilled within China's 'Science of Military Strategy (SMS)'. Furthermore, the country's political leaders have adapted to the new environment by relying on a mix of traditional and modern strategies which is reflected in China's White papers. China's 2015 White paper has been especially transformative in terms of improving China's force structure. The SMS (2013) discusses three main concepts. The first concept is of 'active defence', adapted to 'forward defence', which aims to expand the battlespace beyond China's borders to increase China's strategic depth¹. The second concept is 'strategic space', "where the scope of strategic directions should be expanded to combine areas inside and outside China's borders, inland theatres should be extended beyond China's land borders, while coastal theatres should expand further toward the sea."² The third concept relates to a 'strategic attack posture', which means that "strategic offence should be an important operational type for active defence where weapons are deployed on Chinese territory or in the near seas to strike targets on the periphery."³ Keeping these three key military concepts in mind, China has modernised her defence forces and made significant progress in all the relevant domains of warfare. This paper, however, shall only analyse the Rocket Force and the ways in which Chinese military thought has shaped it into the strategic success that it is today.

Mission of China's Rocket Force

President Xi Jinping has stated that the Rocket Force is "China's core force for strategic deterrence, a strategic buttress for China's position as a major power, and an important cornerstone for defending national security"⁴. China's ambitious advances are clearly evinced by these statements and this may result in an unfettered increase in the number of missiles,

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their reach, modernisation efforts and the readiness of her nuclear forces. PLA Rocket Force is thus, of extreme “importance not only as a provider of key military capabilities, and as a potential source of coercive leverage for Beijing, but also as a highly visible symbol of China’s great power status”⁵. The main mission of this Force, however, may be to “deter other countries from using nuclear weapons against China ... conducting nuclear counter-attacks, and precision strikes with conventional missiles.”⁶. The Rocket Force has also imbibed most of the erstwhile strategic thought of China’s Second Artillery Force, particularly the concept of ‘dual deterrence and dual operations’, whereby, the force continues to incorporate both nuclear and conventional missile forces.

China's Nuclear Modernisation Trends

Given China’s desire and status as a major power, a significant amount of the focus has been on building a strong military, capable of responding rapidly to any eventuality. Accelerated military modernisation has been a core component of this efficient deterrence process. There was an announcement at the Fifth Plenum along these lines where it was stated “that modernisation should be accelerated and that the PLA must meet the goal of ‘building’ the army by 2027, the year which marks the PLA’s Centenary,[...] as also despite the effect of the coronavirus pandemic and cuts to central budget lines such as education and foreign affairs, the defence budget increased by 6.4%”⁷. This aggressive emphasis on rapid modernisation depicts the importance of the endeavour to Chinese military thought and action. The modernisation trends include both qualitative improvement and quantitative increases in China’s nuclear assets. There have been significant modifications to older missiles that have resulted in the development of newer more lethal versions, whose precision is rivalled only by their range. Some of these trends will be examined in the subsequent sections of this paper.

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Quantitative Increase in Missile Arsenal

Over the years China’s nuclear arsenal has grown steadily. As per a SIPRI report, published in 2020, the Chinese current warhead inventory is 320 which is an increase of 30 warheads from 2019 (290)⁸. This may further increase in the future as there are allegations that “China’s current trajectory in the civil nuclear arena will have the result of placing enormous additional quantities of weapons-usable plutonium into the hands of the Chinese government as that country moves into large-scale plutonium reprocessing in order to produce fuel for a new generation of plutonium-fuelled breeder reactors.”⁹. There has also been a dramatic increase in the quantity and quality of land based missiles, primarily due to the military modernisation efforts as well as the fact that the Rocket Force consists of both conventional and nuclear missiles. This has resulted in an increase of 35 percent in the ballistic missile brigades in just three years¹⁰. Furthermore, the inventories of DF-26 Intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs), and dual use missiles, that can target both land and sea targets, continue to increase significantly. This trend is extremely important as it demonstrates the ways in which China is attempting to cover all its bases in the emergence of local/regional conflicts. By ensuring aggressive military modernisation by emphasising active deterrence and an increased range of penetrable land/sea targets, it can maintain its relative hegemony within the region.

Qualitative Improvement in Warheads and Designs

China is transitioning from older, transportable, liquid-fuel, slow-launching missiles to longer-range, road-mobile, solid-fuel, quicker-launching missiles¹¹. New versions of these older, more obsolete missiles have already been displayed in national parades. For example, the DF31 has been modified into the DF-31A, and its range has increased to 11,200 km. The DF-31A is further being upgraded to the DF-31AG which will be based on an 8-axle launcher vehicle which is more mobile, reportedly carrying multiple independently-targetable warheads (MIRVs). All these features, cumulatively widen its deployment options and increase survivability¹² thereby creating an active defense strategy. Another example

can be seen in the DF-41 missile, which is heavier and has more payload capacity. Both these missiles have the capacity to carry MIRV. The DF-41 can carry up to 10 MIRV with a total weight of 2,500 kg, with the added option of having a single 1 MT nuclear warhead or a selectable yield of 20, 90 or 150 kT on each MIRV, and has an accuracy of 100-500 m CEP¹³.

Strengthening the Triad

China's military modernisation has not been limited to its land based arsenal, but the Chinese leadership has also made efforts to strengthen the military triad in the Naval and Air space domains as well. As far as the maritime domain is concerned, China has progressed from its initial experimental Xia (Type 092) class submarine to its nuclear powered six Jin-class (Type 094). There are also advanced plans to achieve accelerated speed and make them less noisy, by investing in the advanced (Type 096) version which is a third generation SSBN. The type 094 carries the JL-2 Submarine launched Ballistic missile whose range is 7200kms. The newer version of the JL-3 intercontinental-range solid-fuel is expected to be integrated with the Type 096 next-generation submarine.¹⁴ This will allow it to remain in the "bastion" while targeting the adversary and prevent it from getting caught in narrow choke points. Similarly, the Airforce is also trying to develop a long range stealth bomber. At present the Airforce "has been newly re-assigned a nuclear mission and the H-6 and the future stealth bomber could both be nuclear capable"¹⁵. The modified version of the H-6K is a dual nuclear-conventional bomber and the H-6N can possibly accommodate the nuclear-capable Air Launched Ballistic Missile (ALBM), or possibly a drone¹⁶. Furthermore, China's next generation long range strike bomber, H-20 is enhancing the PLA Air Force's ability to perform strategic deterrence and strike missions, elevating it to true "strategic service" status within the PLA.¹⁷

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Hypersonic Glide Vehicles (HGVs)

As with most military advancements, the Americans were the first to introduce the concept of Hypersonic Glide Vehicles but their hegemony remained uncontested for a very brief period of time. Soon the Russians and the Chinese joined the race as well. From a doctrinal point of view, China's Ministry of Defence and Central Military Commission, in coordination with the PLARF, are interested in determining how technological advances in hypersonic boost-glide can be integrated into policy and postures¹⁸. The Chinese DF-17 is a medium-range ballistic missile that is mounted to a DF-ZF Hypersonic Glide Vehicle (HGV). The missile boasts a reported range of up to 2,500 km, and is deployed from a mobile transport-erector launcher (TEL)¹⁹. There are reports of an air-launched DF-17 variant which may pose a serious threat to the adversary. The fact that they can be dual use further complicates the situation changing the threat perception and potentially causing escalatory militarisation. Furthermore, with rapid improvement in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the "integration of neural networks into these platforms, to enhance autonomy, manoeuvrability, stability, control, and targeting, promises to be formative in terms of not just conventional anti-access, area-denial aims, but also nuclear penetration of missile defences"²⁰. This technology is not just a deterrent but can also be seen as an offensive technology which may challenge global nuclear stability in future.

Ballistic Missile Defence

With regard to Ballistic Missile Defence, China had limited domestic capabilities earlier. It possessed the CSA-9 (HQ-9) long-range SAM system, and had fielded SA-20 (S-300 PMU2) SAMs, and SA-21 (S-400) SAMs; but now China is developing BMD systems that consist of exo-atmospheric and endo-atmospheric kinetic-energy interceptors. In 2016 China also made its intentions to invest in the land- and sea-based mid-course missile defence capabilities. Furthermore, their HQ-19 interceptor has also undergone tests to verify its capability against 3,000 km-range ballistic missiles²¹.

These developments need to be observed and prepared against. It is important to remember that credible deterrence is dependent on a penetrable offense. China's investment in active defence based on a credible BMD may create challenges for India's missile inventory in the future.

Niche Technologies

Aside from strategic and dual use technologies, another facet of China's military modernisation that needs to be observed carefully is its investment in niche technologies, the most promising of which are definitely related to the Artificial Intelligence (AI) sector. Given the dual use nature of AI there is need for added caution as China has been using this Civil-Military fusion to transfer civil innovations to the military domain. The integration of AI and Autonomous command and control modules in offensive and defensive strategic defence systems is a major cause of concern. China's usage of HGVs, Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs), Unmanned Underwater Drones (UUVs) and Swarm systems could cause serious deterrence concerns in the future. Especially since both the UCAVs and UUVs are Lethal Autonomous systems. China's Dark SWORD, sharp Sword, CH7-Stealth prototype, the series of extra-large underwater vehicles (XLUUVs), etc. are some of the other examples of innovations in military modernisation that needs to be watched.

In 2015, China's military strategy focussed on the concept of 'Rapid Response'. A rapid response is a means to control and deter the enemy through the accelerated enormity of retaliation. AI and other modernisation facets are to fulfil this objective, in a manner that would not require active human oversight. This is one of the reasons that AI can be used to build both offensive and defensive capabilities. For example, "AI could allow for swarms to counter integrated air defences and anti-submarine warfare; enhance targeting and discrimination to improve missile performance and accuracy; improve adaptability and manoeuvrability to enhance precision-guided munitions and defences; and [aid] simulation and modelling that involves testing of spacecraft, aircraft and naval systems"²². While these innovations seem straight out of a science fiction novel, the lack of human oversight could lead to trigger happy repercussions. AI as it currently stands, has a lot of potential, but is still riddled with bugs and errors and will require time to mature as a technology. Although its current applications have limitations the potential for future innovation is ripe and fertile and this strategic space must be monitored carefully if deterrence is to be maintained.

Aside from strategic and dual use technologies, another facet of China's military modernisation that needs to be observed carefully is its investment in niche technologies, the most promising of which are definitely related to the Artificial Intelligence (AI) sector.

Implications for India

As things stand at present, China's missile force has both offensive and defensive capabilities. On the one hand, they have aggressively been developing new variants that are tailored to serve the dual purpose of deterrence and power projection; while on the other hand, they are also experimenting with AI for enhanced situational awareness through improved ISR capabilities, and accelerated early warning systems. According to some analysts, these capabilities may push China towards adopt a more escalatory launch on warning posture. From a strategic perspective, such modernisation could increase their ability to place conventional high precision strikes, while simultaneously striking camouflaged nuclear silos using hypersonic glide vehicles. Such attacks by HGVs will also create a significant dilemma as the attack-time compression will adversely impact decision-making capabilities, thereby, decreasing overall deterrence stability.

All things considered, these are threat projections that need to be taken into account while considering India's military posture. While India does not need to compete with China over the quantity of its arsenal, it nevertheless needs to strategise more efficiently if deterrence is to be maintained. A two-pronged approach would work best in this scenario: Firstly, India needs to ensure its ability to maintain credible deterrence through the development of long range

missiles aimed at targeting adversaries' counter value targets while simultaneously maintaining sufficient missiles for counter-force targets. Secondly, India needs to focus on building a robust force which is in line with global technological innovations. Here, India needs to invest in AI and use these applications in data processing, as well as in Early Warning (EW) systems because "autonomous systems can detect patterns and changes in patterns faster than humans and this could have potential benefits for nuclear security and stability, because well-functioning algorithms could benefit in faster recognition of a strike and give decision-makers more time in a complex environment"²³. AI, therefore, can be used to help military commanders predict developments related to nuclear weapons, including the possible production, commissioning, deployment and use of nuclear forces by adversaries²⁴. Similarly, India also needs to develop more AI driven automated weapons for ISR activities. These would enhance the current lack of ISR infrastructure and improve overall preparedness thereby increasing credible deterrence claims. Some analysts also believe that India's second-strike capability may be compromised in the future due to the use of drones and swarm systems. The sacrosanct assumption that SSBNs are immune to a pre-emptive strike could lead to a dangerous situation as the contributions of AI to intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) systems and the ability of offensive Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUVs) to chase SSBNs²⁵ remains relatively unmeasured and unknown. As of now this gap isn't unmanageable given that AI has several challenges at present and autonomous systems have not yet fully matured, so analysts' belief that for some time the triad may remain intact. However, one cannot ignore the fact that China is in the process of becoming a leader in automated weapons, and over time they will try to change the mode of warfare to one that is in their favour. Hence, the future could see increased usage of AI driven automated weapons. This change in warfare could lead to a reduction of human involvement at a tactical level, and an increase in technological and information warfare²⁶. China is also developing its proficiency in term of their cyber and space capabilities, and India may become susceptible to this mode of warfare if adequate counter measures are not adopted. Revolution in military technologies have changed the nature of warfare and it is about time that these changes are incorporated in the Indian military doctrine as well. There are many layers to warfare and different threats that need to be confronted and managed for credible deterrence, so India needs to be prepared holistically.

China-Pakistan collusivity has become stronger and their potential military cooperation is gradually turning into a reality. Any major technological advancements by China especially, in the unmanned domains are likely to be transferred to Pakistan as well. Cyber and space are other areas where their collaboration will increase in future, thus, these are all theatres of warfare that India needs to shield itself against.

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Conclusion

China's modernisation trend, and the developments it has implemented in the niche technologies sector need to be keenly observed. The role of AI in strengthening nuclear deterrence must be further deliberated and their potential implications need to be examined in the context of the military domain. There is a need for the development of better ISR and early warning capabilities that will help in decision making. Hence the role of UCAVs, UUVs and swarm systems and their potential automation using AI cannot be ignored. To develop new technologies, there is a need for better coordination/fusion between military and civil institutions. Thus, it is essential that India adopts a holistic approach in strengthening her nuclear deterrence posture.

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Section V

External Security: Global Issues

Turkey's Three Challenges: Islamism, Militarism and Erdogan

Brigadier Rumel Dahiya, VSM (Retd)[@]

Abstract

The founders of the republic decided to make Turkey a secular state, adopting French constitutional principle of secularism. However, beginning from around 2007, the Turkish government no longer hide its Islamist proclivities, domestically or internationally. It has openly embraced jihadis in Syria and has employed them in Libya and Azerbaijan; it supports terror-sponsoring states like Pakistan; and has deliberately soured relations with Israel. This article studies and comments upon contemporary Turkey where its desire to regain Ottoman glory has given rise to three challenges: Islamism, Militarism and Erdogan. These are giving it a destabilising image in the world.

Introduction

Turks are proud of their Ottoman past—both the empire and the caliphate; and many of them have a longing for achieving their lost glory. Disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was naturally traumatic for Turks at the time. However, it was the Treaty of Sèvres—signed between the Allied Powers and the fading Ottoman Empire in 1920—that had a lasting impact on the psyche of the nation, which continues till date and is referred to as Sèvres Syndrome.¹ In the Turkish War of Independence that followed, the Turkish nationalists led by the legendary Kemal Mustafa Ataturk defeated the combined armies of the signatories of the Treaty of Sèvres. The 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which superseded the humiliating Treaty of Sèvres, ended the conflict and paved the way for the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Since then, nationalism and the Sèvres Syndrome run deep in Turkish society and are frequently used by ruling elite when in trouble.

The severity of the Sèvres Syndrome can be judged by the statement of the then Turkish President, Turgut Ozal, who favoured supporting the United States (US) led coalition during Gulf War I (1990-91) mainly because, as he stated: “This time we want to be at the table, not on the menu [an allusion to Sèvres].”² In a recent opinion poll in Turkey a majority of the respondents, opined that the Western countries are conspiring to divide Turkey and that the US posed a threat to Turkey, More than two thirds of the ruling alliance voters polled supported the use of military force when it was “necessary to protect its interests in the international arena”.³ These deep-rooted beliefs amongst the people inform foreign policy choices for Turkey.

Democracy in Turkey has always been constrained. For about 80 years, the republic witnessed single party rule; periods of chaotic multi-party democracy, interrupted by soft and hard coups by the military; and, a brief interlude of an Islamist party leading the ruling alliance, before political stability was ushered in after 2002 elections. Recep Tayyip Erdogan led a newly formed Islamic party, the Justice and Development Party, or Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP),

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to a landslide victory in 2002, against the backdrop of a devastating economic crisis. Since then, Turkey has changed substantially.

Islam in Turkey's Politics and Foreign Policy

The founders of the republic decided to make Turkey a secular state⁴, adopting French constitutional principle of secularism—*laïcité*— separating religion from the politics, governance, and education. Consequently, although the people at large were religious, politics in the name of religion was taboo. However, in practice, Turkey's rulers have from time to time invoked the spirit of Islam to seek popular support. Even Atatürk, who focussed on “Turkishness”⁵, used Islam as an essential component in defining the Turkish nation to form a unified people out of the ethnically and religiously fragmented Anatolian society. The war of independence against Greek occupation forces was sometimes called a “holy war”. Since the inception of the multi-party system in 1946, Turkish politicians have been exploiting religious sentiments for political gains to the extent that “political patronage became the basic strategy of obtaining votes, in which religion was frequently used for political purposes”⁶. The slow but steady growth of political parties like the National Salvation Party, the Welfare Party (Refah), or the AKP, is therefore a logical outcome of both the use of religious language in politics and the existence of strong religious sentiments amongst Turkey's population.⁷ However, Turkey mostly stayed away from leveraging religion as an instrument of foreign policy. It even remained indifferent to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)⁸ for many decades and was the first Islamic country to recognize Israel in 1949. This changed after AKP cemented its power by winning a second time in 2007.

Besides piety, what drives Erdogan's actions is the desire for personal glory. An example of this combination is the construction of Turkey's biggest mosque, on Camlica Hill on the Asian side of Istanbul, inaugurated in the presence of many heads of government or state.

Domestically, Erdogan has introduced religion into everyday public life, including by constructing 9,000 mosques between 2005 and 2015^{9,10}. He has mandated the teaching of Islam in all public schools and to all students irrespective of their background or faith. Besides piety, what drives Erdogan's actions is the desire for personal glory. An example of this combination is the construction of Turkey's biggest mosque, on Camlica Hill on the Asian side of Istanbul, inaugurated in the presence of many heads of government or state. The mosque, colloquially referred to as the “Erdogan Mosque” clearly overshadows the famous Blue Mosque and other Ottoman era mosques, just across the Bosphorus on the European side of Istanbul. The increasing (state-sponsored) religiosity of Turkish society has, over the past several years, made many Turkish citizens begun to identify with Islam and the Muslim world more closely.

Ahmet Davutoglu, author of *Stratejik Derinlik Türkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu* (Strategic Depth: Turkey's International Position), and Turkey's foreign minister between 2009 and 2014, and prime minister in 2014-16, was an important proponent of the AKP wooing Muslim states. He argued that “Turkey could become a powerful country only if it utilized the full ‘strategic depth’ of its neighbourhood and adjacent areas, developing better ties especially with those Muslim neighbours with whom it shared cultural affinity.”¹¹ Davutoglu contends that “Turkey's future power depended on improving ties with the largely Muslim nations of the east, including nearby Iran and Syria”¹².

Beginning around 2007, the Turkish government no longer hid its Islamist proclivities, domestically or internationally. It has openly embraced jihadis in Syria and has employed them in Libya and Azerbaijan; it supports terror-sponsoring states like Pakistan; and has deliberately soured relations with Israel. It has engaged with almost all Muslim countries in the Maghreb, Sahel, and Horn of Africa besides Qatar, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. It is possible that the underlying motivations for such wide outreach to the Islamic world is the desire to spread its geopolitical influence through trade, cultural exchanges, and export of military hardware, leveraging religious affinity, and to gain a leadership position among the Ummah.

Erdogan's Influence on Politics and Foreign Policy

After Ataturk's death in 1938, no leader in Turkey, other than Erdogan¹³, has exercised such deep an influence and control over Turkish society and politics. He has lifted Turkey from a low to a middle-income country and launched the country on a geopolitical trajectory whose outcome is uncertain, but whose potential gains can be huge if it succeeds. His personality was shaped by his humble background and exposure to an Islamic environment and politics, including persecution at the hands of the secularist establishment. Erdogan's background, an ambition to establish a bigger legacy than that of Ataturk, and a streak of vindictiveness have defined his politics and actions, both domestically and internationally.

After stabilizing the Turkish economy and gaining domestic and international support, Erdogan managed to systematically neutralize and subdue his domestic opponents and institutions of state, including the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF), the judiciary, media, the political opposition as well as erstwhile allies such as the Fethullah Gulen Movement (also called Hizmet). He did so by extending an olive branch to one while persecuting or prosecuting the other. He used the Hizmet network in the judiciary and police to prosecute many senior TAF officers—both serving and retired—in the infamous “Ergenoken”¹⁴ and “Sledgehammer”¹⁵ cases. He then placated the TAF to dismantle the Gulen movement¹⁶, believed to be behind exposing alleged involvement of Erdogan's family and close political allies in corruption, in December 2013. Since then, a democratic regime has turned into a dictatorial and repressive regime.¹⁷ Since Islamists alone are not in a majority, Erdogan has brought together conservative, Islamist, centre-right, and hard-core nationalist segments that together make up the majority in Turkish politics. Erdogan tightened his grip further after the failed coup in July 2016 and dismissed more than a 100,000 suspected Gulen supporters in the TAF and other government departments¹⁸. He then used a manipulated referendum in 2017¹⁹ to become an executive President and party chief, simultaneously. Since then, he has ruled by decrees; separation of power exists no more, and Turkey is now a signature autocracy. The party, AKP, is now synonymous with, and subservient to, Erdogan.

Erdogan has also been projecting himself as a leader of the Islamic world by raising the issue of Islamophobia and supporting religious causes to gain popularity amongst the Muslim masses.

But public frustration with the regime is growing amid the country's unrelenting economic turmoil. Turkey's credit rating stands downgraded to B2 Negative by Moody's since July 2020. Inflation is running at about 15 percent and the repo rate is at 17 percent. About 60 percent of those employed earn minimum wage or below, and 36 percent of the population is below the hunger threshold.²⁰ Disillusionment seems to have set in amongst the youth who are unhappy with the direction that the country is taking under Erdogan's rule.²¹ This view is also supported by the results of Turkey's municipal elections in March 2019 wherein the opposition candidates won mayoral elections in seven out of the eight largest cities in the country.

Erdogan's background, personality, ambition, and desire for regime survival are major internal drivers for Turkey's Islamic polity and aggressive foreign policy, with nationalism, Islam, and ethnicity at its core. These include tough policies against Kurds at home and in the neighbourhood, and an assertive, confrontational approach toward the West.²² Nationalism and robust foreign policy provide the glue for disparate elements supporting the current regime, such as Islamists and ultra-nationalists. The nationalism card also fetches ready support from the TAF despite its morale having suffered immensely after the trials and tribulations of the previous decade at the hands of the regime.

Erdogan has also been projecting himself as a leader of the Islamic world by raising the issue of Islamophobia and supporting religious causes to gain popularity amongst the Muslim masses. Turkish support to the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) is part of that design. The reconversion of Hagia Sophia to a mosque in 2020 was a symbol of defiance to the

West that made Turks proud, while simultaneously sending out a powerful message to the wider Islamic Ummah that Erdogan was the protector of the faith.

Foreign Policy Adventurism

Turkey had joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in 1952, primarily because it felt threatened by the Soviet power in the Black Sea region and the Middle East in the aftermath of World War II. It also distanced itself from its Arab neighbours for decades. It did not involve itself deeply in the two Gulf Wars to maintain neutrality. However, Turkey started reorienting its foreign policy to redefine, build, and defend its interests with both soft and hard power after its economy stabilized, and AKP under Erdogan won the second successive election in 2007.

The NATO does not consider Russia a big threat anymore and Turkey has lost salience as an indispensable partner. However, it remains relevant to other countries since “Turkey occupies a crucial position—geographically and ideologically—between Europe, the Middle East, and Central Asia. It is the oldest democracy and largest economy between Italy and India[...]Ranked 17th among the countries with the largest GDP, Turkey remains a major global market economy.”²³ Besides, Turkey has built a modern defence industry²⁴, has a strong military—though somewhat weakened because of recent purges—but one that remains professional and deeply nationalistic. It has remained an important ally for the US that has always recognized Turkey’s manifold strategic roles.²⁵

The establishment of the Mogadishu base in Somalia and the Tariq bin Ziyad base in Qatar made clear to the world Turkey’s intent to become an independent player with ambitions extending beyond its immediate neighbourhood.

However, simultaneously, Turkey also suffers from fundamental and endemic weaknesses: the historical baggage of Ottoman rule that makes its neighbours distrustful of Turkey; poor state of relations with all its neighbours; deep domestic political and social polarization; fragility of the Turkish economy that constrains military capability; deficiency of domestic energy resources; perpetual instability in the region; and its propensity to punch above its weight. To make up for these weaknesses it relies more and more on Pan-Turkism to expand its influence in the Turkic Central Asian republics;²⁶ religion and soft power to make inroads into Islamic countries; military power to assert its geopolitical reach; and nationalism to rally its own population behind foreign policy adventurism. This adventurism, in turn, helps consolidate the domestic base behind the regime.

In recent years, Turkey created a deliberate breach with Israel to win over the Muslim Street and openly backed the uprisings during the Arab Spring, supporting MB in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Syria. Its deep involvement in Syria’s civil war and the occupation of Syrian territory, with serious internal and external consequences for Turkey notwithstanding, is well known. It refuses to move its troops out of Bashiqa in the Mosul province of Iraq. It also helped Iran breach sanctions through “gold for oil scam”²⁷ using the state-owned Halk Bank.

The establishment of the Mogadishu base in Somalia and the Tariq bin Ziyad base in Qatar²⁸ made clear to the world Turkey’s intent to become an independent player with ambitions extending beyond its immediate neighbourhood. These bases, since expanded, can accommodate troops up to a brigade strength each. It also joined hands with Malaysia and Pakistan in a move to create an alternative to the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Turkey intervened militarily in Libya in late 2019 opposite France, Russia, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and, most recently in 2020, it openly sided with Azerbaijan in latter’s war with Armenia in 2020, thus challenging Russia in its backyard. It has now put its NATO membership and a still-important relationship with the European Union (EU)—despite any hope of ever becoming its member—to test by signing a maritime agreement with Libya to carve out a maritime space for itself that does not conform to existing conventions. It has been deploying maritime survey ships, escorted by its navy, in the Mediterranean waters claimed by its NATO ally Greece, and Cyprus, despite EU and NATO partners warning against such a move. Turkey’s effort to secure Sudan’s Suakin port as dual-use facility was only stymied by

Sudan's 2019 change of government, which was financially backed by the UAE. It has been employing its jihadi proxies and paramilitary groups such as SADAT²⁹ for advancing its foreign policy goals.

Michael Tanchum, a scholar of the Middle East and Eurasia, opines: "Turkey's new expeditionary capability, resting on enhanced naval capacity and new forward bases, is the logical result of Turkey's post-Cold War strategic reorientation[...]. Turkey is trying to reclaim a foreign policy prerogative that was exercised by the Ottoman Empire but was discontinued after Turkey became a republic[...]"³⁰ Tanchum credits the rise of Turkey's defence industry for Ankara's new capability to project military power far beyond its coastal borders. Turkey has developed advanced capabilities to produce varied systems and platforms inter alia, unmanned, and armed unmanned aerial vehicles, ships and submarines, guns and missiles, helicopters, combat vehicles, and various kinds of ammunition and electronic equipment. Drones produced by Turkey³¹ have played a significant role in changing battlefield dynamics in Syria, Libya, and in Nagorno Karabakh. It also plans to develop and produce an aircraft carrier indigenously.

The external drivers for these aggressive military-backed foreign policy moves are³²: opportunistic exploitation of prevailing chaos in the international order that affords an opportunity to players with a risk appetite; weakening of the NATO cohesion and Turkey's loss of confidence in the organisation's intentions and sensitivities for its security needs; Erdogan's desire to become the leader of the Islamic world; to reprise its Ottoman era role; and, to carve out an independent geostrategic space in a multipolar world.

However, considering Turkey's fundamental and endemic weaknesses, and the fact that the US and EU are likely to push back against its adventurism, its aim to become an individual actor of major significance is unlikely to succeed. Turkey's biggest challenge in foreign policy would be to re-establish trust and reset its relations with the US and the EU. Western analysts have started questioning Turkey's geo-strategic value. The apprehension of Turkey drifting away from NATO and towards Russia is not being seen as particularly dangerous since Ankara and Moscow have historic and deep-rooted suspicions about each other. Besides, the new US administration led by Joseph R. Biden is expected to coordinate a less accommodative stance towards Turkey being with the EU. Erdogan is known for his flip flops.³³ Since November 2020, he has tried to open relations with Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Ankara has also restarted negotiations with Greece despite criticism from many nationalists, including Rear Admiral Cem Gurdenez—architect of the Mavi Vatan or "Blue Homeland" concept³⁴. However, analysts believe that all these signals are not genuine but are a response to the push back it has received from all sides and the change in US administration.³⁵

Considering Turkey's fundamental and endemic weaknesses, and the fact that the US and EU are likely to push back against its adventurism, its aim to become an individual actor of major significance is unlikely to succeed.

In case Ankara is snubbed by the US and EU, it will revert to the familiar narrative of the West conspiring against Turkey and Erdogan himself. He will be willing to embrace China more enthusiastically. He has already retracted from giving support to Turkic Uyghurs³⁶; this is even though Turkey has, for long, hosted a highly active Uighur expatriate community and Erdogan as mayor of Istanbul in 1995 had built a park³⁷ in memory of Isa Yusuf Alptekin, leader of the short-lived East Turkestan Republic. As Prime Minister, he had harshly condemned China's suppression of the July 2009 "riots" in Xinjiang's capital Urumqi and publicly declared Beijing's actions to be "a kind of genocide"³⁸. But generous financial assistance and a currency swap facility extended by China following the economic stress in 2018 have altered Ankara's stance. These are among other reasons³⁹ for adopting this approach.

Under Erdogan, Turkey has advanced its relationship with Pakistan to a much deeper level. Besides close military to military relations that include Pakistan providing F16 pilot trainers to Turkey⁴⁰ (following the purge of about 300 pilots after July 2016 coup attempt), and sale of Turkish warships⁴¹, upgradation of submarines, and F16 aircraft and likely sale of drones to Pakistan, Erdogan has supported Pakistan at various fora on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and has been instrumental in moderating action against Pakistan by Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Bilateral

annual trade, however, has languished below USD 900 million. On the other hand, Indo-Turkish trade in 2018 was USD 8 billion. There are frequent reports for last couple of years about Turkey seeking strategic weapons assurance from Pakistan. Erdoğan has hinted on acquiring these weapons without naming source for it⁴².

The Turkey-Pakistan relationship continues to cast a shadow on Indo-Turkish relations. There are reports now of Turkey involved in the radicalisation of the Indian Muslim community and for helping Pakistan in spreading cross border terrorism in India.⁴³ If this turns out to be true then bilateral relations may be damaged seriously.

Conclusion

Turkey is now seen as an Islamic country. Its democracy deficit, declining economy, and aggressive foreign policy are making the regime unpopular at home and abroad. There are serious differences between Turkey on the one side and the US and the EU on the other. There is a pushback against Turkey from France, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Greece, and Israel because of its aggressive diplomatic and military interventions in the Mediterranean, the Sahel, Maghreb, Horn of Africa, and the Arabian Peninsula riding on the back of its growing military capability. Turkey is also trying to increase its influence in the CARs and South Caucasus, risking its newfound détente with old foe Russia. It is also pushing sales of military equipment far and wide to gain influence. The current leadership in Turkey has created serious misunderstanding with many countries, including India. Yet it remains an important country in its region. Its youthful and hardworking population can help Turkey become an economic powerhouse. The present autocratic regime is facing a serious backlash from the youth and there is a likelihood of the authoritarian regime collapsing sooner than later. This is a very uncertain period for Turkey.

The Turkey-Pakistan relationship continues to cast a shadow on Indo-Turkish relations. There are reports now of Turkey involved in the radicalisation of the Indian Muslim community and for helping Pakistan in spreading cross border terrorism in India.

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Re-Imagining India's "Look West" Policy: West Asia in Crisis Offers for New Initiatives

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Abstract

The on-going pandemic and the attendant economic crises have thrown up opportunities, to provided fresh content to India's ties with West Asia, by moving beyond the traditional areas of energy, trade and community presence, to explore frontier areas. These include: renewable energy, water conservation, food security, digital technology, transnational value and supply chains. But the pursuit of these fresh opportunities is jeopardised by the multiple crises the region is experiencing, at the heart of which is the divide between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This paper proposes that, because of its long-standing ties with the regional states, which have been elevated to the status of "strategic partnerships", India pursue diplomatic initiatives, to promote security and stability in the region through robust engagement between the principal regional players. to identify the issues that divide them and confidence-building measures to enhance mutual trust. This process will culminate in a regional security arrangement that will bring together all the players concerned with security in West Asia.

Introduction

India's ties with West Asia go back several millennia as Indian, Arab, and Persian navigators, traders, philosophers and men of faith interacted with each other across the Indian Ocean. The long journeys over the dangerous and gloomy waters of the ocean encouraged them to share stories, ideas and beliefs, while the cities at which they landed opened their minds to the achievements of diverse civilisations. These fertile and continuing exchanges have shaped a shared cultural ethos that endures to this day. From the late-18th to the mid-20th centuries, as the Gulf came under British imperial control, the region was governed from India — the personnel, the governmental institutions, the soldiers and all the funding were provided from India. This gave the age-old India-Gulf ties a unique intimacy: India now complemented traditional commercial ties with a new role — that of administrator and regional security provider.

Independent India abjured the political hegemony of British rule, but retained the commercial and cultural relations built over several centuries. India's democratic constitution and its secular order were inspiring beacons for West Asia, then still under colonial control. Nehru was welcomed in Saudi Arabia in 1956 as the "messenger of peace", while Pakistan was criticised for joining the Baghdad Pact (in 1955) and bringing Cold War divisions to the region.

However, as a result of domestic revolutions, West Asia itself got divided into traditional monarchies and revolutionary republics. India, with its anti-colonialism background and anti-imperialist mind-set, found itself naturally affiliating itself with the republics and increasingly distant politically from the monarchies, which, of course, had Pakistan, a Cold War ally, as their political and military partner. Iran of the Shah era was also their Cold War partner, and, with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, managed regional security on behalf of the Western alliance.

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This situation redounded to India's disadvantage in the region when, after the 1967 war, Egypt lost its stature in Arab affairs and the pendulum of influence swung in favour of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom quickly anchored its authority in Islam, convening in Rabat in 1969 a summit of Muslim states.

The Gulf Sheikhdoms became independent states from 1970 onwards and joined Saudi Arabia in the Western Alliance. Thus, while India lost political clout in the region, the US, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan set themselves up as the region's powerbrokers.

Following the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and its withdrawal from the US-led coalition, the other three partners strengthened their ties in the 'global jihad' they jointly organised in Afghanistan in the 1980s against Soviet occupation. Following, the Islamic Revolution, the six Gulf Arab states also organised themselves into the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) as a political, economic and military grouping to protect and promote their shared interests. India, uneasy with the faith-based Iranian politics, remained distant from Iran and backed Iraq in its war with Iran in the 1980s.

Post-Cold War Relations

However, though India's political links with the Gulf withered, its age-old economic and cultural ties remained resilient. From the 1970s, as revenues began to flow into the coffers of the oil-producing countries, they embarked on massive infrastructure and industrial development projects and nation-wide welfare schemes. The GCC countries were in the vanguard of these changes. To meet their manpower needs, they turned to India, which again revealed its ability to meet the new needs of the region.

Indian presence in the GCC soared: it went from about two million in 1990, to over three million in 2000, to six million in 2010, and then to eight million in 2020.

Indian presence in the GCC soared: it went from about two million in 1990, to over three million in 2000, to six million in 2010, and then to eight million in 2020. In every GCC country, Indians were the number one expatriate community; indeed, they were the majority community in three countries — the UAE, Bahrain and Qatar. These expatriate Indians in the Gulf remit to the mother country about \$ 35 billion annually. Indian companies also began to execute major national development projects in the oil-producing countries. Their most successful presence was in Iraq and Libya, but they were also present in the GCC countries.

From the turn of the century, there was a significant change in the profile of the Indian community: when, in the 1980s and 1990s, Indians were largely blue-collar workers, now there was increasing recruitment of Indian professionals like doctors, engineers, architects, managers, chartered accountants — who now constitute 25-30 percent of the Indian community.

These professionals work alongside an increasing number of Indian entrepreneurs, whose businesses range from small and medium units to multi-million-dollar enterprises in retail, health, education, real estate, and industrial sectors. Over the last decade, India-based corporations have also entered the Gulf to execute major projects — in real estate, infrastructure and industry — either on their own or as part of larger global consortia.

The dramatic expansion in the presence of the Indian community, and the role of Indian enterprises have moved in tandem, with remarkable changes in India's political and economic relations with the Gulf countries. With the constraints of the Cold War no longer in place, India and the Gulf countries initiated the re-building of their political relations.

This began with Iran. After the destructive Iran-Iraq war, Iran opted for a pragmatic rather than a doctrinaire approach to foreign relations. In the early 1990s, India and Iran were brought together by shared concerns relating to Pakistan's deep links with extremist groups and, specifically, its role in organising and backing the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Presidency of Mohammed Khatami (1996-2004) marked the high point of bilateral relations: in Jan 2003, Khatami was the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebrations; two documents signed were: "The New Delhi Declaration" and the "Road Map to Strategic Cooperation". The main areas of cooperation envisaged were defence, anti-terrorism, Afghanistan, energy and information. These ties had their echo across the Gulf as well. The encounter of the Indian and Saudi foreign ministers in Riyadh in January 2001 removed the cobwebs that had shrouded bilateral ties and opened doors in re-shaping of relations without viewing them through prisms of other relationships. On the economic side, India's high growth rate made it a major buyer of the region's oil and gas resources, while its achievements in information technology made it an attractive technology partner as well. In the 2000s, the GCC countries became India's major trade partners and the principal destination for its exports.

Political ties flowered as well. Between 2005-07, the Head of State or government of every GCC country visited India. The Saudi Monarch, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, was the Chief Guest at India's Republic Day celebrations in 2006, the first visit of a Saudi ruler to India since 1955. King Abdullah signed the "New Delhi Declaration" with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, committing the two countries to pursuing a "strategic energy partnership", recognising India's status as a major global oil importer, with 50 percent of its needs being met by the GCC.

The Pakistan-sponsored attack on Mumbai in November 2008, also affirmed the shared threat that the GCC and India were exposed to, from extremist elements nurtured by Pakistan. This provided the rationale to elevate India-GCC ties to a strategic partnership, which was given formal shape by the "Riyadh Declaration" of February 2010, concluded between King Abdullah and the Indian Prime Minister in Riyadh. This enjoined the two sides to pursue the expansion of ties in political, security, defence, economic and cultural areas.

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New Directions in Gulf Ties

Given the importance of India's relations with the Gulf, Prime Minister Narendra Modi focused on the region from the beginning of his term, with a series of visits to all the major regional capitals in 2015-16 and encouraging return visits; the momentum of these exchanges has been maintained throughout his prime ministership, and have included: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Iran and Israel.

The joint statements issued at the end of each high-level interaction with the GCC states share several common features. Each of them celebrates India's age-old civilisational ties with the region, applaud India's democratic order, and recognise the relationship as a "strategic partnership". Again, in line with the age-old practice of revitalising relations with fresh content, they also identify new areas for bilateral cooperation, including food security, renewable energy, education and skill development, bio-technology and digitisation. The following provide a blueprint for cooperation in coming years:

Renewable Energy. Both India and the Gulf nations are committed to placing renewable energy as an important part of their energy mix. Thus, the share of 'Renewables' in India's energy mix is projected to go from 3.7 percent in 2012 to 6.6 percent in 2022 and peak at 13.7 percent in 2040.¹ In the GCC countries, between 2014 –18, the total renewable electricity installed increased by over 300 percent. The UAE has committed itself to obtaining 44 percent of

its energy production from renewables by 2050. Again, in 2016, Saudi Arabia has set a target to source 9.5 GW of its electricity from renewables by 2023.²

This provides great scope for mutual corporate investments and transfer of technology and experience between the two sides. Over the last six years, investments in India's renewable energy sector have amounted to \$ 42 billion, with \$ 11.1 being invested in 2018 alone. Foreign investment in India's clean energy is picking up momentum: in just 2016-18, it amounted to about \$ 2 billion.³

Water Conservation. Both India and the GCC countries are facing 'extremely high' water stress.⁴ The GCC countries are anxious to pursue obtaining new water supplies with minimum ecological impact. India shares the same interest and has been turning to innovative approaches to meet its needs for sufficient and safe water. Thus, to meet the challenge of diarrhoeal illnesses and deaths, Indian scientists are attempting to purify water by using nanotechnology.⁵ Similarly, in the area of desalination, which is important in the GCC countries, new technologies are being researched to reduce the huge amount of energy that desalination plants consume.

Food security. The worldwide lockdowns enforced by the pandemic meant that movements of ships and commercial aircraft were severely curtailed. This, for a short period, blocked the import of foodstuffs into the GCC states which are crucially dependent on imports: the UAE depends on imports for 90 percent of its needs. Food security is a priority concern for all GCC nations, the countries being particularly concerned about supply disruptions, due to market or political volatilities.

India, though a major producer of foodstuffs, loses about 21 million tonnes of vegetables and 12 million tonnes of fruits annually due to the absence of requisite cold storage amenities.⁶ India also wastes about 21 million tonnes of wheat annually, the equivalent of Australia's entire produce, valued at US\$ 8.3 billion, due to inadequate storage and distribution facilities. According to the national auditor, India lacks appropriate warehouses to store 33 million tonnes of food grains procured from farmers.⁷ Thus, food storage and food processing provide important areas for cooperation with GCC countries.

India is a credible partner with GCC countries in developing digital capabilities for diverse operations; these include: healthcare, agriculture, education, smart cities and infrastructure and smart mobility and transportation.

Digitisation. The pandemic has already speeded up the use of digital technology in GCC countries. Thus, impelled by worker safety considerations, major regional oil companies are monitoring complex operations from a digital command centre, located at their Headquarters. In the GCC countries, digital technology is also playing a central role in shaping the countries' post-oil future. Dubai, for instance, is promoting food security by handling research, production methods, infrastructure improvement and water-saving processes through digital technology. The other sector is finance, where Dubai is aspiring for global status.

India is a credible partner with GCC countries in developing digital capabilities for diverse operations; these include: healthcare, agriculture, education, smart cities and infrastructure and smart mobility and transportation.⁸ India is also well-placed to meet the region's needs for skill development: the country's Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) scheme is aimed at enhancing skills through training of 328,000 people in ESDM sectors.

Global Value and Supply Chains. India is well-placed to participate in global value chains in sectors of its strength — these are buyer-driven networks of high-quality, labour intensive products in the areas of garments, textiles, footwear and toys. But this would need major economic changes at home in particular, improve logistics and infrastructure, improve ease of doing business procedures and upgrade skills of the workforce.⁹

As the GCC countries and India re-build their economies and are open to new ideas, in an innovative move, the linking of new value chains for manufacture could be linked to new supply chains as part of more resilient trade

structures. The principal concerns in the Gulf are both; shorten and diversify supply lines and avoid risky transactions.¹⁰ India fits this bill perfectly, in regard to shaping new value and supply chains with the Gulf in the post-pandemic era, largely due to its geographical proximity, the comprehensive strategic partnerships India has set up with all the GCC countries and the substantial economic ties. For commercial and strategic reasons, India also needs to remain focused on its logistical connectivity projects through Iran — the linkages to Afghanistan, Central Asia and Russia through the Iranian Port of Chabahar.

West Asia in Crisis

The positive agenda for regional cooperation set out above is jeopardised by diverse crises that have engulfed West Asia and North Africa.

At the heart of the crises in West Asia is the deep divide between Saudi Arabia and Iran, a divide that is viewed as an 'existential' threat by both of them. Its roots lie in the sense of strategic vulnerability that the kingdom has vis-à-vis Iran, its deep-seated fear that Iran is expanding its influence across West Asia and is using Shia communities in the region to promote its hegemonic designs. Iran, on its part, sees the kingdom as viscerally hostile to the Islamic Republic and, in alliance with the US and Israel, intent on pursuing the US agenda for regime change. This mutual animosity has taken the shape of a sectarian divide and has led to 'proxy' conflicts in different theatres in West Asia – Syria, Yemen and Iraq.

These regional conflicts have encouraged the proliferation of extremist forces: though Al Qaeda and Daesh are no longer as lethal as they once were, their pernicious influence remains, and several attacks by so-called "lone-wolf" radicals continue to take place in different parts of West and South Asia and even Europe.

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The on-going competitions and conflicts in West Asia have encouraged interventions by regional and extra-regional players. Thus, the entire landscape from India to the Mediterranean and thence across North Africa constitutes a seamlessly connected security space. In Afghanistan, as the US prepares to leave, India, Pakistan, Iran and several Gulf countries are deeply concerned about stability and peace in the country. Again, several countries, regional and extra-regional, are involved in the Syrian conflict, while nations from the Gulf, West Asia and North Africa are playing a direct political and military role in Libya.

This reality, coupled with the US over the last decade exhibiting 'West Asia fatigue', i.e., increasing reluctance to be the *gendarmier* in the region, throws up two principles, that would have to guide any regional peace process: one, that regional states must assume responsibility for regional security, and, two, peace efforts to address West Asian contentions have necessarily to be regional rather than local.

Some Positive Developments

Though the region is in the grip of multiple crises, certain recent developments suggest that new approaches to regional security shaped by India could find fertile ground.

One, the Arab Spring uprisings, though unable to effect fundamental political changes, have ensured that West Asian rulers are generally much more sensitive to domestic opinion than ever before. Public demonstrations have overthrown long-standing rulers in Sudan and Algeria; forced the consideration of a new constitution in Iraq; made Iran's rulers concerned about the economic plight of their long-suffering people and maintained the pressure of corruption charges on Netanyahu. Again, both Saudi Arabia and the UAE have embraced technology as their national driving force

and “moderation” as their ruling creed. The force of public opinion has compelled West Asian nations to recognise the central importance of economic interests over political adventurism in preserving ruling regimes.

Two, changes in the global energy scenario have made it clear that authoritarian rulers will no longer have unlimited funds to co-opt or coerce potential sources of dissent; in fact, they will now be compelled to make their economic order more transparent and accountable and more in tune with popular needs, particularly those for the youth. This, coupled with heightened global scrutiny, will compel greater sensitivity on the part of rulers to issues relating to human rights, gender equality and minority claims.

Finally, while the “normalisation” of ties with Israel by some Arab states (the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco) without any significant concessions from the Israeli side, have taken place to suit the immediate electoral and personal interests of Trump and Netanyahu, over the longer term this could engage Israel more deeply with its Arab neighbours, both economically and politically. This could encourage greater realisation in Tel Aviv that Israel’s security interests are enmeshed with the region and that peace and stability in West Asia are to its advantage. Again, greater contact with the successful and self-confident Arabs of the Gulf, will over a period dilute the demonization of Arabs as ‘the other’ and even encourage a more accommodative approach towards Palestinian interests.

Partnership for peace

The Indian diplomatic initiative to promote regional peace finds solid support in the joint statements that Prime Minister Modi has concluded with his West Asian counterparts.

The India-Saudi Arabia joint statement of April 2016, in the context of the regional security scenario, affirms “their responsibility for promoting peace, stability and security in the region”. This joint statement clearly states that the two leaders had recognised “the close inter-linkage of the stability and security of the Gulf region and the Indian sub-continent and the need for maintaining a secure and peaceful environment”.

The scenario in which India and the West Asian nations could complacently pursue their security interests on bilateral and parallel tracks, is now in retreat and a more uncertain and contentious order is taking shape before our eyes.

Again, in the joint article written by Prime Minister Modi and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed on 26 January 2017, the two leaders pledged: “... we are using the springboard of our friendship to give our partnership a bold new vision that goes beyond our bilateral relations. We will contribute to a regional order that reflects our shared interest in stability, prosperity and tolerance. That is the promise we have made to each other.”¹¹ In the India-Iran joint statement of May 2016, the two countries agreed to enhance “regular and institutionalised consultations” between the national security councils of the two countries on security and terrorism.

Despite the clear pronouncements in the various joint statements, India and its West Asian partners have not made any effort to address the various security issues that bedevil their shared strategic space and have confined their engagements to bilateral matters. This approach is out-dated and serves no useful purpose.

The scenario in which India and the West Asian nations could complacently pursue their security interests on bilateral and parallel tracks, is now in retreat and a more uncertain and contentious order is taking shape before our eyes. This calls for new ideas and new approaches, indeed, what academics would call a new ‘strategic culture’ that shapes a vision for regional peace, and to realise it, builds a strategic approach, which is holistic in perception and long-term in application.

The first step that India will need to take is to engage with Saudi Arabia and Iran, through national security advisers or special envoys, and undertake a detailed sharing of assessments, interests and concerns in regard to regional competitions and conflicts and shape joint approaches to address issues that divide them.

Given the complexity of the issues fomenting the conflicts, this approach will need to move forward incrementally — promote confidence-building measures, followed by quiet engagements to discuss matters of mutual concern between the contending parties, and, finally, organising a larger gathering in a regional format to negotiate norms relating to regional security and mechanisms to guarantee compliance with agreements.¹²

This is a unique role for regional role-players and an unprecedented responsibility for India. It will call for creativity, commitment and compromise, buttressed by understanding, stamina and, often, good humour. The driver will be the realisation that the alternative to regional peace is global conflict — a repeat of the situation that will take the world 'sleepwalking' into war as it had done in 1914.

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Navigating The Russia-China Entente: A Perspective from India

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Abstract

Russia-China ties have radically improved over the last two decades. Western sanctions on Russia, introduced and strengthened since 2014, compelled Russia to pivot towards Asia and pushed it and China closer together. Their comprehensive strategic partnership now includes a cordial defence and security relationship. Still, growing bilateral economic cooperation has remained lop-sided. A full-fledged alliance is not an attractive proposition for Russia or China, even in the face of a common strategic adversary in USA, and is currently not on the horizon. Nonetheless, any move towards a Russia-China alliance would be an unwelcome development from an Indian perspective.

Introduction

While relations between Russia and China have witnessed a number of ups and downs since the People's Republic of China emerged in 1949, they have never been better than at present, in political, economic or military terms. Over the last two decades Russia-China ties have radically improved. The two countries have amicably settled their border dispute that had seen armed clashes in the past. A very elaborate bilateral cooperation mechanism has been institutionalized, incorporating regular multi-sectoral and multi-level exchanges in a pyramid format. Summit level meetings take place regularly and a close personal friendship between President Vladimir Putin and President Xi Jinping guides the relationship from the highest level.

The Situation in the New Millennium

Russia's absorption of Crimea in 2014 sharply strained its ties with the West. The resultant sanctions have been an important factor compelling Russia to pivot to the East, leading to a further, more comprehensive deepening of its partnership with China.

Meanwhile, China's rapid economic growth over the last few decades, to which US trade and investment into China has been an important contributor, has enabled it to expand its political footprint as also enhance its military clout through a sustained increase in defence spending. It has also led to the emergence of a more confident, ambitious and overbearing China. Its high economic performance over several decades, has enabled China to catch up, overtake and widen its economic power differential with Russia.

For its part, Russia accepts the reality of China as a fast rising major power and does not feel directly threatened by its ascendance. It is also not averse to China's growing international voice and stature, as both countries share a polycentric world vision and have a converging outlook on principles governing international relations. Still, the relationship is one of unequal's, but now China is in the lead, with Russia as the 'junior partner'. Nevertheless, China's

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readiness to largely follow Russia's lead at the U.N. Security Council, has lent a greater degree of cohesion to their strategic partnership than may otherwise have been the case.¹

A cordial defence and security relationship is attractive to both Russia and China. A peaceful southern border, allows Russia to stay focused on its primary security challenge from the USA/NATO on its European front; it also provides China a quiet northern flank while it handles its complex ties with the USA and confronts the USA and its allies on its Pacific Ocean side.

Russia also sees advantage in cooperating with China, particularly in fields where it has strengths, such as nuclear power engineering, civil aviation and defence, besides in the extraction and export of hydrocarbons and other mineral resources. China has matching requirements across many of these sectors, making such cooperation mutually advantageous.

In 2012, President Putin described China's economic growth as "by no means a threat, but a challenge that carries colossal potential for business cooperation" and offers a "chance to catch the Chinese wind in the sails of our economy". Since then, bilateral trade has grown from US\$ 88.7 billion in 2013 to US\$ 110.92 billion in 2019, before dipping to US\$ 103.96 billion in 2020. Moreover, in 2018 and 2019 the trade balance shifted in Russia's favour, for the first time in well over a decade. Russia's trade with China, as a percentage of its total trade, has also nearly doubled during 2013-2020, mainly at the expense of West European countries. Since 2014, matching interests have converted trade and investment in Russian hydrocarbons into an important pillar of Russia-China strategic cooperation, with China making major investments in the Power of Siberia oil pipeline projects and the Yamal Peninsula LNG projects in Russia's Arctic zone.

While China has consolidated its position as Russia's top trading partner and an important investor in Russian energy, Putin's hope of catching the Chinese wind in the sails of the Russian economy and expectation that a closer partnership with a growing and capital rich China would inject dynamism into the Russian economy, has largely been belied.

Nonetheless, the lop-sided nature of Russia-China bilateral trade has grown, with Russia predominantly exporting unprocessed raw materials and importing a range of manufactured goods from China. Cheaper Chinese imports have also undermined growth possibilities for Russian domestic manufacturing capacities. Furthermore, Foreign Direct Investment and capital flows into Russia have also remained primarily from Western Europe and the only sector to receive substantial Chinese foreign investment in recent years has been Russia's oil and gas industry.

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Russia's turn to China in banking and finance is also noteworthy. Russia's Central Bank has considerably decreased its share of dollar denominated reserves while raising its yuan holdings, as well as drastically reduced its share of assets held in USA while increasing its Chinese holdings. The Central Banks of Russia and China use currency swap deals to boost trade in their national currencies and lessen dependence on the U.S. Dollar and Euro. Both countries have pledged to move away from the U.S. Dollar to the Ruble and Renminbi in bilateral trade.

The Ambiguous Strategic Dimensions

Russia and China have also deepened their cooperation across the multilateral system, aligning positions in sensitive sectors as outer space and cyberspace. Even though Russia and China loudly extol their comprehensive strategic partnership at the highest levels, they have deliberately avoided upgrading it to a military or strategic alliance.

Russia's latest views in this regard were voiced by Putin in a video-conference response to a question from a Chinese academic at the meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club on 22 October 2020. Asked whether it is possible to conceive of a military alliance between China and Russia, Putin responded, "It is possible to imagine anything. We have always believed that our relations have reached such a level of cooperation and trust that it is not necessary, but it is certainly imaginable, in theory." He went on to recall that Russia and China hold regular joint military exercises and have achieved a "high level of cooperation in the defence industry" not only in "the exchange or the purchase and sale of military products, but the sharing of technologies, which is perhaps most important". He added that as "very sensitive issues" were involved, he would "not speak publicly about them now", but "undoubtedly, cooperation between Russia and China is boosting the defence potential of the Chinese People's Army, which is in the interests of Russia as well as China." He concluded, "Time will tell how it will progress from here. So far, we have not set that goal for ourselves. But, in principle, we are not going to rule it out, either."

The symbolic message underlying a joint Russia-China bomber patrol two months later over the Sea of Japan and East China Sea caught international attention; as per the Russian Defence Ministry, it was intended to "... expand their ability for joint action and strengthen strategic stability".

Advocacy for a Russia-China alliance has long existed in academic circles in both countries, but is not mainstream. While both governments endorse a policy of strategic partnership, the issue of an alliance is presently not on the Russia-China agenda. Clarifying speculation that Beijing and Moscow might be seeking to develop a united front against NATO, the Chinese Defence Ministry stated on March 15, 2021, that "China has no plans to forge a military alliance with Russia".

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The contemporary Russia-China entente is a "complex and multidimensional phenomenon". Not ideology-driven, it reflects an increasingly close political understanding underpinning a growing axis of cooperation, rather than a full-fledged military or security alliance. Converging Russian and Chinese alignments also stem from a common appreciation of the need for closer cooperation in the face of a common adversary, the USA — the pre-eminent world power and the only one with a sustainable global reach in defence, security and financial terms.

The US Factor in the Russia-China Relationship

Independently, both Russia and China regard USA's foreign and security policies as hostile to their respective vital national interests. They regard the USA as their main strategic rival and view its encouragement of freedom and democracy, for example, as a selective attempt to undermine countries like theirs that the USA feels may pose a challenge to it in the future. Nonetheless, both countries retain a huge interest in being at least on working terms with the USA, with whom they do not want a direct confrontation.

China too does not want an alliance with Russia or to come closer to it at the cost of harming its complex ties with the USA, which constitute the most important geopolitical relationship of the first two decades of the twenty-first century. With President Joseph R. Biden Jr having recently started his Presidential term, the direction and dynamics of USA-China ties are yet to crystallize. However, the path ahead can be expected to be strewn with differences and suspicions as the USA seeks to maintain its pre-eminence in international affairs and beat back its primary challenger, China.

Biden's vision of USA engaging with the world, outlined in the "Interim National Security Guidance" released by the U.S. Administration on March 3, 2021, acknowledges that the USA must contend with the reality that the distribution of power across the world is changing. It specifies that China has "rapidly become more assertive" and is

the “only competitor potentially capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system.” It notes that “Russia remains determined to enhance its global influence and play a disruptive role on the world stage” and that Russia and China have “invested heavily in efforts meant to check U.S. strengths” and prevent it from defending its interests and allies. It assures that, in response to “strategic challenges from an increasingly assertive China and destabilizing Russia”, the USA will work out an appropriate structure, capabilities, and force size, and invest in “cutting-edge technologies and capabilities” that will determine future U.S. military and national security advantage.

Meanwhile, USA-Russia ties have repeatedly sunk to new lows, following accusations of Russian meddling in the 2016 and 2020 USA presidential elections, the Navalny issue, and other controversies. There is little hope of their ties improving while both Biden and Putin remain Presidents. Biden’s long-standing aversion for Putin and endorsement of a description of Putin as a “killer” in a TV interview to ABC News on March 16, 2021, only serves to aggravate matters.

Turning to China and the USA, they neither share a border nor have a territorial dispute. Yet, there has been a reduction in trust between them in recent years, *inter alia*, due to stress points in the Indo-Pacific. USA is concerned that China is leveraging its military and economic clout to coerce its smaller neighbours to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to its advantage. It is also apprehensive that China will seek to displace it to achieve global preeminence in the future. On its part, USA would obviously like to maintain its global pre-eminence for as long as possible and is expected to retain it at least till the middle of the twenty-first century. In turn, China views USA’s security strategy in the Pacific as provocative, if not threatening. It interprets USA’s ‘re-balancing’ to the Pacific as reflecting a desire to contain China.

Despite the Russia-China entente deriving from “close and trust-based political ties”, differences in alignment remain. Thus, China regards Crimea as a part of Ukraine, has no interest in backing Russia in its dispute with NATO, and does not recognize Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent countries. Russia too doesn’t recognize Chinese claims in the South China Sea or wish to get embroiled in China’s territorial disputes.

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Russian Fears in Siberia, the Far East and Central Asia

Russia is also acutely aware of potential complications from rising Chinese immigration into its under-populated Siberian and Far East regions. Moreover, its efforts to correct the lop-sided nature of its trade with China are yet to bear fruit. Russian defence Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) theft by China is a further source of friction.

Regions presently witnessing cooperation accompanied by a degree of friction between Russia and China include the Arctic and Central Asia. In its Arctic strategy published in 2018, China claimed to be a ‘near-Arctic state’, a non-existent category for Arctic Council members. China sees considerable commercial opportunities linked to the Arctic arising from the opening-up of the Northern Sea Route that trails along the Russian Arctic coast and is expected, due to climate change, to become ice-free through the year within this decade.

The publicized arrest in February 2020 of the President of Russia’s Arctic Academy of Sciences on treason charges for providing Chinese intelligence with classified information on hydro-acoustics and submarine detection reminds that Russia-China competition remains intact, including in the Arctic context.

The possibility of China reviving territorial claims vis-à-vis ex-Soviet countries bordering it in Central Asia also generates concern. In July 2020, Chinese internet users protested a video placed on Weibo by the Russian Embassy in Beijing highlighting Vladivostok's 160th anniversary celebrations. They recalled that the entire Russian Far East was wrested from China in the nineteenth century via an unequal treaty that needed to be corrected one day. In the same month, official Chinese media repeatedly drew attention to a Chinese historian's view that the entire Pamir region should also be returned by Tajikistan to China. Tajikistan demanded China renounce the article, which it did not, while Russian media criticized China for trying to test the waters for potential future border changes in its favour.

Finally, Russia is aware that in changed circumstances China could again become an adversary and bears this in mind while selling it sophisticated weapon systems so that it does not jeopardize its own national security.

Conclusion and the Indian Perspective

From an Indian perspective, any move towards firming up a Russia-China alliance, while unlikely at this stage, would be an unwelcome development. Even an increasingly cozy Russia-China entente, which should be of greater concern to USA against whom it may well get directed, would also be a source of disquiet in India especially if synergies arising out of it could harm Indian interests. While India has a "special and privileged strategic partnership" in place with Russia, its bilateral ties with China leave much to be desired. Indeed, India explained the conduct of its nuclear weapons tests in May 1998 in the context of a nuclear armed China being its leading strategic opponent.

India will need time and legroom to grow in order to catch up with China. It must pragmatically leverage the constantly evolving global order while extending its foreign policy space by promoting its linkages with all other major world powers, while deftly managing its ties with China.

India's concerns vis-à-vis China are numerous, serious and remain largely unaddressed. They include unwarranted Chinese troop incursions along the Line of Actual Control; China's habit of challenging Indian efforts to upgrade its inadequate border infrastructure; China regularly finding new ways to irritate India over the status of the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh; the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor unacceptably passing through Pakistan-occupied parts of the Indian Union Territories of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir; China's supply of sophisticated weapons to Pakistan; China's growing presence and ambitions in India's maritime neighbourhood; China's constructing hydropower dams on the Brahmaputra, without adequately addressing India's serious concerns about impact on downstream flood management, agriculture, fishing and ecology, water flows and fresh water availability in north-eastern India; China blocking India's Nuclear Suppliers Group membership; China's efforts to undermine India's quest for permanent U.N. Security Council membership.

The challenge before India is to manage a more powerful neighbour, in China, while ensuring its own rise. India will need time and legroom to grow in order to catch up with China. It must pragmatically leverage the constantly evolving global order while extending its foreign policy space by promoting its linkages with all other major world powers, while deftly managing its ties with China. The ongoing freeze in USA-Russia relations is not in India's interest. While India would like to see Russia and USA re-engage and bring back some normalcy to their bilateral ties, this is quite unlikely to happen for now. Meanwhile, India must boost its ties not only with the USA but also work at re-jigging its ties with the USA and its allies, the further development of the QUAD arrangement being a good example. Equally, India's growing engagement with the USA, and other major powers, should not be at the cost of its friendship with Russia. In this context, new arrangements involving multiple players may also have merit, for example linking India, Russia and Japan. An India-Russia-Japan trilateral mechanism, focussed on developing the Russian Far East and its Arctic region, is being explored as a Track-2 initiative and needs to be made official.

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Future of U.S.–India Relations

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Abstract

Since 2000 there has been broad bipartisan support in the U.S. for the Indo-U.S. relationship. Convergence of interests in the Indo-Pacific, and the growing challenge from China, will further propel intensification of bilateral relations. Differences can be productively handled if addressed within the frame of strategic convergence, and due recognition of each other's varying compulsions on some issues due to differing geographical location and historical legacy. Growing defence cooperation and post-COVID technological trends would create new opportunity for deepening engagement.

Introduction

Post the 2020 U.S. Presidential elections there had been some displayed anxiety among analysts in India about the implications for the future of Indo-U.S. relations. The euphoria in the Indian press about an Indian origin U.S. Vice President is however misplaced, The U.S. sees her as its first Black vice president and its first Asian American vice president. A second-generation American Ms Harris will do her best for U.S. national interests. This article examines the Indian anxiety which is slowly subsiding as the contours of U.S. foreign policy emerge under the Biden administration. In essence it will not be very different from the previous administration's basic policy for South Asia.

Biden Or Trump?

The anxiety was fueled by the perception that Prime Minister Modi had steered the Indian government towards a closer engagement not just with President Trump led U.S. Administration over 2017-20 but had also tilted the scale of neutrality a bit towards the Trump campaign. Trump had visited India in February 2020, the election year, when the welcome included a rally in front of a 100,000 strong crowd in Ahmedabad. Earlier, in September 2019, he had joined PM Modi at an event in Houston with 50,000 Indian Americans, where the latter had recalled the 2016 Trump campaign video, where he had articulated in Hindi “Ab Ki Bar Trump Sarkar”, similar to the Modi 2014 slogan. Trump was clearly targeting the Indian-American votes (and electoral campaign funding) which was now significantly at USD 1.8 million, and in some key battleground States the numbers were larger than the Trump victory margins there in 2016. Eventually, he did make some gains, with polls suggesting that he attracted nearly 30 percent of the community's vote, as against 17 percent in 2016. Obviously, this paled in comparison to the political polarization which generated huge voter turnouts, with an overall vote for Biden standing at 81 million, and for Trump at 74 million, the highest counts ever in U.S. history.

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Democrats, on the other hand, were seen as critical of Indian government's actions in J&K, following the abrogation of article 370 in August 2019, of CAA (Citizenship Amendment Act) and NRC (National Register of Citizens). At the Annual Convention of the Islamic Society of North America, in Houston, on August 31, 2019, Democratic Presidential aspirant, and a progressive icon, Mr. Bernie Sanders had expressed "deep concern" and called on the U.S. government to "speak out loudly in support of international humanitarian law." On December 6, 2019, the then Chair of the Progressive Caucus in U.S. House of representatives, Indian-American Congresswoman Ms Pramila Jayapal, had introduced Resolution 745, calling for removal of restrictions, release of detainees, protection of free speech and peaceful protest, and condemning "all religiously motivated violence". Current Vice President Kamala Harris had said in October 2019, that "we are keeping a watch on the situation (in Kashmir) ...there is a need to intervene if the situation demands." In the Biden campaign agenda for the Muslim-American community, there was a call for restoring 'rights for all people' in Kashmir, an assertion that restrictions on dissent, shutting or slowing down internet weaken democracies, and that Biden is 'disappointed by NRC in Assam' as also the CAA, which is "inconsistent with the country's long tradition of secularism and with sustaining a multi-ethnic and multi-religious democracy."¹

Earlier, during his visit to India as a Chief Guest on the Republic Day in January 2015, President Obama, had, at a public event on January 27, referred to human rights related concerns, and said "India will succeed so long as it is not splintered along the lines of religious faith, so long as it is not splintered along any lines, and is unified as one nation."² Then Vice President Biden had made similar comments: "both our nations have to resist the forces of intolerance and remain vigilant in our efforts to make our democracies stronger and more inclusive. It's not just the morally right thing to do, it's the economic necessary thing to do". He said this at a USIBC (U.S. India Business Council) event, kicking off the inaugural India U.S. Strategic and Commercial Dialogue (about a week before PM Modi's U.S. visit to attend UN General Assembly meeting) in September 2015.³

President Trump, by contrast, had stayed clear of these issues. Several steps were taken by Administration that were seen as cognizant of strategic convergence with India: placing the country at STA-1 (Strategic Trade Authorization Level 1) for highest level technology authorizations, at par with allies and closest partners.

President Trump, by contrast, had stayed clear of these issues. Several steps were taken by Administration that were seen as cognizant of strategic convergence with India: placing the country at STA-1 (Strategic Trade Authorization Level 1) for highest level technology authorizations, at par with allies and closest partners; starting a 2+2 Ministerial level dialogue of Foreign and Defense Ministers, which held its third meeting in October 2020; revitalizing the Quad which included Japan and Australia, and raising it to Ministerial level meetings in September 2019 and October 2020; placing emphasis on security in the Indo-Pacific and projecting India as a key partner in that strategy, while renaming the Hawaii based U.S. Pacific Command as the Indo-Pacific Command in May 2018.

The positive perception had stayed despite Trump propelled decisions targeting India on trade and economic issues: removing Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) benefits from certain categories of Indian exports in June 2019; additional 10 percent tariffs on steel and aluminum imports from India (along with China, Europe and some other countries) ostensibly on national security grounds; publicly deriding India and PM Modi, on several occasions for 'inadequate' tariff concessions, including on Harley Davidson motorcycles; not concluding even a limited trade agreement despite months of negotiations, buffeted by conflicting interests of some U.S. companies.

Pakistan/Afghanistan

Trump's Pakistan policy had also oscillated. During the campaign and in the initial days of his Administration he had criticized its lack of support on Afghanistan and continued harbouring of terrorist groups. In a major policy speech on August 21, 2017, on 'Strategy in Afghanistan and South Asia', he had articulated: "Today, 20 U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organizations are active in Afghanistan and Pakistan — the highest concentration in any region anywhere in

the world. For its part, Pakistan often gives safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terror. In the past, Pakistan has been a valued partner. Our militaries have worked together against common enemies. The Pakistani people have suffered greatly from terrorism and extremism. We recognize those contributions and those sacrifices. But Pakistan has also sheltered the same organizations that try every single day to kill our people. We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting. But that will have to change, and that will change immediately. No partnership can survive a country's harboring of militants and terrorists who target U.S. service members and officials. It is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilization, order, and to peace."⁴

To generate further pressure on Pakistan, he referred to 'strategic partnership with India', appreciated "India's important contributions to stability in Afghanistan" and called on it to "help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development."⁵

In his first tweet of the new year on 1 January 2018, Trump wrote: "The United States has foolishly given Pakistan more than 33 billion dollars in aid over the last 15 years, and they have given us nothing but lies & deceit, thinking of our leaders as fools. They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" All aid to Pakistan was suspended in September that year. However, Pakistan was again seen as relevant once U.S. actively began to pursue reconciliation with the Taliban, rhetoric critical of Pakistan slowed down over 2019, and its Prime Minister Imran Khan was hosted in the Oval Office on 22 July. At that meeting, Trump went on to suggest, contrary to facts, and what could only cause provocation in India, that he had been asked by the Indian Prime Minister to mediate on the Kashmir issue. This was formally denied by the Indian External Affairs Minister in a statement in the Indian Parliament.

Pakistan has also sheltered the same organizations that try every single day to kill our people. We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting.

Similarly, on Afghanistan, Trump followed a policy based on perception of his own political advantage, unmindful of need for stability or India's interest. In the South Asia strategy speech, he had, inter alia, said that "hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum that terrorists, including ISIS and Al Qaeda, would instantly fill, just as happened before September 11th. We cannot repeat in Afghanistan the mistake our leaders made in Iraq.... A core pillar of our new strategy is a shift from a time-based approach to one based on conditions. Our troops will fight to win... victory will have a clear definition... preventing the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan."⁶ However, subsequently, he pushed for troop draw downs in Afghanistan, even as the negotiations between the Taliban and Afghan government bogged down, level of violence did not come down in a sustained manner, and terrorist attacks continued.

China

The Trump Administration had been more consistent in its approach to China and the Indo-Pacific, since China was recognized as a major global rival in the National Security Strategy of December 2017, after some flip flops in the earlier part of the year. Chinese President Xi was invited to the Trump Florida resort at Mar-a-Lago in April, and he had visited China in November. Post December, there was broadly a 'whole-of-government' approach with the Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, National Security Adviser, Attorney General, FBI Director, and a host of subordinate officials coming out with a series of coordinated policy pronouncements. Exceptions to this were Treasury Secretary Mnuchin and Adviser to Kushner, who were seen as continuing to focus on advantages from cooperation. There was also a 'whole-of-society' approach with the Administration's messages directed at U.S. business, universities, Governors, think tanks, entertainment industry, to recognize the dangers emanating from China and not give in to blandishments, or short term financial or profit needs. China's authoritarian system under President Xi was described

as a challenge to U.S., espoused democratic values, its predatory economic and forced technology transfer practices were described as challenge to U.S. technological leadership, its unilateral military assertions in East and South China Sea and elsewhere were assessed as challenge to a rule based international order. A series of measures were adopted to deny technology and financing access, by targeting Chinese technology companies, those linked to its military and those involved in the internationally, illegal construction activities in the South China Sea. Further, constraints were placed on the operation of Chinese media and Confucian Institutes in U.S., its Consulate in Houston was closed, sanctions placed on Chinese officials involved in crackdown and human rights violations in Hong Kong and Xinjiang, and higher level government contacts authorized with Taiwan.

The Obama-Biden Administration, over 2009-16, had also vacillated on China, initially calling for ‘strategic reassurance’, but eventually gravitating to ‘pivot’ and ‘rebalance’, recognizing the growing economic, technological and military challenge, because of Chinese unilateral assertions in East and South China seas, and militarization of certain features.

Bilateral

During that period, relations with India advanced steadily. Obama was the first U.S. President to visit India twice, the first to visit on Republic Day, declared India a major defence partner, and articulated support for India’s permanent membership of UN Security Council.

Biden himself had been consistently supportive of the India relationship. In an interview with Rediff India Abroad in December 2006, he had said, “My dream is that in 2020, the two closest nations in the world will be India and the United States.”⁷ He was then the Ranking Member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC), and was set to become the Chair of the Committee in January 2007, since the Democrats had flipped the Senate in the November 2006 election.

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Biden had also piloted, along with his Republican counterpart, Committee Chairman Richard Lugar, with an 85-12 vote, the enabling resolution, that permitted moving forward with the negotiations on the breakthrough of the India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement. This was eventually signed in October 2008. In the intervening two years, which saw several challenges to the deal in both countries, Biden had steadfastly heralded support in the U.S. Senate, particularly from opposing members in his own party. This included the then Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton, who were influenced by concerns of the non-proliferation lobby. During an earlier incarnation as SFRC Chair, in 2001, Biden had written a letter to President George Bush in August 2001, calling for the removal of economic sanctions against India, which had been imposed since India’s nuclear tests of May 1998.⁸

Speaking at the Mumbai Stock Exchange on 24 July 2013, during his visit to India as U.S. Vice President, Biden had reiterated President Obama’s articulation that he saw the India-U.S. relationship “as a defining partnership in the century ahead.” At an event in August 2020, commemorating India’s Independence Day, as the Democratic presidential nominee, he said he would “stand with India” and that a Biden administration will “confront the threats (India) faces in its own region and along its border,”⁹ and there will be no tolerance for terrorism, cross-border or otherwise. Speaking at the Hudson Institute on 9 July 2020, the then Secretary of State, Blinken had said that “strengthening and deepening the relationship with India is going to be a very high priority.” U.S. leaders, including Biden, have repeatedly articulated India’s democracy and the commonality of values as a bedrock for the India-U.S. relationship, and assessed this favourably in context to China as also formulating strategies for the Indo-Pacific.

Both Biden and his Secretary of State Anthony Blinken have said that any differences with India will be handled as a dialogue among friends and partners. In any case, the U.S. has much to account for on its own, including issues related to voter suppression, gerrymandering¹⁰ of voting districts, and violence against African-Americans and other minorities.

Prognosis

Historically, four factors have influenced U.S.-India relations at any point of time: U.S. global priority; role for Pakistan; approach to China; strength of the bilateral relationship.

Current U.S. global priority is to deal with the challenges from China. At their confirmation hearings on January 19, both Blinken and Secretary of Defense Mr. Austin, described China as the main or ‘pacing’ challenge, and agreed with the Trump Administration’s approach, including its characterization of Chinese actions in Xinjiang as “genocide”. Competition with China is expected to provide the peg for generating some bipartisan support in U.S. Congress for Biden’s domestic economic agenda, including dealing with the impact of the pandemic.

The Biden team would want to project that it’s administration is different and more effective than the Trump administration. Its rhetoric may be less sharp. It may be less provocative on Taiwan. It will want to coordinate more with allies, including in Europe. But the substance of the Trump administration’s approach is not likely to change. China is seen as having become more authoritarian under Xi, driving a nail in the coffin of hope and convenience driven U.S. analysis, that more engagement would lead to political and economic liberalization in China.

U.S. relations with Pakistan in the coming period will depend on the support it gets in bringing peace to Afghanistan and assisting in the negotiations to bring it about. They will also hinge on the perceptions related to support available to terrorist groups targeting the West and the U.S..

U.S. choices on Russia, the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, (CAATSA) and Iran’s Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will also have a bearing on India’s interests. These will be driven by U.S. perception of its own interests and political compulsions. But it can be confidently expected that a Biden-Harris Administration will sustain the bipartisan support for the India relationship initiated by Clinton in 2000, and sustained through the Bush, Obama and Trump years, through both Republican and Democratic administrations. There will be some differences on issues pertaining to human rights and climate change, but they can be effectively handled if the strategic frame is kept in view at both ends.

The growing bilateral relationship will provide the ballast. Trade is now around \$150 billion, having risen seven times in the past twenty years. India has, since 2008, contracted to buy more than \$20 billion of defence supplies. The two countries are exploring joint technology development in defence. They have also signed the “foundational agreements” providing for reciprocal logistics support, communications security, exchange of geospatial data, industrial security to enable Indian companies to become part of global supply chain for U.S. defence enterprises. U.S. does more bilateral military exercises with India than with any country outside NATO, complexity of these exercises has grown over time, interoperability is being developed. In the post COVID world, pharma and IT, where the two have strengths, will provide further avenues for deepening cooperation.

It can be confidently expected that with the increasingly complex and fluid global situation, convergence of interests, similarities in some of the challenges, commonalities in values, trends in the bilateral relationship, growing bipartisan political support in both countries, the India-U.S. relationship is headed for further consolidation in the coming years.

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Section VI

National Security Capacity Building

Infrastructure Development along Northern Borders: Prioritisation and Planning

Major General PK Mangal, VSM (Retd)[@]

Having Power and the Capability to use it in an effective manner, is essential for a Nation. Intent need not be stated openly; but just having the Power itself, provides an ominous shield to the bearer.

—Adapted from CHANAKYA

Abstract

Recent developments on CPEC have brought out the euphemism: ‘Chinese Dragon in Pakistan’s Tent’ clearly to the fore. With all this happening cleverly in our front yard; can India keep on sleeping? India, with its demonstrated strengths and values, is already being accepted as the ‘power to be’. For India to be able to wear this mantle, it has to prepare itself really well. The article brings out the need to have an infrastructure development plan and the processes it must undergo to strengthen its northern borders, and recommends prioritisation and planning of development of infrastructure along the northern borders.

Introduction

India shares land borders with seven nations; but it has been well documented that China and Pakistan are potentially the biggest threats for India. Whereas, Pakistan is a smaller nation and though it keeps causing various problems for India so far we have been able to tackle them sufficiently. China to the North, however, is a much bigger nation (powerful both militarily and economically) and requires to be handled more deftly. It has made deep and very serious inroads into most other neighbouring countries; and nuances of these have to be managed from becoming key threats in collusion with China.

Formation of the Himalayas

The Himalayas, a mountain range in South and East Asia, separates the plains of the Indian sub-continent from the Tibetan Plateau. The Himalayas got formed by the tectonic movement of Indian Plate and its subduction under the static Eurasian Plate (some 40-50 million years ago). This mountain range runs West-Northwest to East-Southeast; with western anchor (Nanga Parbat) just south of the northern most bend of the Indus River, and the eastern anchor (Namcha Barwa) just to the west of great bend of Yarlung Tsangpo River (upper stream of Brahmaputra River). The Himalayan range is bordered on the northwest by the Karakoram and the Hindu Kush Ranges.

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National Security Capacity Building

To the North, it is separated from the Tibetan Plateau by a 50–60 km wide tectonic valley called the Indus-Tsangpo Suture. Towards the South, the arc of the Himalaya is ringed by the very low Indo-Gangetic Plains. The mountain range varies in width from 350 km in the West to 150 km in the East. The configuration amply brings out the following:

- The base height of Indian sub-continent is comparatively much lower, than that of the Tibetan Plateau.
- Due to subduction of the Indian Plate, the southern slopes of the heights / peaks are much steeper.
- The Indo-Gangetic Plain is much narrower than the Tibetan Plateau.
- This geological configuration provides China with the advantage of an easy development of major arterial roads – from which many shorter routes can be constructed for distinct places, on the border. These routes also, generally, do not have to traverse over heavily undulating terrain.
- However, on the Indian side, the major arterial roads will have to be at a longer distance away from the borders. Also, the axis for various destinations/places must traverse over excessively folded terrain; warranting that these are much longer.
- The Himalayas are still a very young mountain range compared to other mountain ranges in the world. It has also been established geologically that in the Himalayas, altitudes of up to 5,000 m (above mean sea level) are still made of erosive material – and, thus, are highly prone to slides and decay.
- As far as ease of troop deployment is considered, China enjoys the freedom of not having to undergo multiple acclimatisation – since the base altitude of the area is already high. But lower Indian airfields mean that aircraft enjoy higher take-off weight – thus an advantage of longer reach.

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The Northern Borders of India

The Himalayas (the northern borders of India) practically act as a proverbial wall and hinder any major movement North to South and vice-versa. Ardagh–Johnson Line to the West had been recognised; but presently is obscure. Nepal was never under British dominion and, thus, enjoyed the freedom much earlier than India. Nepal–Tibet border is same as it was earlier and lies immediately to east. Farther to the east of Nepal and Bhutan, lies the McMohan Line [Line of Actual Control (LAC)], one of the most arbitrarily drawn borders between these nations. Albeit watershed is the internationally accepted norm for borders between two nations; but the Sino–Indian border is a much militarily contested and diffusive entity till day at most places.

Important Facets for Consideration

Both China and India are growing nations and potential contenders for primacy in the comity of nations. Both have different governance ethos and should desire to impose their will – in terms of governance, growth, influence, and interaction in the world (especially with the neighbouring nations) and economic supremacy. Some important facets to undertake comprehensive comparison would be:

- Instant status vis-à-vis China.
- Potential economic growth rate.
- Extant influence over other nations (including over-reach).

- Instant Comprehensive Military Power (including capability, expected growth and relevant economic factors).
- Threat perception for assessing Potential Conflict matrix.

Instant Status of India versus China

Current differences between the most populous neighbouring states of the world are well known. Some major established facts are given below:

- As per United Nations (UN) estimates; whilst India's population was 138 crore in 2020, China was estimated at 144 crore.¹ However, the ratio of 'young to old' is in India's favour.
- The two nations were estimated on GDP based on PPP; In 2019 India was at US \$ 9,560,219.60 million, and in comparison China was three times larger at \$ 24,000,000 (including Hongkong) .²
- India has been having an increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) over China in the last few years. In 2018, India was at US \$ 38 billion as against \$ 32 billion of China. There has been a gradual rise in this difference in the period after that.
- Currently, China and India stand at 2nd and 5th rank (in economic terms), respectively, in the comity of nations of the world.

China remains the largest developing country in terms of a wide range of indicators such as per capita levels, industrial structure, employment, innovation ability and balance of development, among others.

Potential Economic Growth Rate

Though both these nations are still categorised as 'developing countries' but that should be taken as mere rhetoric. They may be 'developing' in some fields, but are well developed in others. This is so because the goal of the World Trade Organisation's (WTO)'s special preferences for developing nations is to help poorer countries reduce poverty, generate employment and integrate themselves into the global trading system. China remains the largest developing country in terms of a wide range of indicators such as per capita levels, industrial structure, employment, innovation ability and balance of development, among others.

The following points are relevant:

- Both India and China these countries had a similar Economic Growth Rate of approx. 6.4 percent in 2015.
- In the current Financial Year (FY) (2020–21), China had low but stabilised growth; however, India was found to be in the red.
- International Monetary Fund (IMF) has recently published estimated rates of Economic Growth for FY 2021–22 for various countries. As per this report, China is expected to grow at 5.1 percent, and as against it, India has been pegged at 11.5 percent.
- In another study by Rand Corporation, the Business Cluster's Forecasts are distinctly more optimistic about India's growth prospects at an average rate of 6.3 percent against that of 4.7 percent for China for the 2020–2025 period.
- By 2050, GDP in Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) terms of top nations is estimated at:³
 - ❖ China at \$ 58.5 trillion.
 - ❖ India at \$ 44.1 trillion.
 - ❖ United States at \$ 34.1 trillion.

Extant Influence over the Other Nations

India started off its nationhood journey with the principles of Non-Alignment. It must be admitted here that these were particularly good after attaining independence in 1947. But by now, some of these principles have lost their sheen. Over the past few decades, India has not only got to be a more recognisable face; but also, a very responsible and admired country and not viewed only in Gandhian terms. The COVID-19 pandemic response of India has been viewed with respect. A few military events in the past few years saw India demonstrating the will and power to flex its muscles, as also not to bow down to bully actions and bully nations. It would be quite in order to say that in conflict situations we can actually count on diplomatic and possibly material support from USA, Japan, Israel, the UK, Iran and SAARC countries (except Pakistan). Other countries like Australia, Brazil, many Arab Nations, Indonesia, and Vietnam are also inclined to support us in strategic terms.

Instant Comprehensive Military Power

The Indian military is quantifiably lesser than China in almost all aspects. However, some salient observations are mentioned below:

- It has been stated openly by many military experts that the Indian Air Force (IAF) is qualitatively superior to PLAAF.⁴
- India has taken dedicated steps, in conjunction with various navies, as also other nations, to ensure that PLAN cannot create a situation of Domination of the Seas, or Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs), in the intended areas of conflict.
- Morale and cohesive fighting spirit of Indian soldiers is considered at a much higher level than that of PLA. Doklam, Galwan Valley and Naku La incidents in the recent past have brought this out amply.

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Northern Borders and Recommended Prioritisation

India has a very long land border of 3,488 km with China. As shown in Figure 1, two other independent countries viz. Nepal and Bhutan, though subsumed in the Himalayas, have to be managed separately, in a more considered manner. Certain important and key aspects for important sub-parts of this border are brought out in succeeding paragraphs.

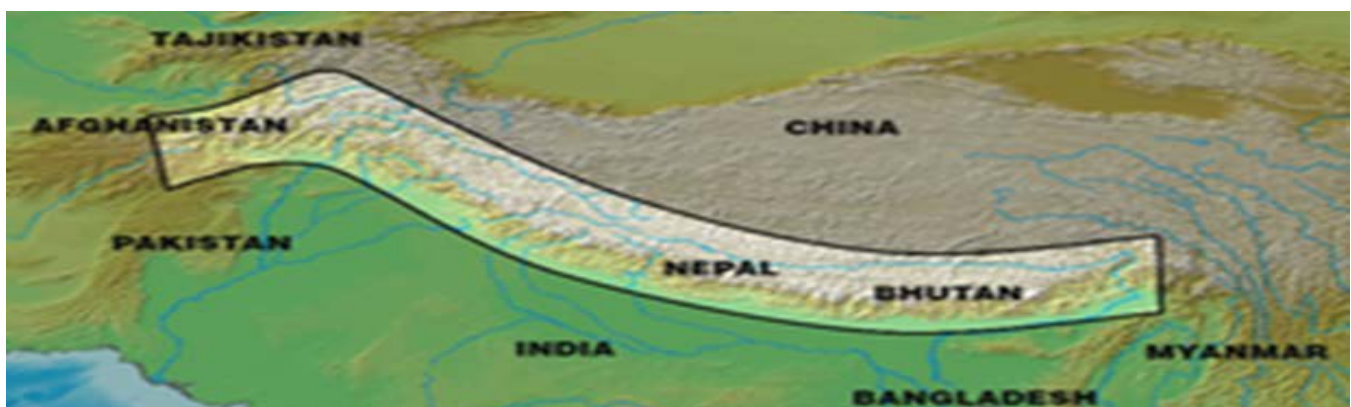


Figure 1

Karakoram Sector

This border is with Pakistan, and is accepted as the Highest (Active) Battle Field in the world. The very important China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project is right in its shadow and facilitates China directly getting connected to Gwadar Port Complex; hence its importance.

- It is known that China has made huge investments here, and many Chinese civil enterprises are operating in this area, with the possible collusion of Pakistan Army.
- There is heavy civil unrest in parts of this area, as also near Gwadar (Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Baluchistan unrests); and despite heavy deployment of the Pakistan military, these are in a very disturbed and volatile state.
- Any major military reverses for Pakistan in this area would directly impinge on the China's efforts to ensure a safe corridor for imports from sea.
- Albeit a proxy border; it needs always to be a critical consideration in China's planning. It, thus, should be of high interest to India.

Upper Aksai-Chin Sector [Across Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO)]

The following points are relevant for this area:

- China has well developed infrastructure available here, facilitating movement and deployment of troops in large concentration.
- This area has presently caught the interest of Indian Government and is developing very fast. It is also being maintained aerially.
- In this sector, mobile warfare nuances can be exercised by both sides, to an extent.
- Neither side would want to suffer any reverses in this sector.
- This area is presently well known all over the world; and, hence, the sensitivity.

This area, which was generally famous so far for Pangong Tso, has come into limelight in the last two years or so. Initially, the Chinese enjoyed almost unbridled reach to the forward areas. However, an intense action in 2020 shifted focus onto this area.

Lower Aksai-Chin Sector (Galwan Valley Area)

This area, which was generally famous so far for Pangong Tso, has come into limelight in the last two years or so. Initially, the Chinese enjoyed almost unbridled reach to the forward areas. However, an intense action in 2020 shifted focus onto this area. The Indian Army (IA) troops acquitted themselves in an unparalleled manner – and the net result is that IA presently occupies and holds the higher positions. Almost simultaneously with this incident happening, Rafale fighter aircraft (already under acquisition) joined the IAF and the military scenario altered perceptively favourably for India. The following points are relevant:

- Despite nine rounds of talks between two sides, only little concessions have emerged so far.
- Though India as well as China would want to forget this incident but that doesn't seem to be possible. It will always remain a sharp thorn, at least, in their collective memories for a long-long time.
- This area is of extremely high importance to India since the issue has an emotive appeal to our population and the heights ensure deep observation onto each other's side.

Below Aksai-Chin (Including till Nepal Tri-Junction)

This is a very difficult terrain and not very many access routes are available from either side for any major movement. However, small parties can infiltrate from either side and can be an irritant. Both sides have deployed adequate troops on required axes; and the situation is more or less under control.

The troop level can be enhanced but the cost and effort/result matrix may not give much dividend. Thus, it is opined that this sector be retained at the present level other than where the opponent raises the ante.

Nepal Sector

Nepal, at the time of independence was an Indian ally. It, being a land-locked state, is still totally dependent on India for all its imports by sea and enjoys many concessions. However, over time China has made inroads into its political and social thought process and at the same time presently it is under Communist Government. Presently various factions of Communists are at logger heads with each other, and the Parliament is dysfunctional.

- The Nepal Government had adopted a new map in June 2020 which affects Indian deployment as also control over the Lipu Lekh pass. It is expected that this issue may get resolved but will take some effort and time.
- Though, we enjoy a comfortable and porous border with Nepal but it is fraught with the risk of influx of terrorists and illegal smuggling of contrabands (money and arms etc.) In spite of the Shastra Seema Bal (SSB) a border guarding force deployed there.
- India has to have a refocus on this sector, with a view to ensure that the levels of influx do not reach higher proportions. For this act, Indian military may not be directly involved but sufficient increase of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) would be adequate as of now.

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Sikkim and Bhutan Sector

Though both these sub-sectors have different nuances, any aggression by China through either of them would impinge on the Siliguri Corridor – and, hence, are being considered together. North Sikkim is a fairly large plateau, much amenable to mechanised warfare at smaller military levels. Whereas, on China's side the vastness of the desert can be easily reached; but if this area is lost it will choke off IA.

East Sikkim has Chumbi Valley on China's side which is a very important approach. Natu La and Jelep La lie at the mouth of this valley, and are astride similar major routes on the India's side. There is a heavy deployment of troops – both by PLA and IA here – to avoid providing any access deep into the nation.

Bhutan, an associate of India (including for its defence too), has very close ties with India but does also deal with China on bilateral matters. Following needs consideration:

- Axes in this area are well developed. If any ingress happens in this sector, it would potentially be dangerous since it may lead to disruption of connectivity with the eastern states.
- It needs to be remembered that this is also a very well-guarded sector and requires only monitoring, as of now, to ensure denial of any military success by China.

Arunachal Pradesh Sector

Probably, this is the most-well known sector all over the world. It has been the backdrop of many intrusions since independence. There actually is no clarity on International Border (IB) and both sides have been sending patrols up to their perceived demarcation line. The axes here too are very well developed from the Line of Actual Control (LAC) to the deep interiors of Tibet. Making of any new routes from LAC to connect with the major arteries may not really be worthwhile; however, further strengthening of major arteries would be better. The faster this happens; stronger India would be at the borders.

Prioritisation of Various Sectors

Recommended prioritisation of the sectors based upon importance and existing deployment is as under:

- **1st Priority.** Upper Aksai-Chin and Karakoram Sectors.
- **2nd Priority.** Lower Aksai-Chin and Arunachal Pradesh Sectors.
- **3rd Priority.** Sikkim and Bhutan Sector.
- **4th Priority.** Below Aksai-Chin till Nepal Sector.
- **5th Priority.** Nepal Sector.

Road network is essential for ease of movement for deployment, re-deployment, side-stepping, sustenance and reinforcement. Requisite road/route maintenance hardware should also be available, at selected locations, to ensure road/route operational functionality within 24 hours.

Planning Matrix for Infrastructural Development

Any military, to be able to undertake its tasks optimally, should be provided with the infrastructural facets as explained below:

- **Road/Route Network.** This network is essential for ease of movement for deployment, re-deployment, side-stepping, sustenance and reinforcement. Requisite road/route maintenance hardware should also be available, at selected locations, to ensure road/route operational functionality within 24 hours. It must meet the following criteria:
 - ❖ Two-Way All-Weather road, capable of sustained traffic, till Brigade HQ, Artillery Deployment areas and Logistics Units.
 - ❖ One Way All Weather or Two-Way Fair-Weather road, with adequate passing places, for uninterrupted traffic till Battalion Bases.
 - ❖ One-Way Fair-Weather route ahead of Battalion Base till as far as forward possible.
 - ❖ Mule/foot track to each out-post from where the road/route ends.
- **Rail Network.** Rail provides quick movement of bulk and voluminous stores besides troops. However, developing such a network is largely dependent upon the geological considerations. Thus, it is opined that rail network should be developed, at least, till where the bulk is required to be placed.
- **Air Bases.** These are most essential for joint and combined arms operations; these should be as far forward as possible, based on tactical and technical considerations. Need and size should be dependent upon the required positioning of permanent/temporary air assets, army assets, and logistics/communication and other network assets. Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs), Forward Area Arming and Refuelling Points (FAARPs) and

National Security Capacity Building

Helidromes should also plan to be developed. In certain places these could be on temporary basis, with bare minimum infrastructure. The factors for these would be same as for Air Base.

- **Sustenance and Rehabilitation Bases.** These would be the bases where the bulk logistics will be located; and troops would move through them both on their deployment as well as on their move forward. These bases must cater for:
 - ❖ Dispersion to meet the camouflage and safety requirements.
 - ❖ Structures for proper acclimatisation of troops.
 - ❖ Infrastructure for training of troops, as required.
 - ❖ Adequate medical facilities for treatment/rehabilitation of troops.
 - ❖ Infrastructural needs for proper care of animals, as needed.

Conclusion

China and India, both are developing countries with ambitions; and are already making a mark on the international scene in almost all spheres. It is regrettable that these neighbours with huge potential to provide greater prosperity to their populations as well as the region are embroiled in a territorial dispute which vitiates their relations. What the future portends for each of them may get unfolded at the appropriate time — but presently it appears that the race will perpetually go on between them; not only from the point of making an impact but also to gain recognition as the leader in this part of Asia. To maintain an edge in the contestation, infrastructure planning, prioritisation and execution is imperative. Unfortunately, our development gets a boost only after each successive standoff and then tapers off as a lull occurs.

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Indian Air Force (IAF): Aerospace Capability Building

Air Marshal Anil Khosla, PVSM, AVSM, VM (Retd)[@]

Abstract

A nation's military aspirations have to be in consort with its socio economic condition and likely threats. Air power possesses significant offensive potential besides being the most responsive arm of military action. Air Force is a technology intensive service and requires continuous infusion of modern cutting edge equipment and technology. A straightjacket approach to military accretions with a purely force on force numeric calculus would not provide comprehensive answers to any military force build-up plan. Capability based approach rather than platform centric approach is desirable. Blending the kinetic and non-kinetic means of strategy is crucial to gaining the upper hand. IAF needs to focus on capability building adopting a multi-disciplinary and integrated war fighting approach. Capability building entails a long gestation period. IAF is in urgent need of capability enhancement considering the prevailing security environment. There is an immediate need to invest in its capability building.

Introduction

A nation's military aspirations have to be in consort with its socio economic condition and likely threats. Due to unique geographical location and geo-political environment, India faces a collusive threat with significant chances of military conflict. Therefore, her national interest dictate that the country be able to deter both her inimical neighbours from any military misadventure either singly or collusively.

Air power possesses significant offensive potential besides being the most responsive arm of military action. IAF must remain an adaptive and agile force to fight and win wars in a network centric battlefield with conflicts varying across the complete threat spectrum. Air Force is a technology intensive service and requires continuous infusion of modern cutting edge equipment and technology.

A straightjacket approach to military accretions with a purely force on force numeric calculus would not provide comprehensive answers to any military force build-up plan. It is imperative that focus areas be identified and assets, platforms, facilitators, and infrastructure developed accordingly.

Future Security Challenges

India's future security challenges are:

- **External.** India would remain a major regional player and IAF would be required to offer options to meet India's domestic and regional security requirements. Although land borders would continue to be the main reason for dispute, security of Indian Ocean Region (IOR) would be a major security necessity for India given its geographic location.

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- **Internal.** The nation has to deal with insurgency in the north and the east. Moreover, the threat from Left Wing Extremism (LWE) has grown slowly but steadily across a wide swath of Indian Territory in South, Central and South Eastern India. The dimension of these problems at times goes beyond the realm of pure 'law and order' and hence are within 'state subject' ambit, necessitating involvement of central forces as well. So far, IAF has been involved in a supporting role.

Trends

World over, some of the trends in air power development and utilisation are as follows:

- Development of very high-speed glide vehicles and cruise missiles to counter missile defences.
- Development of weapons capable of hyper-sonic (Mach 5+) speed.
- Revamping of air-to-air missile (AAM) inventories.
- Development and employment of next-generation bombers.
- Increase in use of standoff, precision weapons from unmanned platforms.
- Increased use of automation, networking, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology and data handling.

Capability based approach rather than platform centric approach is desirable. Platform centric approach in a standalone manner, without clearly defining desired capabilities based on threat assessment, may lead to inaccurate prediction and sub optimal procurement of air assets.

Transformation Philosophy

IAF must be able to orientate itself accurately to the existing and evolving environment so as to work towards focused capability building. The ability to clearly understand the ever changing environment is paramount for articulating the road map for capability building. Therefore, where we stand and where we need to reach, needs to be understood at the organisation level and energies need to be focused accordingly. While there are several issues that can be listed as key requirements, the main pillars are trained manpower, combat leadership, combat sustenance resources, and sound strategy. Some of the salient aspects for transformational philosophy are as follows:

- **Mix of Old and New.** New state of the art equipment is costly and affordability is an important factor for consideration. Prioritisation of capabilities is a major challenge as it needs to be done as per available resources. IAF must look to boost the capacity of existing assets along with induction of new assets. Ratio of approximately 30:40:30 in terms of new state of the art, refurbished / upgraded, and old legacy equipment is a reasonable mix.
- **Platform Centricity vs Capability Centricity.** IAF's procurement policy revolves around the Long Term Perspective Plan. Capability based approach rather than platform centric approach is desirable. Platform centric approach in a standalone manner, without clearly defining desired capabilities based on threat assessment, may lead to inaccurate prediction and sub optimal procurement of air assets. Employment of air power assets needs to be viewed in a holistic sense. An overarching and comprehensive basis for procurement is essential to achieving synergy in war fighting and meeting strategic ends. This will also help in achieving asymmetry over adversaries.
- **Multi Domain Strategy.** Apart from the air, land and sea, the domains of space and cyber play a crucial role in effective war fighting. Cyber capabilities need to be developed for both offensive and defensive ops. A joint services cyber warfare command needs to be operationalised. Defensive and offensive space capabilities are

crucial. Defensive capabilities are the immediate priority whereas, offensive space capability may be developed over a period of time. Blending the kinetic and non-kinetic means of strategy is crucial to gaining the upper hand and keeping the enemy on the defensive.

- **Multi-disciplinary Approach.** India's adversaries have traditionally used asymmetric approach. This is seen in the policy of 'bleed through thousand cuts' by Pakistan, and threat to use long range vectors to counter the deficiencies of fighter operations in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) by China. IAF needs to focus on capability building adopting a multi-disciplinary and integrated war fighting approach.

Focus Areas

Ashley J Tellis, in his article about troubles of IAF, recommends that "India needs to safeguard its regional air superiority over both Pakistan and China by mustering the requisite end strength and enhancing its extant operational advantages. India should expand its investments in advanced munitions, combat support aircraft, electronic warfare, physical infrastructure, and pilot proficiency while being realistic about its domestic capacity to produce sophisticated combat air craft". Some of the focus areas are as follows:

- **Combat Strength.** Indian armed forces have to plan for a two front contingency. Despite being a world-class combat arm, the IAF's falling strength and force structure threaten its air superiority over its rapidly modernising rivals. Resolving airpower shortfalls, therefore, should be a top priority. The IAF's fighter force is short of its sanctioned strength.
- **Self-sufficiency.** IAF continues to be dependent on the international aviation market with bulk of its equipment being of foreign origin. High dependence on foreign vendors results in higher cost, and longer procurement cycles.
- **Diversified Inventory.** IAF is faced with a challenge because of the heterogeneity of its force. It is also referred to as 'unusually diversified' with multiple types of fighters, helicopters, transport (tpt) and trainer aircraft (ac) and combat support namely tankers and Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) platforms. The extremely diverse inventory of the IAF presents techno-logistical challenges of a large magnitude. Problems of inventory diversity includes logistics burden besides maintenance problems caused by the multiplicity of aircraft. However, diversity of inventory has its advantages as well. Major one being avoidance of relying on one or few sources.
- **War Sustenance.** Any fighting force needs to have ability to sustain desired tempo of operation. Hurdles impeding this capability need to be addressed.
- **Infrastructure.** Infrastructure like blast pens, sun shelters, parallel taxi tracks, runway rehabilitation scheme and hydrant refuelling systems (HRS) etc. enables high tempo operations besides reducing the vulnerability of assets to air/ surface-to-surface missile (SSM) strikes.
- **Networking.** Networking of sensors, platforms, systems, and other types of equipment has seen a surge in last decade or so. IAF has applied it to air defence, air ops planning and even maintenance and logistics functions. The IAF networking capability has evolved well however, it still has scope for further progress and improvement.

Blending the kinetic and non-kinetic means of strategy is crucial to gaining the upper hand and keeping the enemy on the defensive.

Capability Building

Modernisation is a continuous process involving phasing out of old equipment and induction of new one. Induction takes a long gestation time. In this process, permanent dilution of requisite force level should not take place.

- **Fighter Aircraft.** Various calculations have been done and suggestions made regarding number of fighter aircraft squadrons required by the IAF [‘Global Air Power’ book mentions a figure of 64 squadrons (sqns) (probably includes transport sqns)]. A study by IDSA in 2012 had arrived at a figure of 53 - 63 fighter sqns against a collusive threat]. Most of the analysts conclude that while the authorised strength is 42 sqns, minimum required is 45 sqns. These figures may go up to even 60 in future as both adversaries keep growing in their operational potential. The fact is that at present the strength is even well below the authorised value. A mitigation plan does exist and is reviewed periodically however, inductions are slow as compared to draw down and the strength is reducing, if the draw down is not addressed the strength is likely to go down further. Immediate planned inductions include left over Su-30 ac, Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) (Mk 1, Mk 1A, Mk II) and contracted Rafael ac. Future induction of 110 multi role fighter ac and Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) need to be expedited. Balance between quantity and quality needs to be maintained.
- **Support Platforms.** Support platforms include AWACS / Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) System, Mid-air refuellers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) platforms and medium / heavy lift ac.
 - ❖ **AWACS & AEW&C.** To enhance the battlefield transparency and seamless coverage at Low Levels (LL), availability of airborne sensors becomes a prerequisite. Considering the assumption of proliferation of High Level (HL) and Medium Level (ML) radars providing seamless coverage all across the frontier, AWACS & AEW&C would essentially provide LL trans-frontier cover. Considering factors like area to be covered, duration of surveillance and turnaround time etc., existing numbers are inadequate. Being costly assets, these could be procured in a phased manner.
 - ❖ **Multi Role Tanker Transport.** Mid-air refuelling platforms are essential to increase the range and endurance of the aircraft. This combat enabler increases the flexibility of use of airpower. Considering factors like tanker capacity, fuel off take, area of operation etc., total requirement is more than the present strength. At least 06 aircraft more would be required on priority in the near future.
 - ❖ **ISR Platforms.** While tactical ISR needs are being addressed, there is an urgent need for induction of Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) platform for ground situation monitoring and targeting. Considering the security scenario, these aircraft are essential.
 - ❖ **Transport Aircraft.** While induction of C-17 and C-130 has enhanced the heavy lift and special operations capability, medium lift capability need to be addressed. Avro and AN-32 aircraft replacement is urgently required.
- **Air Defence.** The concept of AD has undergone a change from point defence to offensive defence. This has been possible because of induction of Surveillance platforms (Ground and Aerial), long range AD weapons [Surface-to-Air Guided Weapons (SAGW) and air-to-air missile (AAM)], Air Superiority fighters and networked

The concept of AD has undergone a change from point defence to offensive defence. This has been possible because of induction of Surveillance platforms (Ground and Aerial), long range AD weapons [Surface-to-Air Guided Weapons (SAGW) and air-to-air missile (AAM)], Air Superiority fighters and networked operations like Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS).

operations like Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS). However, few areas need capability enhancement.

❖ **AD Systems.** Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) and SAGW capable of countering multiple long range (LR) cruise missiles and SSMs, with variable trajectories, are imperative. Close-In Weapon Systems (CIWS) at important installations are critical to counter the enemy's LR precision-guided munitions (PGMs) and cruise missiles.

❖ **SAGW.** Due to the very nature of air attack, a single layer of weapon system cannot economically and efficiently provide all-encompassing, seamless and round-the-clock air defence coverage. With the stand-off ranges of air launched weapons increasing over the years, a layered AD concept has been implemented by IAF to provide defence in depth. Adequate numbers need to be procured to cover all the VA / VPs. Different types of SAGW systems envisaged for a layered AD include the following:

- Long Range Surface to Air Missile (LRSAM) system for Area Defence.
- Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM) system for Area and Point Defence.

❖ Short Range Surface to Air Missile (SRSAM) for Point Defence (incl Akaash and Spyder).

❖ Very Short Range Air Defence System (VSHORADS) for Point Defence of deployed assets.

❖ CIWS which includes AD Guns for providing terminal AD.

Therefore, the endeavour should be to leapfrog the developmental cycle and design and develop a family of stealth / conventional UCAVs which specialise in different roles.

➤ **Weapons.** The weapon list should provide a mix of options. On top of the list are the LR vectors for destruction of enemy air defences (DEAD) campaign. Effective DEAD campaign would be the lynchpin for all air operations. LR autonomous fire and forget air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs), SSMs, anti-radiation missiles (ARMs) and persistent air vehicles with multiple homing heads are imperative for a successful DEAD campaign. While high tech weapon systems have increased accuracy and assurance, they are not a panacea for downsizing force levels. The enemy too would have matching high technology weapon systems, Numbers would matter to win decisively.

➤ **Armed Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) / Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs).** These are likely to take over many offensive roles considering their potential and dispensability. The push for UCAV development and employment is increasing steadily. This situation may entail our fighters and AD weapons fighting against enemy RPA force in the future. Therefore, the endeavour should be to leapfrog the developmental cycle and design and develop a family of stealth / conventional UCAVs which specialise in different roles.

Space. An increase in defensive space based capabilities is a must. The three services, with the IAF in lead, must push for leveraging Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)'s success and expertise for military use. Highest priority is for the Space based surveillance capability. Early warning of SSM launches, and space or land based ASAT capabilities are two other priority areas.

➤ **ISR.** ISR capability should include following:

❖ Responsive ISR on a tactical and strategic level in a defined area.

- ❖ Capability to execute real time surveillance / recce of dynamic targets based on Human / Electronic intelligence (HUMINT / ELINT).
- ❖ Communications intelligence (COMINT) capabilities to help in tracking dynamic targets as well as assessing intentions of the adversary.
- ❖ Capability to conduct ELINT ops against hostile communication and radar networks.
- **Electronic Warfare (EW) Capability.** Capability is required to operate in a dense and hostile EW environment with a secure and jam resistant network as well as employ offensive EW assets with the aim of dominating the EW spectrum. Dominating the EW spectrum will not only keep own attrition to the minimum but will also permit the IAF to impose high attrition on the adversary.
- **Other Capabilities.** These include following:
 - ❖ **Information Warfare (IW) Capability.** Capability to execute offensive IW operations against adversaries.
 - ❖ **Precision and Standoff Capability.** Capability to inflict strategic paralysis through a systems approach and precision strike capability.
 - ❖ **Air Lift Capability.** Airlift and Heli-lift capability, including special ops capability, to support operations.
 - ❖ **Reach.** Air power projection capability in the area of interest stretching from Gulf of Aden to Straits of Malacca. Capability to employ the deterrence value of air power by basing offensive assets at the further reaches of India's territories.
 - ❖ **Networked Environment.** Network enabled real time command and control and air battle management including real time mission planning and tasking.

Electronic Warfare (EW) Capability. Capability is required to operate in a dense and hostile EW environment with a secure and jam resistant network.

Conclusion

The gap between the war fighting capacity and capability of IAF and the perceived threats calls for immediate and substantial measures to ensure national security. Building these capabilities may appear to be a tall order. Capability building entails a long gestation period. IAF is in urgent need of capability enhancement considering the prevailing security environment. There is an immediate need to invest in its capability building.

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India's Nuclear Force Structure in China-Pakistan Strategic Calculus

Dr. Rajiv Nayan[@]

Abstract

India, China and Pakistan are nuclear weapons countries. All three rely on the philosophy of nuclear deterrence. However, Pakistan does not have a no-first use policy. India and China have a “no first use policy”, but China is not trusted for its professed statement. In this situation, could India's nuclear force structure deter both the countries? The conventional wisdom is that it will deter its two nuclear armed adversaries. However, the uncertainty regarding rational behaviour of the two nuclear armed adversaries needs to be factored in India's security and strategic calculus. Different possible scenarios of nuclear weapons use of the three nuclear weapons countries are to be simulated. These scenarios may help India in devising its grand strategy.

Introduction

China is the first nuclear country in Asia and is a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Pakistan is a non-NPT nuclear weapons power that has been part of the proliferation network, linking it to China and many other countries. The network facilitated extended deterrence to all the networked countries which followed informal and more dangerous rules unknown to the world and even to many countries involved in it. The relationship between these countries existed before and after they became nuclear weapon states. Of all the countries involved in the proliferation network, the special relationship between China and Pakistan has always been a matter of concern for India.

The idea behind maintaining the China-Pakistan nexus is to facilitate mutual assistance or to promote interdependence. China and Pakistan are time-tested friends. China helps Pakistan through resources and technology and goods¹ and extends support to it in international organisations on occasions like vetoing moves to designating Hafiz Saeed a terrorist. China is suspected of supplying uranium to Pakistan for its bombs² beside missile technology and components. It is not a one-way street; Pakistan also extends support to China even as a secondary power. In 2011, the notorious A.Q. Khan revealed that even China had benefitted from the uranium enrichment technology which had helped her in refining its enrichment capability.³ Pakistan provides other technological assistance to China through the proliferation network and thus, shields China and for a long period, helped it in projecting itself as a stakeholder in the proliferation system.⁴

The China-Pakistan nexus has been well evident in recent years; more so, in the crisis in Ladakh. Quite interestingly, despite the nexus, the two countries adhere to two different philosophies about nuclear weapons: China professes no-first-use and for Pakistan it is the battlefield use of nuclear weapons, to deter conventional superiority. Pakistan always builds the South Asia nuclear narrative⁵ even though it has a hidden desire to fiddle with West Asian Affairs. China,

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although politically is a part of East Asia, yet it is a security concern for not only the countries in East Asia, but also for South Asia, Southeast Asia, and also the rest of the world. Thus, its nuclear weapons narrative is global in nature.

The principal question of this paper is: could China and Pakistan jointly launch or use nuclear weapons against India? No doubt, there is a very limited or remote chance of nuclear war among these countries; yet the paper does not rule out the use in some extreme circumstances.

Strategic Calculus

China's Move. Unlike the other four nuclear weapons countries, that are members of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, China does not divulge its nuclear weapons stockpile or even the stockpile of its reserve bomb-grade fissile materials. China has also not publicly announced any moratorium or suspension of its fissile materials' production. As a result, its stockpile has become a subject of speculation. From time to time, different studies have come out with their evaluation reports projecting the number of nuclear weapons and the size of unused weapons grade fissile materials.

Could China use nuclear weapons against India? China has a declared doctrine of No-First-Use. It gives the impression that it will fight the battle with conventional weapons. Will China continue with its policy? Actually, China's past behaviour has demonstrated that this is not sacrosanct about any treaty it signs. It finds some pretext or façade to scuttle it. The reality is that by declaring the doctrine of no-first-use, China pushes the world into complacency. By projecting itself as a benign nuclear weapon power, China has focused on its military modernisation by acquiring technology from outside, including the Western world.⁶ China may have bought time through the nuclear doctrine to modernize its military. It has not fought many wars after becoming a nuclear-weapon power. As long as China does not fight any war or maintains conventional superiority over its rivals in a battle, it may continue with its current nuclear posture or doctrine. However, the scenario may change when it faces the threat of losing its conventional superiority.

The reality is that by declaring the doctrine of no-first-use, China pushes the world into complacency. By projecting itself as a benign nuclear weapon power, China has focused on its military modernisation by acquiring technology from outside, including the Western world.

Admittedly, China has forged ahead in new technologies or emerging technologies.⁷ But in developing these technologies, it was helped by the West in the past. After the Russia-China fallout, the United States (US)-led Western world started engaging China and gradually, it eased its curbs on technology transfers to China. Now, the Western world led by Trump is trying to undo what it had done about five decades ago. Trump's campaign has started showing results, and despite investing a huge sum of money, China, actually, has started finding it difficult to push many of its advanced technology projects.⁸

Use of nuclear weapons by an aggressive and increasingly belligerent China is considered a possibility. Under the scenario, China may use nuclear weapons against India's troops either stationed in India or in the neighbourhood. This could be a limited low-scale attack. The objective behind the attack could be to scare India as well as the smaller countries in its vicinity to fall in line and not resist the Chinese design in Asia. This scenario is based on the assumption that after the attack India may not retaliate because of the high cost involved with nuclear escalation. China may signal that its reserve nuclear force may unleash another round of attacks if India retaliates.

China may use nuclear weapons under its current nuclear doctrine of retaliatory use. If the US overwhelmingly defeats China even without using nuclear weapons, theoretically as an adherent to no first use, China ought not to use nuclear weapons. However, as discussed, when China stares at defeat in a battle or is cornered, it may not adhere to its no-first-use policy. It could use nuclear weapons against the Western countries, its troops and allies. Quite obviously, if India participates in military action against China, there is a possibility of use of nuclear weapons against India as well. Could India's doctrine of retaliation or the huge North Atlantic Treaty Organisation/US arsenals deter China from

using nuclear weapons? Yes, in theory, it should dissuade and deter it, but an authoritarian regime often betrays the common sense.

Pakistan's Provocation. Pakistan has been sending a signal or message that it may consider using nuclear weapons against India in a normal battlefield situation, though on many occasions, it underlines the fact that a nuclear weapon is not an ordinary weapon to be used casually. Pakistan has been projecting *Hatf-IX/ Nasr* as the weapon to be used in the battlefield.⁹ The Pakistani political and military leaderships have emphasised on this stark reality on more than one occasion.

To deter India's conventional superiority, Pakistan has used bluffing in the past and may employ the strategic bluffing in the future, though its bluff was called by India after Uri and the Balakot strikes. Strategic nuclear bluffing has been part of nuclear deterrence for a long period. Different writings on nuclear strategy have been highlighting different situations and scenarios in which a nuclear power uses the tactic of strategic nuclear bluffing. Interestingly, some of the writings find it morally justifiable because it helps in preventing a war.

China and Pakistan have been enjoying a deep-rooted and time-tested strategic relationship. The nuclear relationship between China and Pakistan has been part of their multilateral clandestine nuclear proliferation collaborations. Pakistan has also helped the collaborations, including China. Pakistan also shared 1998 test data with its proliferation partners such as China and North Korea.¹⁰

As for nuclear weapons use, Pakistan has a First-Use policy whereas China has a No-First-Use policy. A Pakistan-China combine may have an understanding on the use of nuclear weapons as well.

As for nuclear weapons use, Pakistan has a First-Use policy whereas China has a No-First-Use policy. A Pakistan-China combine may have an understanding on the use of nuclear weapons as well. For the military alliance, Pakistan may start the use of nuclear weapons to demoralise India and China may signal that any use of nuclear weapons against Pakistan will invite a retaliatory nuclear strike from China. This posture may aim at not only dissuading India from nuclear retaliation but also other countries of possible nuclear intervention.

India's Options

After Loss of Territory. China is conventionally superior to India. On paper, the military balance is in China's favour at least quantitatively¹¹, though India's recent spate of military modernisation may give it some advantage in comparison to the past. In a battlefield with China, there could be three scenarios. Firstly, in a conventional war at the border, China runs over Indian posts as it did in 1962, and enters deep into India. Secondly, China in a surprise attack catches the Indian security establishment unawares, and captures territory; and the thirdly, the joint force of China and Pakistan defeats India, and captures a large part of its territory.

India may have three options: first, asking China and Pakistan or China to vacate its captured areas; China obliges and vacates India's territory; the second, it may appeal for the intervention of the international community and the international organisations like the United Nations; and third, it may use its weapons of last resort, namely, nuclear weapons, even if no nuclear weapons are used by its adversary or adversaries. If Pakistan and China capture only Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh and do not vacate, there are less chances of a nuclear exchange.

Massive Second Strike. India's stated policy is that it will use nuclear weapons when it is attacked with nuclear weapons. This nuclear attack could be on Indian territory or Indian forces anywhere. This means that India may use nuclear weapons in retaliation if Indian troops are attacked in Pakistan or China during any military action. This situation may arise when China or Pakistan or both open a front and enter into Indian Territory, and to put pressure on its adversary or both the adversaries, India may enter their territory.

The question comes up that who will use a nuclear weapon against India first? As discussed, Pakistan with no doctrinal qualm regarding no-first-use may start the nuclear war. Theoretically, India may use nuclear weapons against Pakistan as first-use comes from there. The dilemma before India could be selecting the target when it faces joint forces of China and Pakistan and a nuclear weapon is used against it. The scenario becomes complex when a battlefield weapon is used without Pakistan claiming the use of a nuclear weapon. The Indian doctrine is silent on that. India may have to deal with this complex situation. If it uses nuclear weapons against the joint troops, China may openly use the retaliatory strike option against India. India may have to escalate the situation and use nuclear weapons against China as well.

The Indian nuclear doctrine lays down: “Nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage.” Here, the Indian dilemma is resolved and Indian officials reiterate several times that India will not distinguish between a battlefield nuclear weapon and a strategic nuclear weapon. Its retaliation will be the same for both types of nuclear weapons. When Pakistan projected its *NASR* or *Hatf-IX* as its battlefield weapons, many expected India to have a tactical weapon like *Prabar* to project against *NASR*.¹² However, India did not fall into the trap, and made it clear that there would be massive and unacceptable damage in the face of even battlefield weapon use.

India may face a major dilemma over the use of nuclear weapons when it is attacked with chemical and biological weapons—other weapons of Mass Destruction. The nuclear doctrine states: “in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons.”¹³ If India is attacked with either of the weapons, it cannot retaliate with the same weapon because it is a signatory of both the Conventions—the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological & Toxin Weapons Convention.

The dilemma before India could be selecting the target when it faces joint forces of China and Pakistan and a nuclear weapon is used against it. The scenario becomes complex when a battlefield weapon is used without Pakistan claiming the use of a nuclear weapon.

Use of nuclear weapons may depend on the intensity and gravity of the use and consequences of these two weapons. For small-scale use of the weapon, India may prefer other options in place of the use of nuclear weapons, as the use of nuclear weapons may depict India in a bad light. It may be accused of disproportionate use of weapons. The cost of the use of nuclear weapons may be higher than the loss of being hit by two smaller WMDs.

Moreover, the Indian nuclear response may be complicated if the user country is a signatory of both the Conventions and the use of the weapon is not claimed. Both China and Pakistan are signatories of both the Conventions and both know the unnecessary consequences of publicly claiming the use of chemical and biological weapons. However, the scenario may change with the emerging aggressive behaviour of China. It may use chemical or biological weapons to assert its position in the international system. It may start openly overlooking all the international rules, norms and commitments it gave, though so far, it did all this clandestinely. In the changed situation, when China admits the use of biological and chemical weapons, and a large number of people are killed because of the proven deliberate act, a chance of India using nuclear weapons may theoretically be foreseen. By doing so, it will not be violating any international law.

Launch on Warning. As discussed, India has a no-first-use policy but also the policy/doctrine of nuclear retaliation to a first strike. However, the question frequently posed ever since the adoption of the doctrine of no-first-use is: what will India do if it receives a signal or information from satellites and other early warning systems that its enemy has launched or is preparing to launch a nuclear attack? A wide cross-section of the Indian strategic community has been highlighting the hazard of absorbing a nuclear attack when information of an attack becomes available.¹⁴ It is also considered a morally, ethically and militarily risky idea to expose a country’s population and armed forces to a nuclear attack when this attack could be prevented. This prompt launch option is in practice as a policy in the US doctrine for decades.¹⁵ The US had conceived this idea, though it was not under any doctrinal or ethical pressure of no-first-use. The only serious

factor, which is discussed in the US, is the risk of an accidental launch because of the false alarm. The idea behind a launch on warning is that any country's deterrence could be useful security-wise if it overcomes or escapes a surprise attack. In this regard, the US strategic community discusses launch on strategic warning or launch on tactical warning that is preventive strike, or pre-emptive strike.

The danger of accidental alarm may be relevant in the Indian theatre as well. Pakistan's deceptive behaviour and its policy of nuclear bluff may cause a false alert but China avoids giving such a false indication. Quite significantly, the entire argument of accidental launch has been built around the Cold War experience. Technology has become more sophisticated, and India has also invested in space assets and other surveillance technology. India needs to launch a mix of conventional and nuclear weapons to debilitate the enemy's attack which may otherwise destroy India's high-value targets and more importantly, the morale of the nation. If India provides proof to the international community or even to its domestic audience, it will not be held accountable to non-adherence to no-first-use.

Conclusion

Both China and Pakistan will pursue opaque nuclear weapon development and modernisation programme. The number of weapons both countries possess may continue to be a subject of speculation. The two countries will have more sophisticated missiles and aircraft. If China is able to demonstrate the development and battlefield use of J-20 as per its claim, and develop J-31 or J-35, as reported, it will have a robust capability against India and the world. Both the countries may also focus on developing and refining sea-based nuclear delivery capabilities. India will also have to increase its nuclear weapons and refine its nuclear weapons delivery vehicles/systems.

The use of nuclear weapons by China along with Pakistan may not be a far-fetched reality. The loss of the edge in conventional weapons could be a trigger for the use of nuclear weapons for China.

As for the use of nuclear weapons, conventional wisdom and the taboo against nuclear weapons guided the world to conclude that nuclear weapon countries may hesitate to use the capability. However, China's increasing assertiveness and dismissive approach towards international law and norms as well as its expansionist behaviour, make the world apprehensive of the unthinkable scenario emerging. The use of nuclear weapons by China along with Pakistan may not be a far-fetched reality. The loss of the edge in conventional weapons could be a trigger for the use of nuclear weapons for China. If it is on the verge of losing a war, it may think of using nuclear weapons. It may possibly use nuclear weapons against India if it sees India working or 'aligning' with the US and the Western powers. Use of nuclear weapons against India to scare its smaller neighbours is a remote but a real possibility. The use of nuclear weapons in a common battlefield is very unlikely. Most likely, Pakistan may continue with its tactic of strategic bluffing with its nuclear weapons. Joint use is a likely scenario. In this, Pakistan may use the nuclear weapons and China will posture that if Pakistan is attacked, it may opt for nuclear retaliation.

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Ideating India's Response to the PLA Strategic Support Force

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Abstract

The arena of warfighting in the 21st Century is gradually shifting from the physical to the information and cognitive realms. Realizing this, China has displayed commendable agility by integrating strategic space, cyber, electronic and psychological warfare capabilities under the potent PLA Strategic Support Force (SSF); the US has raised its Cyber and Space Commands over the last decade and has significant psychological operations resources at its disposal; and Russia has demonstrated its capabilities for waging war in Infospace by conducting dramatic operations in Estonia, Georgia and Ukraine. It is imperative for India to introspect and assess whether our efforts so far towards developing non-kinetic warfare capabilities have been adequate. This work analyses the response options available to India for countering the military threat posed by the PLA SSF and outlines a roadmap for raising a tri-Service Information Operations Command, assessed as being the most viable option.

Introduction

The Strategic Support Force (SSF) was created in 2016 as part of the reforms for restructuring the PLA. The integration of strategic space, cyber, electronic and psychological warfare capabilities under the single umbrella of the SSF gives an insight into how the PLA plans to fight informationized wars of the 21st Century.

China is not alone in recognizing that the centre of gravity of warfighting is shifting from kinetic conflicts in the physical realm to Grey Zone operations in the information and cognitive realms. Indeed, it is Russia which has demonstrated the most noteworthy strategic effects in Infospace, by conducting dramatic information operations in Estonia (2007), Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2015 onwards)¹, in addition to its alleged interference in US presidential elections (2016) and France (2017). The US takes credit for being a pioneer in the conceptualization of Information Operations (IO) and has significant IO resources at its command. Faced with the imminent danger presented by a daunting adversary on our northern borders, it is imperative for India to introspect and assess whether our current efforts so far towards developing non-kinetic warfare capabilities have been adequate. This work postulates that the strategic importance of information operations has not yet fully dawned on the Indian Armed Forces, with the result that till now we have taken rather insipid initiatives on this front. It then outlines a roadmap for creating a tri-Service IO Command as an effective counter to the military threat posed by the PLA SSF.

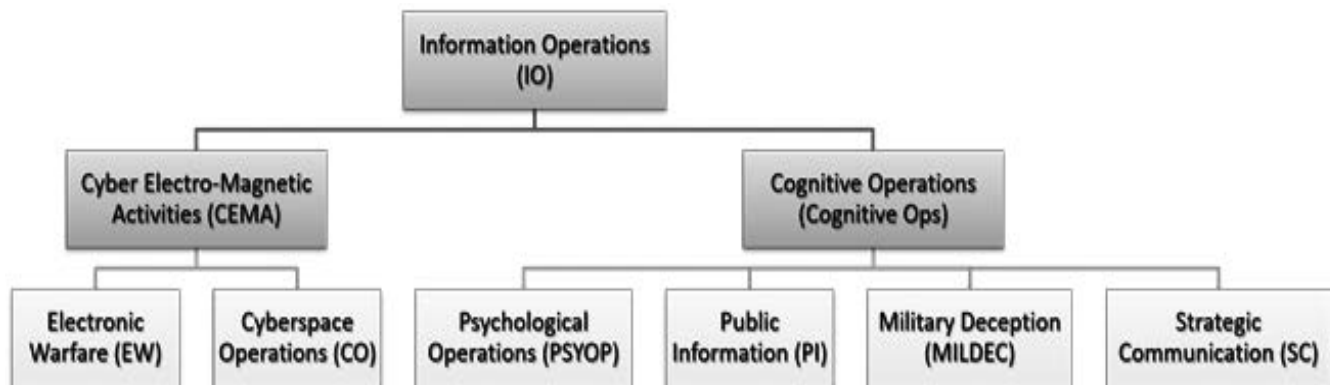
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Infospace: The Fifth Domain of Warfare

Five-Dimensional Battlespace. Modern military doctrine recognizes a five-dimensional battlespace comprising land, sea, air, space and cyberspace domains. While the term dimension refers to the conceptual facet of this battlespace, the usage of ‘domain’ implies jurisdiction and resources associated with each dimension. Thus, for instance, giving cyberspace the status of a warfighting domain in military doctrine is not merely an academic construct but mandates the creation of a dedicated ‘force’ for conducting cyber warfare.²

Infospace and Information Operations. The cyberspace dimension captures the virtual (non-physical) constituent of the modern battlespace which, in the author’s opinion, is better represented by the term Infospace³. IO are means for achieving dominance in Infospace and cover three types of warfighting capabilities: electronic warfare (EW), cyber warfare/ operations (CO) and psychological/ cognitive operations, which play out in the physical, information and cognitive realms respectively. In this work, the term Cognitive Operations (Cognitive Ops), rather than Psychological Operations or Perception Management, will be used to denote operations in the cognitive domain, mainly due to negative overtones of the latter two terms⁴.

The IO Hierarchy. It is useful to classify IO capabilities into two streams: Information Technical Operations (ITO), comprising CO and EW, also referred to as Cyber-Electromagnetic Activities (CEMA)⁵; and Cognitive Ops, which include several distinct capabilities, the chief amongst them being psychological operations (PSYOP), public affairs/ public information (PA/ PI), military deception (MILDEC) and strategic Communication (SC). The hierarchy of IO capabilities may be depicted diagrammatically as under⁶:-



Cognitive Operations. While the scope of CEMA is usually well understood, Cognitive Ops require further elaboration⁷. A very brief description is given here, as under:-

- **PSYOP.** PSYOP, as an abbreviation for psychological operations, is a US DOD term which denotes planned operations to convey *selected (and not necessarily truthful) information* and indicators to *foreign audiences* to *influence* their emotions, motives and objective reasoning⁸. In a military context, they target the adversary’s combat forces with the objective of inducing fear and reluctance or refusal to fight⁹. The term *psychological operations* is often used in a generic sense to refer to all hues of cognitive operations. This work uses the term *PSYOP* and implies the US definition.
- **PI.** These are actions aimed at *informing* foreign (hostile, neutral and friendly) as well as domestic audiences with the objective of supporting own objectives¹⁰.

- **MILDEC.** MILDEC are actions executed during military campaigns to deliberately mislead adversary decision makers¹¹.
- **SC.** For the purpose of this work, based on certain considerations, SC is restricted to Military Diplomacy (MD) and Civil Military Operations (CMO)¹².

Considerations for Organization Design

It is important to understand that there is a fundamental difference between CEMA and Cognitive Ops streams of IO, as making such a distinction impinges on operational, organizational and training issues. CEMA capabilities (CO and EW) have their theoretical foundations in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). In contrast, the Cognitive Ops practitioner needs to have a grounding in the social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, political science, history, etc. The training and operational environments necessary for honing these disciplines are also entirely different. Within CEMA, while CO requires the highest levels of human skills, EW derives its strength from sophisticated technology. These considerations dictate that, at the execution level, organizational purity must be maintained for the three primary IO functions of CO, EW and Cognitive Ops. Also, within the ambit of Cognitive Ops, activities characterized by 'deceit/ lies' (PSYOP/ MILDEC) must be kept sufficiently isolated from activities which rely on truth and positive messaging (PI/ SC), from considerations of credibility. Finally, integrated employment of IO capabilities is best carried out through staff coordination and/ or mission oriented multi-disciplinary teams.

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The Space and Infospace Dimensions: A Symbiotic Relationship

At this point in time, the Space segment fulfills three primary functions: provision of communications (information flow), geolocation (information about location) and ISR (information about adversary forces). Therefore, rather than viewing Space as a warfighting arena, it is better perceived as a non-terrestrial sub-stratum for Infospace. Due to this symbiotic relationship between Space and Infospace, there is merit in striving for organizational synergy between military capabilities in these two dimensions, as has been achieved to a large extent in the case of the PLA SSF.

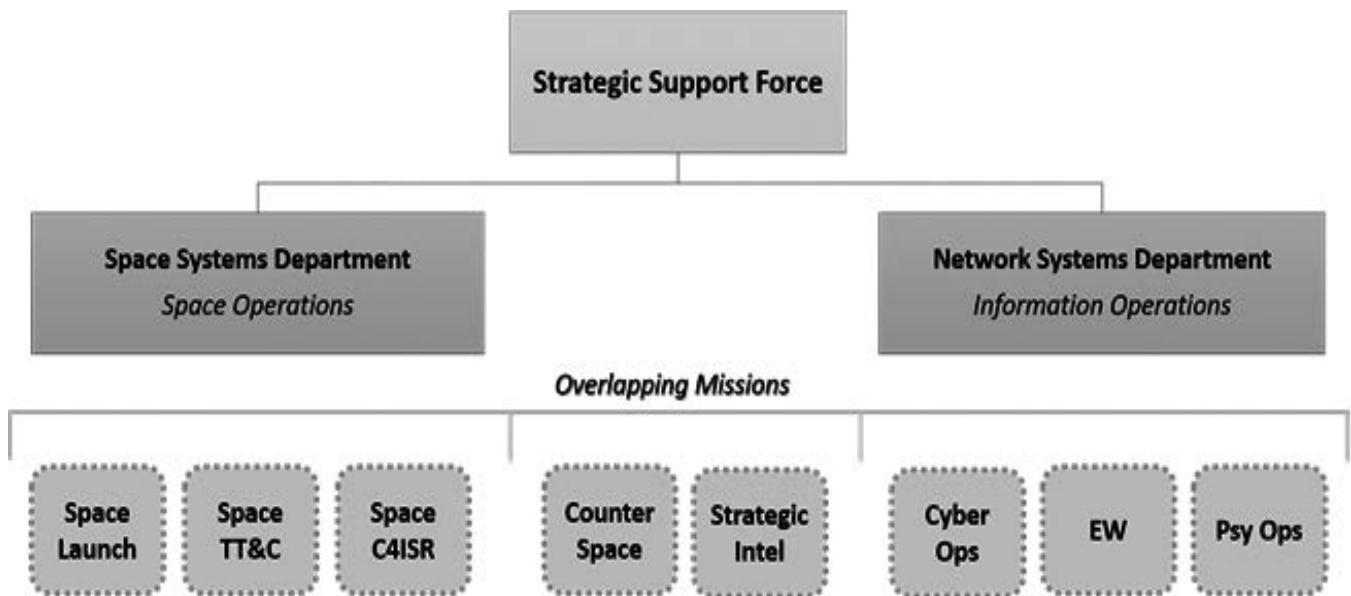
The PLA Strategic Support Force

Concept. The PLA SSF as a force has been created to conduct strategic operations in Infospace. Its charter covers almost the full spectrum of IO as well a significant slice of space operations. The SSF operationalizes the Chinese warfighting doctrine of Integrated Network Electronic Warfare (INEW)¹³, which corresponds to CEMA, as also (partially) the Chinese "Three Warfares" concept, which comprises of Psychological Warfare, Legal Warfare and Public Opinion Warfare¹⁴ [4]. The former two correspond to PSYOP and PI respectively, which the SSF is organized to conduct. Legal Warfare is different from any of the IO capabilities discussed above and implies the use of international and domestic law to claim the legal high ground or assert Chinese interests. It is not clear from available literature whether the SSF is tasked with Legal Warfare, strategic MILDEC or SC.

By restructuring its strategic IO resources under the SSF, the PLA has achieved two levels of integration: firstly, the 'attack' (information destruction, denial, corruption) and 'exploit' (information stealth/ interception) capabilities have been brought under the same *department*; and secondly, almost all strategic IO capabilities spanning the Space and Infospace domains have been organised as a single *force*. This high degree of integration is expected to enormously increase the potency of available resources.

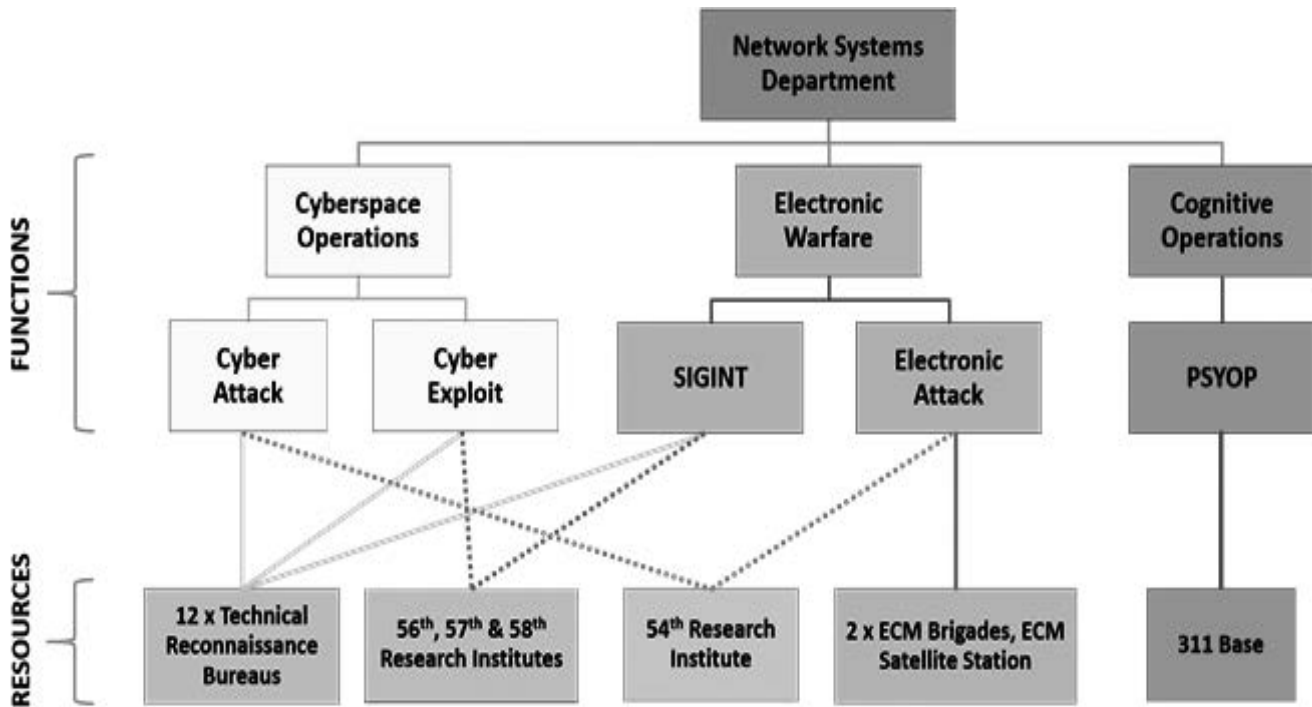
More significantly, raising the SSF as a separate force at par with the PLA’s Army, Navy and Air Force components is emphatic evidence that the PLA now considers Infospace as a warfighting domain in its own right. It has also underscored the importance, in Chinese strategic thought, of bringing space capabilities under military jurisdiction.

Organisation. The SSF comprises of two operational departments, namely, the Space Systems Department (SSD) and the Network Systems Department (NSD), and functions directly under the operational control of the CMC [7]. The SSF has so far been created using a ‘bricks, not clay approach’, wherein existing organisations and their component parts have been renamed, resubordinated and moved, and their command relationships redefined. Under the respective departments, the SSF appears to be organized as bases, many of which existed as part of the pre-reform structure. For instance, five of the former test bases responsible for space operations have been transferred to the SSF, as is also the case with the 311 Base, China’s Three Warfares establishment known for psychological operations [8]. Functional responsibilities of the SSD and NSD are depicted diagrammatically below¹⁵:-



The SSF is structured to conduct essentially *strategic* IO, while the five theatre commands have their integral IO resources as well for supporting operations at the operational and tactical levels. Some form of control over theatre resources from the apex level is likely to be in place, especially in the CO and Cognitive Ops verticals.

Finally, the PLA SSF (together with the PLA Rocket Force (RF)) differs from the three Services in another significant aspect: while the Services are responsible for force construction with actual fighting being the domain of theatre commands, the SSF is vested with the responsibility for force construction as well as conduct of operations and is therefore organizationally a hybrid between a force and a service. As per information available in the open domain, the IO resources placed under the NSD are depicted diagrammatically below:-



The Technical Reconnaissance Bureaus (TRBs), are known to be responsible for cyber exploit/ espionage and signal intelligence (SIGINT) missions. Elements integral to the erstwhile GSD's Fourth Department trained for cyber-attack missions have also perhaps been integrated into the TRBs. The 56th, 57th and 58th Research Institutes (RIs) are known to possess the R&D and weaponization expertise for cyber operations as well as SIGINT missions, while the 54th RI is responsible for R&D on electronic attack and offensive cyber operations.

The US IO Organisations

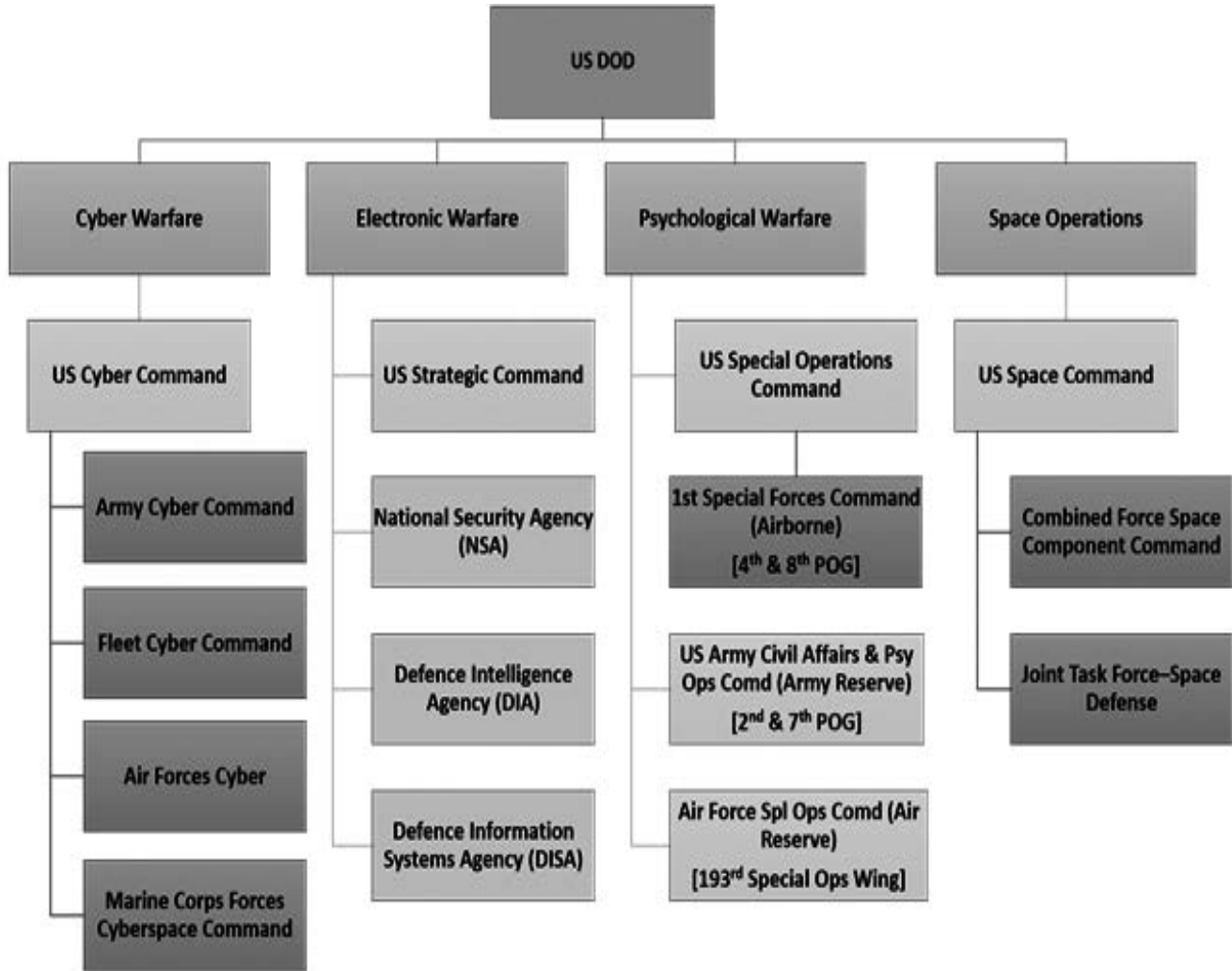
Cyber Operations. The US Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM) is one of the eleven unified commands of the DOD, which has under it Component Commands provided by the each of the four Services, namely, the Army Cyber Command, the Fleet Cyber Command (10th Fleet), the 16th Air Force and the Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command. The USCYBERCOM achieved initial operational capability in 2010 as a component of the US Strategic Command (USSTRATCOM). It comprises of 133 Cyber Mission Teams with a total strength of 6200 personnel. A good proportion of these teams are distributed amongst the geographical commands to be deployed at operational and tactical levels. In Aug 2018, the Cyber Command was upgraded to the status of a unified combatant command¹⁶.

Electronic Warfare. DOD has several organizations responsible for developing and maintaining EW capabilities. The EW Executive Committee, led by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, is tasked with synchronizing and integrating EW across all DOD components. However, in the case of special operations, EW capabilities are coordinated by the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM)¹⁷. The congressionally mandated National Defense Strategy Commission has stated that the US is losing its advantages in EW vis-à-vis China and Russia and recommended increasing EW investments to regain US military advantage. The FY2019 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) mandated the creation of an Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations Cross Functional Team to develop an electronic warfare strategy leading to an acquisition plan.

Psychological Operations. The DOD active components mandated to carry out psychological operations are placed under the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). These components are the 4th & 8th Psychological Operations Groups, each comprising of 3-4 Psychological Operations battalions. There are several reserve components tasked to carry out psychological operations, which are part of the Army, Air Force and Navy.

Space Operations. US Space Command (USSPACECOM) is a unified combatant command of the US DOD, responsible for military operations in outer space. It was originally created in September 1985 to provide joint command and control for the US Armed Forces in outer space but was inactivated in 2002. It was re-established in August 2019 due to an increased focus on military space operations. US Space Command has two subordinate components. While the Combined Force Space Component Command uses space assets to support warfighting units across the globe, the Joint Task Force-Space Defense has the responsibility to protect and defend space assets from both terrestrial and space-based threats¹⁸.

The overall structure of US IO organisations is depicted diagrammatically below:-



Existing Indian IO Structures

Joint Services IO Structures. The only IO organisation at the joint services level in India is the Defence Cyber Agency (DCA). Originally established as the Defence Information Warfare Agency (DIWA) and subsequently re-christened to Defence Information Assurance and Research Agency (DIARA), the DCA has now been partly established as a tri-services organisation headquartered in Delhi. Approval was accorded in 2017 to upgrade DIARA to the DCA, which is a whittled down version of the Cyber Command recommended by the Naresh Chandra Committee as early as 2012.

The DCA, once fully raised, is expected to have a decentralized structure, where the bulk of the Agency will be split into smaller teams embedded within operational forces in the tri-Service commands, with its command centre in Delhi. It also aims at putting dedicated officers in major headquarters of the tri-Services to deal with emerging cyber warfare issues¹⁹.

IO Structures at Individual Service Levels . The following IO establishments exist at the individual Service levels:-

- **Staff Structures.** In the Army, so far, the ADG MO (IW) was responsible for all aspects of cyber, EW and psychological warfare. The ADG Public Information (PI) is chartered to carry out the PI function. Approval of the MoD has now been granted for the creation of the posts of DG (IW), who would have under him the existing ADG (IW) and the erstwhile ADG (PI) re-designated as ADG (Strategic Communication)²⁰. As regards field formations, specific IW staff appointments exist at higher HQ, while at lower levels this function is carried out by the operations staff officers.
- **CO.** The Army Cyber Group (ACG) is mandated to carry out all aspects of CO for the IA, including cyber audit and forensics. Similar establishments exist within the AF and the Navy.
- **EW.** Army EW resource being scarce, EW groups/ sub-groups are presently placed directly under Command HQ from considerations of efficient utilization. Their employment is entirely at tactical levels in close support to the fighting formations. In the IAF and the Indian Navy (IN), EW effort mostly focuses on platform based non-communication (anti-radar) capability.
- **PSYOP.** As per open domain information, no PSYOP units/ establishments are in place.

The Chinese 'SSF' model appears to have significant advantages over the US 'Command' model, since it facilitates a much higher synergy amongst various IO capabilities.

Space Operations. Space operations are currently the charter of the Defence Space Agency (DSA), which was approved in 2018 as a downsized version of the Aerospace Command. Its establishment was recommended by the Naresh Chandra Committee in 2012, together with the setting up of a Cyber Command and Special Operations Command. The Defence Imagery Processing and Analysis Centre (DIPAC) in Delhi and the Defence Satellite Control Centre (DSCC) in Bhopal have been subsumed by the DSA. The DSA is mandated to protect Indian interests in outer space and to deal with potential space wars, as also to develop space warfare strategy. The Defence Space Research Agency (DSRA), approved in 2019, is responsible for developing space-warfare systems and technologies for the DSA²¹.

India's Response Options

'Force' vis-à-vis 'Command' Structure. The Chinese 'SSF' model appears to have significant advantages over the US 'Command' model, since it facilitates a much higher synergy amongst various IO capabilities, which is very desirable for effective CEMA, cyber influence operations (CIO), etc. Moreover, a force, with its captive cadre and optimally tailored HR policies, is better suited for nurturing the high levels of specialisation necessary for developing expertise in various IO disciplines.

Notwithstanding the advantages of raising a separate IO force, in India's case adoption of a 'Command' model akin to that followed by the US DOD is recommended. Several considerations dictate this approach, as under:-

- In contrast to the US and China (and even Russia), doctrinal thought on IO in the Indian Armed Forces has not matured enough to generate the necessary conviction and will, even within the Forces, to bring about such a revolutionary change.

National Security Capacity Building

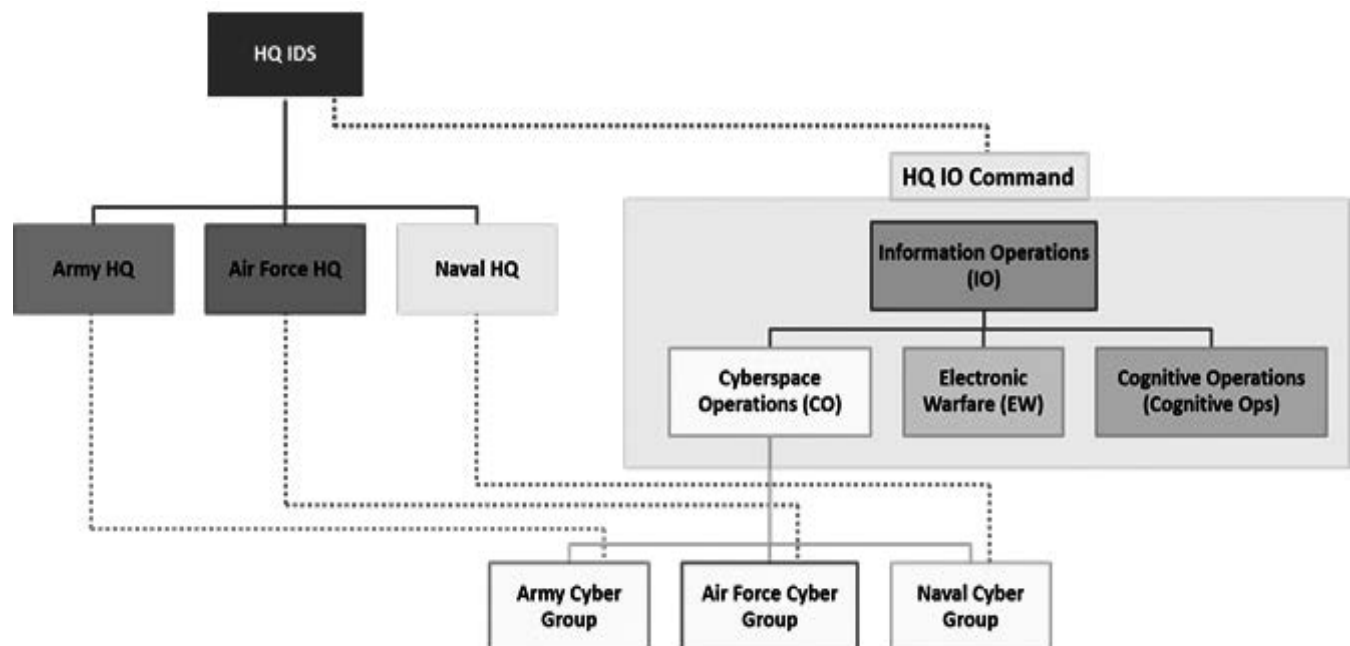
- Keeping in view India's resource constraints, creating a separate force would need to be done through a "save and raise" approach. The current level of jointness amongst the Services is not very conducive towards shedding manpower for a tri-Service force.
- The overheads involved in creating a separate force are likely to be higher.

In view of the above, it is recommended that an IO Command is raised over the next few years. As regards space operations, the DSA is recommended to be upgraded to an Aerospace Command in due course.

A Phased 'Bricks and Clay Approach'. The 'bricks not clay approach' could be adopted by the PLA because the desired capabilities for carrying out the entire spectrum of IO were already in existence, albeit spread across different departments. In India's case, however, certain capabilities do not exist at all, eg, psychological operations units. Therefore, a 'bricks and clay approach' would need to be adopted, wherein existing as well as fresh resources would be stitched together in a phased manner in order to ultimately set up a full-fledged tri-Service IO Command. Such an approach is outlined in the next section.

Tri-Service IO Command: Structure and Roadmap

Tri-Service IO Command: Dual-Control Architecture. The architecture proposed here attempts to build upon existing establishments, with upgradations and new raisings getting added on in a phased manner. In the proposed plan, the three Services would field Group level establishments (the equivalent of PLA bases) subordinate to the HQ IO Command, tasked with actual conduct of operations. Thus, in the realm of CO, while the Army already has an Army Cyber Group, existing cyber resources within the AF and Navy could also be restructured as groups and/ or sub-groups. A dual-control structure is recommended, with part control being exercised through the technical channel (eg, 'Cyber' channel), and partly by the respective Service. The nature of the dual-control structure would be dictated by operational requirements as well as the type of IO capability. For example, in the case of cyber operations, the specialist control channel would carry greater weight, while for EW it is the formation command line which would take precedence over the specialist one. Such a notional structure is depicted diagrammatically below (dual-control indicated only for CO)²²:-



Cyber Influence Operations (CIO) to be Prioritized. Cyber Influence Operations (CIO), being conducted on an ongoing basis by our adversaries, pose an imminent threat to India's national security. Countering CIO threats requires the integrated employment of CO and Cognitive Ops capabilities. Therefore, these capabilities need to be enhanced on priority, especially as these are currently either weak or non-existent. This involves upgrading the existing DCA to a full-fledged Cyber Command, creating cognitive operations capabilities which are presently not available, and optimizing staff structures for integrated employment of IO resources.

Staff Structures: Specialist Handling of CEMA and Cognitive Ops. It is important that, at all levels, design of staff structures be premised on a clear separation of the CEMA and Cognitive Ops streams of IO. For instance, in the IA, ADG (IW) and ADG (Strategic Communications) should be re-designated ADG (CEMA) and ADG (Cognitive Ops) respectively, with the two verticals merging at the level of DG (IW), which should be re-designated as DG (IO). Separate specialist staff appointments for CEMA and Cognitive Ops are recommended to be created down to Corps HQ.

Cyberspace Operations: Upgrade DCA to Cyber Command. Upgrading the DCA to a full-fledged tri-Services Cyber Command would provide the requisite capability to conduct offensive cyber operations including active defence. In addition to a Command HQ, cyber units should be raised and deployed down to tactical levels, along with intermediate subordinate Cyber HQ as felt necessary. While some of the Cyber HQ may be inter-Services in structure, Service purity should be maintained at unit level. As and when an IO Command comes up, HQ Cyber Command would get absorbed into the 'Cyber Operations' box of the HQ IO Command architecture depicted above. Execution units, placed under the command of Service HQ and various formations, would function under strict control of HQ IO/ Cyber Command in both scenarios.

Upgrading the DCA to a full-fledged tri-Services Cyber Command would provide the requisite capability to conduct offensive cyber operations including active defence. In addition to a Command HQ, cyber units should be raised and deployed down to tactical levels, along with intermediate subordinate Cyber HQ as felt necessary.

Cognitive Operations: Raise Pilot Cognitive Ops Unit. As of now, no PSYOP units/ establishments are in existence, and cognitive operations are being undertaken by non-specialist staff officers posted at various headquarters, thereby resulting in ineffective execution. The only formal structure which exists in support of cognitive operations is the ADG (PI), with the limited charter of media operations. There is an urgent need to raise specialist units for conduct of these operations. As a first step, it is recommended that a pilot tri-Service Cognitive Operations Unit be raised, manned by personnel trained in different cognitive disciplines (PSYOP, PI, MILDEC, CMO). Based on experience gained with the pilot unit, additional such units/ formations may be created in subsequent phases.

EW: Boost Strength and Modernize. Existing EW formations/ units/ establishments are recommended to be changed over to state-of-the-art equipment profile, and new formations/ units raised to fill existing voids.

Final Phase: Amalgamation of Bricks. In the final phase, a HQ IO Command would be raised, into which the existing Cyber Command as well as Cognitive Ops and EW formations/ units would be amalgamated, leading to a potent tri-Service IO Command.

Conclusion

This work has endeavoured to highlight the enhanced threat posed by China in Infospace and Space domains consequent to the creation of the PLA SSF. Against this backdrop, it has explored India's response options for developing requisite capability to wage war in Infospace. After reviewing the SSF 'Force' model vis-à-vis the US 'Command' Model, the above analysis has concluded that while the former is more optimally structured, the latter is better suited in the Indian context.

The work advocates the creation of a tri-Service IO Command over the next few years. A dual-command architecture for the IO Command has been proposed and a roadmap presented for upgrading and amalgamating existing IO resources together with new raisings into the IO Command in a phased manner. For space operations, it has endorsed upgradation of the DSA to a full-fledged Aerospace Command but has not favoured its organisational integration with the IO Command.

It is time for the Indian Armed Forces to take serious note of the strategic potential of Grey Zone conflicts in 21st Century geopolitics and shore up capabilities in conformance with India's aspirations for becoming a regional power of consequence.

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Integrating Military Logistics for Future Security Challenges

Lieutenant General Balbir Singh Sandhu, AVSM, VSM (Retd)[@]

Abstract

With the appointment of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and emphasis on establishment of tri-Service theatre commands, the need to integrate logistics at the tri-Service level has become exceedingly important. Each Service follows its own time-tested procedures using their Service specific documents (forms) to perform the same logistic function which hinders interoperability. This article examines this issue and the pros and cons of integration and suggests the way to go about this extremely important integration.

Introduction

The Logistics structures and procedures of the Indian armed forces, inherited from the British, have undergone only incremental changes since independence. There is a need to create a lean and efficient system, through integration and optimisation; this has often been discussed with limited outcome. There is a need to integrate the military logistics with the national logistics as also integrate logistics within the army. However, the scope of this article is restricted to draw a road map for integration of tri-Service logistics. All stakeholders agree with the concept and need for integration but are unable to accept thinning out of their domain whether at the inter service or intra service levels. It is ironical that British Army has transformed their logistics functions and establishments over the years to make them leaner, integrated and efficient while Indian armed forces continue to uphold traditions inherited from the British Indian Army.

With the appointment of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and emphasis on establishment of tri-Service theatre commands, the need to integrate logistics at the tri-Service level has become exceedingly important. Before evolving the structures for integration, it is important that all three Services speak the same language to get day-to-day logistic needs. Currently, different terminologies and procedures are followed by each Service to ask for the same item. With shrinking defence budget and increasing revenue expenditure, the aspect of economy through integration and optimisation gains added importance. The armed forces can ill afford duplication and inefficiencies to meet the future security challenges.

While integration of logistics is a prerequisite for jointness, it must not be mistaken for over centralisation resulting in poor response to the needs of the troops nor should it aim to achieve economy at the cost of efficiency and reliability. While best practices in vogue in other countries must be evaluated, at the same time, tendency to force-fit a western model must be avoided because the security requirements of India are totally different from those of the western countries. The western armed forces generally operate in 'out of area' contingencies whereas Indian armed forces confront two adversaries armed with nuclear weapons right on our borders. Besides unsettled borders with China and Pakistan, their connivance to tie down India and hold back her development is an issue of serious concern. Prolonged deployment of Indian Army in internal security in remote areas, in penny pockets, demands a totally different lean, agile,

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secure and, yet a responsive logistics model for daily maintenance. Therefore, there is a requirement to evolve a tailor-made integrated logistics solution which is best suited for Indian security environment.

Impediments to Integration

Having established the need for integration, it is important to understand what comes in the way of integration. Some issues in the existing logistics system of the three Services which hinder integration are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

Logistics organisations at all levels ranging from the Service headquarters to the tactical levels are different in the three Services. It is interesting to note that they perform the same jobs but are organised and grouped in a different manner. The army has two Principal Staff Officers (PSOs) for logistics besides the Adjutant General (AG). Logistics functions are performed by the Quartermaster General (QMG) and Master General of Ordnance (MGO) under whom services like Army Service Corps (ASC), Army Ordnance Corps (AOC) and Electronics and Mechanical Engineers (EME) operate. AG looks after the personnel issues while the Director General Operational Logistics (DGOL) looks after the logistics policies. A similar organisation exists at the HQs at Command and the Corps levels. Unlike other two Services, PSOs in the army are generally officers from the fighting arms (Infantry, Armoured Corps, Mechanised Infantry). Logistics in navy include administration and is headed by Controller of Logistics (COL) and Chief of Material (COM) who looks after the maintenance functions. The Indian Air Force (IAF) has two verticals of logistics and administration. Maintenance functions are handled separately by the Air Officer Maintenance (AOM). It is evident that absence of a standard organisation is one of the biggest impediments to the process of integration.

Sacrificing the principle of economy of scales during the procurement, which can be leveraged for favourable pricing, results in uneconomical utilisation of financial resources thereby adversely affecting the overall defence budget.

Each Service follows its own time-tested procedures using their Service specific documents (forms) to perform the same logistic function which hinders interoperability. Though at the apex level, manuals like Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) and Defence Procurement Manual (DPM) guide all three Services but the forms, procedures and sanctioning authorities differ for each Service for the same job.

All three Services use different brands of vehicles and equipment for the same purpose leading to uneconomical utilisation of available budget for procurement and maintenance. Different brands of equipment for the same purpose enlarges inventory which complicates maintenance effort, thereby adding costs.

Traditionally, each Service forecasts, plans and procures its own requirements without coordinating with the other Services except medical stores and rations for army and air force. Navy started its own procurement of dry rations only about two decades back, departing from the earlier system of centralised procurement by the three Services. Absence of integration results in duplication of procurement and supply chain organisations in all three Services for the same items. Sacrificing the principle of economy of scales during the procurement, which can be leveraged for favourable pricing, results in uneconomical utilisation of financial resources thereby adversely affecting the overall defence budget. Centralised procurement sometimes results in dissatisfaction amongst the dependent troops which needs to be guarded against by ensuring high standards and quality control.

Logistics is too specialised a job to be handled by persons with no experience in the field of supply chain management. The Army often appoints logistics PSOs who have had little or no experience in the field of logistics which hinders realisation of full potential of that appointment. A PSO is the highest authority within the Service for a specific group of functions where he has near independence to take decisions within a specified financial limit. Because of this he is denied the benefit of being educated by another senior. Instead of emphasising on specialisation, there is

a generalisation of a specialised function like logistics which is detrimental to the overall efficiency and output of the organisation.

Technologies are changing at an unimaginable pace; as a result, they become out-dated even before they can be implemented pan India for even a single Service like the army. Adoption of technologies in a piecemeal manner by the three Services hinders communication and interoperability amongst the Services. Absence of inter Service communication between various applications and software, being adopted for the same purpose like logistics, results in creating silos with no scope for mutual support from each other. Such isolated adoption of technologies results in inefficient inventory management and wastage of resources. Inventory management within each Service also needs much more technological intervention in a coordinated manner to prevent local purchase of an item in one station while the same item is lying surplus at another due to lack of inventory visibility.

In the absence of integration and standardisation, each Service and various arms and services within the same Service have different training establishments and courses for the same trade/skill which jeopardises jointness, uniformity and economy. Isolated non standardised training prevents mutual learning and interaction amongst officers and soldiers of the three Services performing the same job.

There is no doubt that the present system of logistics has delivered phenomenal results both during peace and war for a long time but with changing times, there is always a room for improvement to ensure that the system is current. With fast changing battlefield environment, development of new technologies and evolving national security challenges, logistics must not only change but transform and attitude of maintaining status quo must be shunned.

Jointness through integration of various functions like logistics is no longer a matter of choice but a national security necessity.

Despite high levels of training, motivation and commitment, there is lack of financial awareness in the armed forces. Culture of effecting savings and adopting cost cutting measures at the working level is far below the desired levels. Loyalty to individual Service sometimes gets priority over economy through integration. There is also a need to look at the tail within the teeth (combat arms). The Indian Army is too administration heavy within the combat units which is often justified for reasons of regimental customs and traditions.

Way Ahead

Integrating logistics and communication is a prerequisite to achieve much needed jointness. It is also understood that jointness through integration of various functions like logistics is no longer a matter of choice but a national security necessity. Aspects of integration and benefits that will accrue have been highlighted in several papers, seminars, and discussions in the past, hence they, are not being repeated in this article. The article aims to recommend one of the ways to achieve the desired integration. It may be comparatively easier to define the desired integrated logistics structures, processes and outcomes but implementing the change from the existing system to the desired one, without creating tremors, is the challenge which needs to be addressed. There is a need to achieve integration and not centralisation; likewise, decentralisation should not lead to duplication. While the desired end state for integration must be transformational, on the other hand, the implementation should be evolutionary rather than revolutionary. Some of the enablers of integration in the Indian context are:

- Uniform organisation.
- Common procedures and processes.
- Standard codification of inventories.

- Common communication backbone and software/automation.
- Common training including institutions and manuals.

Roadmap for Integration

Desired integrated logistics organisation and processes must be approved after due deliberations by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) under the aegis of CDS. An empowered committee (which does not need repeated government sanctions for every change) headed by the Chief Of Integrated Defence Staff to The Chairman Chiefs Of Staff Committee (CISC)—comprising of three Vice Chiefs supported by the logistics PSOs of the three Services and heads of the existing Services—must be tasked to execute the mission of approved integration. Since this will be a transformational moment in the history of Indian armed forces, it may be prudent to select such officers as logistics PSOs and have a concurrent tenure of about three years to ensure continuity in implementation. If the CISC can also have a concurrent tenure it would be ideal. They would be accountable for a time bound completion of the project during their tenures. A dedicated team of high profile, logistics qualified, officers posted specially for this project of integration must support the PSOs in consultation with all stake holders of respective Services. These officers must remain as much accountable for time bound completion of the transformation process. Appropriate representatives from the Defence Finance, Integrated Financial Advisor (IFA), must be involved at each stage so that the desired changes do not need separate financial concurrence. Involvement of all stake holders who would be affected by this transformation is a necessity and they need to be assured that the reformed structures will be beneficial for professional growth and career progression of their respective cadres/Services. A win-win model must be evolved to motivate all stake holders to accept and implement the changes.

Integrating branches of all three Services which are identical in organisation and functioning is much easier than integrating them the way they exist at present with different hierarchy within each Service.

Uniform Organisation. Most of the changes in the initial stages will be preparatory in nature in which all three Services must change to uniform logistic organisations at all levels starting from Service headquarters. Integrating branches of all three Services which are identical in organisation and functioning is much easier than integrating them the way they exist at present with different hierarchy within each Service. These branches must be ready for cross staffing without compromising efficiency. Such a reorganisation exercise will set the stage for final integration. The ultimate integrated logistics structure must be headed by an appropriate officer, duly staffed, under the CDS (may be CISC or equivalent) with full financial powers so that he can speed up procurement processes. Needless to state that the IFA must form part of HQ IDS so that no procurement proposal has to go beyond HQ IDS. A similar structure must exist at each theatre command. Logistics of items which are peculiar to a particular Service must be handled by the respective Service, but integration must be achieved for common stores and functions in the initial stages. With accomplishment of integration at tri Service level, it must be ensured that logistics organisations and procedures at each command and lower headquarters are uniform even in single Service establishments.

Integrated Logistics Command. One of the ways to achieve integration is to raise an Integrated Logistics Command under which all the logistics resources and installations are placed, and it acts as a single reference point for tri-Service logistics policies, procurement and distribution issues. This reorganisation will result in consolidation of depots/installations, some optimisation and total integration but is likely to be at the cost of existing efficiency, assurance and response levels in our context because of the expanse of deployment, varying terrain and commitments of various formations and organisations forming part of three Services. This will result in separation of installations from their technical support and will disrupt the existing distribution channels. Such an organisation is likely to be bulky and bureaucratic due to the sheer size which may adversely affect response time and quality. Logistics is a function of command; hence a close integration of logistics with command organisation at every level creates a situation of comfort

and assurance for the commanders. Creating logistics structures as integral part of command structures, starting from HQ IDS to theatre commands and single Service commands, which are integrated at the office of CDS would be better suited for current Indian security environment than setting up an Integrated Logistics Command to achieve integration. Integrating command and logistics at each level is as important as integrating tri-Service logistics to create a system which is responsive, and which is accountable to the chain of command. Integrated theatre command will, to some extent, create a communication gap between the command and the logistics elements.

Standardisation of Equipment and Procurement. Besides reorganising the structures and procedures, common use items like vehicles and other equipment must be identified and procured by a single agency to ensure economy of scales. Diversity of brands to meet common needs of all stakeholders must be minimised to ensure efficient inventory management. Introduction of new equipment must be preceded by equivalent reduction of inventory and downsizing inventory should be a norm to ensure lean logistics systems. Maintenance of such equipment through outsourcing must be the norm unless it is sensitive operational equipment which needs in-house maintenance.

Specialisation. To infuse specialisation, a logistics cadre, on the lines of General Cadre, must be established giving option to officers from all arms and Services to opt for it on completion of their command of the battalion or equivalent. The selected officers, thereafter, should hold all logistics staff appointments at all levels which will equip them to hold higher logistics appointments as they progress in their careers. All logistics PSOs of three Services must belong to this cadre and qualifying residual service for a logistics PSO must be at least two years so that he can take some cases to finality with the government during his tenure. Officers belonging to this cadre may be permitted to go back to their parent arm or Service for command of a brigade or to tenate an equivalent criteria appointment if cadre management and combat exposure so warrants. Thereafter, beyond the rank of brigadier, officers of this cadre must hold only logistic staff appointments till superannuation. This will give the organisation advantage of specialisation, efficiency, and continuity.

A uniform codification of inventory will help full exploitation of automation and facilitate inventory management and asset visibility resulting in optimum utilisation of available resources.

Processes and Procedures. Alongside the organisational changes, the documentation to procure, demand and distribute common use items must be made uniform. Best practices of each Service which reduce delays and ensure better response through simplified procedures must be adopted. A dedicated team can be tasked to complete this process in a time bound manner.

Outsourcing. Integration of lean organisations is much easier than integrating bulky ones. The process of optimisation to make units lean must be affected across the entire spectrum of arms and services within each Service, especially army. Outsourcing noncritical items and services can reduce inventory, make organisations lean and help in saving human resources. At the end of this process, there must be no duplication. Outsourcing is an ongoing process which must be reviewed periodically to ensure economy.

Automation and Infusion of Technology. All three Services have adopted automation in a piecemeal manner which must be brought on a common platform to facilitate integration. In the initial stages, the existing platforms could be patched together for interoperability till a fresh platform integrating all three Services is developed. A uniform codification of inventory will help full exploitation of automation and facilitate inventory management and asset visibility resulting in optimum utilisation of available resources.

Spirit of Execution. Logistics is integral to every arm, service, unit and formation to a varying degree. Therefore, transformation of logistics must be planned and executed across the board and not in a selective manner which gives

National Security Capacity Building

the appearance of a few services being targeted. A sincere effort executed with fairness will result in far more motivated new organisations than the ones executed in a partisan manner.

Conclusion

Indian armed forces today stand at the crossroads of being modern, lean and efficient armed forces vis-à-vis being a status quoist traditional organisation and which is prepared to modernise in an incremental manner. Continued incremental changes at the present pace may become a case of 'too little too late'. Logistics and communication may be areas to lead transformation of the Indian armed forces to make them totally integrated, lean, efficient, and combat effective organisations equipped to face the future global security challenges of a new vibrant India.

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The Aircraft Carrier vs Submarine debate in the Modernisation of the Indian Navy

Rear Admiral DM Sudan, AVSM, NM (Retd)[@]

Abstract

India's dependence on the seas, for its external trade and sustenance of its energy needs, is well known. More than 90% of India's trade by volume and 70% by value comes by sea. Safety and security of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) is, consequently, a key national interest. Air superiority is a crucial capability required for success of operations, be it on land or sea. Sea Control can only be achieved with active participation of air power. Despite the aircraft carrier having remained a potent platform of sea power for nearly a century, there has regularly been a cyclical debate between capability-vulnerability, offence-defence, sea control-sea denial, seen since World War 2. This article examines the requirement of capabilities in the Indian context and in the context of the role and capabilities required of the Indian Navy.

Introduction

India's Strategic Context. Sea power is closely linked with economic growth and prosperity of nations. Maritime power is defined as 'the ability of the nation to use the seas to safeguard and progress its national interests.' It is a combination of economic, political and military elements that permit a nation to use the sea for its benefit and deny it to those who are inimical to it.

India's dependence on the maritime domain has increased substantially. Its global interactions have grown and national security imperatives expanded beyond the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). With higher economic growth fuelled by increased energy consumption, India's dependence on the seas, for its external trade and sustenance of its energy needs, is well known. More than 90% of India's trade by volume and 70% by value comes by sea. Taking into account the total oil imports by sea, offshore oil production and petroleum exports, the country's cumulative 'sea dependence' for oil is estimated to be 93%. Any maritime disruption or blockage would have a disastrous impact on the Indian economy, despite building of strategic oil reserves. In addition, renewed focus on international trade and commerce, making India an integral part of the global supply chains as evinced in the vision of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (self-reliant India), substantial Indian investments overseas and Indian diaspora in foreign countries, requires India to have unhindered availability of seas. Safety and security of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) is, consequently, a key national interest, with freedom of the seas and a rules based international order (such as strengthening of the United Nations Convention on the Laws of the Seas) central to India's perspective.

The Global Scene. The shifting of global economic and military power from Euro-Atlantic to Indo-Pacific, has led to emergence of great power competition, posing a challenge to the prevailing world order. China's military modernisation, increasingly aggressive foreign policy moves as seen in the East/South China Seas, and steadily increasing naval activity in the Indian Ocean Region has implications for Indo-Pacific dynamics. With a permanent naval presence, establishment of bases; repeated forays of PLAN offensive platforms(submarines) into the Indian Ocean Region; the likelihood of a

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Chinese carrier battle group sailing in the Indian Ocean; increases complexity in the maritime environment. With Indo-Pacific region becoming the arena of military competition and increased possibility of State-on-State conflict, India requires to be prepared for all eventualities.

In the Indian context, legacy problems and nature of unsettled borders have given rise to crises such as at Doklam and Ladakh on the Northern borders. These are precursors to the challenges that lie ahead. With a possible stalemate on the land borders, the maritime domain could emerge as the next flash-point. The Indian Navy (IN) has to be fully prepared to undertake tasks across the full spectrum, ranging from war-fighting to Low Intensity Maritime Operations (LIMO), while undertaking other peace-time missions.

Indian Maritime Security Strategy

The Indian Maritime Military Strategy of 2007 and the Indian Maritime Security Strategy of 2015 “provide strategic guidance for the growth, development and deployment of the Navy in the coming years.” In peace, the Navy through ‘Preparedness’, buildup of requisite force capability, readiness and training, and ‘Presence’, forward deployments and ready naval posture, deters inappropriate action by adversaries. Once conflict is thrust upon the country, the Navy takes action to achieve a decisive military victory, through application of meaningful force.

The maritime battlespace being three-dimensional in nature, the Navy has to be capable of operations on, above and below, the surface of the seas. The IN is a ‘balanced Navy’ optimally equipped to perform the full spectrum of missions – anti-submarine, anti-air, anti-surface, expeditionary or joint operations. Despite limited budgets, IN has anticipated geo-strategic developments and built a capable and potent force which can substantially address the country’s challenges in the maritime domain.

The maritime battlespace being three-dimensional in nature, the Navy has to be capable of operations on, above and below, the surface of the seas.

Sea Control vs Sea Denial

There are two distinct but complementary strategies that are employed during times of conflict:-

- **Sea Control.** This is a condition when maritime forces are able to ‘utilise a *defined sea area* for a *defined period* of time for one’s own purpose and, if necessary, deny its use to the adversary.’ It requires control of the airspace, surface, sub-surface and electro-magnetic spectrum, in the specified area. Sea control enables the Navy to have freedom of action in a specified part of the sea for one’s own purposes while denying its use to the enemy. It envisages undertaking a range of naval missions to achieve sea control, towards execution of its larger operational plans. Sea Control is not an end in itself but facilitates necessary conditions to use the sea for further purposes – maritime operations, freedom of navigation, power projection. This is the central concept around which the Indian Navy is structured and its operational philosophy rooted. This is achieved by a Carrier Task Force (CTF) having integral anti-air, anti-surface and anti-sub-surface capability, with an aircraft carrier, surface platforms and underwater assets as its constituents.
- **Sea Denial.** Denial of the use of a defined sea area for a defined period of time to the adversary is Sea Denial. It is a form of anti-access/area denial (A2/AD), without being able to control that area oneself. It reduces the adversary’s freedom of action and degrades his operations. Sea denial becomes applicable only when Sea Control is not exercised by choice or by necessity. This strategy is largely used by countries that are unable to exercise Sea Control, while attempting to deny the adversary control of that area, or by a superior force in a secondary area of operation. Submarines play a significant role in this strategy, in addition to maritime strike, using long range missiles, strike aircraft and mines.

Aircraft Carriers and Submarines

At a macro-level, air superiority is a crucial capability required for success of operations, be it on land or sea. Sea Control can only be achieved with active participation of air power. Maritime air power contributes across the full range of operations, from supporting the Fleet to projection of force. Aircraft are the biggest threat to warships, submarines, enemy aircraft and commercial shipping. In naval operations, survival of the surface fleet, as also its' ability to operate freely, is severely compromised without air support. The Aircraft Carrier with its ability to support and safeguard own Fleet, by providing Surveillance, Airborne Early Warning (AEW) and Air Defence, while projecting tactical Air Power over long ranges, for anti-ship, anti-submarine, long range strike-over land and sea, or Close Air Support, is a powerful multi-capable naval platform. Carriers are also ideal as a Command and Control centre. The Aircraft Carrier thus has a pre-eminent role in engaging threats, protecting own forces and creating space for freedom to operate, without requiring friendly air bases on land.

An aircraft carrier, however, is even more than just a military platform; it is an important diplomatic tool, able to exert influence by its mere presence, and to deliver strategic messages. It can serve to strengthen friendship—such as during exercises, training and port calls, provide substantial assistance during Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions, and in adverse situations, send a strong signal to influence events and be a source of deterrence.

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Submarines

Submarines with their inherent advantage of concealment and potent mix of weapons, have classically been utilised as underwater stealth platforms to exercise sea denial against enemy surface warships. Anti-ship missile capability coupled with high speed (of nuclear submarines) has increased the submarine threat for surface platforms. They are also capable platforms for undertaking offensive missions in enemy waters, intelligence gathering, mine warfare, insertion of special forces and land attack. However, the effectiveness of the submarine depends upon its ability to remain undetected, while it searches, tracks or attacks from beneath the surface. Once the position of the submarine is localised, it becomes difficult for the submarine to evade prosecution, particularly if airborne ASW platforms are available.

The conventional diesel-electric (SSK) submarine are ideally suited for littoral operations and limited maritime battlespaces. Being smaller in size, they are easier to operate and manoeuvre in shallow waters. Deployment options in an open ocean environment may be limited due to their constraints of slower speed and reduced endurance. Technological advances in Air Independent Propulsion technology and fuel cells has made it possible for them to remain underwater much longer and overcome their traditional disadvantage of less submerged time before surfacing to charge batteries. SSKs are also far cheaper than the bigger nuclear variants. A networked environment coupled with tube launched land-attack cruise missiles and smart homing torpedoes, have made the SSK as a cost-effective option to deliver similar effect vis-a-vis the SSN (Nuclear Attack Submarine).

Nuclear submarines (SSN) are capable of high speed and long endurance. The SSN are more heavily armed, with greater endurance and range than SSKs, making them indispensable assets. Their inventory of anti-ship cruise/land attack missiles, bring huge capability to attack ships or targets on land, and so shape the theatre of operations. Unlike conventional submarines, they can cross an ocean underwater at high speed or remain submerged for weeks outside critical littoral spaces. Nuclear submarines are ideal platforms for blue water operations enabling them to be employed for 'blue water' Anti-Submarine Warfare and Anti-Surface Warfare (ASuW/ASW).

The SSBN (nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine) forms a critical element of the nuclear triad, and can be used either for first strike or as a credible second strike platform, due to its concealed location. Presently, both SSBNs and SSNs are the preserve of just six nations (five permanent members of the Security Council and India).

Not surprisingly, navies today prefer a combination of nuclear and conventional submarines, with each class playing a specific role. Only the US Navy, Royal Navy and French Navy, have an all nuclear submarine operating force.

The Aircraft Carrier Debate

Despite the aircraft carrier having remained a potent platform of sea power for nearly a century, there has regularly been a cyclical debate between capability-vulnerability, offence-defence, sea control–sea denial, seen since World War 2. The IN force development plans envisage a three carrier Navy, with at least two being available at any given time for operations on either coast. The IN proposal for sanction of the third aircraft carrier, in line with Maritime Capability and Perspective Plan (MCPP), has started a renewed debate on aircraft carrier vulnerability and affordability.

Vulnerability. Since the advent of anti-ship missiles the debate about vulnerability of aircraft carriers has been ongoing. The Anti-Access/Anti-Denial strategy of China to extend sea denial to greater ranges than earlier, has re-ignited the debate. Technology advancements and missile upgradations has led to increased missile ranges (greater than 1500 kms for DF-26 ballistic missile), hypersonic speeds and better target acquisition. In the conventional strike role, hypersonic weapons would require actionable intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance capabilities. It is difficult to localise and target a mobile force, either by submerged submarines or from land, particularly over long ranges and when updates are not forthcoming. The aircraft carrier through its Air Wing is designed to ensure all tracking platforms are prosecuted. Should the submarine come to periscope depth or surface it would be more vulnerable to detection and attack. Practical issues of A2/AD efficacy utilising land-based missiles or submarines, with regard to closing the kill chain and accuracy of hit over long ranges, of a maneuvering platform deploying hard kill and soft kill measures, with the Fleet employing new employment paradigms, is difficult. Notwithstanding, it is a threat, and response would encapsulate modern weapons, platforms and tactics. New anti-missile weapons are nearing operationalisation ranging from directed weapons — in the form of high-energy lasers (HELs) and high-power microwave (HPM) devices — to long range anti-missile missiles and other hard-kill guns. A layered defence and robust sensor-shooter net-centric architecture enhances engagement of incoming missiles. Attacking adversary platforms prior to them launching missiles is the best course of action. The CTF would thus require to expand its zone of engagement further. The powerful Air Wing (fifth/ sixth generation fighters, AEW aircrafts, ASW helicopters, re-fueling aircrafts) has the requisite capability and would need to factor this for its future aircrafts. Together with surface and underwater platforms, coordinated action by the Carrier Task Force would sanitise threats in all dimensions and overcome long range missile threat.

Since the advent of anti-ship missiles the debate about vulnerability of aircraft carriers has been ongoing. The Anti-Access/Anti-Denial strategy of China to extend sea denial to greater ranges than earlier, has re-ignited the debate.

Affordability. The issue of affordability emerges in times of constrained budgets, due to internal pulls within the Service and external pulls between the armed forces. With low defence budgets and shortfalls in Service development plans, the capital budget kitty is constrained. The cost of building a 65,000 ton aircraft carrier would be between Rupees 45,000 to 50,000 crore. With money being spent in stages, over the design and build period of nearly 15 years, the fund outflow would be small and manageable within the IN's capital allocation. Particularly in the initial years of design activity, the cash outflow would be minimal. Further, as the carrier would be built indigenously, the multiplier impact on the Indian economy and technological advancement of the industry, would contribute handsomely to India's economic growth and employment generation for the country.

National Security Capacity Building

Critics of the modern aircraft carrier focus on the alleged vulnerability and affordability of the ship and fail to factor the immense and essential capability carrier air power provides. The huge benefits provided by the aircraft carrier with regard to presence, influence and assistance, along-with deterrence and coercive value, as much during peace as in war, while being central towards achieving Sea Control, make investment in a modern and capable aircraft carrier well worth the cost.

Global Developments

Many countries have faced a similar dilemma of whether to finance an aircraft carrier programme. An examination of global naval force development plans clearly brings out that considering the evolving geo-political environment, countries have increased investment in aircraft carrier capability with new programmes being approved.

(a) The US has had a robust debate, not about the need of carriers, but their optimum numbers to support its global interests. Post a Future Naval Force Study (FNFS), followed with its 30 year shipbuilding plan in Dec 2020, USA retained its fleet strength of 11 nuclear-powered 100,000 ton carriers. The USN is also studying options of building 'light' aircraft carriers of 75,000 tons.

(b) The UK has reposed its faith in the utility of aircraft carriers by having two Carrier Strike Groups centred on two 65,000 ton aircraft carriers.

(c) France has confirmed build of its next aircraft carrier PANG, which would be about 75,000 tons.

(d) Italy has modified its carrier 'Cavour', to operate the F-35B aircrafts.

(e) The Japanese government announced in November 2018 their intent to upgrade its two *Izumo*-class helicopters carriers to support the F-35B Lightning II stealth strike-fighter.

(f) The Korean Navy announced in Jan 21 a conceptual design of its future light aircraft carrier.

(g) China having understood the great value that Carrier air power provides and how it can shape the maritime environment, is pursuing a large aircraft carrier programme, with each carrier more capable than its earlier variant. It already has two 65,000 ton aircraft carriers operational and the third under build. It will be about 320 meters long, surpassing Shandong's 305 meters, more high-tech than previous ships and equipped with an electromagnetic catapult system. The third Chinese carrier, is likely to formally enter service by 2025. Carrier centred 'Sea Control' appears to be central to China's maritime-military strategy.

Critics of the modern aircraft carrier focus on the alleged vulnerability and affordability of the ship and fail to factor the immense and essential capability carrier air power provides.

An increased investment in aircraft carriers is evident against a backdrop of a renewed debate over the value of aircraft carriers.

Modernisation Imperatives of the Indian Navy

The envisaged force levels, capability and capacity of the Indian Navy is envisioned through long-term perspective plans, which cater for the changing geo-strategic environment and technological advancements. The Indian Navy through such assessment and planning has evolved as a balanced Navy capable of multi-dimensional and multi-spectrum operations. Induction of new assets and capabilities is being progressed in consonance with the its' long-term perspective plans.

Aircraft Carrier. Integral air power is a necessity and its requirement and relevance is not reducing anytime in the future. Despite any amount of debate and delay, aircraft carriers would continue to play a useful and important role in

naval operations. Global developments in this direction serve to underscore this fact. The IN force development plan envisages a three carrier Navy, ensuring at least two being available at any given time for operations on either coast. A study to assess the optimum capability required of the air wing of the third aircraft carrier was undertaken by the IN. The study concluded that a composite air wing of around 55 aircrafts comprising multi-role fighters, ASW helicopters, Early warning and re-fuelling aircrafts, employing Catapult Assisted Take-Off but Assisted Recovery (CATOBAR) flying operations would be required. This would require the aircraft-carrier to be around 65,000 tons and be able to operate larger sized aircraft, bigger fighters with longer ranges and higher weapon carrying capacity and fixed wing AEW&C aircrafts, and have adequate capability to accomplish missions and tasks — both of offence and defence, including power projection concurrently. It is pertinent to mention that Vikramaditya and Vikrant are in the lower band of medium class of aircraft carriers, between 40,000-45,000 tons.

Little progress has however been made with regard to granting 'Acceptance of Necessity'(AON) for the third aircraft carrier. While there was an initial sanction to commence preliminary activity, it has not been followed up with further necessary approvals. Grant of AON would set in motion the feasibility of design study. Post this, scope of work and execution timelines would be drawn. In addition, the expertise gained on IAC 1 would remain current and the design team would gain by discussions with the design consultant. It is pertinent to mention that as a part of the Indo-US Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI), a Joint Working Group on Aircraft Carrier Technology Cooperation exists, which India could leverage to incorporate technology and lessons of building a slightly larger sized aircraft carrier than it has operated or built, including availability of the EMALS electromagnetic catapult system. Other options include BAe Systems the builder of UK's latest aircraft carrier, Queen Elizabeth, which has offered to assist India with design consultancy. Considering geo-political developments and rising profile of India, it would be in the best interests of the country to give, at the minimum, clearance to commence design study of the third aircraft carrier. The lead time, if conceded would take years to regain.

The Indian Navy cannot be operating close to its own land-mass due to lack of air support. Non-availability of an aircraft carrier of requisite capability will restrict India's influence precisely at a time when it is increasing its global profile and reaching out beyond its traditional area of operations. It would be a case of foreign policy and defence working at cross-purposes.

Submarines. Considering the practical utility and effectiveness of submarines, they form an important element of the Navy and naval force development plans. It was in 1999, after the Kargil conflict, when the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved the 30-year plan for the construction of 24 submarines. Today the IN has a mix of SSK, SSN and SSBN(Arihant) submarines in her inventory. Most of the SSKs are of considerable vintage and would have to be phased out within this decade. The ongoing programme of six P-75 Scorpene submarines will alleviate this to some extent. The Project 75(I) programme currently under process for six more SSKs, to be built indigenously under the Strategic Partnership programme, is behind schedule and needs to be expedited. A force level of about 18 modern SSKs supported by at least six SSNs, would be commensurate with India's maritime security interests. A flotilla of 5-6 SSBNs would add the requisite weight to India's sea-based leg of the nuclear triad.

Maintaining asymmetry in capability is a strong factor towards deterrence and achieving victory in conflict situations. Parity diminishes detente leading to protracted wars with higher losses. Aircraft carriers and nuclear submarines provide this asymmetry making the adversary react to this capability. As India grows economically and expands its global engagement, enhancing the Indian Navy's reach and area of operation would be necessary. The Indian Navy cannot be operating close to its own land-mass due to lack of air support. Non-availability of an aircraft carrier of requisite capability will restrict India's influence precisely at a time when it is increasing its global profile and reaching out beyond its traditional area of operations. It would be a case of foreign policy and defence working at cross-purposes.

Conclusion

To ensure 'freedom to use the seas' for India's national interests, it is necessary for the seas to remain secure. Sea Control allows the Navy to operate in disputed waters, while Sea Denial attempts to deny operating space to the adversary. The choice of choosing the requisite strategy is based on the vision of the country and the tasks it sets for its Navy. The Indian Navy is structured as a balanced force capable of operations on surface, in the air and under the surface. The Indian Navy requires to have broad-based capabilities with credible forces. This requires growth of the Indian Navy as per perspective plans which cater for envisaged tasks catering for the future geo-strategic situation and envisaged budgetary support. The question is not of having either aircraft carriers or submarines but of having the requisite capability resident in the Indian Navy to meet the country's interests and requirements. Reshaping its strategy from Sea Control to Sea Denial would be retrograde and limit PM Modi's vision. In 2015, he had urged the Indian missions "to use this unique opportunity to help position itself in a leading role, rather than just a balancing force globally." The emerging regional geopolitical architecture highlights India's centrality in the Indo-Pacific. India must utilise this opportunity to enhance its sphere of influence and secure its national interests while working towards its policy of Security and Growth for All (SAGAR). This requires upgrading naval capabilities as per perspective plans. It requires having aircraft carriers, submarines, surface ships and aircrafts.

The question is not of having either aircraft carriers or submarines but of having the requisite capability resident in the Indian Navy to meet the country's interests and requirements.

Endnotes

Endnotes

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India's Theatre Commands: the Drivers, the Challenges and the Way Ahead

Major General Rajiv Narayanan, AVSM, VSM (Retd)[@]

Abstract

For India to be a major power, it needs to ensure a strong military to balance / counter the multi-domain threats it faces from its Northern and Western adversaries. This needs an integrated / joint approach not just between the three Services but also between the civil and military in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) decision making process. The creation of the post of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), Permanent Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (PC-COSC) and creation of the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and the recent press releases about impending Joint Theatre Commands (TC) is a welcome step towards it. But there is a need to step back and assess the drivers for the change and the challenges ahead, to be able to execute and do the mid-course corrections, if needed. This paper analyses the same and suggests the way ahead.

Introduction

The creation of the post of CDS on 31 December 2019 appears to signal a change by the decision makers on the structure of the Higher Defence Organisation (HDO). A first of the many more that would be unrolled in the coming years, and one that is essential, if India is to become a 'key player' in the Indo-Pacific and beyond in the post-COVID era. Though the need had been felt for such major structural changes ever since the Kargil War, yet the changes till now have been spasmodic with the Military establishing two 'Joint Commands' – the Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) and the Strategic Forces Command (SFC), to control the nuclear assets. The integration of the forces and MOD has been in a limbo, despite the setting up of the Integrated Defence Service (IDS) HQ, and a change in lexicon for the three Services, HQ, the IHQs of MOD (Army / Navy / Air Force).

Under the garb of civilian control, the armed forces of the country had been denied a say in the decision making since the 1950s. The change has now commenced, not just with the establishment of the billets of CDS, DMA and a PC-COSC—though all under the CDS—but also the push to set up Joint Theatre Commands. Not much has been mentioned about the TCs other than the forthcoming Joint Air Defence Command (ADC) and Maritime Theatre Command (MTC) to be launched by May¹. Further TCs, at least three more, are said to be in the pipeline.

These are very welcome restructurings, but there is also a need to step back and have a wholistic assessment of the drivers for the change and the challenges ahead to be able to execute the mid-course corrections, if needed. It needs to be emphasised that though the journey from jointness to integration is some way ahead, the Joint TCs would enable the Indian Military to be better prepared for the emerging threats and challenges of the future.

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This paper essentially analyses,

- The likely drivers for this change,
- The challenges, and,
- The way ahead.

The Drivers for the Change

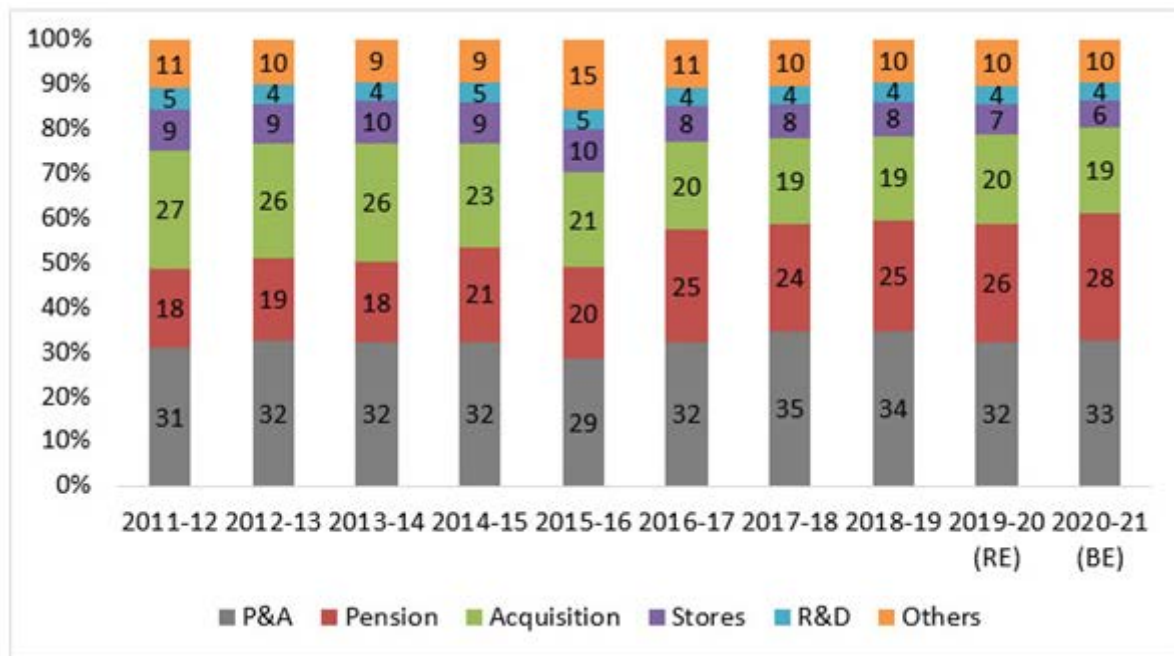
There are likely three key reasons for the Indian Military restructuring. First is the dwindling budgetary support, second is to improve the ability to conduct joint / integrated operations to counter the evolving multidomain threat, both from the Northern and Western adversaries, third is to advance civil-military integration, something that has frayed over the years since Independence. These factors are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Budgetary Support

For some time now the Indian Armed Forces have been burdened with insufficient funds, with growing revenue expenditure, especially in pensions, and the kitty available for capital expenditure reducing. The Figure below gives a better perspective of the problem, while the pension bill has increased from 18 to 28%, while the funds available for capital expenditure has reduced from 27 to 19 %. The long term sustainability of military expenditure needs this bulging manpower costs to be addressed.

There are likely three key reasons for the Indian Military restructuring. First is the dwindling budgetary support, second is to improve the ability to conduct joint / integrated operations to counter the evolving multidomain threat, both from the Northern and Western adversaries, third is to advance civil-military integration, something that has frayed over the years since Independence.

Figure 1: Category-Wise Distribution of MoD's Expenditure²



National Security Capacity Building

Joint (TC) would not only enable jointness / integration of plans but would also ensure a better utilisation of the defence budget by ensuring economy of scales through standardisation of weapons, equipment and warlike stores, with a seamless logistics and maintenance back up. Further, the infusion of hybrid and disruptive technologies in the integrated military strategy would enable reduction in the increasing manpower, thereby, releasing money for capital expenditure. The underlying essence here is reduction in pensions etc. which must result in a concomitant increase in capital and other revenue (sustenance) expenditure, something that has not accrued in earlier manpower reductions.

Concurrently, there is also a need for a de novo look at the role and tasks of the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). The two tasks of border policing and border defence given to these forces are as different as chalk and cheese. Apropos, it may be prudent to earmark BSF and ITBP Sectors and battalions dedicated for border defence duties under the Army, which would be trained under it and equipped appropriately for the same (through Home Ministry funding, as hither-to-fore). Less critical sectors of the International Border (IB) and Line of Actual Control (LAC) could then be allocated to these troops, with the reduction of Indian Army deployment in these areas. This would also lead to manpower savings and availability of funds for sustenance and capacity building.

Conduct of Joint / Integrated Operations

The evolving multi-domain threat that India faces in the future wars demands integrated / joint strategy to thwart it. No single service would have the capacity to effectively counter it independently. The Northern adversary, while moving towards 5th Generation Warfare (5GW)³, is also putting a major effort towards 6th Generation Warfare (6GW)⁴ and 7th Generation Warfare (7GW)⁵.

What the Northern adversary evolves, it would surely pass it on to the Western adversary, who is its catspaw, at some point in time. This is the kind of evolving threat that India would have to contend with in future. Thus, any restructuring of organisation and decision making process, capacity building and modernisation that the Indian military undertakes would need to be able to counter such hybrid and disruptive warfares over both fronts.

Earmark BSF and ITBP Sectors and battalions dedicated for border defence duties under the Army, which would be trained under it and equipped appropriately for the same (through Home Ministry funding, as hither-to-fore).

The Indian Armed Forces have structures for a 3GW and counters 4GW threats with limited infusion of technology. It is yet to formulate how it intends to counter the emerging 5th, 6th and 7th GW threats. The lessons drawn from the First & Second Gulf Wars, Wars in Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen indicate moving towards joint / integrated command and control structures to enable swift decision making process and execution thereby, ensuring that key fleeting opportunities are grasped to ensure gaining of military aims and objectives at every stage. To face these emerging threats and ensure a credible / punitive deterrence India needs to evolve a new concept and strategy with the concomitant joint structures for ensuring its security.

Civil – Military Relations

The MOD itself has an antiquated structure that is not conducive to any swift decision-making, as it has generalists for the same, with no experience in the field of national security. It is no small wonder that they are hesitant to change, and under the garb of civilian control over the Armed Forces, they have kept them out of the decision-making loop, since the mid-1950s, when the post of the Commander-in-Chief was abolished.

While the formation of the CDS, office of the DMA and CDS being the PC-COSC is a welcome step, but there needs to be an integration of the MOD and the IDS HQ for better decision making.

The Challenges

The main challenges visualised towards achieving jointness / integration to enable the Indian Military to face the evolving hybrid and disruptive threats appear to be five key issues, the Higher Defence Organisation, Integrated Military Strategy, Unity of Command, Span of Control, and Cadre Satisfaction. These are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

Higher Defence Organisation (HDO)

Today, the MOD replicates the departments of the three Services / IDS HQ, has juxtaposed the DMA under the CDS thereby, increasing delays, and avoiding tough decisions. Despite having outstanding and dedicated officers in the bureaucracy, the MOD is inhibited by this lack of comprehension of military matters, due to their lack of exposure in this highly specialised field during their service.

The expertise gained in other departments where they would have served, would be more on budgetary and accounting details as relevant to MOD, rather than military strategy and the geo political construct dealing with the emerging and future threats to security. This leads to decisions based more on budgetary constraints rather than a synergetic approach to counter these threats.

Unless there is complete synergy by merging the IDS HQ and MOD, the extant civil-military divergences will only increase. With the push towards joint TCs, it is but natural that these should come under the CDS. This would entail a fresh round of restructuring of the MOD, inclusive of the military within the strategic decision-making process to ensure a holistic and focussed approach. The CDS should be made responsible for the Defence of India and be the single-point advisor to the Raksha Mantri, Pradhan Mantri on operational issues and should be a member of the Cabinet Committee on Security. The Defence Secretary should be the advisor only on administrative issues.

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Integrated Military Strategy

There needs to be a clear perspective on 'Future Integrated Military Strategy' for India in the near, medium and long terms. Such 'integrated operations' enables orchestration of an effective synergy to achieve a force multiplier impact over the battle space, thereby, facilitating early achievement of military and political aims of war. These would lead to the broad framework for the desired Joint TC structures, functional command structures and the prioritisation for acquisition, modernisation, capacity development for operational readiness as per the Joint Directives and Doctrines issued by the PC-COSC.

A major portion of the logistics, training and maintenance set up could also be integrated, which should ensure its smooth execution. The integration of these would circumvent the current division of effort, thereby, achieving savings through '*economy of scales*'.

Unity of Command

A full spectrum high intensity war, covering land, sea, air, space, information and cyber domain, of limited duration is likely to be the future battle space milieu. 5th, 6th, 7th GW, with Unrestricted Warfare and the hybrid and disruptive technologies will further add to these complexities. Both the Western and Northern neighbours would concurrently utilise non-state actors in conjunction with their conventional forces covering military, trans-military and non-military spheres.

To achieve victory in this milieu, a single command for the integrated theatre operations would be imperative. Thus, there is a need to ensure that the TCs need Unity of Command, to be able to effectively stitch together the multi-domain operations, further, to ensure that in execution, the sum of the parts is greater than the whole. This would ensure success in the wars of the future.

Span of Control

While new structures are being processed there exists a need for a thorough study of future command and control in the armed forces. It should review of all the functions performed within the hierarchy to see which levels are critical and crucial for each, and which merely pass on information from one echelon to another. New information technology should be able to perform this task and thus, be able to design a shorter and more direct communication path and eliminating the echelons that do not have a substantial role to play. These billets should then be up for review and be deleted or utilised elsewhere.

Clausewitz believed that the limits of span of control were dependent on the level of command. At the army level, eight was the optimum number. At the division level because there are far fewer means for transmitting orders. In action, he considered five subunits to be the appropriate figure. Something similar has been in vogue in the Indian Military till now.

With technology and digitisation now coming in a large way, the span of control needs to be considered afresh. However, physiologically, even with all the technological support, the human brain can control only that many elements effectively, and not commit mistakes. These need to be validated through rigorous exercises. Maybe, the Command span could now be more than eight, to include the land, air, maritime, space, cyber, information and other hybrid and disruptive technology elements.

It must be clearly understood that these changes take a finite time to mature and must not be rushed. Since India has two live borders and counter-terrorism to contend with, these changes in Command & Control structures should not create a flux, as it would be detrimental to India's security.

Cadre Satisfaction

Currently there are 17 Commands amongst the services — 7 each in the Army and Air Force and 3 in the Navy. Apart from this there are 4 Vice Chiefs / equivalent and two Tri-Service Commands — ANC and SFC. Thus, there are 23 Apex scale (Army Commander) billets, with their concomitant subordinate billets. Despite this, the pyramid for promotion to higher ranks is very steep. By reducing the commands drastically from 17 to a lesser number, with some reduction in the subordinate billets, would the pyramid now be akin to a stiletto?

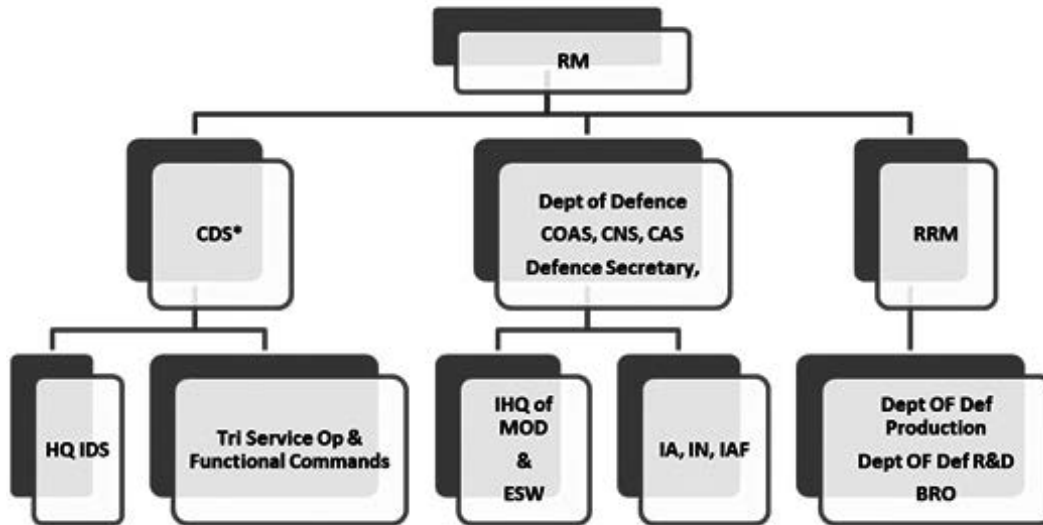
If so, it would have a gathering ripple effect on Cadre Satisfaction. This aspect needs a careful study, to ensure that the morale at all levels is not adversely affected in the hurry to move towards jointness / integration. That there would be a reduction in certain billets is a given, but how much and at what levels should it be implemented, needs a careful analysis. As a matter of comparison, the US military has 40 four star ranks compared to four in India.⁶

Way Ahead

As Indian decision makers move ahead with the creation of the Joint / Integrated Commands, the challenges mentioned above need greater consideration. Further, it must be clearly understood that these changes take a finite time to mature and must not be rushed. Since India has two live borders and counter-terrorism to contend with, these changes in Command & Control structures should not create a flux, as it would be detrimental to India's security.

The main challenge would be the HDO, wherein the need is to create an integrated civil-military structure and develop this spirit of jointness that would diminish the civil-military divide. With integrated Command structures, it is obvious that these must come directly under the CDS, who must shift to an operational role from the current administrative one. A recommended restructuring of the MOD is given below,

Figure 2: A Restructured MOD



Note: - * The CDS has only operational control over all field formations and provides input to the PM, RM and CCS on all operational issues.

The Service Chiefs would not have any operational role and thus, would not exercise any operational control over the field formations. The AOB/TOB Rules relevant to MOD would need a review.

The span of control, unity of command, and cadre satisfaction needs a careful calibration. It opens the way for two options, wherein both have their pros and cons but need adequate attention to ensure a smooth transition

- **Multiple Theatre Commands opposite Western, Northern and Maritime Borders.** This would create two issues, unity of command for stitching together an integrated strategy across these fronts and span of control. To offset the same, the CDS's HQ would need to have senior billets for enabling the same, viz, a Deputy CDS (West), Deputy CDS (North), Deputy CDS (Maritime), Deputy CDS (Operational Logistics) and a Deputy CDS (Strategic). Could also consider a Chief of General Staff (CGS). These would enable expanding the span of control and provide some cadre satisfaction.
- **Integrated Front HQs.** Considering that jointness needs time to move towards integration, one option is to reduce the number of respective Service Commands and create Four Integrated Front HQs, and four Integrated Functional Commands. Each of the Front HQ would be responsible for conduct of operations in respective theatres – West, North, Maritime and Strategic, while the Functional Commands (FCs) would be responsible for Logistics, Air Defence, Training and Maintenance provide integrated combat and logistics support to the Armed Forces.

The creation of TCs and FCs would not only enable jointness of plans but would also ensure a better utilisation of the defence budget by ensuring standardisation of weapons, equipment and warlike stores, with a seamless combat support, logistics and maintenance back up. The restructuring of both the MOD and the Service HQs, with the relevant changes in the AOB/TOB Rules and providing an operational role to the CDS is the need of the hour, if India is to be able to counter future threats to its security and emerge as a major power amongst the comity of nations.

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Air Defence Command: A National Level Discussion

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Abstract

Air Defence Command (ADC) is likely to be a reality sooner than later. Creation of ADC is a national-level decision. This is so, because it is the successful implementation of this decision or otherwise, that will decide whether or not the country is able to put together its air defence power as a cumulative punch in countering the one common air threat from our adversaries. Whether we will put up an integrated punch or the air defence power of the nation will be fritted away into small penny-packets driven by narrow Service interests—only time will tell. This article examines the ADC in all its dimensions and brings out some salient aspects related to the same.

First on the List

The Chief of Defence Staff on his very first day in the office on 01 Jan 2020 announced the creation of an Air Defence Command (ADC) by 30 Jun 2020.¹ Various aspects of ADC are analysed in the following sequence:

- Visiting the ADC decision.
- Integration— the signature of ADC.
- Overall configuration of ADC.
- Other possible areas of integration.
- Integration of ADC with Theatre Commands.

Visiting the ADC Decision

Logic and Rationale of the Decision. There could be two main reasons that catapulted the decision to create ADC right to the forefront. These are firstly, high operational necessity and secondly, do-ability.

High Operational Necessity. To understand the first reason, it is fundamental to realise that all air defences, be it on land, sea or air exist for the sole purpose of countering the air threat from our adversary (ies). Air threat would imply the cumulative capability of our foes to cause damage and destruction to our vulnerabilities in furtherance of his war aims. Such a threat can manifest on land, sea and air simultaneously, or in any combination. The vulnerabilities could be the strategic assets, our core infrastructures, nuclear assets, our war waging potential and more. While capabilities exist on the land, sea and air to counter the air threat as mentioned above, there is a high operational necessity to integrate this capability under one integrated command. The need for such integration is due to the following reasons:

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National Security Capacity Building

- To put forward a strongest possible cumulative punch of national air defence power for defeating the common air threat to the nation.
- To ensure that any one moment in the execution of the air defence battle, the best possible weapon is pitched against the threat.
- To cut out duplications and redundancies in operational application of the air defence power, as well as, in other areas of joint concern.
- To ensure that the finite and extremely costly inventory of air defence weapons is employed in the most optimal and economic manner.

Do-ability. Creation of ADC is do-able because of the following reasons:

- The resources are very finite and manageable.
- There is kind of clarity on the road ahead.

Integration – The Signature of the ADC

A Paradox. While the defining signature of the ADC is INTEGRATION, this aspect must be addressed with utmost ‘caution’ and ‘domain expertise’ (emphasis intended). In fact, ‘Integration’ as related to ADC is a paradox. In that, while there is a wide-spread perception that ADC means just INTEGRATION, what exactly needs to be integrated and what must not, has not been a subject of much expert debate. This much used but sparsely understood term is actually the key to the success of ADC. This issue is explained in detail in the succeeding paragraphs.

While there is a wide-spread perception that ADC means just INTEGRATION, what exactly needs to be integrated and what must not, has not been a subject of much expert debate.

What Needs to be Integrated²? In order to answer this key question, there is a need to re-visit the bottom line — ‘air defences exist to counter air threat’. A thorough understanding of the air threat is therefore the first step to understand as to how the ADC must gear itself to address its ‘existential’ requirement.

Revisiting the Air Threat

There was a time in the 40s and 50s when the air threat used to be prosecuted by the valiant gunner standing upright in his propeller driven aircraft, guiding his guns manually, by hit and trial to fire at ground targets. The sixties and seventies was the time when the air attacks used to be delivered by the binary pair of first generation aircrafts and helicopters firing some dumb bombs and unguided rockets on to the vulnerabilities. Cut to today, this air threat has metamorphosed. The 21 Century air power is multi-dimensional and multi-modal and based on multiple air threat vehicles³. We face a formidable air threat from Pakistan and China. The contours of this threat are briefly enumerated⁴.

- The adversary aircrafts belong to 3rd to 5th generation (Pak — JF-17, F-16, Mirages III, V etc.; China — J-7, JH-7, J8, J10, J 11, SU-30, H-6, Q5 J20, J31 and more). These machines, equipped with state-of-the art in avionics, munitions and sensors are capable of long range and deep strike with precision and accuracy.
- The aircraft fleet is joined by deadly attack helicopters (Pak - AH 1F, K 8, China - WZ-9, 10,11, 19, Z-11 and more). These machines are capable of flying in the nap-of-the-earth thus avoiding radar detection and have high lethality.

- China in particular and Pakistan to a lesser degree have a significant muscle in the Unmanned Aerial Systems or UAS (Chinese front-ranking UAS - Wing long, CH3, GJ 1, GJ 2, Anjian, Pak UAS - Burraq UAS, ASN 105, ASN 206 etc.)
- We also face the threat of Cruise missiles – low level, avoiding radar detection and capable of lethal strikes (Pak Cruise missiles — Nasr, Babur. Chinese missiles—CJ 10, YJ 6 etc).
- There is also a threat from Anti-Radiation Missiles (ARMs) capable of taking out our sensors in the operations called Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD). Pak ARMs — MAR 1, China — YJ91, KH31P, YJ 93 and more.
- Another formidable air threat faced by us is the threat from the Surface-to-Surface-Missiles (SSMs). Pak SSMs cover the range from 80 km (HATF-1) to 2750 + Km (Shaheen II). Chinese SSMs cover a range from 700 km (DF1) to 12000+ Km (DF 41).
- In the category of soft-kill weapons, the threat from laser weapons has become a reality while the one from the high-powered microwave weapons and Charged Particle Beam weapons is some years away.
- Coming to the future, Chinese have been reportedly testing the Hypersonic weapons both in the category of Hypersonic Cruise missiles (Starry Sky II), as well as Hypersonic Glide Vehicle or HGV (HGV on board DF 17).

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Countering the threat

In order to counter this formidable threat, there are three critical requirements as under:

- The threat must be detected at longest possible ranges and identified earliest as Hostile/friendly.
- Effective fire from the most appropriate weapon must be brought upon the threat.
- Since each weapon has a finite range and altitude envelop, this fire must shift seamlessly from weapon-to-weapon all across an extended ‘fire arm’ till the threat is either destroyed or the mission is called off.

This requirement is achieved by two verticals:

- Deployment of weapons.
- Putting together a Battle Management and Control (BMC2) System.

As to the weapons, these are deployed in multiple mediums as under:-

- The combat air power, as the flexible arm of the air defence is deployed at various air bases and geared up to destroy the air threat in aerial combat operations.
- The naval based air defences are dedicated towards carrying out air defences of the fleet at sea as an exclusive naval domain.

National Security Capacity Building

- The Ground Based Air Defence Weapon systems (GBADWS) are deployed grounded to a theatre grid and in multiple layers. The inner-most layer is provided by air defence guns and man-portable missiles. This layer is successively patched up with layers of Short range, Medium Range and Long range Surface-to-Air Missiles.
- The deployment details in range and quantum are classified. This pattern of deployment is called the layered and tiered defences.
- In addition to the above, Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) systems are deployed to counter the threat of adversary's SSMS. These include Programme AD of DRDO and may also include in future the US National Advanced SAM II (NASAM II) and the S-400 System (Technical details are not covered).

All the above weapons are threaded into one chain by the BMC2 system. *In fact no Air Defence Weapons fire unless cleared by the BMC2 System.* Following details are stated about the same:

- The Indian Air Force is responsible for the air defence of the Indian national air space. In execution of this responsibility; it has put together a national level BMC2 system which is known as the Integrated Air Command and Control System or IACCS.
- IACCS provides a nation wide BMC2 system which in air defence parlance is called the Air Defence Control and Reporting System or ADCRS for short.
- In essence, ADCRS executes the functions of detection, identification, interception and destruction of enemy threat.
- The ADCRS provided by the IACCS cuts across Service boundaries and hand-shakes with ADCRS systems of the Army (Akashteer) and the Navy (Trigun) in one seamless loop.
- IACCS along with the air defence weapons on ground sea and air constitutes what is called the Integrated Air Defence System or IADS.

The Ground Based Air Defence Weapon systems (GBADWS) are deployed grounded to a theatre grid and in multiple layers. The inner-most layer is provided by air defence guns and man-portable missiles. This layer is successively patched up with layers of Short range, Medium Range and Long range Surface-to-Air Missiles.

With all the above stated, it is now possible to answer the poser — what needs to be integrated? The following is stated:

- What needs to be integrated is the ADCRS or the BMC2 system that binds the air defence weapons systems at land, sea and air and constitutes them as a national IADS.
- What must be retained as distinct core-competencies are the means to execute the air defence battle at land (GBADWS), Sea (naval air defences of the fleet at sea) and air (combat air power).
- Services over decades have built expertise in execution of air defence battle in their respective mediums. This not only relates to operating the weapon systems but a thorough understanding of the battle in the medium concerned. These must be retained as distinct arrows in the sheath of ADC.

Overall Configuration of ADC

The Following points are stated:

- Keeping in mind the tri-Service nature of the air defence battle, the ADC must be a tri-Service Command.

- Since Air Force is responsible for the air defence of the Indian National air space it will be appropriate to place the ADC under an Air Force Commander-in-Chief (C-in-C- three star).
- The Deputy C-in-C (two star) could ideally be one each from the Army Air Defence and Navy.
- Till the time the permanent command structures come up under the CDS, it will be appropriate to place the ADC under the Permanent Chiefs of Staff Committee.

Other Possible Areas of Integration

The Following could be the other possible areas of integration under the ADC:

Intelligence. Intelligence in the air defence parlance translates to Air Threat. The Air threat needs to be assessed in qualitative, as well as, quantitative terms. ADC must provide an institutional platform for putting out the latest air threat and updating it from time-to-time.

Capability Development. This is one of the most important area of integration under the ADC. It must become the sole responsibility of the ADC to provide tri-service air defence related inputs in the Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP) of HQ IDS as laid down under the new provisions of Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020.

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Budget Allocation. Flowing from the above plan of Capability Development, the ADC must put up the national level requirement of air defence budget out of the overall kitty.

Sustenance. Air defence weapon life-cycles extend 25-40 years and more. It is a great challenge to sustain the complex high tech air defence equipment operationally effective over such long years. Activities like progressive overhauls, mid-life upgrades, life-extension, cannibalisation etc. fall under its gambit. It must become the responsibility of the ADC to lay down overarching sustenance policy, disseminate guidelines for its implementation at the national level and closely monitor its execution.

Training. This is another important area of integration under the ADC. What needs to be ensured is that the training is cohesive and complementary that prepares *the vayu-rakshaks* on land, sea and air to counter a common air threat. It will demand laying down the national level Training Philosophy and Training Policy in a manner that ensures retention of core-competencies in training, optimal use of finite resources and cutting out duplications and redundancies.

Inspection. Anything not checked is not done is an old dictum. ADC must ensure that that a national level Inspection regime is put into place that inspects the skill and calibre of *Vayu-rakshaks* across board on common Inspection criteria and grading system. Air Force already has a very well-defined and a time-tested Inspection regime. In what way and with what changes can it be extended as to cover the national air defence grid, should become the responsibility of ADC.

Integration of ADC with Theatre Commands

Integration of ADC with the theatre Commands as and when these come up will be an important operational requirement. Following points are relevant:

- Each Theatre Command should have an Air Defence Cell. This Cell should be manned by a team from the ADC (under a two-star officer rotatable among Services).

National Security Capacity Building

- Commander AD Cell should report to the C-in-C Theatre Command and be his connect to the ADC leadership.
- The Cell will make two types of allocations to each Theatre Command:
 - ❖ An ab-initio dedicated allocation of assets (air assets and GBADWS) based on the known vulnerabilities of the Command.
 - ❖ Flexible allocation based on the progress of the battle and its changing priorities.
 - ❖ As much as the air assets are totally flexible in their operational employment (nothing called dedicated air defence aircrafts), the GBADWS are also flexible and dynamic in their employment. These must be deployed and re-deployed on VAs/ VPs in much the same way as air assets all driven by the dynamic and digital play of the air threat.
 - ❖ Expert and professional handling of precious and finite air defence resources in the manner described above will be the responsibility of the Commander Air Defence Cell on behalf of ADC.

Conclusion

The foregoing makes it clear why the creation of the ADC is a National Level Decision. Undoubtedly it needs to be done, equally undoubted is that it should be done with deliberation and forethought so that its subsequent inevitable evolution proceeds smoothly.

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Prognosis Of the Chinese Economy: Challenges & Roadmap for India's Economic Response

Gaurie Dwivedi @

Abstract

India will take 15 years to become the world's third largest economy, even as China will dislodge America as the largest economy in just seven years. Repercussions of a totalitarian regime — that crushes dissent even by its successful entrepreneurs like Jack Ma — becoming most powerful will be profound for India, both in geo-politics and geo-economics. As the world's largest democracy, India's economic path is different from China's, but it must break free from its status quoist approach towards industrial policy. Manufacturing, exports and trade deals can help India stand tall against China economically. For China, its unsustainable debt burden could be its undoing.

Introduction

It was the onset of the Chinese New Year in 2020 that, in some ways, changed the world as it coincided with the rapid global spread of the deadly coronavirus pandemic. Since then, a year has passed by and as the world continues to grapple with the virus, it's paid a huge economic cost. For the first time, since the Great Depression, global GDP will witness a negative growth of 4.3 percent.¹ This comes, even as the Chinese economy is slated to grow at 2 percent in 2020, and a robust 8 percent in 2021.² Added to this is prediction by the British think tank, The Centre for Economics and Business Research, that China will replace the US as the world's largest economy by 2028 — five years ahead of schedule³. So not only is the second-largest economy bucking the global trend of a pandemic induced de-growth, but it is also growing fast enough to narrow the difference between itself and America. These trends have profound implications for the world, for Asia and for India. This article highlights the impact on India of the fast turnaround and economic growth that the Chinese economy is set to witness and the steps India must take to arrest the widening gap between the two large Asian neighbours. It will also highlight the dangers of the Chinese growth story which will have ramifications for the world.

Indian and Chinese Economic Growth

Both India and China had almost the same level of economic progress in 1990, but since then the economic trajectories of the two nations have been vastly different, leading to the present stark difference. In 1990 — 11 years since the first SEZs were established in Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shantou — China's GDP stood at \$360 billion. In comparison, India's GDP was \$320 billion. However, by 2000, China had grown more than four times and was an over \$1.2 trillion economy.⁴ For India, this was a decade of lost opportunity, marked by high political and economic uncertainty and it languished as a sub - \$500 billion economy. Since then, the difference between the two neighbors has continued to widen. The Chinese economy is now five times bigger than India. As things stand right now, India will witness a larger and more sustainable economic recovery from the Covid shock only by the third quarter of the next financial year

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(October-December 2021) and the Reserve Bank of India expects the return to pre-Covid economic levels will be achieved by early 2022⁵. Even before the pandemic, growth in the Indian economy was unimpressive. GDP growth had fallen to a multi-year low of 4.2 per cent in 2019, down from a moderate 6.1 per cent in 2018. In 2016, India's GDP had grown at 8.3 per cent. So even a return to a sub-optimal growth level will take almost two years for India, during which China will grow at a faster pace. Even if one discounts for the veracity of Chinese data, the trend is clear — the economic gap between the two countries will widen.

How China's Growth Impacts India

Geo-economics and geo-politics are closely interlinked. China derives its strength in world affairs on the back of its massive economy. China's muscular geopolitical stance — both in Asia and beyond; and both on land and sea — must be viewed along with the present economic lead it has taken against its rivals. A robust domestic economy, a faster revival of its exports and a sluggish world economy will collectively bolster China's hegemonistic designs. Ability to pour money in economically unviable projects in India's neighbouring countries, build more infrastructure on its borders with New Delhi and continued military upgradation are all derivatives of a stronger economy. China's faster economic turnaround will aid its ability to retain global companies to stay invested in the status quo arrangement of reliance on Chinese manufacturing capabilities. While 2020 saw loud calls for de-risking or de-leveraging as large businesses felt the need to reduce their over-dependence on China's global supply chains; fast-paced recovery of the Chinese economy can diminish those prospects.

Companies dealing with muted growth will not respond to any clarion call to limit their China exposure if it made imprudent economics.

For India to respond effectively to all these acts, it first needs to get its public finances in shape. India's limited success in attracting large-scale manufacturing has been well-documented but its ability to lure large investors gets further constrained with Chinese economy back on its feet soon. World Bank expects the Indian economy to contract almost 9.6 per cent as against a 2 per cent growth for China. Even for FY21, World Bank's India GDP growth forecast is a modest 5.4 per cent as against China's much faster 7.9 per cent.⁶ A stronger Chinese economy could also limit Indian efforts to decouple itself — a sentiment that gained momentum after the deadly Galwan Valley clash between the two neighbours. Companies dealing with muted growth will not respond to any clarion call to limit their China exposure if it made imprudent economics.

Given the present nature of globalised trade, a growing Chinese economy translates into a growth in its trade ties with both the European Union and the USA — India's largest trading partners. Despite the initial anger directed at Beijing for spreading the virus and the subsequent resolve to reduce its economic reliance on China; the EU rushed ahead to seal an investment deal with the world's second largest economy. This is testimony to how crucial trade ties with China are for the growth-starved, stagnant economies of the European continent, even if it means side-stepping grave geo-strategic concerns. Likewise, under a Biden administration — which is expected to mend America's business ties with China — the possibility of de-linking economic and geo-political interest is high, especially since the American economy will not be out of the woods immediately. (World Bank estimates US economy will contract by 4 per cent in 2020 and rebound with a modest growth in 2021). These trends will translate into few takers for India's policies that aim to isolate China with punitive economic measures.

India has significant economic heft, favourable demographics and has both promise and potential in acting as the only counter to China in Asia and the Indo Pacific region. But despite these obvious advantages, in the short term, India will have limited success in positioning itself as the economic alternative to Beijing if Western economies put their economic interests ahead of geo-political concerns. Though this approach is counter-intuitive to how trade with China should be done given Beijing's past record of weaponizing trade (recently it penalised Australian coal and wine exports after Canberra sought a probe into origin of coronavirus).

How Can India Reduce Economic Gap with China?

Beyond the immediate recovery and revival of its main economic drivers, India needs to have a clear roadmap to determine its economic fate against China. New Delhi must prioritize areas/sectors to kick-start growth and get its economy on a high growth trajectory to reduce the gap with its much larger neighbor. To achieve the same, the focus must be on three aspects — manufacturing, exports and identifying newer trade partnerships. As Japan, Singapore and Vietnam rolled out the red carpet to attract global manufacturing in response to shuttered factories across China, India's record has been found wanting. Japan and Singapore have competitive edge over India on account of deeper port linkages, superior infrastructure, and a more efficient administrative mechanism. Vietnam scores high on account of its resolve to create a more investor-friendly regime — something that India needs to pay more attention to. It is jingoism to assume the one-sided trade relationship can be fixed with one clarion call for economic self-reliance. It has taken two decades for India's trade deficit with China to grow sixty times — from \$1 billion in 2000 to \$60 billion in 2020⁷; and to reverse this trend it will need a combination of new policy, clear roadmap, and a long-term vision.

India's path to manufacturing should take two complimentary routes; one driven by cost factors where it will have to compete with other low-cost destinations like Bangladesh/Sri Lanka; the second route must be based on innovation. While political systems of communist countries cannot be compared with democratic set-ups where unpopular economic reforms are politically unpalatable, it is worth noting that China has already identified its next growth frontier — innovation. The Make in China 2025 plan has research as its main pivot. What India lacks in terms of global supply chain linkages and economies of scale; it can make up by leveraging its strengths as an IT superpower. By developing niche areas of industrial research, effort must be towards creating domain expertise in industrial innovation. Close collaborations with German, American, Swedish, Swiss, and Japanese industry should be encouraged and prioritised. These are countries rated among the top nations in World Economic Forum's global competitiveness index. India needs to identify its distinct edge and superiority in industrial innovation, which can be a key driver of future growth.

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Despite a pushback against globalization after the spread of the China-originated virus, trade deals and investment pacts are once again being inked. Globalization-which played a key role in the growth of the Chinese economy-continues to be resisted across the world. But despite these waves of protectionist tendencies sweeping almost all parts of the world, ironically, new trade opportunities are being identified. The EU signed an investment pact with China, despite terming it a 'systemic rival' and an 'economic competitor', in a clear demonstration of what the future of international trade could be, which is, segregation of economic and political concerns⁸. For India these changed realities of global trade have multiple ramifications. The EU-China agreement will connect the biggest world markets; blunting the decoupling narrative that promotes alternate investment destinations like India. Such changes must force India to speed up its stalled negotiations to achieve breakthroughs with the EU, the US and the UK in its trade talks. India and the EU held 16 rounds of negotiations between 2007 and 2013 but due to lack of agreement on crucial issues, talks fell apart and have remained frozen till date. The onus of breaking the impasse lies on India since the EU will soon enjoy access to 14 other nations under the China-backed RCEP allowing greater market potential for European exporters. Despite calls for restraint by America, the EU pushed ahead with the pact, indicating its desperation.

If anything, India can take advantage of European willingness to identify growth opportunities by proposing a limited pact by addressing some of the concerns of French wine makers and German auto companies. Likewise, the US became India's largest trading partner in FY20 (Source: Ministry of Commerce), but notwithstanding the opportunity and potential of the trade relationship, there has been little progress on a trade deal. India must seize the opportunity

of a democrat administration that will have a more benign view of issues related to the visa system and the GSP mechanism (the preferred tariff regime) with a limited pact. The most contentious issues related to agriculture subsidies must be kept out of it, for fear of derailment of talks. India's refusal to join the RCEP bandwagon should not translate into reluctance to forge more trade pacts or hunt for better trading opportunities. Instead, it should lead to more agreements which may be limited in scope with a focus on specific sectors that provide Indian exporters with newer markets. It may not be just a coincidence that New Delhi has not signed a new trade agreement since 2013, the same year Indian exports started stagnating.

Lastly, India's moribund exports are a case of neglect, apathy and ineffective policy. Consider this, from \$309 billion in financial year (FY) 2012; exports fell to \$307 billion in FY 2013, to a tepid \$318 billion in FY 2014, \$316 billion in FY 2015 and fell sharply to \$262 billion in FY2016.⁹ The period between December 2014 to September 2016 saw Indian exports shrinking consistently and it was only due to very benign global crude prices which were at record lows (sub-\$30 a barrel) that India's trade deficit remained manageable. In its first term, the Modi government had set a target of increasing share of Indian exports to 5 percent of world exports. It has remained within 1.5 – 1.7 percent throughout, not even touching 2 percent. Barring FY 2019, there was nothing noteworthy about India's annual merchandise exports which saw contraction from August-December 2019 (FY'17 - \$274 billion, FY'18 - \$302 billion, FY'19 - \$330 billion and FY'20 - \$314 billion). From non-tariff barriers to poor infrastructure connectivity to lower skill sets, Indian exports need immediate policy measures to improve competitiveness.¹⁰ There is urgent need for reducing high logistics costs (14 per cent of GDP) which erode competitiveness. Niti Ayog has pointed out that just a 10 per cent reduction in logistics cost can boost exports by 5-8 per cent. A strong manufacturing policy and a robust export growth are closely linked, with the share of manufactured goods rising from 66 per cent to 68 per cent between the period 2008-2018, as per a WTO report.¹¹ Beyond manufacturing, the latest McKinsey report has said India can generate \$95 billion of high-value agriculture exports by 2030, which could provide a fillip to employment¹².

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Pitfalls of the Chinese Economic Model

Though it is likely that China's economic ride may be smooth, there are some roadblocks ahead. In fact, concerns around indebtedness and skewed economic model are so significant that they threaten to derail the Chinese economy, and with it the world. China is heavily indebted and is prone to bank defaults; its model of pumping money to boost growth has now run its course with a negative total productivity factor since 2012 and its property market is now precipitously close to a fall. China has too much debt from 140 per cent of the GDP in 2008, to over 260 percent by 2019. With Baoshang Bank Co. being the first Chinese bank in two decades to fail¹³; higher corporate debt has raised prospects of a larger banking crisis in China. In first quarter of 2020, there was an 11 percent rise in China's debt/GDP ratio, driven by the corporate sector. China's corporate debt/GDP ratio now stands at 129 percent with the share of Chinese Banks' corporate loans now rising to 81.1 per cent. But corporate debt is not the only problem. China's debt is non-transparent and hidden at the local government level — making any action difficult and only partially effective. There is no clear estimate of the total public debt that is off-balance sheet. China's total debt is now 5 per cent of the global GDP¹⁴ and a collapse of its banking institutions will translate into a global financial crisis. Add to this China's undocumented overseas lending through its large investments under the Belt and Road Initiative since 2013. Despite the multi-million-dollar contracts signed in the last few years, China has not officially reported any loans either to Venezuela or Iran. As per a Harvard study, countries owed \$5 trillion in debt to China in 2017¹⁵. With China having lent more than World Bank, IMF and the OECD countries put together, lack of transparency of the nature and even the quantum of loans puts the world economy at a huge risk in case large scale defaults occur. Equally worrying is its highly inflated and

leveraged property market. China's largest real estate company Evergrande has seen its debt zoom from \$4.7 billion in 2010 to a whopping \$123 billion.¹⁶ Evergrande is not alone in this game of leverage which could destabilize its banks and throw its economy into a tailspin, triggering a larger financial crisis.

Conclusion

In concluding one could say that investors are mindful of the risks enumerated above—termed broadly as ‘country risk’—but India must keep reminding other nations, especially its neighbours, about these pitfalls. China's economic engine is set to fire on all cylinders, but it may run out of steam due to a combination of these pitfalls. For India, this presents both an opportunity and a risk and wading through this could decide its economic destiny. 2020 saw an aggressive and belligerent China willing to change status quo, both on land and on sea. New Delhi—which shares an over 3500-kilometer-long border must prepare for an economic turnaround and growth to counter some of the geo-political headwinds that will temper only with a stronger Indian economy — hopefully before 2028.

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