Challenges To National Security In India

There are numerous challenges to the national security of India and the extent and scope of threats are complex, varied and vast. Perhaps no other country in the world confronts as many threats with as much intensity at the same time. Overall, more than 50 per cent of India is affected by threats that are not just "law and order" problems. They have increasing external dimensions belying conventional wisdom that internal security threats are caused mainly by internal sources. The poor internal security situation is a result not only of India's unfavourable strategic environment but also due to weak internal security mechanisms, especially the criminal justice system. In this context, this article argues that if appropriate actions are not taken, the threats may result in the gradual degradation of the Indian state. It suggests new sets of policies and mechanisms in diplomatic, economic, military, political and sociocultural arenas.

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INTRODUCTION

India faces major national security challenges from a resurgent People's Republic of China and an unstable Islamic State of Pakistan. Combined with the continuing political instability in Central Asia to the north and the fear of regional Islamisation, India's land borders face both active and potential hostile opponents and at least two nuclear weapons equipped nations. Moreover, in the seas to the east, south and west, it is anticipated that Chinese nuclear

armed submarines may patrol at will in the future, within striking distance of the Indian land mass. It is also expected that conventionally powered Pakistani nuclear submarines could also ply these waters equipped with nuclear tipped cruise missiles. American naval forces, although considered a lesser threat than China and Pakistan, also patrol these waters, both on the surface and in its depths (Michael Kugelman, "Looking in, Looking out: Surveying India's Internal and External Security Challenges" in Michael Kugelman (Ed), *India's Contemporary Security Challenges*, Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars, Washington DC, 2011, pp3–4, online at https://www.wilsoncenter.org).

DEFINITION

> "National security necessarily denotes a nation's determination to preserve certain interests at all costs. Foremost among these national interests are the nation's territorial integrity, political independence and fundamental governmental institutions. It embraces not only survival of the nation but also its ability to survive"—Robert E Osgood Jr (*Ideals and Self-interest in America's Foreign Relations: Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953, cited in PM Kamath, "Terrorism in India: Impact on National Security", *Strategic Analysis*, vol25, no9, December 2001).

Difficulties or extraordinary circumstances nowadays occur not only because of natural threats but also due to lacunae in security. The traditional view of security focussed on the application of force at the level of the state and was fairly narrow, hinging on military security. It is now widely acknowledged that there is more to security than just the military aspect. Today's definition acknowledges economic, environmental, human, political and social factors among other strands that impact the concept of security. In basic terms, the concern for security at the lowest common denominator of all societies has resulted in the development of the concept of "human security", which focuses on the individual. Thus the definition of security has been broadened to include the ability of the state to perform the function of protecting the well-being of its people. This formulation harks back to the days of Chanakya and his *Arthashastra* (Kamath, *ibid*). In the olden days, bows and arrows were used for wars, which were then gradually modernised into guns and tanks. With the advancement of technology, nuclear

weapons came into being. However, as they cause widespread mass destruction, nations have started fighting indirect wars. They use technology to destroy enemy or rival nations through cyber attacks.

CYBER WARFARE

A field in which awareness is at best nebulous is cyber warfare. The 2007 *Annual Virtual Criminology Report*, authored by McAfee (online at https://resources2.secureforms.mcafee.com) warned that international cyber espionage would be the single biggest threat to national security in 2008. It claimed that 120 plus countries were already on the web espionage bandwagon. Reports suggest that the United States of America (US), Russia and China have acquired considerable capabilities in this domain. The Indian armed forces are increasingly investing networked operations, both singly and in a joint fashion. India cannot afford to be vulnerable to cyber attacks. Its information technology is known for its strength and it would be in the country's interest to leverage it in developing formidable "offensive" and "defensive" cyber warfare capabilities. Harnessing the gene pool available in academia, private industry and among the younger generation of talented individuals is imperative.

Indian authorities have so far been spending most of their resources tackling localised cybercrime while responding to major attacks on a case-by-case basis. Recognising the strategic dimensions of cyberspace, the Prime Minister's Office created the position of National Cyber Security Coordinator in 2014—a welcome first step. There is however no national security architecture today that can assess the nature of cyber threats and respond to them effectively. India's civilian institutions have their own fire fighting agencies while the armed forces have their own insulated platforms to counter cyber attacks. Unlike nuclear energy, a marked division between civilian and military use of cyberspace is difficult to establish. Just as the Indian army may face serious cyber attacks from non-state actors in Pakistan, the digital assets of a major Indian conglomerate like the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation may be taken down by the military of another country. The asymmetric character of digital warfare not only requires a technically equipped multiagency organisation but also decisions based on sound strategy and regular policy inputs (Suresh Mehta, "National Security Challenges", *Outlook*, 12 August 2009).

THE SECURITY OF MARITIME BORDERS

Developing and coordinating India's maritime security is crucial. Preventing the ingress of terrorists from the sea remains an abiding challenge. The country's long porous coastline and island territories, many of which are uninhabited, offer avenues for infiltration of men and material into the heartland, as well as safe havens for clandestine activities. Intrusions via the sea are extremely difficult to prevent at the current state of material and organisational preparedness, as was realised during the terror attacks of 26 November 2008, when perpetrators breached the shores of Mumbai with impunity. However, littoral regions must be secured in the interest of national security, if India is to prevent intrusions and attacks via the sea route. New Delhi's acute consciousness of "turf guarding" must give way to a more synergistic way of functioning. The modest beginning that has been made must be sustained through concerted efforts of all stakeholders, adequate funding and most of all public awareness (Arun Mohan Sukumar, "Upgrading India's Cyber Security Architecture", *The Hindu*, 9 March 2016). Maritime security must be incorporated into the notion of internal security through the dual functioning of intelligence and the assistance of people living in coastal areas.

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INTERNAL SECURITY

Domestic security must be enhanced as well. Over the past decade and a half, "internal security" requirements have grown phenomenally. There is unrest of various hues in different states born out of equally diverse causative factors. Addressing the causes and maintaining law and order are in nearly all cases a matter of internal governance and therefore squarely within the purview of civil

administrations and police forces. The rampant spread of left-wing extremism is particularly worrying and tackling the problem requires a well thought out strategy. However, the increasing demand on the armed forces to assume "law and order" responsibilities is a detrimental trend. While aiding civil authority is a mandated role of the armed forces and they deliver whenever ordered to do so, this must always be a "last resort" and "temporary" measure to be expeditiously withdrawn when the critical need is met. The armed forces should not be seen as being used against the civilian population and the irreversible damage of such action is apparent for all to see in India's neighbourhood.

INTELLIGENCE

Much has been reported about New Delhi's handling of intelligence in the past, particularly in the aftermath of the 1999 Kargil War and the Mumbai terror attacks. Indian intelligence agencies must focus on long-term intelligence forecasting and accordingly direct efforts towards anticipatory security planning predicated on actionable intelligence inputs, in addition to immediate and short-term requirements. Cohesion amongst intelligence agencies and sharing of intelligence in an integrated manner is an operational necessity. Integration between all the organs of government dealing with intelligence and the seamless acquisition and processing of strategic, operational and tactical intelligence and its timely dissemination is of the essence. Information exchange mechanisms with other friendly countries must be facilitated as well to enhance domain awareness in different arenas.

MANAGING NATIONAL SECURITY

Furthermore, much needs to be done to improve the management of national security in India. First and foremost, the government must formulate a comprehensive national security strategy inclusive of internal security so that all stakeholders become aware of what is expected of them. It has clearly emerged that China poses the most potent military threat to India and given the nuclear, missile and military hardware nexus between China and Pakistan, a future conventional conflict in South Asia could be a two-front war for India. New Delhi thus needs to

raise new divisions to be able to carry the war deep into Tibet in case of a Chinese attack. This would involve substantial up-gradation of ground based (artillery guns, missiles and rockets) and aerial delivered (aircraft, attack helicopters and fighter bombers) firepower. Only then would it be possible to achieve future military objectives. Towards this end the government has approved the Long-Term Integrated Perspective Plan 2012–2027 formulated by the Headquarters of the Integrated Defence Staff. In addition, defence procurement must be undertaken through carefully prioritised long-term plans designed to systematically enhance India's combat potential rather than through ad hoc annual procurement plans. Effective defence planning cannot be undertaken in a policy void ("Lecture by P Chidambaram: India's National Security Challenges and Priorities", Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, 6 February 2013, online at http://www.idsa.in).

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STRUCTURAL DIFFICULTIES TO IMPROVING SECURITY

Improving coordination between intelligence agencies and the police; deepening the socioeconomic component and reducing the collective elements of counterinsurgency; modernising the armed forces and working to reduce misunderstandings with key foreign allies must figure in debates about how best to meet India's security challenges and threats. Nevertheless, several scholars have contended that unless India recognises and tackles the structural constraints on improving its security climate, these well-intentioned policies may fall flat. One such constraint is the clout of the Indian mining lobby and its frequent collusion with both the central and state governments. According to *Asia Times*, all major political parties in the iron ore rich state of Karnataka have been funded by mining profits and the Bharatiya Janata Party has rewarded

"mining barons" with ministerial positions. Such collusion has implications for counterinsurgency efforts. In 2010, New Delhi proposed legislation that would require mining companies to share 26 per cent of their projects profits with local populations—a widely praised measure that many believe could deprive Maoists of a major grievance. However, even as parliament prepared to introduce the legislation, observers feared that the opposition of mining interests would ultimately produce a watered-down version of the bill.

Another structural constraint is the inefficiency of India's defence procurement and modernisation processes, particularly those pertaining to the navy, often described as "slow, bureaucratic and corrupt". The Indian naval fleet is mostly ageing and many doubt the ability of the country's shipbuilding industry to deliver new platforms in a timely matter. The navy has traditionally been the smallest and least well-resourced of the three military services. Such disparities are rooted in the "land centric" mentality among India's political class—a "sea-blindness" that in turn is symptomatic of a lack of strategic thought. Several observers have decried the absence of long-term strategic planning among Indian politicians and statesmen. According to Arun Prakash former Chief of Naval Staff, "Every military operation since independence ... has been guided more by political rhetoric than strategic direction" (online at http://iesmorg.blogspot.in). However, the navy has sought to fill the vacuum by developing its own strategic framework.

Some experts have stated that the current Indian civilian leadership better understands the importance of strategic thought in national security as well as the roles of the government and military forces. Nevertheless several hidden factors are still not considered. These include coordination between the police, paramilitary and military forces, people's involvement, technically sound and non-easily identifiable communication systems, etc. For example in the US, every police force is connected through a network. The above points must be highlighted today to deal with terrorist activities in the future. Otherwise, the basic system may prove inadequate for protecting the nation as a whole. Budgetary allocations towards the intelligence system must be enhanced to identify and eradicate threats to the country. Ⓦ

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