

Security Environment in 2025 : India's Interests and Strategies

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It would be rash to try and define the specific security environment affecting India two decades hence and, worse, attempt to outline the "role" India should play to successfully deal with the challenges that the environment would pose. This role is not a simple mantle that countries can put on or discard. But they play a role based on their cultural correlates, intellectual acumen, core values, and national (in some cases narrower regime) interests and capabilities in relation to the environment and policies of other players on the international and regional arena. When our potential role is viewed in the context of our higher defence organisation, the complexities are obvious. It would be naïve — and even counter-productive, therefore, to go down that road. What can be realistically undertaken is an assessment of the trends that are likely to shape the (broader global, regional and national) security environment in 2025, in the context of our core interests and try and outline the direction along which we should be thinking, keeping in mind the main approach outlined by the organisers.

While a very large number of factors and events would shape the security environment as we approach 2025, at this point in history we can identify some major trends that are likely to impact that environment during the coming two decades. These are briefly outlined in the following paragraphs.

Global Power Shift

It has been clear for the past two decades that a global power shift from the Euro-Atlantic "West" to an Asia-centred "East" has been in progress. This has far reaching implications not only for the nature of the international order as it emerges in the coming decades and great power relations, but also inevitably for the security environment. This shift has started to attract serious attention due to a number of factors, among them being the following : (a) Sustained high growth of economic and military power of China leading to perceptions (and concerns) about the "Rise of China," (b) Robust

economic growth of India under a resilient democratic political system bringing a new recognition of "Emerging India," (c) Economic recovery of Japan (after the stasis of the late 1980s and 1990s), and (d) Economic and political recovery of Russia and its renewed urge to play a global role along with its increasingly closer strategic ties with China, (e) Rising prices of oil along with the prospects of the beginning of its depletion in the next quarter century affecting energy security of the developed as well as developing countries, with the likelihood of the proportion of global oil (and natural gas) reserves (and consumption) increasingly located in Asia and (f) Religious extremism, and terrorism and political armed violence having acquired global linkages along with its greater sophistication.

It needs to be remembered that the rise of the West owed itself substantively, (if not primarily) to the dawn of the industrial revolution in mid 18th century the techno-economic fruits of which were the primary factors for the European powers to establish territorial empires (to control human and material resources that multiplied the techno-economic advantages) across the world through the exploitation of military technology and force. Industrial revolution also provided the means to alter the means and methods of economic productivity, and hence of national income and industrial output. This, in turn, resulted in the de-industrialisation of China and India besides other countries which came under colonial rule and domination leading to their modern status of underdevelopment.

For example, among the two large countries of Asia (and the "East") China accounted for 23.1 per cent of the global income in 1700 AD increasing to 32.4 per cent by 1820 AD before the western domination on the strength of industrial revolution resulted in the shift in the balance of economic strength from East to West. And China's share dropped to as low as 5.0 per cent by 1978 AD. India as the second largest advanced and rich country itself accounted for 22.6 per cent of the global income in 1700 AD before its decline started bringing its share down to a mere 3.4 per cent by 1978.¹ A similar trend was applicable to the manufacturing-industrial output where the changes in the technologies of economic productivity strengthened the growth of western countries.² Two important points need notice.

One is that China was historically ahead of India through the past four centuries in economic industrial terms. To this must be

added the historical fact that it was never under total alien rule like India had become by mid-19th century. China under the *Qing* dynasty (1644-1911) had remained a powerful independent country with a central rule that expanded its borders unlike India which experienced fragmentation and internal wars after the *Mughal* Empire started to crumble by the end of 18th century (ironically coinciding with the rise of Europe). Also, Japanese occupation of its territories in the early 20th century led to the industrialisation of its north-eastern region. Second, China's modernisation since 1980, managed with strong national policies without the distractions of democratic dissonances has demonstrated phenomenal techno-economic growth of its capability inviting admiration as well as concerns as far away as the western hemisphere. India's economic reforms, subject to constant pulls and pressures of a vibrant though noisy democracy with coalition governments, commenced a decade after that of China.

In view of the evidence of historical processes, it is reasonable to conclude that China's national (comprehensive) power will remain ahead of that of India through the coming decades. But that does not, by itself, create adverse security challenges unless it becomes significantly asymmetric in specific areas like the balance of military power usable across the frontiers. This is where Indians would need to shed the trauma of 1962 war, where the failure of the higher defence organisation on one side and near absence of sufficient force and logistics played the key role in our defeat which was more marked in the eastern sector than in the north-western one. The real issue affecting future strategic environment, therefore, is not that China's power is increasing, but the strategic uncertainty about how China might use that power in the coming decades? And what would be the balance of military power between now and 2025 that could be applied on India's frontiers by China, if relations start to deteriorate?

Emerging International Order

Global power shift from West to East with new centres of power rising is inevitably shaping the nature of emerging international order that has intrinsically an important impact on the security environment affecting the powerful as well as the weak states. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the international order during the Cold War was not bipolar in the strict sense but more a Euro-Atlantic bipolarity. The reality of nearly 130 countries staying formally out of the military-ideological-political alignment was proof enough of the limited nature

of bipolarity. In addition large countries like India, which charted an independent foreign policy and China, which adopted a similar position by the 1960s had fractured the bipolar system making it more of a diffused multipolar world with bipolarity among the rival alliances (and a degree of multipolarity within the alliance). By the 1980s, during the peaks of the Cold War, strategic thinkers and leaders like Henry Kissinger and Zgniew Brezinsky were talking of a pentagon of powers (USA, USSR, Japan, China and the EU). To this, Kissinger had started to add India in the early 1990s as a provisionally emergent power.

So what we see in reality is a diffused multipolar international order that has been evolving into a polycentric system with six major players the USA, China, Japan, India, the EU, and Russia impacting the future strategic environment.³ It is in this context that there has been talk of China's attempt to create conditions (as demonstrated in the formation and actions of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) for opposing hegemony (of the United States) where Russia appears to be willing to join in. China-Russia axis is gathering strength with a marked difference from the alliance of the 1950s in that it is China as the stronger partner that drives strategic trends. It is in this context that the US has sought to seek closer relations with India, consciously or unconsciously strengthening the shift toward polycentricity.

The current international order has some specific characteristics that need to be noted for their implications for foreign and security policy. There is substantive asymmetry of power, capability, and willingness to exercise that capability among the leading centres of power in today's world. The United States in that respect is the most complete power, and hence the image of unipolarity intensified by the fact of almost all the developed countries being its military-political allies, members of the erstwhile G-7 etc. Thus, what we observe is the phenomenon of concurrent competition and cooperation among the leading players of the world. There is every possibility that this would lead to conflict in military as well as non-military terms, with many of the signs of the latter phenomenon already in practice in trade and technology terms. Whether this leads to an element of uncertainty in the world order, or the disorientation resulting from a rather rapid impetus of change in the international system is the cause of continuing uncertainties, is not the issue. What is clear is that the phenomenon of concurrent competition and co-operation is

likely to persist as long as significant asymmetries among the primary powers continue. A parallel effect of this phenomenon is that this co-operation and competition will continue to be functional rather than ideological. For example, non-proliferation issues are likely to remain a source of friction among the main players till there is agreement on disarmament. But none of the issues are likely to reach a point of divergence of interests as to call for a fracture of the system.

It is reasonable to assume that there will be strong tendency toward polarisation of the polycentric international system over time leading to multipolarity, and possibly, even bipolarity again, although the poles in either case would be significantly different than those of the past. But any form of polarity in the international system intrinsically contains an implicit phenomenon of areas of control and influence and hegemonic framework of interstate relations. While this may reflect the traditional concept of power, it also remains contradictory to the goals of democratisation of the international system. India's interest would be served well by the perpetuation of non-hegemonic polycentrism rather than any form of polarisation in the international order.

The big question that we need to reflect on is, how will the international order get shaped by the changes taking place with the global power shift? In particular, how will the emergent powers of the world like China and India respond to these changes? Equally, if not more important, how will the current and sole super power, the United States, adjust to the changes taking place? Its actions in Iraq and the Middle East in general provide us with little confidence of its ability to make the necessary transitions. This is not so unusual. Great powers have, historically, found it difficult to adjust to the changing power equations in the world and accommodate the rise of other powers leaning toward greater unilateralism than at other times. They, therefore, have tended to resort to the use of force, directly or indirectly, (as the UK did in 1956) though not necessarily against the challengers and sought to create a "balance of power" as the European states continued to do since the 17th century by shifting alliances and alignments. The United States, till recently, has also tended to balance the rise of China and India unilaterally though it did seek China's cooperation to cooperate in its own policy goals.⁴ It is only now that Washington has given out clear signals that it would like to "help India to become a global player" which has

been mostly interpreted to imply supporting India as an emergent balancer to China. While the US cooperation and closer US-India relations are important necessities, it would not be in our interest to balance China on American behest or to support its grand strategy as much as it would not be in our interest to side with China to counter American hegemony.

Other Issues

Among the large number of issues that impinge on the security environment as it evolves toward 2025 that of energy (especially hydrocarbons) security stands out. It has been clear for more than two decades that the world is going to experience the beginning of the end of oil in the early decades of the 21st century. Oil prices have been expected to rise (which has been happening for the past four years). This has made oil exploration in commercially less attractive exploration more feasible. But that still does not alter two fundamental realities that impinge heavily on the security environment toward 2025.

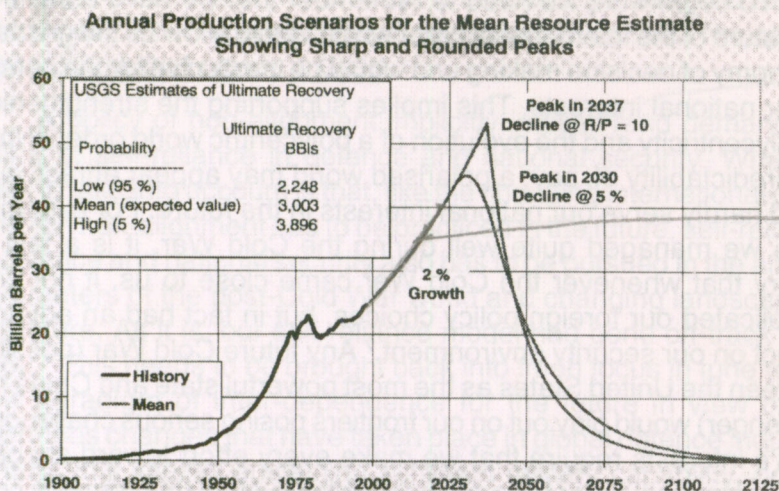
One is the expected decline of availability of oil by about 2030 in relation to the continued rise in consumption. In fact, the accompanying Graph 1 indicating the reserve to production ratio tells us a lot about the picture of current and future global security environment since oil is crucial to world economy and security. To this has to be added the second important factor: bulk of the high growth in consumption is taking place in China and India, with the bulk of global oil (and natural gas) located in the region around these two large Asian countries.

Since oil is the last territory-related strategic resource base, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that whatever were the other reasons for wars and conflict in Afghanistan, (since 1980s), Persian Gulf region (since 1980 starting with Iran-Iraq War, followed by the Gulf War 1990-91 and then the Iraq War 2003 onward), oil has been a major factor influencing the course of events. Impending shortage of oil and its rising prices are bound to create tussle among producers and consumers, large consumers like the US, China and India, besides providing countries with large reserves (like Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran) with additional leverages of global influence.

Linked to the problem of oil, but not necessarily only affected by it, is that of potential reversal in the economic growth rate of key

countries which would have profound impact on the security environment of the future. Consider the following possibilities of alternate scenarios like:

- (a) China's economic growth starts to decline and the already visible social dissonance increases to high levels. This is highly hypothetical and unlikely to actually take place except if China's access to oil and gas is significantly curtailed. But its consequences would be far reaching for the global and regional security environment. If past history is any indicator, Beijing's efforts to retain national stability may lead to substantive use of force and possible reaction outside its frontiers. This may be compounded if it views the problem of Tibetan refugees in India or close US-India relations inimical to its immediate interests.⁵
- (b) India's economic growth slows down to below 6 per cent leading to serious internal turbulence and weakness in dealing with challenges from outside.
- (c) Pakistan is located in a crucial geographical area dominating current and future oil transportation routes. If Pakistan enters into a stage of increasing instability leading to strengthening of radical violence emanating from its territory, it could have far reaching implications for global economy and security besides peace and security on account of ethno-religious violence in states and societies.
- (d) West Asian stability has been under potential stresses for quite some time. It is reasonable to assume that the political structures in these countries would change in the coming two decades. Serious problems could arise if that change is not evolutionary and is accompanied by violence.
- (e) The US war in Iraq (and now Israeli war in Lebanon) and its continued hostility toward Iran has had profound impact on the security dynamics of the Persian Gulf region. The contours of its implications are too complex to make a definitive assessment of how the conflicts would play out.⁶ But what we are witness to is an unprecedented shift in the nature of even asymmetric conflict with ethnic and religious ideologies overlays.



Note : U.S. volumes were added to the USGS foreign volumes to obtain world totals.

Graph 1

Humanitarian disasters, both man-made as well as natural disasters, already attract tremendous global attention. There are few signs of the man made disasters reducing in future. In fact, the conflicts in West and Central Asia and Afghanistan (where Taliban seem to be regaining ground) indicate that the worse is yet to come. It is not clear if the rise in natural disasters like earthquakes, tsunami, extensive floods and debilitating droughts etc. are a consequence of climate change and global warming. But they are increasingly demanding greater attention from security planners. Most of these demand the involvement of military forces and hence are a factor in security planning, especially for "out of country" contingencies that need rapid responses.

India's Interests and Strategies

From our perspective, given the current trends as they evolve toward 2025, we need to reflect on how should India approach the issue of its own rise to power? What should be India's policies that serve its core interests best in the context of the evolving strategic environment? What should be its response strategy to the concept of balancing China? On the other hand, how should it deal with the rise of China and its military power? And where and how does our higher defence organisation fit into this picture? Conversely, what would be the context in which our higher defence organisation would need to function and the tasks it would need to address?

To begin with, we need to remember that we have a stake in the nature of the international order which would allow us the greatest autonomy of decision making and would be conducive for the pursuit of our national interests. This implies supporting the strengthening of polycentricity and the evolution of a polycentric world order. While the predictability of, say, a polarised world may appear attractive, it could hardly serve our national interests in the future. For example, while we managed quite well during the Cold War, it is a fact of history that whenever the Cold War came close to us, it not only complicated our foreign policy choices, but in fact had an adverse impact on our security environment.⁷ Any future Cold War (possibly between the United States as the most powerful state and China the challenger) would play out on our frontiers posing serious challenges. India's interests require that we make every effort toward shaping the international order toward a polycentric system that remains non-polarised, non-hegemonic and cooperative.

An objective analysis would reveal that India's interests into the future would be best served by the pursuit of its traditional policy of non-alignment, which is another term for independent foreign policy.⁸ This would provide the flexibility and space for manoeuvre for New Delhi to take the maximum advantage of the opportunities emerging at the global level and in its relations with other countries, small or big. Overall, we would have far more to lose by aligning politically (leave alone militarily) with any power. Jawaharlal Nehru's words at the Asian Relations Conference are even more relevant for the future than at any time in the past. As it is, there are sufficient signs to indicate that the world itself is becoming less aligned as compared to two decades ago.

g — Our foreign (and security) policy, therefore, must be based on this goal and work through the formula of multiple cooperative bilateral relations rather than any polarisation that may be tempting in terms of acquiring our zones of influence or a perceived necessity of balancing some country or the other. In fact we must resist, as much as we can, the trends toward polarisation. By definition, a polycentric order would lead to requisite equilibrium in international relations that would best serve our interests. Hence, we must reject the concept of balance of power as it emerged and was practiced in the West where wars and conflict were seen as an integral component of its principles and practice. This should, however, not be interpreted as

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negating the concept of power which is essential, as Mahatma Gandhi used to say, "to make the change" to achieve our goals. The central issue is how that power is used.

A policy of non-alignment implicitly implies (and demands) a policy of self-reliance in defence and national security. What we have to take into account is that, like the changing international order in which non-alignment has to be practiced in the future, self-reliance in defence and national security also has to be pursued in the altered parameters of the post-Cold War world and changing landscape of the future. As it is, our self-reliance model had gone off-track after 1962.⁹ This needs to be brought back into fresh focus in tune with a new paradigm of inter-dependence for the future in view of the enormous changes that have taken place in global defence industry. In turn, this implies sustaining sufficient military capability, not for dominating other states, or "teaching lessons" like the philosophy of some countries, or "playing an out of area role" as some others want to do, but to ensure our own national security. The rise of India as a global player is contingent to its ability to generate sustained economic growth rates with equity and social empowerment, and to ensure its own defence and security.

Seen in the context of our present study of the role and structure of our higher defence organisation for the future, this requires that we seek to ensure that our military power would be able to:

- (a) Ensure credible nuclear deterrent against nuclear threat and use.
- (b) Provide credible deterrence and territorial defence capabilities against potential military challenges, including (and especially) conventional warfare under nuclear overhang, and other conventional military contingencies, small or big.
- (c) Ensure credible capabilities and strategies to successfully respond to proxy war through terrorism and other "unconventional" and asymmetric methods of warfare. It must be noted here that this would require significantly different type of force and strategies than those for the first task above.
- (d) Maintain adequate capability for "out of country contingencies" (which must be defined objectively and specifically) to protect and ensure the safety and security of

our citizens abroad (as indeed had to be done during the Gulf War, and now in the Lebanon War, etc.) and to support international peace and security (mostly under UN mandate, or bilateral agreements etc.), disaster relief etc.

(e) Build a strong and self-reliant defence industry through greater international interdependence. One of the most important aspects of managing future security environment (which requires our higher defence organisation to specifically address) is the issue of China's military posture and its implications for us.

China's Military Posture

China's official policy document titled *China's National Defence 2004* issued on 28 December 2004 sets out its assessment of the strategic environment under which it plans to shape its military posture and some of the key elements of its military policy to support its objectives.¹⁰ At its core the official policy now argues for greater rather than lesser role for military power in international relations. This is an obvious shift from earlier official positions perhaps as an outcome of an enhanced confidence about its own increasing political, economic and military capabilities on one side and the use of military force in Iraq by the US-led coalition on the other.

This is the first time the defence White Paper has clearly expressed China's strategy related to the role of its military power. In particular the White Paper specifies China's basic military goals and tasks to include :

(a) "To build a strong military by means of science and technology. The PLA works to improve its combat capabilities by taking advantage of science and technological advances and aims at building qualitative efficiency instead of a mere quantitative scale, and transforming the military from a manpower-intensive one to a technology-intensive one."

(b) "The PLA will promote coordinated development of firepower, mobility and information capability, enhance the development of its operational strength with priority given to the *Navy, Air Force, and Second Artillery Force*, and strengthen comprehensive deterrence and warfighting capabilities." (This, of course, was also reflected in the Chief of Air Force being

made a member of the Central Military Commission, the highest policy and executive body to develop and employ China's military power).

(c) "The PLA takes as its objective to win local wars under the conditions of informationalisation and gives priority to developing weapons and equipment, to build joint operational capabilities."

The White Paper's conclusion that "world peace is elusive" now (which we can agree with) and the "military factor plays a greater role in international configuration and national security" (a line of assessment that should caution us) would probably not come as a surprise to many experts watching the strategic and security environment especially in Asia. But it is clear that China, if anything, is once again emphasising the importance of military power in its strategic calculus and appears to have taken a more pessimistic view of the security environment where it believes "military imbalance worldwide has further increased" no doubt reflecting its concerns about expanding the US military presence in regions around China.

China has the third largest nuclear-missile arsenal in the world and it has been developing more accurate mobile ballistic missiles now being deployed. China's nuclear weapons improvements appear to be directed toward increase in yield-to-weight ratio of warheads, perfecting multiple re-entry vehicles, and more accurate survivable delivery systems. In substance, the expressed rationale is that China has been lagging behind other nuclear weapon states, in particular the United States, and its goal is to narrow that gap in the coming years. This has profound implications for China's neighbours since the overwhelming proportion, (as much as 96 per cent) of China's nuclear and missile capabilities have rationale only for them because of the ranges of delivery systems developed and deployed by China.

At the same time China, in view of its lag behind the US capabilities in BMD (ballistic missile defences), would have to rely on counter-BMD strategies. Quantitative and qualitative growth of China's nuclear and missile capabilities at a faster rate may be expected to constitute a major element of these strategies. Significant increase in China's capabilities, spurred on by BMD deployments by the United States will also make China more difficult to deter. In turn, this may lead to China becoming more assertive with the risk that it may resort to coercive policies, especially with regard to its

neighbours. This will pose a different type of challenge to India than what was experienced in the past.

Shifting Balance of Military Power

Pentagon's official report to the Congress has been emphasising that "the principal area where China appears to be making advances in coercive military capabilities involves airpower, to include missiles and information operations." And China's own official 2004 Defence White Paper now categorically states the future objectives of its defence policy when it states that:

"While continuing to attach importance to the building of the Army, the PLA gives priority to the building of the Navy, Air Force and Second Artillery Force to seek balanced development of the combat structure, in order to strengthen the capabilities for winning both command of the sea and command of the air, and conducting strategic counter-strike."

There are many areas where Indian defence planning would need to pay close attention to build requisite capabilities for the type of war which may get imposed on us. But the case of combat air power is probably symptomatic of the nature of challenges ahead. The head of the Chinese Air Force has publicly sought a greater role for the PLA Air Force declaring that the Chinese Air Force will strive for a transformation from the air defence type to an offensive and defensive types as soon as possible. He announced that "At the turn of the century and in the early part of the new century, the Air Force will have a batch of new-types of early warning aircraft, electronic-equipped fighter planes, and ground-to-air missiles" and that the Air Force "must give more prominence to air offensive, gradually integrate offensive and defensive, and build up a crack, first-rate air strike force"¹¹. This has already taken definitive shape.

In fact, by 2010 China would be capable of deploying nearly 300 to 500 multi-role combat aircraft of the Su-27/30 class (air refuelled) with long range precision strike and air superiority capabilities. Further down, plans to build 500 to 1000 of China's Jian-10 fighter (and its future Pakistani version of FC-20) are fructifying and even Pakistan is planning to acquire the aircraft as the first export customer of J-10.¹² Nearly 800 F-7 (MiG-21 design) with modern fire control and interception radar would provide a strong force besides the other combat aircraft being added to the PLA Air

Force inventory. Above all, aerial refuelling capabilities would dramatically enhance the ability of the Chinese Air Forces to operate from bases deeper inside China and still be able to impact on Indian territory and targets. Acquisition of AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) would dramatically alter the ability of PLA Air Force to apply combat power in a variety of offensive and defensive missions with greater impact. On the other hand, the force level of Indian Air Force has been dropping and is expected to go down by 30 per cent by the end of this decade. The real impact of this trend would be on our land forces in case of armed conflict. It is indeed surprising how and why our higher defence organisation, especially with an Integrated Defence Staff in place as the successor to the Defence Planning Staff of the COSC, has allowed this situation to emerge?

India has to also take into account the strategic nexus between China and Pakistan though the reasons are not all related to India and its possible "encirclement." China has provided Pakistan with not only conventional weapons since 1965, but also nuclear weapons technology, "proven nuclear weapon design and enough enriched uranium for two devices" in the 1980s and has since continued to provide additional assistance to Pakistan's nuclear weapon programme during the 1990s.¹³ Pakistan has made no secret of the rationale of its nuclearisation which is specifically targeted against India. There have been numerous persistent reports that the Pakistani device was tested at Lop Nor in China during 1983. In fact, the Pakistani nuclear scientist, Dr. Samar Mubarakmand who was in-charge of the nuclear tests in May 1998 claimed that Pakistan had tested a nuclear device in 1983.¹⁴ China supplied ballistic missiles to Pakistan in 1991.¹⁵ China's arms sales policies have greater strategic rather than commercial rationale. "As with Pakistan, Beijing seeks to use arms sales to Myanmar to complicate India's security planning."¹⁶

India's relative defence capability has been undergoing some fundamental changes. At the time of 1962 war China's military capability was high and at an all-time peak. Its military had won the revolutionary civil war against the US backed and supplied KMT forces, and its leaders were military commanders led by Mao Tse Tung. In early 1950s China had fought the UN Command (with forces veterans of World War II) to a halt in Korea. Its military was equipped

with massive supplies of Soviet state of the art weapons and systems now tested in the Korean War. The fact that Chinese military was qualitatively inferior to the US military did not lead to any definitive advantage for the UN. In fact, serious consideration was given by the US military commanders to even the use of nuclear weapons to defeat the Chinese "volunteers." Thus by the time of 1962 China-India war, the PLA was perhaps at its peak both qualitatively and quantitatively. From then on the quality of PLA declined even though its size increased. Broadly speaking, the decline had bottomed out by the time of the Sino-Vietnam War of 1979. From then onward military modernisation has been leading to increase of military capability, especially in qualitative terms even though the size of PLA has been cut back.

The problem is that while Chinese military capability has continued to grow in absolute and relative terms, the Indian military capability started to decline after 1987 from 3.38 per cent of GDP to its current figure of 2.24 per cent for 2006-07. There has been very little modernisation or replacement of weapons and equipment since the mid-1980s. Declining defence capability was, undoubtedly, one of the factors responsible for Pakistan launching its war in Kargil in the summer of 1999. There has been concern that similar weakness in relation to China could result in a situation not different from that in 1962 which had led to the humiliating defeat suffered by India.¹⁷ The parliamentary committee on defence has been demanding increase in defence spending to 4 per cent of GDP.¹⁸ However, while increase in defence spending is to be expected, it is extremely unlikely that this is more likely to stay below a level of around 2.5 per cent of GDP in the years ahead.¹⁹ While there is every likelihood that the force levels may have to be reconsidered and down-sized, modernisation of Indian military is likely to receive particular attention in the years ahead. This would include special emphasis on force multipliers, surveillance systems and precision guided weapons besides replacement of platforms, where necessary.

One of the strategic realities of the present period is that the balance of military capabilities between China and India is rapidly shifting to our disadvantage in operational terms. And nowhere is this more noticeable than in the air and space capabilities. This has to be weighed in the context of the fact that future wars are going to be heavily influenced by air power. There is no question that we

must continue to improve relations with China and reduce the potential for disagreements and possible conflict. It would not be in our interests to think of China in any adversarial terms. But it would be less than prudent to ignore the changing realities of military power that would provide the capabilities on which altered intentions could be based. Factors beyond our control could propel the two countries into a possible conflictual situation.

Managing Policy

What is clear from the above is that we can expect substantive strategic uncertainty in the coming decades. This would require deep and extensive studies looking closely at historical and cultural factors affecting the security environment, current trends and future developments. While this naturally includes intelligence as we understand it in India, but in reality it goes far beyond mere intelligence to comprehensive, continuing, policy-related, future-oriented empirical studies of global trends and developments impinging on our security and detailed assessments of political-military capabilities of key countries of interest. Overwhelming proportion, (normally believed to be over 95 per cent) of such studies has to be undertaken in the public domain in suitable think tanks. This would perform two inter-linked roles: that of providing independent inputs for decision makers, and second, to assist in broader understanding (so crucial in a democracy) of our challenges, policy options and their implications.

Unfortunately this remains a major deficit. The NSC Task Force recommendations in 1998 to establish five think tanks, and the NSAB (National Security Advisory Board) recommendation (accepted by the NSC chaired by the Prime Minister) in June 1999 have remained unactioned. Our universities focus almost exclusively on academic research which is extremely important, but that leaves few institutions undertaking policy-related studies. Barring a few notable exceptions, our area studies centres have also not been able to provide the type of inputs crucial to policy making.

This raises the issue of intelligence assessments. Our major weakness in dealing with military challenges since independence has been the failure of military-related intelligence and strategic trends, all the way from 1948 to Kargil. Contrary to conventional wisdom this has been due less to lack of information than requisite

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assessment. Information in such matters will mostly remain sketchy and ambiguous. The success of intelligence assessment, therefore, rests on the ability of experienced analysts well-versed in their fields to construct the most probable scenarios and their implications. The decision makers should then be able to apply their experience and professional judgement to shape policy. The task of analysts cannot be undertaken by short-tenure appointees; and suitable institution is needed to nurture the long-term study and analyses.

One of the consequences of erosion of our higher defence organisation in the late 1950s was that the quality of work of the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) of the Chiefs of Staff Committee had declined. Worse still, instead of re-invigorating the JIC, it was taken out of the ambit of the Chiefs of Staff Committee and placed separately under the Cabinet Secretariat depriving the Chiefs of Staff Committee of a vital source for the basis on which military power could be planned and employed effectively. If the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) has to perform the role of intelligence assessment (including net assessment, which is necessary foundation for current assessments) which it must, then it will have to be answerable directly to the Chiefs of Staff Committee rather than an intermediate planning staff (which would receive its reports in any case to undertake its own task). And the DIA should have the wherewithal to provide intelligence assessments independent of those from the RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) and the IB (Intelligence Bureau) even where the same basis information is common to all of them, which should be the norm. An emergent India in tomorrow's world (and its credible defence) simply cannot afford a weak intelligence assessment system, especially in the crucial area of national defence and military power.

There are many other aspects which require attention if defence decision making is to be improved. But the core of all problems is that there are fundamental systemic dysfunctions in the higher defence system, the most serious of these being the vertical disjunction where the higher military organisation is not an integral part of the government framework. Non-democratic countries (like China and former USSR) have a totally military staffed department of the government which combines the functions of current preparedness and conduct of operations, with future force development. In many countries like Pakistan, the military exercises extra-constitutional authority and controls both functions in the name of the government of the day. All established

democracies in the world, on the other hand, have an integrated civil-military staffed ministries of defence to undertake the planning and development of future defence capabilities. India seems to be the singular exception for reasons which have been difficult to identify.

The vertical disjunction must also be seen in the context of two realities. Unlike the earlier eras, military power is increasingly used by states for political purposes without necessarily resorting to classical war and would have to take into account the existence of nuclear weapons where they exist exercising profound influence on the way military power can be used. The disjunction between the government and higher military organisation is a serious handicap in managing this "coercive diplomacy", both against and for the state. The problem is further compounded by short tenures, especially in military bureaucracy, limited experience of defence matters in the civil bureaucracy, poor understanding of defence issues amongst the intelligentsia in general, and the pre-occupation of political leaders with (domestic) politics.

The second major problem is that the functions related to force development — the policy related to creation of doctrine, strategy, technology, and force levels and structures require resource allocations and commitments on a long term basis. These, by their very definition, are governmental functions. In fact, they substantively extend beyond the jurisdiction of even the Ministry of Defence. The civil bureaucracy in the Ministry of Defence is too small, is overburdened by routine (and crisis) management, and has too little professional expertise to manage this task. Their decision making is further heavily conditioned by the financial bureaucracy which focuses more on expenditure audit and control approach.²⁰ On the other hand, service headquarters keep planning for future force development, essentially in vacuum, since they are not part of the process examining and planning resource allocation.

Thirdly, because of, and together with, this vertical disjunction, substantive horizontal dysfunctions exist — within the defence forces, between them and agencies and departments dealing with foreign policy, finance, intelligence, internal security etc. Once again, this is the reason for people looking for structures like the National Security Council. What is obviously needed is a methodology and framework which removes these disjunctions in policy planning. A second major deficit is that of lack of long-term national security planning and strategy making. The

NSC Task Force addressed this in its recommendations in June 1998; but these have remained unimplemented.

Notes

1. Angus Maddison, *Chinese Economic Performance in the Long Run*, OECD, Paris, 1998.
2. All countries of Europe combined, for example, accounted for 23.3% of global income in 1700 AD which kept rising to 40.3% by the end of 19th century before declining giving way essentially to the United States whose share increased from 1.8% in early 19th century to nearly 22% by 1980.
3. This was argued earlier in Jasjit Singh "Challenges of the Strategic Environment" paper presented at the seminar on "Command and Staff Challenges for the 21st Century" organised by Defence Services Staff College, Wellington, April 14-15, 1998.
4. For example, in June 1998 President Clinton sought China's cooperation to work for non-proliferation in South Asia and pursue its goal of "cap, reduce and eliminate" nuclear weapons capability of India, which, if it were to succeed, would leave China as the obvious dominant power in Asia where Washington could hardly be expected to risk itself for the security of, say, New Delhi. After all that was the rationale under which Washington declined to provide security guarantees to India in 1967!
5. It is worth recalling that its war in 1962 was substantively motivated by similar factors where Zhou Enlai even asserted to Mongolian leader that the war was not about territory but to teach India a lesson for moving too close to the United States and possibly "giving away" Kashmir to the West (See Cold War History)
6. For example, my preliminary assessment is that Israeli war in Lebanon indicates a new paradigm of a terrorist organisation acquiring the status and support of being a semi-military sub-state actor with the population supporting it while it engages one of the most professional militaries in the world forcing it to ceasefire after a virtual stalemate. This has been happening while Iraq moved almost inexorably toward a civil war, Turkey massed its troops on the Syrian border to threaten any move toward Kurdish independence, and Iran maintained similar posture. Celebrations in Iran, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria of what has been perceived as the Hizbollah (and hence Shia) victory is likely to trigger the rise of similar trends in future.

7. US military alliance with Pakistan with transfer of massive arms in the 1950s, the establishment of CENTO and SEATO, entry of extra-regional naval power into Indian Ocean following the Vietnam War, the US-directed proxy war against Soviet intervention in Afghanistan conducted through Pakistan as the "front-line state" and Islamic "Mujahideen" with sophisticated weapons in the 1980s (the after-shocks of which have been reverberating ever since all the way to the US World Trade Centre on side, Punjab and J&K in India to the Islamist terrorism across the world), the debris of the Cold War in the shape of the phenomenal spread of small arms and light weapons into society besides the narcotics trafficking are but some of the examples that continue to affect our security decades later.
8. Non-alignment, as distinct from what came to be called the Non-Aligned Movement, was not the product of Cold War and was adopted as the strategy for pursuit of Indian foreign policy a decade before independence. See Jasjit Singh, "Conflict Prevention and Management: The Indian Way" in Jasjit Singh (ed) *Asian Strategic Review 1995-96* (New Delhi, IDSA, 1996) pp 9-26.
9. Ajay Singh, "Quest for Self-Reliance" in Jasjit Singh, *India's Defence Spending* (New Delhi, Knowledge World, 2001).
10. *China's National Defence in 2004*, Chapter III, p.1, the White Paper published to illustrate China's national defence policies and the progress made in the previous two years, *China Daily*, December 28, 2004 at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-12/28/content_403913.htm. Emphasis added.
11. "Air Force Commander Liu Shunyao on Air Force Transformation" FBIS-CHI-1999-1107, dated 07 Nov 1999.
12. Sergio Coniglio, *Military Technology*, Vol. XXX Issue 7, 2006. See also earlier reports like SWB dated 28 August 1999, p.19.
13. *China's Arms Sales: Motivations and Implications*, RAND Report, 1999, p.viii.
14. Cited in *The Gulf Today*, May 19, 1999
15. For China's supplies of ballistic missiles to Pakistan see Pakistan Prime Minister Moeen Qureshi's statement on August 26, 1993, cited in *The Nation*, August 27, 1993; and Foreign Minister Abdul Sattar's statement to the Senate August 26, 1993, cited in *The Nation*, August 27, 1993. See also Chinese ambassador to USA, Zhu Qizhen's address to the National Press Club, Washington DC, Reuters Transcript Report (June 27, 1991) cited in John Wilson and Hua Di, "China's Ballistic Missile Programs", *International Security*, Fall 1992, vol. 17, no.2,

- p.37, where he stated that, "We have sold some conventional weapons to Pakistan, including a tiny amount of short-range tactical missiles..."
16. RAND Report, op. cit. note 11 above.
 17. This is not to suggest that a similar conflict would naturally follow.
 18. *Defence Policy, Planning and Management*, Sixth Report of the Standing Committee of Defence (1995-96) Tenth Lok Sabha, March 1996, p.37.
 19. The average for the past 15 years works out to 2.3% of the GDP annually.
 20. Amiya K Ghosh, a former Financial Adviser (Defence) in his seminal study *Defence Budgeting and Planning in India* (New Delhi, Knowledge World, 2006) goes further to conclude that the Defence Ministry and the Department of Defence has little control over planning since budgeting remains under the actual allocations are decided by Ministry of Finance and the Financial Adviser (Defence) thus marginalising defence planning by military professionals.

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