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NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE

The National Defence College is India's apex institution of learning for the study and practice of national security and strategy. Established in 1960, it has over the years earned a reputation for excellence and gained world renown. It is dedicated to the intellectual development and strategic enculturation of select senior officers of the armed forces and civilian government services of India and those from foreign countries, for higher leadership positions and responsibilities. The College Motto in Sanskrit 'Buddhiryasya Balam Tasya' meaning 'Wisdom Is Strength', is the overarching and guiding precept for nurturing a strategic culture and mindset, amongst the higher echelons of military and civilian leadership who undergo the NDC Course.

Kuutneeti in the Arthashastra refers to strategy and diplomacy.

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Commandant's Reflections

Rabindranath Tagore, the revered Indian bard's lines in his inspirational *Gitanjali*, could not have been more apt for the times—*"A moment's flash of lightning drags down a deeper gloom on my sight, and my heart gropes for the path to where the music of the night calls me."* After a trying 2020, little did one expect that more testing times were waiting around the corner. If the only certainty of change is change itself, then the College began the year with a change in the course strength. With a planned maximum increase to 120 members by 2022, this year we have a strength of 107 and a record 34 foreign members. Amid the ongoing infrastructural and capacity enhancement at NDC, the 'show went on' with Covid protocols and online lectures and discussions becoming a way of life.

As the world struggled with the pandemic, an economic down turn, loss of lives and livelihoods, a geopolitical and military storm blew across Eastern Ladakh as China flexed its muscle with a brazen display of brinkmanship. If the manner and timing of the Chinese aggression was a deliberate strategy, it was ill-conceived and triggered a level of push back from India that it did not anticipate. What the move also triggered was a worldwide alarm that the existing rules-based world order was under threat. For the College, which is the crucible of strategic leadership, it underscored the old truism—strategy often has unintended consequences. Grasping a ringside view of the world and India in churn, continues for the 61st NDC Course members, as they undergo a unique virtual curriculum—minus the Hunt Lounge interactions over coffee, the Friday pre-lunch drinks at the Anchor Bar, social events and golf! Amidst all the uncertainties and challenges, the human spirit and its ability to prevail shines through. The curriculum is not only the reassuring constant, but also the thread that binds in the quest for knowledge and wisdom.

If the inaugural issue of *Kuutneeti,* the new avatar of the NDC journal, was born in tough times, this edition has then been forged in fire. Writing is not easy, and strategic writing is an elusive skill. The College took a leap of faith with *Kuutneeti.* The heartwarming reviews of the first journal encouraged us to value-add the contents of this issue with some inspired pieces, thoughts

of the Service Chiefs, book reviews and contributions by alumni. What is truly reassuring is the qualitative depth of discourse at the strategic level, which has come to the fore. The deep faith and conviction we have of the need to build intellectual capital among future strategic leaders and policy makers who journey through this College, has been validated. Strategy is the well-spring of all discourse and debate at the College, and *Kuutneeti* is the river it flows into. Kautilya would certainly approve!

Air Marshal **D Choudhury**

From the Editor's Desk

Simply returning to normal once the pandemic is over won't be easy after the changes it is imposing on us. Nevertheless, as the NDC attempts to adjust to the new normal with an expanded member strength for the 61st course, we are enthused with the feedback we have received for the Diamond Jubilee issue of *Kuutneeti.* Rather than slip into complacency, I would prefer to invoke Robert Frost, my favourite poet from school, and stay with India's own Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore. Frost ruminated,

> *"The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep,"*

Tagore reached out to millions of Indians when he wrote,

> *"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; where knowledge is free;—where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action. Into that heaven of freedom, my father, let my country awake."*

It is in the spirit of their words that the current issue has been put together. In this issue of *Kuutneeti* we have tried to pack-in more than the previous one to accommodate a wider cross-section of articles. We are grateful to the three service chiefs for their candid and wide-ranging interviews that lend much strength to the seriousness with which the NDC goes about its business of building intellectual capital within national security structures. Our core contributors in this issue remain the vibrant community of the members of the 60th and 61st NDC, however, we have introduced an *Alumni Corner* from this issue onwards. In lighter vein, this generation of members has competition!

Journals across the world are platforms to encourage individuals' expressions of intellectual thought, and *Kuutneeti* is no different. Departing from featuring group papers, we have offered a platform to showcase the best individual contributions on myriad aspects of international and national security this time. Towards this, we drew on a recently introduced thematic

academic assignment called Agile Strategic Analysis Task (ASAT) and selected a few pieces in our *Commentary* section that revolve around the broad theme of 'Security Challenges in a Post-Covid World'. China remains the focus of attention and it will be a challenge not to get fixated by it in the years ahead. It will be our endeavour to diversify our offerings in the issues ahead. It also gives us immense pleasure to publish edited and shortened versions of two excellent and relevant theses from the 60th Course, and two essays from the 61st course on the ongoing peace negotiations in Afghanistan and contemporary interpretations of the PLA's military transformation in the *Articles* section in this edition. We would like to urge members of the 61st NDC, who we will reach out to after the course, to help with the abridging process of selected theses for next year's journal despite your busy professional careers.

Happy Reading and keep your contributions coming!

Air Vice Marshal (Dr) **Arjun Subramaniam**



NDC Journal

Senior Leaders' Perspectives



General M. M. Naravane, COAS in a candid interaction
with Brigadier Vikrant Deshpande

Interview with General M. M. Naravane, Chief of the Army Staff

Interviewer: Vikrant Deshpande

In this wide-ranging interview, India's army chief discusses several important issues regarding the Indian Army's preparedness to tackle diverse challenges.

VD: *The last nine months have been a trying period for the Indian Army. What have been the macro takeaways from the three major phases of the face-off-the initial phase, the riposte and the pull back?*

COAS: Looking back at the events of the past nine months, I would like to say that it has been a period of immense satisfaction wherein our brave soldiers have once again proven their mettle and displayed extreme resoluteness in the face of adversity. With the backing of the entire nation, the Indian Army has not only safeguarded our territorial integrity but also ensured that every misadventure of the adversary has been countered befittingly. We have also had time to introspect during this period. Our focused efforts have yielded results, wherein we have stabilised the situation and prepared ourselves for any future exigencies.

Our long-standing belief that as a nation we need to be prepared for all contingencies always, even if peace and tranquillity are being maintained along the LAC, was reinforced during the recent crisis in Eastern Ladakh; therein lies the need for building our capacity and capability with respect to our Northern adversary. It was indeed heartening to see the pace at which we could mobilise our forces and deploy them at these altitudes, the unstinted support that we received from the IAF in executing our mobilisation plans, and from the Government in procurement of weapons and equipment on an emergent basis. The nimbleness of our operational logistics capability

Brigadier **Vikrant Deshpande** is an Infantry officer from the Indian Army and a member of the 61st NDC Course.

was tested and stands validated. We have also been seized with the need for restructuring our forces to be able to address both our fronts, and the need for infrastructure improvement in our forward areas. We have partly addressed these issues and are in the process of further fine-tuning them. Adequate funds are being committed towards ensuring that the entire range of infrastructure needs including the improvement of communication infrastructure and habitat needs are provided in the forward areas. Significant efforts have been made to improve our ISR capability as well, especially considering the technological edge that our Northern adversary possesses in this domain. These efforts, however, need to be sustained.

I would not like to use any term like "riposte" to describe any of our actions. We firmly believe in maintaining peace and tranquillity along all our borders and doing all we can to coexist peacefully with all our neighbours. Having said that, we reserve the right to respond to needless aggression in a befitting manner. Our desire for peace on equal terms and with mutual respect should not be mistaken as a weakness. Our actions that you are referring to were based purely on tactical considerations and precautionary in nature. We observed activities on the LAC on the South Bank of Pangong Tso, which in our appreciation could have led to PLA achieving tactical advantages.

In such a situation, as any professional Army would, we took swift and resolute actions to strengthen our positions; and as events proved later, they had a strategic impact that allowed us to negotiate from a position of strength, which subsequently led to the disengagement by both sides. We are clear that any aggressive adversary action must be met with a measured and timely response, for which there is a need for placement of adequate reserves in the immediate depth that are strategically poised in terms of time and space. This entire event also highlighted the need for close coordination between the Armed Forces and the Diplomatic Corps. In such times of crisis, a 'Whole of Nation Approach' is a must.

VD: *There must have been immense pressure on you to offer an immediate quid-pro-quo kind of response from several quarters. What went on in your mind in May 2020 and what were the major factors that shaped your response? Was Kargil ever at the back of your mind?*

COAS: You must understand that Kargil was an entirely different scenario, with a different historical perspective, different operational dynamics, different mindsets of all parties involved. The situation was bereft of well-

established protocols that are bound by multiple signed agreements, against a different adversary with different capacities and capabilities. Comparing the two scenarios, the nature of the confrontation and the sequence of events that unfolded may not be correct.

About the situation in May, events went into an escalatory spiral. Due to the aspect of differing perceptions of the LAC, and the proximity of soldiers on ground, the situation remained on the edge and ran the risk of escalation following even the smallest of provocations. The challenge was to balance the need for restraint with the emergent military requirement to mobilise adequate troops into the theatre to counter the Chinese threat that was manifesting rapidly. Despite concurrent and sincere efforts towards resolution and disengagement that was seen in the several rounds of talks, we needed to be operationally alert to nip any possibility of continued aggression in the bud itself.

About our response on the South bank and the Kailash Range, bold and decisive political decisions at the highest level, immediate financial commitment towards capability enhancement and a clear and concise mandate to the Armed Forces shaped our decisions. The time and place of our response was measured, and took into consideration the escalatory spiral that was unfolding. At each stage, the effort was to ensure that there was no loss of territory and that we create adequate tactical advantages to negotiate from a position of strength. Ensuring uninterrupted logistics for the troops on ground was another major factor that could not be lost sight of, especially when the stand-off began extending into the winters. No efforts were spared to ensure fast-tracked emergency procurements to meet the need of the hour. With a clear mandate, the national effort was focused at ensuring that no stone was left unturned towards attaining our objectives.

VD: *Notwithstanding the pull back, there will continue to be immense trust deficit between India and China in the short/medium term. What are the essential steps that need to be taken by both China and India to reduce the volatility along the LAC?*

COAS: There has definitely been a breach of trust between India and China during this entire situation, and it will take deliberate efforts to make up the trust deficit that currently exists, even down to the last soldier deployed ahead. Towards this end, concerted steps need to be taken by both sides politically, diplomatically and militarily. Special Representative (SR) level talks and

talks between the Defence Ministers and the EAMs have taken place, and our concerns have been highlighted at both the political and diplomatic levels. It has been adequately conveyed that peace and tranquillity on the LAC is a pre-requisite for progress of bilateral relations. At the military level, ground level protocols and trust building issues are being discussed. There is a need to revisit our existing protocols and agreements, and ensure stringent implementation of articles in the protocols. As our EAM had mentioned, Mutual Respect, Mutual Sensitivity and Mutual Interests need to be the bedrock of all our engagements and actions.

We also need to work towards clarification of the LAC, and make progress on the boundary question, since for the man on the ground, ambiguity can result in friction.

VD: *Do you see any change in the collusive nature of India's principal security threat and what kind of restructuring can we see in the Indian Army in the coming years?*

COAS. China's economic rise, its steadfast military modernisation, its aggressive actions on the disputed border areas and its nexus with Pakistan have some cogent lessons for India. China's partnership with Pakistan, through provision of military hardware, supporting Pakistan at various geopolitical fora and insensitivity towards India's territorial claims while pursuing CPEC through PoJK can be best described as an anti-India nexus. It has been observed that the collaboration between Pak Armed Forces and PLA has increased over the years and both the nations are more than an 'ally' without any formal alliance. This collusive threat has already been appreciated and there is no further change to that appreciation.

To deal with this collusive threat, deterrence against China must be independent of our capacity to tackle any, or all forms of threat from Pakistan. Over the last few years, the Indian Army has been focused on progressively increasing our capabilities through optimisation of force levels, upgradation of technology, induction of Force Multipliers, as also modernisation and improvement of infrastructure. Our capability development plans continue to be guided by operational requirements identified for prosecuting successful operations across the entire threat spectrum, be it conventional or hybrid domains. We have embarked upon comprehensive restructuring, calculated modernisation and a focused Integrated Capability Development System (ICADS) programme.

The Army HQ has already started functioning as per the re-organised structure with effect from 1 September last year. Apart from optimisation of 106 officers from Delhi, creation of the post of DCOAS (Strategy), DCOAS (Capability Development & Sustenance), DG (Information Warfare), ADG (Vigilance), a special Human Rights section headed by an ADG, merger of the Military Training Directorate with the Army Training Command (ARTRAC) and forward basing of the Rashtriya Rifles (RR) Directorate are some of the measures aimed at improving operational and organisational efficiencies. We aim to optimise approximately 53,000 personnel who will be re-deployed to strengthen structures with niche capacities—Space, Cyber, Special Ops and Electronic Warfare.

Concurrent studies on establishment of Continental Integrated Theatre Commands for Land Borders, Maritime Theatre Command and the Integrated Air Defence Command are important steps aimed at enhancing operational preparedness and synergising capability and combat potential of the Armed Forces during war and peace.

Optimisation of logistics by integration of resources of the three services and civilian resources is one of the key elements of the 'Transformation and Modernisation of Indian Army'. A whole of Nation approach towards integration of logistics has been adopted to ensure optimal utilisation of national assets for improving military capabilities with reduced financial liabilities. Considerable headway has been made towards the establishment of Joint Logistics Nodes (JLN). Two of them at Port Blair and Guwahati are already functioning while the one at Mumbai will be operational by April 1, 2021. More such JLNs are also being considered. A detailed tri-service study for establishing robust logistics support for Integrated Theatre Commands is underway. Outsourcing and other initiatives are also under implementation.

Rapid emergence of niche technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI), autonomous and unmanned systems, long-range precision technology, Internet of Things (loT), 5G, Quantum Computing, Directed Energy Systems and Geo-Spatial technology domains, will certainly need to be analysed, acquired, infused and absorbed, as part of a deliberate and continuous process. We are working towards creation of an Army Technology Council (ARTECH-C) to oversee the critical niche technology requirements holistically.

As India rises in stature both economically and technologically towards a more eminent position in the region and the world, it must concurrently modernise its military to thwart the threats and challenges that it may have to face along the way from its potential adversaries. Considering the quick

pace of defence modernisation being undertaken by our adversaries, and the continued heavy dependence of Indian Armed Forces on equipment of foreign origin, self-reliance in defence has become a strategic necessity.

Our key thrust areas are availability of arms, ammunition and equipment for CI/CT operations, critical weapon system upgrades and development of extended range rockets and missile system, enhanced battle field transparency and night fighting capability, acquisition of niche technologies, including precision weapon system and upgrading capabilities of mechanised forces.

VD: Technological innovation within the Indian Army has been a bit of a laggard and while there are signs of significant improvement, there is much to be done. Sir, you have spoken a lot about this. Do you have a vision or blueprint for creating such an ecosystem within the IA?

COAS. Indian Army has been undertaking technological innovations for long, but there have been challenges in actualising these brilliant ideas. This was primarily because the entire process was not streamlined, did not acknowledge the innovators' efforts, lacked follow up for conversion into products thereby resulting in most brilliant ideas remaining just that. We have now taken major steps in this direction for recognising and promoting innovation. A structured mechanism has been created to identify promising service innovations and their innovators, with the purpose of actualising them. We have identified a way forward for each innovation from the concept/prototype stage to the production stage. IPR protection and Innovator recognition have also been catered for in this new mechanism. In the past three years itself, almost 150 tangible innovations have been developed and more than 50 of them have already been implemented or are in various stages of production. Under the Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti scheme over the last year, we have been able to file 16 IPR patents and another six are in the pipeline. Recent innovations Iike Sarvatra Kavach, Xploder, Machine Pistol (Asmi) and various Al based systems have been developed in-house which have cross-sectional employability for all security forces. The recent initiative of iDEX4Fauji has further given a boost towards recognising the Service innovations and their innovators.

I would also like to mention the major forays by the Indian Army in R&D of niche technologies. The Army Design Bureau has been spearheading this initiative and has signed MoUs for Joint Research & Development with premier academic institutions like IITs. In a first, an Indian Army Cell has

been accepted by IIT Delhi and IIT Gandhi Nagar where our innovators can be posted for joint R&D.

We have also laid a clear road map for our Schools of Instruction, where Incubation Hubs are being established. The first Al lab of Indian Army has already been set up at MCTE, Mhow, while Ballistics Lab and Composite Materials Lab are under the process of fructification, at Mhow and Pune respectively. Further, every year 80-90 of our officers who undergo MTech course are being guided to carryout research in the field of niche technologies like Al, Quantum Computing, etc., and who will then be posted to these Incubation Hubs. The road map and blueprint for creating an eco-system within the IA is well on its path towards realisation and I am very sure that in the days to come, our Service innovators will play a major role in our thrust towards self-reliance in our defence needs as part of the overall vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat.



Admiral K.B. Singh, CNS in a candid interaction
with Commodore Deepak Singhal

Interview With Admiral K.B. Singh, Chief of the Naval Staff

Interviewer: Deepak Singhal

In this candid interview, India's naval chief discusses several important issues regarding the Indian Navy's operational preparedness and diverse mission sets in the evolving maritime domain.

DS: *The previous nine months must have been a good opportunity for the Indian Navy (IN) to assess its operational readiness in the backdrop of a possible escalation along The Line of Control. What have been the major takeaways?*

CNS: Maritime threats are persistent and transnational due to the nature of the medium and complexity of establishing domain awareness. Therefore, the IN's deployments to preserve and promote India's national interest in the maritime domain are continuous in nature. In the maritime domain, presence and surveillance is an ongoing and continuous process. However, events of the past months have indeed provided an opportunity to look at operational paradigms and measures of effectiveness.

During this period, *IN* maintained persistent presence in our areas of interest, serving as a deterrent though clear signalling of capability and intent, despite limitations imposed by the COVID pandemic. Combat-ready units remained mission deployed over the vast seascape of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), wherein, the ability of our Op Logistics Chain to sustain such deployments over a prolonged period, notwithstanding disruptions in global supply chains, was also put to test. In conjunction with these deployments, we continued to monitor major choke points of entry into the IOR, and information gathering and collation emerged as a critical resource, where the

Commodore **Deepak Singhal** is an officer from the Executive Branch of the Indian Navy and a member of the 61st NDC.

IFC-IOR served as a key enabler. Through these actions, IN was also able to exploit pressure points, based on adversary's key vulnerabilities, with a view to influence events ashore.

The past months have also made it increasingly evident that China is on a march Westwards and is seeking to create a 'New Normal' in the IOR through its deployments. Therefore, it is operationally imperative to continuously monitor and shape the environment, so that we are not caught by surprise. This is an ongoing process and a 24x7 task for which navies are well suited given their inherent attributes of mobility coupled with sustained presence.

The adversary recognises its own vulnerabilities and IN's advantages in the IOR. Accordingly, our intent has been to underscore INs ability to influence events in the maritime domain in a decisive manner. The overall deterrent effect of our deployment philosophy and operational posture have been instrumental in precluding any misadventure in the maritime domain. This is a significant factor in escalation dominance. As the principal manifestation of India's maritime power, the IN remains poised to counter every threat emanating from the maritime domain.

DS: *The Indian Navy has for long been the vanguard of India's maritime diplomacy Initiatives and has also emerged as a major player in PM Modi's SAGAR initiative. How do you reconcile these with the primary war-fighting roles of the IN?*

CNS: Considering maritime diplomacy and war-fighting as conflicting requirements, is a common misunderstanding, reflecting unfamiliarity with the characteristics of the maritime domain. Navies the world over, have military, diplomatic, and benign roles. These are all complimentary roles based on the inherent flexibility of a maritime force. In fact, the first and key component of the Hon'ble PM's vision of SAGAR is *Security*—which is provided by the Navy in the maritime domain.

Peace fosters growth, and maritime security is instrumental for peace, especially in the Indo-Pacific with its predominantly maritime character. The vastness of the Indian Ocean Region, scarcity of resources, and the ubiquitous nature of transnational threats further reinforce the requirement to progress a co-operative approach to maritime security in the region. This approach is underpinned by maritime diplomacy initiatives. While working with a multitude of nations, we must realise that Trust' is a foundational factor, essential for success, that cannot be surged. It requires

persevering commitment and effort over a long period of time. Maritime diplomacy initiatives, deployments and enhanced interoperability are part of this overarching effort to foster mutual trust. It is also pertinent that these activities are scalable, and provide a wide spectrum of options in furtherance of national political aims Thus, it is the ability of the Navy to create convergences through diplomacy that in fact enhances the war-fighting role.

The IN is also committed to the concept of Collective Maritime Competence, where every maritime partner contributes through their specific capabilities and has an equal seat at the table. This is driven through issue-based convergence between nations, which is facilitated by the fact that maritime nations tend to think alike. Maritime diplomacy, therefore, acts as the foundation for security paradigms. I am of the firm belief that 'Regional solutions' best address 'Regional Problems' and the IN is fully invested in progressing a co-operative approach towards furthering regional maritime security in consonance with other stakeholders.

Further, we are witnessing the blurring of lines between peace and conflict. These can no longer be viewed as binaries, but rather fuse into a conflict continuum. The inherent flexibility of naval platforms, and ability to provide responses across the conflict continuum, allow units deployed for maritime diplomacy to provide options against a wide gamut of emerging threats. Maritime diplomacy is part of the shaping the environment favourably, an essential activity, since one cannot be expected to wade into battle without having shaped the battlefield first.

DS: *Like other instruments of force, the Indian Navy too could be called upon to exercise its coercive capabilities in less-than-war situations. Could you throw some light on the kinds of service specific and joint missions and roles that the IN is thinking about at the lower end of the conflict spectrum?*

CNS: The roles, missions and associated tasks of the Indian Navy in pursuance of National Maritime Interests are enunciated in the Indian Maritime Security Strategy. This encompasses five clear strategies for Deterrence, Conflict, Favourable and Positive Maritime Environment, Coastal and Offshore Security, and Maritime Force and Capability Development. These strategies cover operations across the spectrum of conflict, including power projection, expeditionary operations, SLOC protection and interdiction, seaward defence, information operations, etc., under the 'Military' Role.

Non-traditional and trans-national challenges manifest themselves from the coastline to the high seas. To put things into perspective, IN's area of interest in the IOR is more than 20 times India's landmass and the IN regularly deploys assets to monitor these areas, develop domain awareness, intervene if necessary, and reinforce regional maritime security. On several occasions, this is done on request from friendly foreign nations.

The IN is also participating in low intensity operations through deployment of MARCOS in tandem with Special Forces of the Army. Our MARCOS have been regularly deployed in Counter Insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir, especially in water bodies like lakes, etc.

Further, in terms of joint actions, IN's operations entail jointness not only with sister services, but also a wide range of other government and non-government agencies and organisations. This derives from the fact that IN is also mandated to address non-traditional threats like piracy, armed robbery, IUU fishing, human, arms and narcotic smuggling, etc., under its Constabulary Role. As the principal stakeholder, IN is responsible for coastal defence encompassing actions at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. Accordingly, in these spheres, actions are being undertaken jointly in conjunction with numerous national and state level agencies associated with coastal security, viz. Coast Guard, Maritime Police, Port authorities, MoPNG, Min of Shipping, Fisheries, ONGC, etc.

The evolving character of warfare and use of salami slicing strategies by certain states, raises the risks of similar attempts being made against Indian interests. The IN is cognisant of these challenges, and maintaining a constant watch on possible pressure points of the adversary so that these may be suitably leveraged before or during combat. Our emphasis is to remain nimble in our approach and maintain adequate options such that an action/likelihood of action in one domain may be countered through another domain.

The IN is evolving its force structure, operational philosophy and concepts accordingly. The inherent persistence, flexibility, agility and scalability of naval forces allows us to provide graded responses to challenges, even at the lower end of the conflict spectrum.

DS: *How do you see the trajectory of Joint operations in contested domains in the years ahead?*

CNS: In today's complex global scenario, contestation is no longer sandboxed to the area in which it initially originates, but rapidly cuts across

domains including the ubiquitous maritime, space and cyber domains. Traditional operational paradigms based on domain specific threats will not be fully effective in the face of cross-domain conflict. The ability to break operational silos to evolve capabilities and structures which can influence multiple domains is the way future wars will be fought.

Therefore, future wars would invariably have an increased 'Joint' flavour. Each Service has its characteristic advantages and leveraging these advantages towards overcoming specific limitations and optimising effects would be instrumental for decisive victory. Jointness is accordingly being emphasized upon in the Armed Forces, not only for employment of force, but also in generation of effects.

The establishment of DMA and constitution of post of CDS have given a significant fillip to Jointness at the apex level. This would be further enhanced with the impending establishment of Theatre Commands. These Theatre Commands will provide the organisational framework to underpin joint application of force at the operational level, in support of national interests. Here, it is important to note that theaterisation deals with evolving a nimble organisational structure where Tri-Service assets are placed under a single Theatre Commander to maximise operational effects. The consequential positive effects on joint training and synergy is self-evident. These assets could very well be re-allocated based on emergent scenarios or developing threats. The Theatre Commanders themselves could also be tasked in Supporting or Supported roles. Thus, aspects of flexibility, mobility, and cross-theatre application of force would be addressed.

From the maritime perspective, the Maritime Theatre Command would aid in seamless integration between the Sister Services and provide for efficient and effective joint application of force. This will enhance our ability to promptly utilise our capabilities for escalation dominance in the maritime domain. The establishment of functional Defence Cyber Command and Space Agency have enhanced the ability of the Indian Armed Forces to protect, preserve and promote national interests in these domains also. All these are ongoing reforms and transformations and will bear fruit as we evolve and Consolidate.

Our war fighting framework at the operational level, would undergo a significant shift with the establishment of Theatre Commands and integration of the Functional Commands into the Concept of Operations. To optimally leverage this opportunity and transform our war fighting paradigms, it is imperative that wholehearted effort be invested in strengthening the operational capability of the incumbent Theatre Commanders and

empowering them with assets to carry out their mandate. Additionally, linkages and organisational structures between Theatre Commanders and Services HQs would have to be evolved to ensure seamless integration and fulfilment of operational Charter.

The ubiquity of the maritime domain, both temporal and spatial is well acknowledged. Associated to this ubiquity are the challenges in maintaining domain awareness across the dynamic global commons. It is the IN's endeavour to continuously collate and analyse data, so as to keep the information cycle active. This will ensure that domain awareness is maintained and 'we are never surprised in maritime domain.

Overall, I will say that we are on the right track to ensure Joint employment of force in contested domains and must continue persevering on this path to achieve tangible outcomes.

DS: *What worries you most in the growing asymmetry between the Chinese Communist Party(Navy) CCP (N), as the IN calls the more widely known PLA (Navy), and the IN What would be the most critical single service or joint capability that would be needed to reduce this asymmetry?*

CNS: The capability differential between the CCP(N) and IN has grown rapidly in the recent past. CCP(N) is the largest Navy in the World by number. The total strength of the CCP(N) platforms stands at about 600 ships and submarines. The CCP(N) is adding tonnage equal to the entire IN every four years. Twenty-five Capital platforms have been commissioned in 2020 alone.

That said, we must understand that CCP(N) has global ambitions Spanning across the vast expanse of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. Hotspots within the Nine Dash Line also demand resources and this limits the ability of the CCP(N) to commit resources to the IOR. However, the availability of large numbers gives the CCP(N) significant surge capability in case of any eventuality. The asymmetry is not only quantitative but also qualitative, especially with the CCP(N)'s homegrown range of modern destroyers and submarines.

There is no proverbial 'magical bullet which will re-balance a conventional differential achieved through decades of investment. Building navies is a time and resource-intensive endeavour. Accordingly, we are progressing a comprehensive and well-rounded capability development plan which includes capabilities cutting across domains. This plan caters for budgetary constraints, which may force us to focus on an immediate threat or capability gap for the

time being. However, it must be borne in mind that this is not a change in philosophy but only the outcome of resource limitations. Simultaneously, we are facilitating niche technology integration and development of disruptors through leveraging the innovative and entrepreneurial potential of the domestic defence eco-system.

I would like to reiterate however, that this capability-building endeavour is to protect our national interests and not against any one country.



Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria, CAS in a candid interaction
with Air Commodore I.I. Kuttappa, VM VSM

Interview with Air Chief Marshal R.K.S. Bhadauria, Chief of the Air Staff

Interviewer: I.I. Kuttappa

In this crisp interview, India's air chief discusses several important issues regarding the Indian Air Force's current capabilities and its preparedness to tackle a full-spectrum threat environment.

IK: *Balakot threw up several lessons for the IAF as it came to grips with rapid response strategies in less-than-war situations and as a coercive tool of statecraft. How has the IAF changed since then?*

CAS: We have come a long way over the last two years and have incorporated several changes to not only address the lessons learnt from Balakot, but also to figure out the evolving threat scenarios. We have optimised our op training to emulate realistic scenarios and complexities in EW and AD environments by creating Integrated Training Areas (ITAs) to improve interoperability. This has allowed us to compress our reaction time-frames to cope with rapid escalation. We are also undergoing a rapid transformation through infusion of technology, integration of long-range precision weapons and up-gradation of current fleets. We are also moving towards complete Network Centric operations and improving our ISR capabilities, besides inducting force enhancers in terms of technology, training and infrastructure. Broadly, we are working on a three-pronged action plan for transforming the IAF. First, we are ***preserving and maintaining*** our legacy fleets. Second, we are ***upgrading and improving*** the fleets that will remain with us for the next two to three decades. Lastly, we are ***acquiring new platforms*** to replace the assets that are about to be phased out.

Air Commodore **I.I. Kuttappa** is a fighter pilot from the Indian Air Force and a member of the 61st NDC Course.

IK: *The nine-month face-off in Eastern Ladakh provided several opportunities for the IAF to prove itself as an equal responder along the LAC in what has so far been a literal no-go area for assertive air operations. What have been the major takeaways for the IAF?*

CAS: Even during peace time, the IAF maintains a heightened state of alert along its stressful northern and western borders. With its current capability, the IAF is capable of forward deployment at a very short notice and this is what we exercised after the Galwan stand-off; wherein we activated and forward deployed our frontline combat assets. The immediate deployment of attack helicopters and frontline fighters in the Ladakh sector acted as a credible deterrent. Our heavy-airlift platforms played a pivotal role in the unprecedented mobilisation of ground forces in the Northern sector which demonstrated the scale and speed of rapid deployment capability of the IAF with its strategic and tactical air lift assets. There are always lessons to be learnt from such massive deployments and we continue to refine and evolve. Among the several challenges faced during this deployment, maintenance of equipment at high altitude and extreme weather and the challenges of remaining op deployed for long durations were the key takeaways.

IK: *'Doing more with less' is emerging as a fait accompli for the IAF in the face of serious crunch in numbers. This requires a serious change in mindset, improved efficiency and looking at rebalancing the teeth-to-tail ratios. How do you see this impacting the IAF over the next decade?*

CAS: While we are short on numbers as of now, particularly in the realm of fighter platforms, the IAF is committed to increase its squadron strength in a phased and sustainable manner and we are taking concurrent and parallel steps in this direction. The inclusion of a high-tech platform in the form of the Rafale, even if in limited numbers, has bolstered our capabilities manifold, because in today's era, quality is as important as quantity. Inclusion of the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) in its Final Operational Clearance version, and procurement of new platforms are the most important milestones that the IAF intends to bolster its force structure in the years ahead. These efforts would result in increase of squadron strength from present 30 to 36 squadrons in the next ten years. Our focus would also be towards infusing and amalgamating advanced technology and weapons capability in our current platforms and planning next gen technologies in our future indigenous fifth gen platforms. This would ensure an operational

edge over adversaries across the spectrum of conflict. If the development cycle progresses as planned, the end of the current decade should see the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) poised to complete its flight test phase and enter the production phase.

IK: *A direct question here sir, how are we placed vis-à-vis our principal adversaries in a short high intensity limited conflict that is spread over two or three sectors (not theatres). What are the two or three capabilities, which if reinforced on priority, will give you the decisive edge?*

CAS: A short answer to that question is that we are very well placed for this kind of split-scenario. Our capability enhancement of existing platforms and systems is already done and operationally validated in the existing threat environment. Along with what is in the pipeline, the IAF is on a pretty strong wicket. In the immediate future, we must look at developing asymmetric capabilities and technologies, enhancing networked ops and enhance our ability to deploy adequate force multipliers like AWACS which would provide the decisive edge. In the long run, developing home-grown platforms, weapons and combat systems to develop and retain the capability edge over our adversaries must be our priority.

IK: *A final question sir, the IAF Doctrine is now almost 10 years old; is there a new doctrine in the making? Are we going to see air power as the first responder in different genres of conflict and how does the IAF see the nature of war and conflict from a joint perspective?*

CAS: As you are aware, the re-structuring of Higher Defence Organisation is underway and all our Joint SOPs and doctrines are getting revised. While the IAF Doctrine is being revised, we are awaiting the evolution of revised Joint doctrines, so that we can suitably dovetail them in our doctrine. While the threat scenario would keep changing and new forms of warfare will keep evolving, the importance of air power if anything would only grow with time. To counter multi-spectrum threats in a constantly mutating environment, the future combat force has to have the capability to identify and assess the threat quickly, and respond instantly, precisely and effectively. In the physical domain, the instrument of choice that allows one to place precise effects on target, at range and on time is air power. Hence, as witnessed in the recent skirmishes, Air Power would continue to play a most significant and critical role. Future threat scenarios would also be shaped by low-

cost disruptive technologies like the UAS/Drone technologies/Manned-unmanned Teaming, etc. To counter these asymmetric threats, the three services would require to 'train, equip, plan and fight together.'



NDC Journal

Commentaries

Technology as the Pivot of a Chinese Military-Civil Fusion Strategy

Samarth Nagar

Introduction

Independent of whether the current Chinese military aggression on India's northern borders is analysed as fait-accompli or attempted coercion, and irrespective of whether it ends as a Chinese strategic over-reach or miscalculation, the current impasse has raised legitimate concerns about the power differential between China and India and its future trajectory. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is emerging as a powerhouse across a range of exponential technologies and the Chinese leadership has recognised the ongoing technological transition as a critical, even historic, opportunity to achieve widespread strategic advantage. Speaking to PLA commanders in June 2017, President Xi Jinping asserted, "We must accelerate the formation of a full-element, multi-domain, and high-return military-civil fusion deep development pattern, and gradually build up China's unified military-civil system of strategies and strategic capability."[1]

To achieve this, the Chinese have progressed their Military Civil Fusion strategy (MCF) as a "military-scientific whole of society" effort. The Chinese state and the PLA are deeply concerned about being subjected to technological surprise in any future conflict, particularly with the US. Concurrently, they are equally focused on seizing opportunities to achieve windows of technological surprise with a focused implementation of military-civil strategic fusion. From India's perspective, rapid advances in China's Science and technological innovation (S&TI) will continue to create the potential for new, asymmetric, and unpredictable threats in addition to the already serious conventional threats. Consequently, there is an urgent need for India to focus on building

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its own brand of S&TI enterprise within strategic planning structures to cope with technological surprise posed by adversaries.

Chinese MCF Initiatives & Structures

MCF is the CCP's strategy to develop the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a "world class military" by 2049. The near-term goal of this fusion is to achieve a state of "MCF deep development" marked by streamlined processes and resource sharing to achieve increased interconnectivity and efficiency while optimising resource allocation. The long-term goal is to progressively unify Chinese military and civilian strategies to generate a strategic capability for success in a systems confrontation. Under MCF, the CCP is systematically reorganising the Chinese science and technology enterprise to ensure that new innovations simultaneously advance economic and military development. MCF is not simply another national plan, but rather a strategy whose components are to be woven into China's several national strategic priorities to advance the PRC's overarching security and development goals.

Chinese scholars and experts have over the years closely studied the Civil-Military integration (CMI) models of other nations, specifically those of the US, Japan, Israel, and the Soviet Union. While they have observed the pitfalls of an over committal of resources and its consequences on the Soviet Union, they have also studied the Israeli and Japanese models, distinctly identified as "Driving the Civilian with the Military" and "Concealing the Military among the Civilian" respectively, in Chinese literature. The latter two were seen to hold valuable inputs for a potential Chinese approach to MCF. However, it is the US defence industry and defence innovation ecosystem that has categorically inspired[2] and informed the Chinese MCF effort. The whole-of-nation implementation of MCF indicates the seriousness of Chinese attempts to create and leverage synergies between defence and commercial developments, particularly in the realm of emerging technologies to build an integrated national strategic system in support of China's national rejuvenation goals.

The first authoritative reference to MCF as a guiding principle appeared in former PRC leader Hu Jintao's report to the 17th Party Congress in 2007 wherein he urged the country "take a path of military-civilian fusion with Chinese characteristics." In 2015, the CMC under Xi Jinping's leadership codified MCF as an official strategy. Xi chairs the CMC and the Central Commission for MCF Development (CCMCFD), the unified MCF management hub. Key technologies being targeted under MCF include quantum computing, big data, semiconductors, 5G, advanced nuclear

technology, aerospace technology, and AI. The PRC specifically seeks to exploit the inherent 'dual-use' nature of many of these technologies.

The near-term strategic objective of MCF "military-civil fusion deep development pattern" has three core characteristics described as "full-element," "multi-domain," and "high-return."[3] While the "full-element" characteristic defines the "types of resource sharing" between military and civilian sectors, "multi-domain" identifies the priority domains, with "high return" referring to the outcomes that the CCP leadership expects from MCF development. The "multi-domain" aspect comprises four segments while the "nascent technologies areas" presently includes biotech, new energy and AI with the list being open to expansion with the addition of new exponential technologies. There is a 'Going Out' element in the strategy that refers to the exploration of new markets and technologies in the BRI domains by Chinese state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

System of Systems Approach

Chinese strategists have underscored the economic and social aspects of MCF strategy as much as the military/defence dimension.[4] This construct is reinforced in the six Systems of the Systems (SoSs) formed by fusing civilian and defence ecosystems. The six SoSs in the MCF roadmap of 2016 highlighted below represent an unambiguous priority and have apparently emerged from the four SoSs articulated by Hu Jintao in 2007, albeit worded differently.[5]

- Fusion of China's defence technology industrial base (DTIB) and its civilian technology and industrial base (CTIB).
- Integrating and leveraging S&TI across military and civilian sectors.
- Cultivating talent and blending military and civilian expertise and knowledge.
- Building military requirements into civilian infrastructure and leveraging civilian construction for military purposes.
- Leveraging civilian service and logistics capabilities for military purposes.
- Expanding and deepening China's national defence mobilisation system to include all relevant aspects of its society and economy.

Three major potential institutional, structural and policy obstacles to MCF identified by senior party leadership in 2016 were articulated as the three Cs—communication, cooperation and coordination.[6] At the operational levels a supply-capacity imbalance was detected that resulted in relatively insufficient capacity for highly advanced platforms versus an excessive supply of lower-end technology, and an incomplete legal framework. Conscious that MCF "deep

fusion" cannot be achieved until these issues are resolved, a "three systems" remedial prescription was put in place in 2017. Comprising a unified MCF organisation and management system, an operational system unifying Party/state leadership, defence requirements and market operations, and supported by a comprehensive legal and regulatory policy framework, it seeks to incentivise the actors in MCF and set time-bound objectives. As of 2019, low private sector participation and "single sourcing" has indicated inadequate competition in defence acquisition, and continues to plague the MCF effort. The persistent due diligence, higher direction and process improvement initiatives highlight the complexities of Chinese MCF effort, and the focused commitment to resolve glitches, and thus holds valuable lessons for India.

Among the major successes have been the embedding of fusion structures across the entire party, state, and military structure of the PRC.[7] This has established mechanisms to rapidly leverage civilian technologies for defence technology innovation, scientific data-sharing across a wide range of national scientific research facilities, structured personnel education and training agreements with 118 civilian universities for PLA talent. Instructive for India is the fusion of the PLAAF Logistics Department with five leading logistics and delivery service companies through agreements and several other network projects, collaborative innovation platforms, innovation bases and development zones with significant state funding and organisational support from the CMC and the State Council.

Analysis

The core concern driving Chinese MCF efforts is balancing the imperative of economic development with increasing national defence requirements. Western analysts see MCF as part of a larger attempt by the CCP to achieve the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" and an end of the extant American-dominated international system that constrains China. The current Chinese leadership has made it a central aspect of an overall strategy of military modernisation and "leapfrog" across the United States' military, economic and technological advantages while at the same time avoiding a USSR like overextension caused by unbalanced military spending. The CCP recognises the dynamism of the civilian economy and has attempted to leverage technology transfer between the civil and military industries for strategic benefit while 'controlling' the increase in the defence budget. As MCF enters its next phase, the allocation of additional financial resources for construction of dual-use technology zones and projects and the adoption of MCF into Chinese companies' corporate strategies, will allow

Chinese defence companies to penetrate new markets. The spread of Chinese nuclear power technology, aerospace, telecommunication and shipbuilding capabilities across the BRI will in turn create more resources for the Chinese state and infuse a self-sustaining momentum to MCF.

MCF may prove effective in the long term, but it is likely to generate inefficiencies in the near term as the efforts may not directly translate into impact. While the PLA will adapt its acquisition and capability development systems to effectively incorporate commercial technologies, analysts have highlighted that some Chinese companies incorporated in MCF may seek to take advantage of the resources available rather than making tangible contributions to military modernisation, presenting the risk of exacerbated corruption. While the CCP seeks to pursue a precise and scientific approach to managing this complex endeavour, China's political system presents significant obstacles to the success of the strategy. This is mainly due to the inherent contradictions that impede free flow of information, transparency, risk management, devolution of authority and a dynamic market system in a state system that is built on the centralised control of economy and society. Notwithstanding an opaque state construct, China's demonstrated technological prowess lends great potential for consolidating MCF and significantly enhancing Chinese military power. The future evolution and implementation of Chinese MCF merits sustained attention and further research. A Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threat (SCOTS) table can be instructive for India in pursuit of this endeavour.

Strengths	**Challenges**
• Governance Structure for Centralised Command (when activated) • Physical Infrastructure-DPSUs, PSUs, OFB • Nuclear & Space Research • Private Software Industry • Core of Elite S&T Academic Institutions • (IITs &IISc)	• Strategic Technological Dependencies • Reduced Focus on Basic Research • Insufficient R&D Funding • Lack of Semi Conductor Fab • Core Sciences • Incongruent R&D Mechanism • Underlying Tension in Private & Public Industry • Frequent Procedural Modifications • Inadequate Tech Mapping • Tech Management • Absent Cogent S&TI Strategy

Opportunities	**Threats**
• Multilateral/Bilateral Tech Cooperation • Open Innovation • Disruptive S&TI-Asymmetric Advantage • Achieve Technological Surprise • Reconfiguration of S&TI Enterprise • Optimise R&D Costs & Outcomes • Iterative & Incremental Defence Acquisition	• Pre-emptive Tech Denial • Strategic & Technological Surprise

Tech- Technology
S&TI-Science & Technology Innovation

Indian Responses and Way Ahead

India's responses to the challenge of Chinese ambitions in Science & Technology Innovation (S&TI)need not seek or emulate Chinese MCF, but must recognise the threats it poses. India must harness the unique strengths of its own ecosystem, while redoubling current initiatives intended to enable and promote technological advancement and innovation. **To mitigate the risks of surprise, the Indian intelligence community must innovate collection activities** as necessary in addition to acting in concert with the scientific community to leverage open-source intelligence (OSINT) techniques towards tracking and monitoring the current and future path of MCF and PLA modernisation. This must be accompanied by a scaling up of efforts to evaluate and translate Chinese military writings and technical literature. Reliance on information leveraged from largely western sources is likely to widen the information gap and may result in poor or incomplete understanding of technological and strategic trends in China. There must be a focused expansion of existing initiatives for training linguists and specialists alongside investments in technologies related to intelligence collection and analysis, language and voice recognition, behavioural analysis, natural language processing, all with a common foundation of AI, towards effective threat assessment. Such a Strategic/Defence Science and Technological Intelligence

Establishment is an imperative for tracking global technological progress as also safeguarding indigenous strategic S&TI effort.

The Government of India must articulate a National Technology Strategy that can serve as an effective national approach and a roadmap for successful, long-term technological development and innovation. The strategy must outline the framework for technology policy on key issues such as open innovation, risk mitigation, leveraging and generating Indian advantages in select technology fields. The larger ecosystem of academia and industry stakeholders must be on board, and the strategy must generate the ability to access the best talent in the world. This can be achieved by providing proactive and collaborative investments in specialised facilities, and by adopting transformative frameworks and innovative practices necessary for critical national security science and technology needs.

The DRDO Science and Technology Management Council (DSTMC) must be expanded with the infusion of additional technical and managerial expertise from academia, private sector and global consultants to inform technology policy making. The New and Emerging Strategic Technologies (NEST) Division at MEA[8] is a significant development and must be integrated into the national S&TI enterprise. Where it is not critical to build and maintain specialised S&TI facilities for the sole purpose of national security, collaboration with the wider ST&I community must be encouraged and supported through open campus arrangements and the promotion of robust ecosystems for collaboration with academia and the private sector. These issues must be addressed in the short term towards strategic effectiveness including articulation of a Key Technologies List (KTL) and a national roadmap for closed and open innovation converging capability definition, Technology Readiness Levels (TRL), funding and risk management functions.

Closed defence technological innovation has historically required high levels of specialised expertise, structures, processes and finance and manifests in 'block acquisition' or incremental development of platforms with progressive infusion of technology. Innovation with information age technologies is driven as much by widespread popular experimentation and tinkering as by classified development projects. **India must reorient its processes to reflect the reality of the commercially driven, open technological context in select domains,** viz. Robotics and Autonomous Systems (RAS), AI, energy devices, medicine and extreme survival, cyber security, computing power, biotechnology, nanotechnology, indigenous 5G/6G, etc. The national S&TI enterprise must be progressively reorganised around new strategic concepts/

models that adopt a whole-of-society approach. In select domains, the military-civilian firewall in our R&D must be reconfigured with safeguards and clearances to facilitate technology access. Special/unorthodox talent must be allowed to move horizontally in and out of military service without penalty to make it possible to identify the most promising commercially driven technologies and develop forward-leaning operational doctrines.

Emerging technologies will continue to create the potential for new, asymmetric and unpredictable threats which if unaddressed and overmatched in select domains will manifest as adversarial coercion or a fait accompli. Indian national security S&TI enterprise must become more agile, responsive and resilient. Innovation models developed for a different technological context and accompanied by a slow pace of change carries the risk of yielding obsolete strategy and doctrine. Technological surprise is inevitable and capacities to cope with it must be built into Indian strategic planning.

Notes

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Reducing the China-India Strategic Asymmetry
A Net Assessment

Arvind Chauhan

Introduction

Among several dialogues within the strategic community in India on tackling multiple security threats along contested frontiers, the predominant ones revolve around ideas that seek to rationalise the contradictions that exist between capabilities and threats. Within this framework, the China–Pakistan collusive threat and the alarming two-and-a-half front war that could emerge from it occupy pole position. Perhaps the principal challenge that emerges from this security dilemma is China's belligerent rise and India's suboptimal strategies thus far to handle this rise with a preponderance of diplomacy and inadequate focus on coercive strategies. The recent crisis in Eastern Ladakh has brought to the forefront the need to roll out multi-spectral measures to reduce the strategic asymmetry between the two Asian powers taking into consideration that from an Indian perspective, the resources and capabilities are finite and limited.

On November 7, 1950, a month after China invaded Tibet, Deputy Prime Minister Sardar Patel wrote to Prime Minister Nehru: "The Chinese Government has tried to delude us by professions of peaceful intention.… They managed to instil into our Ambassador, K.M. Panikkar, a false sense of confidence in their so-called desire to settle the Tibetan problem by peaceful means.… The action of the Chinese, in my judgment, is little short of perfidy."

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[1]These words were prophetic and symbolise a continued Chinese deviousness and India's strategic lethargy with respect to China.

It took China precisely 72 hours in April 2020, to unilaterally abrogate all understandings and protocols in Eastern Ladakh that were carefully crafted from 1993 till date. This, coupled with Chinese intransigence to move ahead with border demarcation, exposes their intentions. Thus, the current LAC imbroglio is in fact an eye opener, and offers instructive lessons for the long haul. Some of the issues covered in this article will relate to a Net Assessment and SWOT Analysis of the two protagonists in this strategic rivalry. An attempt would also be made to contextualise the Pakistan factor in this relationship and highlight the importance of 'achieving more with less' for India in a skewed capability asymmetry in favour of China across disciplines.

Continuing Relevance of Net Assessment

As new global and regional strategic rivalries gain momentum in the twenty-first century, Net Assessment (NA) retains its importance even though its origins go back to the Cold War. NA is a practice for "comparative analysis of military, technological, political and economic factors governing the military capabilities of two rival countries,"[2] essentially to seek the establishment of strategic asymmetry. NA asks the right questions rather than providing the right answers. Andrew Marshal is considered as the '*Master Yoda*' of NA. He was Director, Office of NA in the United States Department of Defense (US DoD) from 1973 to 2015; he advised eight US Presidents across the political spectrum and is credited with strategy enunciation which ultimately led to the fall of the Soviet Union. Marshal's long tenure signifies the strategic continuity which spanned an entire era of strategic thinkers.[3]

NA combines the precision of science and the fluidity of art, utilising various tools, the major ones being *Threat Analysis, Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities & Threat (SWOT) Analysis and Scenario Building*. The process essentially involves a scan of the relevant environment utilising the Base Means Capacity (BMC) analysis technique followed by a SWOT analysis to generate strategy options. A concurrent scenario building and analysis to identify the high impact and environmental drivers allow for the creation of likely scenarios (rated for likelihood and desirability). What finally emerges from this process are strategies to reduce the gap between what is likely and what is desired. These are then put through an Environment, Values and Resources (EVR) filter to enable implementation. The uniqueness of the process is the balance between the science of deduction and the art of human

intuition. The focus is on the end result and not on the process, which is to achieve strategic asymmetry vis a vis an adversary.

The most significant aspect of Net Assessment is the eclectic nature of research on disparate subjects that combines the art of intuitive deduction along with scientific research. It considers time as an important dimension while seeking to suggest viable strategies as an end-state or outcome.

INDIA-CHINA: SWOT ANALYSIS

The following table expresses a quick SWOT analysis from an Indian perspective in the context of the India-China strategic dynamics:

Strengths	**Weakness (Challenges)**
• Political Will & Government Structure • Battle-hardened Military • Strong Institutions • Emerging Private Industry • Emerging Strategic Think Tanks • Nuclear Option • Space Capabilities • Cyber Industry	• Poor Economic Performance (COVID) • Bureaucratic Processes • Political dissonance / polarisation • Poor Research and Development • Suboptimal Civil-Military-Ecosystem • Social Inequities and Cohesion • Internal Security Challenges • Information Warfare (IW)
Opportunities	**Threats**
• Strategic Alliance with the US • Quad • Partnership with Technology Leaders • China's brutal Authoritarian Regime • China's untested Military • Countering 'One' China Policy • Internal fissures in Pakistan • Economic relations with Neighbours	• China's Territorial Adventurism • China's ambitions in Indian Ocean • China's influence on Neighbours • Cyber Threats (Data Hegemony) • Sino–Pak IW • Technology Denial Regimes • Russia's Proximity to China • Terrorism • Chinas Defence expenditure • China's Civil Military Fusion

India has displayed remarkable progress and emerged as an example of a liberal democracy which has provided reasonable levels of progress to its citizens who constitute almost 17 per cent of humanity. However, in the context of security, it does not appear enough, particularly with a rampaging China and perfidious Pakistan (led by its deep-state). The Indian government

structure has proven strong, however in the shadow of the economic hit due to COVID, it requires greater accountability from all instruments of statecraft. Military, bureaucratic and diplomatic structures must operate with greater synergy and reconcile to a two-front security scenario with a preponderance of effort being directed towards China without losing track of Pakistan. The military industrial ecosystem requires significant reform by investing in a government encouraged private sector. On the external front, a robust strategic partnership with the US and other strategic partners like France, Japan, Australia, Israel, UK, and Vietnam provides an excellent opportunity to take forward initiatives to support a rules-based global order.

Just as China has focused on building capabilities with 'Chinese characteristics' over the last three decades with an eye on reducing the strategic asymmetry vis-à-vis the US, India must do similarly with an eye on China. Several countries seek to replicate this Chinese transformation and there are lessons for India too.[4] With its lopsided geography and demography exacerbated by a brutal authoritarian regime and emerging neo-colonial tendencies, there are several chinks in the Chinese armour that are likely to impede its continuous rise. The Chinese military has built immense capacity. China's official defence budget for 2019 is approximately US$ 175 billion, while external estimates are at approximately US$ 240 billion. It is reported that approximately US$ 60 billion has been spent on capital procurement.[5] In comparison, the total defence budget of India is US$ 71 billion. However, translation of this Chinese military spending into decisive military capability remains untested and questionable. If unchecked, the current trajectory of Chinese revisionist ambitions will lead to further erosion of India's influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) beyond the current situation that still has room for contest.

SWOT Based Strategies

While there is an element of broadband predictability in SWOT based strategies, they are important as an intrinsic part of any strategic toolkit. India has several advantages that it must leverage at the macro level while crafting a China strategy. Among the internal strategies, in no prioritised order, is the need to tap the inherent strength of government structures to enhance the performance of the government machinery, improve economic performance and create a sustainable military industrial eco-system. Next is the accelerated necessity of plugging the widening internal fissures and cracks arising out of societal tension. The importance of strategic communication and information warfare cannot be overemphasized in an interconnected world and this is an

area that merits serious attention if India is to match China in the battle of narratives and check the collusive potential of the China-Pak nexus.

Reducing the technological imbalance that exists between India and China, there are several areas that merit immediate attention. Among them is the necessity for leapfrogging initiatives in two key areas. These are space-based capabilities in Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), communications and a small basket of coercive capabilities as China enjoys a significant advantage in all these areas. The second area that merits significant human and material investment is in the realm of both offensive and defensive cyber capabilities. Finally, India lags China in both innovation and reverse engineering capability and needs to speedily ramp-up proficiency in these.

In terms of shaping the international environment, India enjoys significant global and regional respect and is on the right track to leverage strategic partnerships in its attempt to manage and even contain China's expansive, neo-colonial and revisionist tendencies.

India-China: Possible Scenarios

Focus & Drivers

While considering possible strategic scenarios, the recent stand-off in Eastern Ladakh has busted the myth of China's benign handling of its disputes with India, and calls for a sharper decision focus on the part of Indian strategic planners with multiple timelines (short, medium and long term). This decision focus must concentrate primarily on reducing the asymmetry in several areas and aim to clearly identify selected domains where India can forge ahead and concentrate on building asymmetries of its own.

Of the several factors that need to be meshed in while assessing possible scenarios, uncertain external environmental factors are high impact ones and key drivers. Among these is the continued China-Pakistan collusive strategic relationship that singularly targets India's rise. Concurrent with this are several security dilemmas related to India's strategic partnerships and balancing between strategic autonomy and alliances. Leveraging these partnerships in the technology realm to supplement indigenous initiatives will emerge as another key external driver while developing and gaming possible scenarios.

While assessing the internal environmental factors, the key constants that have to be factored in are: the short term outlook of electoral politics in a parliamentary democracy; India's federal structure; its societal fault-lines and the myriad internal security challenges represented by strife in

Jammu and Kashmir, North East India and Left Wing Extremism. The key variables which impact India's security are: continued sustainable and equitable economic growth coupled with indigenous military industrial capacity; internal social cohesion; and India's ability to obtain a technological edge in limited areas.

Scenario 1: The Plodding Elephant. This scenario premises on the '***business as usual***' approach with some of the effects and consequences visible as they are currently. Considering a five-year timeline and the key drivers highlighted earlier, India's economic growth could hover around 4 to 5 per cent; its homegrown defence industry remains unable to deliver despite the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* initiative; and its strategic relationship with the US remains close without breaking the barrier of a transactional approach. This approach would thereby limit major breakthroughs and leave windows open for strategic hedging by major players like Russia and Iran who have earlier enjoyed long periods of closeness, but have now drifted away from India in a rapidly changing global geopolitical environment. At the same time, skilful management of the COVID pandemic has ensured relative improvement in China's economic performance and it is expected to overtake the US economy by 2028 with a predicted annual growth rate of 6 per cent.[6] Should India allow China to race ahead in the technology space, particularly in cyber, space and military technology and leverage this asymmetry diplomatically, all of India's neighbours would continue their slant towards with the probable exception of Bhutan.

On the internal front should societal tensions continue to increase as India searches for a new identity and equilibrium, there are likely to be more frequent agitations and protests that could repeatedly flare-up into law and order crises. Despite having a politically enfranchised government as never before, India may not be able to leverage this to boost its international standing as a progressive democracy. This would embolden China to consolidate its growing presence in the IOR while keeping India continentally engaged with support from Pakistan, which would continue to snipe at India's internal vulnerabilities. While such a scenario is a bleak one and may not pan out exactly as painted, it would be dangerous to discard it based on the potential but unquantifiable growth of Indian power.

Scenario 2: The Trumpeting Elephant. This scenario premises on a fresh approach which focuses on a relentless mission mode orientation. Considering a five-year timeline and should India's economy show resurgence with a continued growth at more than 8 per cent accompanied by a significant jump in HDI, this would be the springboard from which

India could emerge as competitive business and manufacturing alternative to China. If complemented with a robust homegrown defence industry that starts producing world-class platforms, sensors and weapons systems, and a stronger strategic partnership that resembles more with a strategic alliance of equals with the USA, the green shoots of an Indian surge may well become a reality. Should this be accompanied by greater strategic confidence, better management and demonstration of deterrence and coercive capabilities, and social and demographic equilibrium, Indian aspirations of emerging as a leading power in the next decade narrowing the strategic and power asymmetry vis-à-vis China may well be within the realm of possibility, not over a five-year timeline, but probably in a decade.

Strategies to Support Scenarios

While the commencement of a phased withdrawal by both China and India in the Pangong Tso sector cannot be a sign of things to come given the known ambiguity of Chinese actions, it certainly offers a way ahead that the only way to stand up to Chinese coercion is by offering a firm and unwavering politico-military-diplomatic response. The time for only hedging and balancing is over and it is time that containing and countering is now part of India's basket of strategies that would resemble a 'horses for courses policy.'

Constituents of such a strategy could include several possibilities without any apologies or carriage of baggage from the past, whether it be the conversion of partnerships into alliances with a clear security focus, and clearly articulating the focus of such moves as resting on national interest. Seeking leverages out of such alliances or partnerships in the space, cyber and information domains will not only help in achieving self-sufficiency, but also cater for periods of downturn and uncertainty.

The recently established Office of Net Assessment in the NSCS must be given more focus and emerge as a key think tank of the government of India. It must be dynamically led and have unhindered access to every arm of government and comprise a balanced mix of young and experienced analysts drawn from within and outside the government, without domination by any single bureaucratic group. This is eminently possible considering that the NSCS has been brought into the ambit of the Government's Allocation of Business Rules.[7]

Conclusion

Given the serious limitations of fiscal provisions for building national security capabilities, which is a bitter reality for national security planners, a

strategy of doing more with less seems to be emerging as a fait accompli at the heart of all Indian strategies to contain and manage Chinese expansiveness. Pakistan has kept India on its toes and guessing with its own brand of doing more with less by using terrorism as an instrument of state policy, playing nuclear bluff periodically, or continuing a refined subversion strategy that targets India's several vulnerabilities.[8] While the model of a 'Deep State' to manage national security affairs in an asymmetric environment is a common feature in autocratic states like China, or in radicalised/extremist states like Pakistan, democracies like India have to create hybrid strategies that go with responsibility and restraint, two features of statecraft that India must not abandon. With its vast repository of human capital, India must convince itself that pure economic and military asymmetry as it exists today with China does not automatically translate into strategic asymmetry. Result-oriented diplomacy, alliances and robust partnerships, leveraging technology and human capital, dominating the information and cyberspace combined with visionary leadership, constitutes a strategic brand value that India could embrace in the decades ahead. Kissinger suggests in his book, *On China*, that the US should embark on a process of co-evolution because China doesn't seek a war of World domination[9] (but that was in 2012), hence it may be wise for India to keep its powder dry. In his book *World Order*, Kissinger describes India as "*a fulcrum of twenty-first century order: an indispensable element, based on its geography, resources and tradition of sophisticated leadership, in the strategic and ideological evolution of the regions and the concepts of order at whose intersection it stands*."[10] It is up to India to seize the moment.

Notes

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Tejas Light Combat Aircraft
A Success Story or Missed Opportunity for Atmanirbhar Bharat

Tejpal Singh

Introduction

The defence needs of the Indian armed forces have been largely met by imports since Independence. This has also been true of the combat aircraft used by the IAF. The HF-24 or the Marut as it was christened was the last attempt at developing an indigenous combat aircraft till the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme was launched in 1983. The Marut was an excellent aircraft and saw operational action too in the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict.[1]

However, it failed in the final analysis due to the lack of an engine that could provide adequate thrust without the aircraft having to undergo a major redesign. Over the years, the IAF has operated combat aircraft from Russia, France and the UK. Indigenous capability was limited to HAL and IAF BRDs undertaking licensed production, overhauls and some limited upgrade programmes.

The MiG 21 was the backbone of the IAF from the mid-1970s to the early 1990s and then need for a replacement was felt which led to the start of the LCA programme in the 1980s. The programme has achieved several milestones and the aircraft entered operational service in 2016.[2] In the course of this journey, there have been significant achievements and some shortcomings too. This article seeks to offer a brief and holistic evaluation of this journey as well as the role played by the IAF in its evolution. Even though the LCA programme is a highly emotive issue on the road to Atmanirbhar Bharat, it is important to do a mid-course review to determine whether on

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the whole the Tejas programme has been a success or a missed opportunity. Considering that there is now a whole-hearted commitment from the IAF and the GOI to ensure that the project succeeds and leads to several versions of the Tejas seeing operational induction in the years ahead, an objective review can only add value to the future trajectory of the programme.

Brief Historical Background

Once the government gave the go ahead for the programme, the first decision was with respect to who would lead it. The obvious choice was the Aircraft Upgrade and Research Design Centre (AURDC) of HAL. However, a decision was taken to establish the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) under DRDO in 1984[3] to lead the development programme with HAL being the production agency. It can be debated that this decision resulted in the R&D capabilities of HAL suffering and it played second fiddle throughout the programme. The Air Staff Requirements (ASRs) were formulated in 1985 by the IAF. The programme was meant to design a light combat aircraft with a focus on five key technologies—an indigenous engine, a modern fire control radar, carbon fibre composites, a modern glass cockpit and flight control system which would ensure good manoeuvrability while permitting carefree handling. The engine and radar were to be developed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) labs and the National Aerospace Laboratory (NAL) was made responsible for the flight control laws.

While the objectives were clear, it was obvious that a prototype aircraft could not be flown with a prototype engine. The safety requirements of prototype flight testing would never allow such a combination. Hence, as the programme progressed, ADA had to identify an engine which could power the initial prototypes while the Kaveri engine development continued in parallel. That the Kaveri engine development never fully materialised meant that an imported engine would not only power the initial prototypes but also the production ac. This would be the General Electric F404 engine which remains the engine of choice till date with its successor the F414 to power the next generation variant. The Kaveri engine project remains one of the biggest failures in the programme and would be discussed later in the article. The multi-mode radar too never met the requirements, hence the Israeli Elta 2032 radar was chosen and continues to equip the operational variant as of now.

On the aerodynamic front, a tail less delta design with relaxed static stability was chosen[4] and Dassault systems was one of the initial

consultants. This was in a sense inspired by the Mirage 2000 design, an aircraft manufactured by Dassault and already in operational service with the IAF. The programme had various phases with two technology demonstrators followed by three prototype vehicles and then a limited series production.[5] Development was hit by the US sanctions after the nuclear tests in 1998 and the first flight finally took place on January 4, 2001. The Initial Operational (IOC) clearance was accorded in December 2013 with Full Operational Clearance (FOC) being accorded in February 2019[6] albeit with some concessions. The IAF has inducted the aircraft since and two squadrons have been formed in a phased manner.

Key Successes

ADA had identified five key technologies for the programme as highlighted earlier. These were the direct drivers of the programme with the sixth being the aim of achieving indigenisation or 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' in the design and production of fighter aircraft along with key sub-systems. The biggest success has without doubt been the flight control laws developed by NAL. Each pilot who has flown the aircraft has nothing but praise for the manner in which the aircraft handles and responds. In fact the IAF has gone on record to state that the control harmony of the aircraft is comparable to the best in the world.[7] This achievement is even more remarkable when one factors in that no foreign assistance was available post the sanctions in 1998. The flight control laws have been refined as flight testing progressed and it's a testament to the maturity of the design that the LCA remains one of the few programmes across the globe to have had an accident free record over the entire testing phase and even after entering operational service. The ultimate tribute to this success and confidence was when the Tejas participated in the Republic Day flypast in 2017, the first time in two decades that a single engine aircraft flew over Rajpath.[8]

The second success has been the design and manufacturing of composites for the airframe and ancillary parts. The Tejas today uses nearly 35 per cent of composites in its structure.[9] This technology has benefited the programme as well as several other projects being pursued by DRDO and in the private sector. The gains have percolated to other industries like civil aviation, space and automobiles.

A key achievement of the programme has been the creation of an ecosystem in the aerospace sector and its inherent contribution to 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. This has been present in the design and development phase as well as the production phase. Over the life of the programme, nearly 2000[10] entities have

contributed in big and small ways. This ecosystem has led to the emergence of new companies and a new culture of R&D which has benefited other areas of the defence industry as well as other spheres of manufacturing. There has also been the creation of institutional knowledge as several scientists and designers have been associated with the project since inception. This will prove critical in the development of future variants as well as more advanced ac. This aspect is often missed by critics of the programme when they talk about the delays and shortcomings. The programme will also provide the take-off point for further programmes like the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) where several technologies developed for the LCA will help to reduce the timelines of development.

The indigenous mission computer and open source avionics architecture is a game changer and would ensure that future upgrades are easy to incorporate along with a seamless and continuous integration of new weapons and systems. This is a major advantage when one looks at the difficulties faced during several upgrades of various imported platforms where one had had to either go back to the OEM or accept sub-optimal integration like in the case of the autopilot on the Jaguar.

Development of a combat aircraft requires extensive testing on the ground and in the air. The Tejas programme has ensured the creation of world class testing facilities within DRDO, NAL and HAL. This includes high speed wind tunnels, lightning test facilities, modern simulators, virtual reality systems and avionics integration rigs. These will not only continue to facilitate future programmes but can also be offered to friendly countries for their projects.

Areas of Concern

One of the major failures in the overall programme has been the Kaveri engine. Several prototypes have undergone extensive testing on the ground and on the test bed aircraft in Russia. However, the engine has never produced the designed thrust and there have been major safety issues which have prevented any testing on the actual ac. DRDO has gone into consultancies and Joint Ventures (JV) with major engine manufacturers and one can only hope that India will soon have an indigenous engine to power the Tejas. This is critical in the long run as flying the aircraft with a foreign engine will never allow complete indigenisation and self-reliance.[11]

The second area of concern is the multi-mode radar. The radar developed by DRDO did not meet the specifications, hence an Israeli radar was selected for the prototypes and initial production ac. Electronics Research

and Development establishment (LRDE) is developing the Uttam active electronically scanned (AESA) radar which is currently undergoing flight trials.[12] It is important that this project meets the requirements as the radar is a critical component of the sensor package and weapon delivery system.

A modern combat aircraft needs to be able to protect itself in the contested battle space. The Electronic warfare (EW) suite of the Tejas which includes the defensive package is still under testing. It is essential that the system meets the requirements and is integrated into the rest of the avionics package at the earliest so that the aircraft becomes a potent offensive platform capable of defending itself even in the most dense air defence environments. The evolving security situation along India's northern borders should act as a significant catalyst in accelerating this programme given the potent air defence network that exists in Tibet.

HAL is the designated agency and prime contractor for production of the ac. It has also designed certain components/systems of the ac. The PSU has engaged several sub-contractors who contribute to the complete production of the ac. Production by HAL has not met the requirements of the IAF and the number of aircraft produced annually is well short of the desired figure. Suboptimal maintenance support to the two squadrons has been a major bone of contention and has resulted in low serviceability in the operational squadrons. This is an area where HAL has much to do if the LCA is to realise its full operational potential and emerge as a worthy export contender. HAL also needs to embrace modern production methods and review the quality of its sub-contractors to ensure that production standards improve and better maintainability is assured. The success of the programme from here on rests on how HAL converts an opportunity into tangible deliverables.

Role of the IAF

The IAF is the biggest stakeholder in the project as the performance of the aircraft has a direct bearing on its operational capability and future inductions. There has often been criticism that IAF support for the programme has been lukewarm and it has preferred the import of combat aircraft to maintain operational levels. The aspect most often mentioned is that the IAF has changed the specifications and goalposts over the years which have contributed to the delays in the programme. This is factually incorrect. The ASRs were defined in 1985 and the basic performance parameters like max speed, service ceiling, load factor, turn and climb rate and other flight parameters which affect the design of the aircraft have never been changed. In fact, the IAF has accepted certain deficiencies as otherwise, major redesign

and a more powerful engine would be required to meet the ASRs. What the IAF has demanded has been the integration of better weapons which was inevitable considering the time that has elapsed since the programme commenced and the asymmetries in weapons' capabilities that were emerging even with an inferior adversary. The IAF simply could not accept an aircraft that would be equipped with first and second generation weapons defined in the original ASRs while claiming to be a fourth generation platform. This is an important aspect when one examines the various changes sought by the IAF over the years.

The IAF has been instrumental in supporting the flight test program of the Tejas. Over the years, the IAF has deputed its test crew including test pilots and flight test engineers to the National Flight Test Centre (NFTC) and continues do so even today as the LCA Mk 1A enters its final lap of testing before operational induction. These test crew have provided invaluable inputs to ensure that the final product meets the operational requirements and have been key participants in the project. Maintenance crew have engaged with the designers to address maintainability issues and find solutions with minimal design changes. The IAF has also continuously supported the programme through its Project Management Team (PMT) based in Bengaluru which has engaged with various stakeholders. The IAF has inducted the aircraft into service and continues to support the development of the LCA Mk1A and Mk2 which is highlighted by the recent contract for 83 ac.

Way Forward

The most important aspect is that ADA and HAL need to complete development of the LCA Mk1A and ensure that the production is in sync with the contractual timelines. The flight trials need to be completed and HAL needs to ensure that the production facilities are upgraded so that aircraft production is ramped up to at least 16 aircraft per year if not more. HAL needs to identify more work which can be outsourced to reduce production timelines so that the first aircraft is delivered in three years as mandated in the contract. Increased collaborative production with the private sector is a possible way forward.

Critical maintenance issues need to be addressed to ensure better serviceability and tarmac availability. Quality control at all levels needs to be commensurate with international standards. This will not only ensure better serviceability but also enhance the possibility of exports. The involvement of IAF Base Repair Depots (BRDs) in maintenance activities needs to increase as has been the case in the overhaul of the Su-30 MKI. At the same time,

development of the LCA Mk2 needs to be pursued in a logical and planned manner so that IAF has an even more capable variant in the future for meeting its operational needs.

DRDO needs to continue to work on the indigenous engine programme with a clear cut methodology. There are several high-end technologies involved and a collaborative effort with a leading foreign company is the only way forward to achieve success. An indigenous engine is essential for subsequent variants of the aircraft and it will also have an impact on the AMCA programme. If required, a private sector company could also be made a strategic partner in the project. A successful indigenous engine programme will also ensure that ancillary industries in the metallurgy sector get a boost while improving our capabilities in forging and casting.

The Uttam radar project needs to be taken to its logical conclusion as this would make a substantial contribution to the level of indigenisation in the ac. It would also create additional capabilities in the overall eco-system of aerospace manufacturing. Similarly, the trials of the EW suite need to be expedited and integration with the Uttam radar should be planned in parallel to reduce timelines for operationalisation.[13]

The LCA programme has created a viable and sustainable domestic aerospace industry which in turn has led to a significant growth in the overall defence industry. In this context, the public sector enterprises need to shed flab while the private sector needs to take advantage of the liberalised FDI norms, invest more in R&D and form strategic partnerships with foreign entities. This could accelerate the induction of the latest technologies in domains like—where India is lagging. DRDO needs to introspect and concentrate on niche and high end technologies while closing down labs which are engaged in mundane activities. This is essential for projects to meet objectives within the stipulated timelines including the LCA Mk2 and AMCA. There is also a need to create a talent pool and ensure that we can hold on to the best brains who otherwise tend to move to greener pastures after a few years with DRDO.

There is extensive debate on whether a light combat aircraft can meet the operational needs of a modern air force when compared with medium and heavy multi role ac. The recent comments of the US Air Force Chief on the F-35 programme provide an insight on this issue. Keeping in mind the serious issues faced by the programme, he has hinted at the requirement of a light weight fighter to replace the F-16 which would complement heavy weight aircraft like the F-15, F-35 and F-22.[14] The Tejas has an important role to play and would complement the Su-30 MKI and Rafale besides

providing all the advantages of an indigenous platform. While multi role aircraft have their space in a modern air force, a light weight aircrafy like the Tejas provides flexibility and varied employability options with lower operating costs.

Conclusion

The LCA has been one of the most ambitious programmes undertaken by India. Over the years, it has seen its fair share of success and failures. The programme has seen the keen participation of various DRDO labs, HAL and creation of a vibrant eco-system in the private aerospace sector. There are only a handful countries which have successfully developed a combat aircraft and India can rightfully claim its place in this select group. While there have been certain deficiencies and shortfalls, a holistic assessment clearly indicates that the programme has been more of a success than a missed opportunity. The contribution of the programme towards energising the private industry in the aerospace sector cannot be overstated and this has further led to a spurt in the growth of the defence sector as a whole.

For a nation faced with a myriad of external and internal threats, an indigenous programme like the Tejas is essential not only to demonstrate its technical prowess, but also to have the desired autonomy to meet security challenges. Failures have to be taken in their stride because the ultimate goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat is a strategic one which cannot be compromised at any cost. The time has come for the Indian aerospace sector to take a quantum leap and become a force to reckon with.

Notes

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India-ASEAN Relations in the Post-COVID-19 World
An Opportunity to Consolidate Convergences

Sandeep Puri

Introduction

Over the last one year, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on human life with far reaching and all pervasive consequences. Today, the disease has affected 118,268,575 people, in 219 countries leading to 2,624,677 deaths.[1] Hardly any segment of human life and the way nations do business, to include social interaction, business, governance and the conduct of international relations, have remained unaffected. The world was already witnessing strong sentiments of nationalism and protectionism, trade wars and a lack of faith and confidence in multilateral institutions and multilateralism as an enabler of regional or global geopolitical relationships. The pandemic has accelerated the process and laid bare the wilting of the existing world order. The pandemic will mark an inflection point in history, leading to a recalibration and rebalancing of the international world order.

Apart from the challenges mentioned above, the pandemic has also brought to the fore the inability and inadequacy of even the strongest and most resource-rich nations to successfully tackle and contain such problems. So, while forces of individualism were present, the spirit of cooperation has also emerged, giving a ray of hope to the future of multilateralism. India and ASEAN, bound together by their cultural and civilisational links, share an important regional partnership. Relations with ASEAN are one of the cornerstones of India's foreign policy and the foundations of the Look East Policy initiated in 1992, which has subsequently been upgraded to the Act

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East Policy since 2014.[2] India is a Summit level partner of ASEAN, with relations spread across the three pillars of politico-security, economic and socio-cultural cooperation. This commentary seeks to examine the scope of consolidating India's multilateral relations with ASEAN in a post-COVID-19 world.

COVID-19: Whither Multilateralism and a New World Order

The Western-led 'Liberal World Order' that was in place since the end of World War II has been under severe stress over the past decade. The approach of the USA under President Trump towards 'affairs of the world' was inward-looking and characterised by nationalism, while the essential utility of democracy and multilateral institutions has increasingly been questioned and challenged. Strategic re-balancing of the existing power centres and the contest against globalisation were thus the two key characteristics of the prevailing geo-political environment.[3] COVID-19 pandemic has added fuel to the proverbial fire and possibly catalysed the churn that was already underway.

The pandemic saw the complete absence of any global leadership-especially by the USA,[4] coupled with the increasingly unpredictable Chinese behaviour marked by high belligerence, insensitivity to world opinion and an aggressive push back against any perceived counter measure was blatantly visible. This manifested in rise of tensions between the US and China which led to worsening of trade conflicts, thereby aggravating the already adverse impact on the world economy. The pandemic also gave cause to question the utility and relevance of the European Union model, where asymmetric capabilities led to divergent responses, possibly heralding an existential crisis.

Equally disheartening to see was the side-lining of multilateral institutions such as the UN and WHO. These institutions were seen to have become fragmented, politicised and irrelevant. Consequently, their response to the pandemic was ineffective since they failed to respond with alacrity in the absence of a consultative and collaborative global approach to tackle the deadly pandemic. Multilateralism was also under severe strain under the forces of unilateralism on account of the advent of populism as seen in the US under Trump, UK with Brexit and the rise of protectionist trade tendencies.[5] The pressures were enhanced with the onset of the pandemic. As one researcher puts it, "2020 saw the virtualisation of multilateralism both in form (going online) as well as in practice (the suspension of major talks and summits)."[6] Amidst all this emerged a surprising fact that some ASEAN countries, such as Vietnam, Cambodia and Lao PDR, emerged less-battered

from the initial phase of the pandemic as compared to their more developed counterparts elsewhere in the world.[7]

While the Biden administration is attempting to ensure that the US regains its leadership of the liberal world order in a post-Covid global strategic environment with all the right moves, it is too early to predict the way forward. There are contrarian views on the contours of the emerging world order. Francis Fukuyama argues that the post-COVID-19 world could either see the relative decline of the US, continued erosion of the liberal international order and a resurgence of fascism, or it could see a rebirth of liberal democracy.[8] According to G John Ikenberry, there will be a 'fractured world' characterised by great power competition between the US, China and Russia and little space for multilateralism and cooperation.[9] Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, while speaking at the Asian Leadership Conference on November 11, 2020, opined that the world was heading for new balances of power and interests which will manifest in a more multi-polar global architecture, one that will be characterised by convergences among powers and working arrangements to give convergences a practical shape.[10] The new world order is thus likely to provide for a greater role for middle powers and regional solutions will get more space to unfold.

India-ASEAN Partnership during COVID-19

The forces against multilateralism unleashed by the pandemic as mentioned above, affected ASEAN as well and posed a challenge to regionalism. Nation states initially reacted unilaterally, in an uncoordinated manner and pursued their own narrowly defined national interests. Almost immediately Malaysia announced a border closure, to include shutting down of the causeway connecting it with Singapore, which is a critical supply route for goods and labour. Vietnam also unilaterally shut its borders with Cambodia and Laos, which was retaliated by Cambodia in equal measure.[11] It merits attention that a multilateral bloc such as ASEAN was vulnerable to the pandemic spread on account of the existing connectivity—integrated supply chains, trade and investment and people-to-people—as also deep linkages with China.[12]

While urgent national responses were legitimate, it was quickly realised that interconnected regions, such as ASEAN, essentially needed regional and internationally coordinated efforts to successfully contain and tackle the virus. ASEAN secretariat got energised and meetings with dialogue partners started through video conferencing and telephonic conversations. The ASEAN and ASEAN Plus Three Health Ministers forum issued a joint statement on April 7, 2020, pledging coordinated efforts to combat the virus

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outbreak within the ASEAN as also work with the dialogue and development partners.[13] A Special ASEAN Plus Three (APT) Summit on Coronavirus Disease was held in April 2020, where the forum declared their commitment to sharing technical, material, and financial support and creation of an '**APT Reserve**' of essential medical supplies. Training sessions, exchange of best practices, initiation of projects on technical knowledge sharing, creation of a **Common Response Fund** and other related activities were initiated. ASEAN took the lead in coordinating a regional response through achieving cooperation with other countries such as China, Japan, South Korea and even India. ASEAN exhibited an openness for both bilateral and multilateral cooperation in response to COVID-19 with all its dialogue partners.

India's relationship with ASEAN is a key pillar of its foreign policy and the foundation of its Act East Policy. As part of the outreach after the outbreak of the pandemic, India reaffirmed its commitments under the 'Neighbourhood First' Policy, and accordingly a lead was taken to connect with the SAARC countries. This was subsequently extended eastwards to ASEAN as part of the Act East Policy. PM Modi held a video conferencing with several leaders of the ASEAN member states on potential regional and bilateral response strategies. Under the 'Vande Bharat Mission', India extended help to them to bring back their citizens from India.

Cooperation efforts between India and ASEAN included supply of pharmaceutical products and medical equipment, exchange of experts and sharing of public health information. The 20th ASEAN-India Joint Cooperation Committee (AIJCC) Meeting was held on June 11, 2020, where both sides reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen and deepen their cooperation.[14] The two sides also adopted the new Plan of Action of the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity (2021-2025) at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference (PMC) 10+1 Session with India on September 12, 2020. At the 17th ASEAN-India Summit held on November 12, 2020, via video conference,[15] PM Modi announced India's contribution of USD 1 million to the COVID-19 ASEAN Response Fund.[16] India's 'Vaccine Maitri' programme has been active in the region as well to include almost 37 lakh doses to Myanmar, 3.24 lakh doses to Cambodia and 1.32 lakh doses to Lao PDR.

Convergence Opportunities

India and ASEAN are natural partners so dictated by geography. While India classifies South East Asia as its 'Immediate Neighbourhood', South East Asian countries have a 'Look West Policy' towards India. There

are historical and cultural linkages that have been invigorated through a concerted outreach over the last three decades. It is therefore not difficult to find areas of convergence to take the relationship forward in the new setting.

The ability to provide a 'Regional Response to Global Problems' such as the recent pandemic is a major area of political convergence that emerges as a realisation of the manner in which nations responded to the crisis.[17] India and ASEAN have the requisite structures and mechanisms in place to achieve this. The two sides need to work together towards strengthening multilateralism, and gainfully reforming the multilateral system through promotion of an inclusive and participatory regional governance architecture. Global leadership was absent during the pandemic and its aftermath, and India and ASEAN need to ensure that they develop convergences to be able to fill up this vacuum in the region.

Disaster management is another area assuming importance after the pandemic. India and ASEAN need to conduct regular consultations between the ASEAN Committee on Disaster Management (ACDM) and India's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to develop and foster synergy among multilateral cooperation mechanisms on disaster management.[18] India has joined the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) that was set up in September 2019 and it can undertake projects in ASEAN member states as part of this initiative. India can also share and learn from best practices, common Standard Operating Procedures and communication hot lines for cooperation in this field.

A major fallout of the pandemic was the economic crisis that affected the economies of both, especially sectors such as health, transport, tourism, hospitality industry, SMEs, etc. ASEAN was heavily reliant on global supply chains and had a deep dependence on China in several areas. The lockdown severely affected these supply chains. Common lessons have been learnt post the pandemic and these provide opportunities for future convergences. Realignment of global supply chains is already underway and India and ASEAN need to support each other in building new and stronger supply chains.[19] The Indian impetus to the MSME sector and self-reliance model of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat' has the potential to align and find complementarity with the quest for new supply chains.

The health sector is another important area where there is potential for cooperation. India is one of the world's largest producers of generic medicines with Indian generics accounting for 20 per cent of the total world exports by volume.[20] There is scope for collaboration between the Indian pharma industry and ASEAN. Despite the hiccups in India's Covid vaccine

production capability, it remains the largest vaccine manufacturer in the world and there is much potential in developing linkages with ASEAN and further enhancing the range and scope of India's Vaccine programme, particularly in terms of setting up manufacturing facilities in ASEAN countries for global distribution. Cooperation in the areas of Public Health, through sharing of best practices, expertise and joint R&D is another area of cooperation. Medical tourism and growth of Traditional Medicine also have great potential in both India and ASEAN.[21] Organisation of Virtual India-ASEAN Healthcare Trade Fair by the FICCI and ASEAN India Business Council from February 22 to 24, 2021, was a step in this direction.

The next sector with tremendous potential is Information Technology and IT-enabled Services (ITeS). Digital connectivity assumed considerable significance during the pandemic by sustaining normal day-to-day life to include conduct of e-commerce, provision of medical services, education, legal services and even conduct of diplomacy. India and ASEAN can work together to strengthen digital connectivity by way of developing digital infrastructure. ASEAN can consider utilising the USD 1 Billion Line of Credit that has been offered by India for the purpose.[22] A related area of cooperation can be development of Fintech applications where India already has vast expertise by way of UPI applications such as BHIM.

The education sector also has potential, where India may extend Indian e-VidyaBharati and e-AarogyaBharati (e-VBAB) Network Project to ASEAN. Within ASEAN, there is a sub grouping of Least Developed Countries (LDC), such as Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, where there continues to be scope for undertaking Quick Impact Projects related to the sectors of public health, education and skill development. India can easily perform this role.[23]

Potential for cooperation between India and ASEAN was aptly summed up by H.E. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand at the inaugural Session of the 6th ASEAN-India Network of Think Tanks (AINTT) on August 20, 2020, where he said, "The ASEAN-India Strategic Partnership should be taken forward at this critical time, threaded together by a simple yet powerful word spelt ***S-H-A-R-E,*** or ***SHARE,***"[24] where SHARE stands for Supply chain, Health, Academics, Regional, Environment.

India-ASEAN Cooperation: Possibilities and Challenges

India and AEAN share a Strategic Partnership based on 'Shared Values and Common Destiny'. As regional neighbours both share common

challenges and concerns. There is great scope in developing and sustaining convergence in the way both conduct their day-to-day business. In the emerging world order, which is defined by narrow views of ultra-nationalism and anti-globalisation, finding regional solutions to global problems via strengthening regional cooperation, by way of India-ASEAN partnership, can act as a role model for the world.

For the partnership to reach its true potential, however, it is essential that differing perceptions and perspectives that exist on both sides are resolved. Strengthening people-to-people cooperation, involving civil society business groups and strengthening media cooperation will pay rich dividends in this regard. The need is to focus on each other's strengths and experiences, transform the interactions to be more productive and meaningful without giving too much credence to the role of any third party in disrupting the relationship. India needs to work to dispel the credibility deficit that exists in ASEAN, especially with regards to delivery of commitments. The recent vaccine diplomacy and continued outreach in times of need will help India to overcome this deficit. However, much more needs to be done and the opportunity provided by the pandemic needs to be utilised effectively.

An overbearing factor in India-ASEAN relations is the Chinese quest for influence in the region. China shares land and maritime borders with ASEAN member states and therefore the dynamics of its pursuit for economic and security predominance encompasses these countries as well. This interplay poses significant stresses and strains on the development of robust relations between India and ASEAN, especially in the security cooperation sphere. However, common concerns of a rising hegemonic power, prone to treating an existing rules based order with disdain, provides a window of opportunity to make the engagement between India and ASEAN more substantive.

Areas of convergence between India and ASEAN already exist and it remains to be seen whether India and ASEAN shore up their public diplomacy and display a willingness and resilience to undertake mutually-beneficial collaborations, thereby defining the contours of future regional cooperation.

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Asset Monetisation as a Reformative Initiative in a Post-COVID India

Uma Shankar Dhyani

Role of the Public Sector in India

"Public Sector Enterprises (PSEs) work as catalysts of acceleration for economic growth (in India). Earlier they were only confined to basic and key industries of strategic importance. It was the public sector alone which could build the capita-intensive infrastructure that India needed post-independence. In the industrial policy of 1991, only eight industries were reserved for the public sector. These eight industries include defence, production, atomic energy, coal and lignite, mineral oils, iron ore, manganese, gold and diamond, atomic minerals and railways."[1]

The role of PSEs in terms of contribution to the Indian economy has increased manifold. However in the new policy, it has been stated that the government will run the public sector on sound commercial principles. It was decided that chronically sick public sector units will be referred to the Board for Industrial and Financial Re-construction (BIFR) for examining their viability.[2]

Though, many public sector assets are sub-optimally utilised, the government has decided to monetise them for greater financial leverage and value for the companies, and of the return on equity that the government has invested in them.[3] And these can only be utilised through "Asset Monetisation". What does the term "Asset Monetisation" denote? It involves creation of new sources of revenue by unlocking of value of hitherto unutilized or underutilized public assets. Internationally, it is recognized that public assets are a significant resource for all economies.

The objective of the asset monetisation programme of the Government of India (GOI), is to unlock the value of investment made in public assets which have not yet yielded appropriate or potential returns so far, create hitherto unexplored

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sources of income for the company and its shareholders, and contribute to a more accurate estimation of public assets which would help in better financial management of government/public resources over time.[4] The adverse impact of COVID-19 may well present the government with a fait accompli to generate additional revenue by rolling out this initiative which has been mulled over several times in the past by governments across the ideological divide.

Asset Monetisation

Monetising assets that government controls, including public corporations, is widely held to be a very important but inadequately explored public finance option for managing public resources. As stated by the PM, "The reforms on privatisation and asset monetisation will mainly aim at ensuring that public money is spent judiciously to benefit the poor, in what was seen as a response to critics of the new policy."[5]

Asset monetisation is also an important aspect of the disinvestment exercise for FY22. Though this normally does not provide the Centre with large gains on Public Sector Unit (PSUs) assets, it helps the entries to start a fresh capex cycle based on fund mobilisation through the route. Asset Monetisation is implicit in the term; it is the process of conversion of assets into economic value. Many assets owned by these public sector units are sub-optimally utilised and hence have failed to yield adequate returns. By unlocking the value of underutilised or unutilised public assets, asset monetisation creates new sources of revenue for the public sector undertakings owning them.

Asset monetisation can be undertaken through sale of land, non-operational assets through long-term lease with significant upfront lease payment, toll-operate-transfer (TOT) model for operational road assets, infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs), sale of portfolio of assets to strategic/financial investors and loan asset monetisation through securitisation and value capture financing (VCF).

Benefits of Asset Monetisation

Asset Monetisation can lead to the following benefits:

- Balance Regional Development: As of now, these assets have been lying idle and, with private entities bidding for them, they will be utilised for creation of productive assets and setting up of factories leading to regional economic development.
- Additional Revenue Sources for PSUs: Also, the concerned PSU will get access to additional resources which can be utilised for restructuring,

reinvestment and expansion. It can also trim market borrowings by PSUs and bring down their interest payment burden.

- Achieving Targets of National Infrastructure Pipeline: The Union government has announced its plan to invest Rs 102 lakh crore in infrastructure projects across India that will be implemented between fiscal 2020 and 2025. Going by the present fiscal situation, it will be no small challenge for the Centre to raise the funds. The National Infrastructure Pipeline task force has suggested contract enforcement and asset monetisation among other reforms for achieving infra investment targets.

Monetisation of Surplus Land

Recently, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, in her Budget speech, said: "Idle assets will not contribute to Atmanirbhar Bharat. The non-core assets largely consist of surplus land with government ministries/departments and public sector enterprises." She mentioned, "Monetizing of land can either be by way of direct sale or concession or by similar means. This requires special abilities and for this purpose, the FM proposed to use a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) in the form of a company that would carry out this activity. In order to ensure timely completion of closure of sick or loss-making Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs), a revised mechanism will be introduced and ensure a timely closure of such units."

The idea of monetising non-core assets or surplus land is not new. It has been spoken about at various forums and it did find favour with many eminent thinkers. But unlike monetisation of other assets, land is complex and comes with its own challenges. And, what will this SPV be? How will it be different from a land bank? How will it help the government in revenue generation? Will there be guidance for public sector enterprises for sale of their land? When opting for strategic disinvestment, does land not form part of valuation?

According to Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Secretary, Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM), Ministry of Finance, the proposed SPV will be an organisation that would be more than just a land bank; the bank will be like a portal. Eminent economist and former NITI Aayog Vice-Chairman Arvind Panagariya, who has been arguing in favour of the monetisation of surplus land for resource generation for some time now, points out, "Monetisation of assets can be done via usual auctions that India has deployed in the past in the case of mines and spectrum. In the case of land, one complication is that PSUs often have vast parcels of land. So, for PSUs that must be closed down because they are running perpetually in loss and have no potential buyers, land is their only asset."

This land turns into a challenge when closing down PSUs, and a simple solution, according to Panagariya, is to include this land in a land bank that the government must maintain. And once this is done, he says, the PSU is left with no assets and closure becomes a simple matter. "Similarly, profit-making PSUs also have vast parcels of surplus land. This is because the government has often allocated more land to PSUs than what they actually need or use. When privatising PSUs, their valuation can get distorted on account of this surplus land. The solution once again is to hive off the surplus land and deposit into the land bank and then proceed with privatisation of the PSU," he said.

Therefore, the government must then separately auction the land from the land bank on a continuous basis; he added that "it is important not to let the land in the bank lie idle and, therefore, remain unproductive for too long. Let it come on the market and be productively used." The government is well aware of the challenge this initiative will pose. There are two kinds of land—government land and those owned by CPSEs. CPSE land again falls in two categories-owned by listed companies and those owned by unlisted units. "When we do strategic disinvestment, then we take care of such activities… We hive off non-core assets for listed as well as unlisted companies. The whole idea is to spur the National Infrastructure Pipeline," Pandey said.

In a report published in The Times of India dated February 25, 2021, "The PM supported the planned privatisation of state-run enterprises during a webinar on the Budget 20-21. He reiterated during the talk that privatisation will help free up resources for spending on welfare, development and empower the citizens and create jobs as he sets a target of monetising 100 government owned assets across sectors worth Rs 2.5 lakhs crore."[6] The PM further reiterated, "The money that belongs to the poor is used for such enterprises (PSUs) that puts a huge burden on the economy." [7]

Monetisation Framework

On November 16, 2020, the Department of Disinvestment and Public Asset management (DIPAM) signed an agreement with the World Bank for advisory services on asset monetisation. The DIPAM has a framework for monetising non-core assets. The government is clear that the end objective of this entire process is to put most assets to productive use. It also wants the CPSEs to be so empowered that they can develop their own monetisation plans.

In response to how it could be executed, Pandey suggested: "They need to create consciousness about preparing an asset monetisation plan. We are mandating them to do so and it will be in the performance matrix, based on which marks will be allocated to CPSEs for the asset monetisation

done, then subsequently for its execution also. In a way it is to make the management conscious about raising resources. These resources typically go to the company and not to the government. Receipts for government will come only from government land."

Though it is a well-thought-out plan, there are several probing questions that need to be clarified related to where the monies raised will be parked? Who will handle this money? And what will be the protocol if a PSU wants to do it—do they need the permission of the nodal Ministry or will DIPAM handle it? Besides, there are State PSUs too; will they have a similar protocols? The government needs to ensure that the funds so generated are transparently and speedily deployedeither used for infrastructure development, social development for public good, or to further strengthen PSUs.

The Plan

The Centre plans to transfer five operational roads worth Rs 5,000 crore to the Infrastucture Investment Trust (InvIT) of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and also shift Rs 7000 crore transmission assets to PowerGrid's InvIT. Also, in the pipeline are the monetisation of dedicated freight corridor (DFC) assets by Railways, operational toll roads of NHAI, oil and gas pipeline of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Gas Authority of India Ltd. (GAIL), Hindustan Petroleum, warehousing assets of CPSEs, and Airport Authority of India (AAI) airports in tier two and tier three cities. The Indian Railways, which owns approx. 47,000 hectares of land is the front-runner in ownership of such assets. The NHAI aims to raise Rs 1 trillion via the toll-operate-transfer model over the next 5 years.

NITI Aayog is hand holding the respective asset owners in undertaking the detailed assessment of potential assets for monetisation, and subsequently, the transaction process for monetisation of various and identified assets. This would bring the statutory bodies, public sector enterprises and other such undertakings within the purview of the government of India and state governments. It has decided to empanel transaction advisors for monetisation of assets and carry forward the process of disinvestment of public sector enterprises.[8] NITI Aayog also envisages the provision of support to state governments for identification of potential state public sector entities for disinvestment and in undertaking the end to end disinvestment process for identified entities.

Stock Market Response to Union Budget 2020-2021

The inference is simple: Being India's biggest oil marketer, lender or power generator and transmitter might seem a big deal to many, but not to

the markets that value performance more than size. In this case PSUs are seen to deliver value not to shareholders or taxpayers but to ministers and bureaucrats. While the markets are not always right, it's clear that the only way to unlock the hidden value of PSUs is by liberating them from government control. The latest Union Budget has referred to a new disinvestment policy that aims at privatising all PSUs and limiting them to a "bare minimum presence" even in the so-called strategic sectors. But given the Narendra Modi government's record of statism in both social and economic affairs, how much it walks the talk remains to be seen.[9]

But it isn't just PSU versus the private sector. The markets are also valuing consumer facing firms more than those in engineering and capital goods. Thus, the market cap of Hindustan Unilever (Rs 5,09,208 crore) or Asian Paints (Rs 2, 28,975 crore) exceeds L&T's (Rs 2,03,959 crore). Even more revealing are the numbers for Page Industries (Rs 30,739 crore) and Jubilant Food Works (Rs 41,089 crore), compared to SAIL (Rs 27,692 crore) and BHEL (Rs 13,824 crore). If the makers of Jockey innerwear and Domino's Pizza are valued more than steel and power equipment manufacturers, it points to two things. India's growth will continue to be consumption and not investment led. Second demonetisation, GST and lockdown may have killed the informal sector. But organised and branded product players have grabbed a bigger share of the pie, which itself has perhaps shrunk. The next market rally is likely to only consolidate these trends.

Challenges

At present the government has a tough challenge managing its public sector efficiently. To face the challenges, disinvestment is the only mechanism proposed by the government. It has garnered an average of Rs 0.56 lakh crore, since 2014 through disinvestment. The government has already mooted an overhauled policy for Central Public Sector Undertakings (CPSUs) with this aim, barring four strategic areas; other sectors were divested under the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan in the last year. The cabinet committee of economic affairs has cleared the CPSUs policy on January 27.[10]

But the Covid pandemic and the consequent lockdown has badly hurt the Indian economy. In order to mitigate the ill effects, various experts have proposed direct monetisation of government deficit. The budget for 2021-22 proposes a national monetisation pipeline of potential brownfield projects. There are discussions underway for railways to tap its dedicated freight corridor, AAIs airports in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, to be monetised.

However, there seems to be greater urgency to sell the assets this time around. That said, how the assets are bundled and how speedily can the

initiative be kick-started, will make all the difference. On the one hand, the pandemic has made companies wary of big spends and on the other, there are sectors that are still booming in India and are in the sustained investment phase. With online retailers such as Amazon, Flipkart and now Reliance Industries on an expansion mode and with deep pockets to beef up infrastructure to support their supply chains, the appetite for land, warehousing, and railway assets will grow. Real estate is a good sell too, and the government can unlock value in land especially with funds such as Brookfield and Blackstone fairly active in this space. Globally, low interest rates are nudging investors to take bigger risks.[11]

A big chunk of the disinvestment target can be met if the government-owned Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), which has been inching towards the auction block for some time now, is able to garner the valuation it is estimated to command. A 10 per cent disinvestment at a market value of Rs 10 trillion can alone bring in Rs 1 trillion. The numbers seem big but achievable. The bill has been placed. Whether it has passed with flying colours or has failed without a whimper will be known next year.

Caution Needed

There is no need to sell assets outright for monetisation. The government should be smart enough not to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. A disposition of public utilisation may take the form of a long-term lease, known as a concession agreement. There are several viable commercial models to facilitate this objective through adequate upfront premiums, regular revenue shares, standard service delivery parameters with defined penalties and termination clauses in the contract. Clarity over tariff setting and concession periods of long duration is essential to motivate the private sector to create assets of national importance. The bidding process needs to be structured correctly to achieve a win-win scenario for all: the government, the investor and the public. This is also a sensitive decision-making process that needs to take into account the correct valuation of the assets in question, the future infrastructure needs of the country and the private sector's ability to fulfil the targeted objective. Equally important is the willingness of the citizens at large to accept management of public infrastructure by the private sector. A badly managed public-private partnership (PPP) experience may cause long lasting damage to public perception. Dialogue is an effective way to build strong public support and dispelling any doubts created by a few vested interests.

Given the current circumstances, India would have to resort to monetising the deficit as such a large increase in expenditure cannot be managed without

monetisation of government debt. However, in doing so, it should not forget the lessons from the balance of payments crisis in 1991, and a near-crisis in 2013, which were a result of extended fiscal irresponsibility.

While there is no ideal level of debt which is mandatory, most economists however believe developing economies like India should not have debt higher than 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the GDP. Hence, India should commit to a pre-determined amount of additional borrowing and to reversing the action once the crisis is over. Only such clearly stated fiscal control can retain market confidence in India's economy.

Conclusion

A successful monetisation of public assets demands a four-step process. First, the motivation of the policy formulating government should be understood. Second, a detailed analysis of assets (both operational and financial) is needed. Third, analysing the current and future potential of such assets. Fourth, carefully managing all the stakeholders and executing the project with care to deliver the envisioned objective. As a nation, it is imperative that unutilised assets are not hoarded and left to stagnate. For years, this has resulted in suboptimal economic development. Just as money has an opportunity cost and there are several uses to which it can be put rather than being locked in a bank account; every unutilised asset is an opportunity foregone to make something bigger and better for our civilisation.

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Africa in a Post-COVID-19 World

Innocent Chidi Ejiofor

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a global crisis that has posed several health and socioeconomic challenges across the globe. Despite gradual reopening of economies from initial lockdowns and rollout of vaccines that have boosted expectations of global recovery, the virus continues to spread in waves triggering new lockdown measures. In Africa, the challenges of rising COVID-19 cases and socioeconomic complications due to disruptions in global economic value chains have created uncertainties in regional stability and economic growth.

Prior to the epidemic, Africa's regional economic growth was projected to rise from 2.9 per cent in 2019 to 3.2 per cent in 2020, and 3.5 per cent in 2021.[1] Significant gains were being recorded in poverty reduction and health statistics. The appreciation of technological innovations across Africa was on the increase. Processes for political unity and economic integration were at advanced stages. The Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) launched in May 2019 promised to increase intra-African trade by 25 per cent by 2040.[2] The pandemic with its associated preventive measures has generated significant setbacks, mainly in terms of trade and lost productivity in all key growth enhancing sectors of African economies.

Africa's real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is projected to have contracted by about 3.4 per cent, with potential GDP losses of about $189.7 billion from the pre-COVID-19 estimated GDP of $2.59 trillion for 2020 and $47 billion from potential GDP of $2.26 trillion for 2021.[3] These setbacks present enormous challenges to Africa's regional security. While the full consequences of the pandemic remain uncertain, the situation could pose prolonged humanitarian, socioeconomic, and political challenges

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with destabilising effects on regional economic growth and integration. It is against this backdrop that this article seeks to examine the challenges facing African regions in the wake of COVID-19.

Impact of COVID-19 on Africa

The first case of COVID-19 in Africa was recorded in Egypt on February 14, 2020. The desire to contain the spread of the virus resulted in most African nations imposing full or partial lockdowns that saw the temporary closure of frontiers, businesses, schools and social services. Following the enforcement of safety measures against the virus and considerable socioeconomic costs of lockdowns, African countries like the rest of the world began to gradually open their economies, despite massive acceleration in the rate of infections across the continent. As of March 23, 2021, confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Africa are reported at 4,116,102 with 110,163 reported deaths, and 3,689,576 recoveries, resulting to a Case Fatality Rate (CFR) of about 2.7 per cent.[4] The statistics of confirmed cases of the pandemic across African regions are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Reported Cases of COVID-19 Across African Regions - 23 March 2021

S/No	Region	Total Reported Cases	Total Recoveries	Total Deaths	% No of Cases	Case Fatality Rate (CFR) %	Remarks
1.	Southern Africa	1,891,043	1,774,549	59,220	45.94	3.13	
2.	Northern Africa	1,220,213	1,080,253	34,996	29.64	2.87	
3.	Eastern Africa	464,950	347,712	8,475	11.3	1.82	
4.	Western Africa	422,991	385,753	5,541	10.28	1.31	
5.	Central Africa	116,905	101,309	1,931	2.84	1.65	
6.	**Total**	**4,116,102**	**3,689,576**	**110,163**	**100**	**2.68**	

Source: Adapted from All Africa, https://allafrilca.com/coronavirus/#covid19_map

Africa reported fewer cases of Coronavirus and low CFR despite having poor health infrastructure compared to other developed regions. This could be attributed in one hand to Africa's longstanding experience with infectious

disease. When the WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic, doctors and public health officials in African countries that already had experience with outbreaks of other infectious disease set up training programs to help medical personnel at regional hospitals recognise the symptoms of COVID-19.[5] They brought in testing kits and re-instated the hand washing stands that had been ubiquitous during the Ebola outbreak. Additionally, wearing of masks was not politicised. According to the WHO, the single best way to stop the spread of COVID-19 is by wearing a mask. Hence, the wearing of mask by majority of Africans was significant in containing the spread of the virus.

Early shutdown in major African countries like Kenya, South Africa and Nigeria contributed to containing the spread of the virus.[6] Businesses were closed, borders shut, gatherings were banned, in-person schooling stopped, and curfews were enforced. Apart from Africa, countries such as India and South Korea also enforced early lockdowns. These moves were unpopular and economically destructive, but they also helped in controlling the spread of the virus. Another contributing factor to the continent's low CFR, is Africa's younger populace. Africa's median age is 19 years old, with fewer people over the age of 50.[7] Because the virus is far more dangerous for the older population, a relatively young population would result in a lower CFR. Furthermore, some of the comorbidities that appear to make the pandemic deadlier, like diabetes, obesity and hypertension, are also less common among the continent's population than they are in other parts of the world.

While Africa has been able to relatively slow the spread of the virus compared to other regions, the pandemic aside the growing health and death toll, has had severe impact on the continent. The impact of the pandemic on African economies is discussed in subsequent paragraphs.

Impact on Healthcare

The coronavirus has exposed the gaps in Africa's healthcare systems. The dearth of healthcare workers in most African countries, has severely limited effective response to the virus. In 2017, only 3 (Libya, Mauritius, and Tunisia) out of 57 African countries had met the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommendations of having 100 physicians per 100,000 people.[8] More than 20 countries have less than one hospital bed per 1,000 people.[9] Additionally, Africa imports about 94 per cent of its pharmaceuticals.[10] Hence, the pandemic with associated shutdown of firms and restrictions in global exports has resulted to increased demand and rise in prizes of essential medical and pharmaceutical supplies. Furthermore, the inadequacies in number of healthcare centres, diagnostic facilities, Intensive Care Units

(ICU) and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) across African countries constitute drawbacks to Africa's preparedness to contain the pandemic. These shortfalls could be attributed to Africa's low health expenditure.

In 2017, Africa's total health expenditure was 6.3 per cent of Africa's GDP, against the world average of about 10 per cent.[11] Only 5 countries have met the budget commitment of appropriating at least 15 per cent of national budget for healthcare systems, agreed during the Abuja Declaration 2001.[12] Low public health spending impedes health infrastructure development, escalates out-of-pocket expenses for healthcare, plunging more people into poverty. Therefore, African countries need to increase their fiscal allocation to the public health sector.

Economic Impact

Africa plunged into economic recession for the first time in five decades due to the COVID-19 pandemic.[13] The disruptions in global value chains affected key drivers of African economies with drastic decline in output. The vulnerabilities encompassed several economic and socioeconomic sectors including, travel and tourism, commodities, financial inflows, education and labor, amongst others.

The pandemic has taken a toll on Africa's travel and tourism sector resulting in losses in direct and indirect jobs. The contribution of the air transport industry to Africa's economy is estimated at US$ 55.8 billion. It supports 6.2 million jobs and contributes 2.6 per cent of the continent's GDP.[14] The restrictions in interstate and international travels have affected African airlines which are large employers and have linkages to other sectors like the tourism sector. The travel and tourism sector in Africa is projected to have lost at least US$ 50 billion in revenues and 2 million direct and indirect jobs.[15] The impact has been much higher on the economies of countries like Seychelles, Cabo Verde, Mauritius, and other countries that have tourism contributing to over 10 per cent of their GDP.

External financial flows in form of remittances and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) have dipped following the pandemic. The generation of domestic resources in African countries is low, hence, Africa relies disproportionately on external financial inflows. In 2018, external financial flows to Africa constituted 9.7 per cent of Africa's GDP compared to only 3.6 per cent for high-income countries.[16] Remittances have been the main source of external financial flows for many African countries as shown in Table 2. In 2018, Africa recorded a total of US$ 82.8 billion in remittances; it represented about 5 per cent of the GDP in 13 countries with Egypt

and Nigeria making up to 60 per cent of total remittances inflow to the continent.[17] The pandemic-induced recession and restrictive measures that prevented senders from working and earning money has reduced remittances inflow from Africans in diaspora. The plunge in remittances and FDI have created severe financial deficits that make urgent fiscal reforms necessary for African economies.

Table 2: Africas External Sources of Finance for National Development

Source of Revenues	Financial Flows by Year									
	(in million of US$)					(as a % of GDP)				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Inward Foreign Direct Investment	53.9	56.9	46.5	41.4	45.9	2.2	2.5	2.2	1.9	2.0
Port Folio Investment	30.4	22.2	6.2	57.1	36.5	1.2	1.0	0.3	2.7	1.6
Remittances	71.6	71.9	67.3	77.4	82.8	3.0	3.2	3.2	3.7	3.7
Official Dev. Assistance (Not total all donors)	54.1	50.1	50.4	53.8	55.1	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.5	2.4
Total Foreign Inflow	**209.9**	**201.1**	**170.4**	**229.7**	**220.3**	**8.5**	**8.9**	**8.0**	**10.7**	**9.7**
Tax Revenues	**408.9**	**339.4**	**309.7**	**328.7**	**362.5**	**16.4**	**14.9**	**14.4**	**15.2**	**16.0**
Private Savings	**507.0**	**419.7**	**408.3**	**415.7**	**427.5**	**20.6**	**18.7**	**19.3**	**19.6**	**19.1**

Source: OECD (2020), COVID-19 in Africa, Regional Socioeconomic Implications and Policy Priorities, p. 11.

The plunge in the prices of commodities, particularly crude oil has severely impacted the capacity of several African countries to contain the virus and implement safety nets policies. Oil prices fell by about 50 per cent in the first quarter of 2020. The UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) estimated the losses related to the fall in oil prices at US$ 65 billion for the region.[18] Similarly, non-oil commodity prices declined with natural gas and metal prices dropping by 30 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively.[19] The fall in prices of commodities along with decline in travel and consumer goods demand from developed countries, presented African economies with massive capital outflows and exchange rate depreciations. With low export revenues and exchange rate depreciation, African countries have been constrained in their ability to service their external debt and increasing debt burdens across the continent. The pandemic makes it imperative for African economies heftily relying on primary commodities, such as oil, to diversify and lessen their vulnerabilities to external shocks.

Challenges to Recovery

Africa faces greater challenges than most regions of the world in the wake of the pandemic. The lack of capacity of Africa's healthcare systems, low fiscal generation, rising debt burden and low technological innovations places Africa in a precarious situation. Additionally, with an estimated population of 1.3 billion, Africa is confronted with rising unemployment and deepening inequality that could worsen food insecurity and instability.

Healthcare

The COVID-19 epidemic has worsened already existing cases of cholera, HIV/AIDS, and the resurgence of Ebola in West Africa amongst other diseases that have significantly drained healthcare resources. The pandemic has created more health expenditure resulting in increased fiscal deficit in healthcare sector that could impact Africa's access to vaccines. Already, Africa is facing significant challenges gaining access to the COVID-19 vaccines (COVAX). As on March 15, 2021, only about 23.6 million doses of COVAX have been distributed across Africa, which corresponds to a regional coverage of 1.7 per cent.[20] A rapid access to safe and effective vaccination is necessary to prevent severe cases and related deaths, and is strategic for the control of the pandemic and return of the continent's economic growth.

Fiscal Deficits and Debt Sustainability

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in huge outflows of capital from African countries with rising fiscal deficits. Also, with increased fiscal support and private sector borrowing to cushion the effects of the pandemic, the debt burdens of the African countries have increased. The changing reliance of Africa countries on private sector lending has caused significant increases in the debt servicing obligations. High debt levels leave African countries vulnerable to sudden deterioration in investor sentiments. Among Africa's largest creditors are China's "policy banks" that have been extensive creditors to African countries in the past decade. This leaves Africa's debt burden vulnerable to politicisation between the Western lenders and China. High debt burden along with the collapse of export revenues has led to substantial currency depreciations and rising borrowing cost particularly for commodity exporters. A reform in fiscal policies and debt relief from multinational institutions is imperative to alleviate Africa's financial situation in the wake of the pandemic.

Unemployment and Deepening Inequality

The COVID-19 shutdown has caused huge job losses across Africa with the informal workforce being mostly affected. In Africa, 86 per cent of total employment is informal, with up to 91 per cent in West African countries.[21] The inability to work and layoffs due to the recession puts the survival of many in informal jobs under threat. Informal workers such as traders, retail, and manual workers have been hard-hit resulting to increase in joblessness, poverty, and increased inequality. Without policy interventions, the situation may exacerbate resentment among the vulnerable populace. This necessitates reforms that would create safety nets to ameliorate the consequences of the crisis on large segments of the population.

Food Insecurity

An estimated two-thirds of African countries are net importers of basic food.[22] The pandemic together with the locust invasion in East and West Africa in 2019 has created severe shortages in food supplies, worsening already existing food insecurity. It is projected that about 11.4 million people are in immediate need of assistance in West and Sahel African regions.[23] Over 50 million people could face a combination of health and security crisis arising from food insecurity.[24] With the disruptions in global supply chains, worsened by speculative hoarding of food items, inflation in food prices has risen significantly. Higher food prices could signal impending shortages with potential to cause social unrest. With the disruptions in imports from China, importers, traders, and poor consumers in some countries are being seriously affected as they earn their livelihood trading Chinese products. Therefore, mitigating the rising food insecurity in Africa through policies that could encourage local food production is necessary to ensure regional stability.

Rise in Violence and Extremism

The advent of the coronavirus has largely shifted focus away from conflicts, insurgency and other security challenges that have entrenched themselves across African regions. With rising poverty level, unemployment and inequality, more people could be vulnerable to criminal and insurgent groups across Africa. African countries confronted with challenging socio-political conditions such as political instability and conflicts, food shortages, high refugee concentration, as well as lack of transparency in governance and public institutions are most vulnerable. Inter-communal and inter-ethnic violence that currently exist in some countries in the region, could worsen as the pandemic's impact leads to the loss of livelihoods particularly

of informal workers who account for significant portion of Africa's workforce. Similarly, civil unrest could worsen with weakened socioeconomic conditions. Extremist and terrorist groups, especially Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram, could use the pandemic to improve their standing and increase their recruitment of vulnerable youths in Somalia, West Africa and across African regions. Enhancing transparency in governance and public institutions and soliciting international support to contain the virus could lay a path towards establishing safety nets to prevent instability.

Way Forward

African governments have prioritized the procurement, and speeded up the widespread distribution of COVID-19 vaccines. Nevertheless, outside the immediate policy priority, extra action is required to energise a return to robust enduring growth that could withstand future external shocks. This calls for policy reforms to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on Africa as discussed in subsequent paragraphs. While fiscal policy reform and revitalisation of the healthcare sector have been discussed earlier in the article, a few other areas too merit attention.

Diversification of Economies

The pandemic has revealed the fragility of growth strategies concentrated on a narrow set of sectors. African economies will need to be sufficiently flexible to adjust to the demands of the post-pandemic landscape. Economies that heftily rely on tourism or primary commodities such as oil will need to diversify to lessen their vulnerabilities to external shocks. This can be enhanced by policies to foster sectoral reallocation of labour from lower productivity to higher growth sectors or firms. Investment in education, digital technology, improved government service delivery, and deepened efforts to guarantee a level playing field for entrepreneurs and innovators can nudge economies along the way towards greater diversification.

Investment in Digital Infrastructure

The pandemic has pushed firms to increasingly rely on digital solutions. Education and healthcare systems have expanded their reliance on online learning or consultations. The use of online payment systems and other forms of cashless payments as well as online commerce has expanded rapidly. Wider availability of digital services can mitigate the impact of mobility restrictions and accelerate access to government assistance and other financial services. It can facilitate the discovery of new job opportunities

and increase employment. It can support education and facilitate higher firm level productivity. Expanded use of digital services requires investment in digital infrastructure with appropriate regulatory framework to ensure safety, efficiency, and minimum quality standards. One way of improving Africa's digital infrastructure is through international collaboration. In this regard, countries like India offer a potential partner to African countries in digital infrastructure development. India has become the global digital capabilities hub with about 75 per cent of global digital talent present in the country.[25] The digital India initiative launched in July 2015 has facilitated access to both government and private sector services by the Indian populace. African countries could collaborate with India in digital infrastructure development to enhance the delivery of healthcare, education and other economic services to the citizens.

Improving Governance and Business Climate

Accountability in governance can promote trust in government. African countries need to take steps to reduce corruption and promote the rule of law. Currently, most African countries fall below 50 per cent in the 2020 Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI).[26] Governance as well as business climate reforms can raise investment and growth in Total Factor Production (TFP) directly by boosting private returns on productivity-enhancing investments in human and physical capital. They can also promote investment and TFP growth indirectly by eliminating barriers to other drivers of durable growth such as innovation, openness to global commerce and finance, competition and fiscal development.

International Trade Cooperation

International cooperation supports beneficial Global Value Chain (GVC) participation. Increasing GVC participation has become a critical driver of growth and job creation. Production networks organised mostly on regional basis attract more GVCs resulting in enhanced regional and country-wise benefits. Africa remains a small actor in global trade in intermediate goods with low GVC participation. In an average European country, 65 per cent of the imported intermediaries embodied in its exports in 2018 originated from other European countries; this share is about 55 per cent for an average East Asian economy.[27] In contrast, Africa is more integrated globally than regionally, having only 11 per cent of trade in intermediate goods. The AfCFTA is expected to bridge this gap by

increasing the share of foreign value added in exports within the region. This involves effective trade liberalisations within the region to lower barriers to trade and investment.

Regional Trade Integration

Repositioning the African region to effectively respond to post COVID-19 challenges requires a coordinated regional front in trade and services delivery. The full implementation of the AfCFTA presents a unique platform to attract more FDI and joint investments with prospects of local transformation and technology transfer. Accelerating progress towards the next phases of the AfCFTA, particularly the agreements in investments, competition policy, and e-commerce, is critical to positioning the region as an attractive investment hub in the wake of the pandemic. Additionally, the implementation of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan of Africa and establishment of the African Medicine Agency are necessary to reduce Africa's overdependence on imports for its medical supplies. These regional integration frameworks would reposition Africa towards the path of self-reliance and robust economic growth.

Conclusion

The disruptions in global value chains due to the coronavirus affected key drivers of African economies with drastic decline in output. The lack of preparedness to tackle the pandemic could primarily be attributed to low fiscal expenditure in the health sector by most countries. Improvement in the health systems budget allotment of most countries is imperative for enhanced health infrastructure development. A rapid access to safe and effective vaccination is necessary to prevent severe cases and related deaths and is strategic for the control of the pandemic and return of the continent's economic growth.

The fall in prices of commodities, plunge in remittances and FDI created severe financial deficits that makes urgent fiscal reforms necessary for African economies. A reform in fiscal policies and debt relief from multinational institutions is imperative to alleviate Africa's financial situation in the wake of the pandemic. Mitigating the rising food insecurity in Africa requires policies that could encourage local food production to ensure regional stability. Enhancing transparency in governance could lay a path towards establishing safety nets to prevent instability.

Repositioning the African region to effectively respond to post COVID-19 challenges requires a coordinated regional front in trade and services delivery. The full implementation of the AfCFTA presents a

unique platform to attract more FDI and joint investments with prospects of local transformation and technology transfer. Such regional integration frameworks would reposition Africa towards the path of self-reliance and robust economic growth.

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NDC Journal

Articles

Understanding Agitation Dynamics in India
An Integrated Approach

Girish Kalia

Abstract

Internal security and stability are extremely important for India's national security and all-round development. Dissidence and agitations are disruptive threats with a propensity to spiral into public expression of rage and violence. India can ill afford to ignore the power of numbers on the streets, and must evolve a well-planned, calibrated and coordinated response mechanism that goes beyond coercive strategies. An integrated agitation management strategy, empowered with strong laws, efficient government machinery, information dominance and well-trained/equipped personnel will enable management of agitations in a responsive, professional and calibrated manner. Such an agitation management strategy would broadly support the emergence of India as a responsible and restrained power of global consequence.

Introduction

India, with its vastness, diversity and heterogeneity with unequal distribution of wealth, opportunities and public services is bound to experience internal fissures. While the need for a strong military to safeguard the country against external/internal threats cannot be overemphasised, it is the strength of government institutions and their cohesive functioning which determine the texture of the internal security (IS) situation. With a pre-independence legacy of civil disobedience, people in India have questioned the decisions of the government on numerous occasions even to the extent of defying

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state authority. At times, tough decisions taken by the policy makers, many of which are considered essential on many counts by governments in power, are not accepted by all sections of the society in equal measures which leads to dissidence and agitations. A failure by the state to diffuse the situation through dialogue or concessions often leads to the spiralling of dissent into public expressions of violence. In response, the state is often forced to come down with a heavy hand on protestors, which rarely results in resolution of the crisis. In such a situation, efficient and coordinated management of civil disturbance at every stage thus becomes extremely critical. It is in this context that an all-encompassing integrated agitation management strategy needs to be conceived and articulated that represents a whole-of-government approach.

Starting with the Arab Spring in 2011, the last decade emerged as the 'Year of the Street Protester'.

[1]The United Nation observed that demonstrations throughout the world reflected peoples' frustration with the system at large and the inequalities in terms of opportunities and wealth.[2] These movements, driven by commoners and propelled by social media, were directed mostly against inept and dysfunctional governance systems, which largely responded with force to either quell the movements or initiate sub-optimal negotiations.[3] India's response to similar protests has been a mix of several methodologies that have emerged through a process of trial and error and may not have always conformed with an aspirational model that goes with India's status as a firm but responsible and restrained democracy.[4] While it is not the mandate of the state to pander to international opinion or cave-in to unreasonable demands that undermine the well-being of the larger civil society, a large democracy such as India must consider choosing a reconciliatory and reformist approach to manage protests and agitations with the umbrella of force ready for use only as a last resort.[5] Can Kautilya's lessons of *Saam/Daam/Dand/Bhed* be applied contextually to manage agitations, assuage the grievances of citizens and concurrently serve national interest and bind a fragmented and yet highly conscious Indian society?

Understanding Agitations

The phenomenon of public outrage of dissent/dissatisfaction in the form of agitations, protests, demonstrations or unrests is not new to India. While Kautilya classified them as security threats, independent India's legal-provisions and public order methodology strangely are not focused

on agitations. Ineffective handling of discontentment can cause a conflict of interests to spiral out of control and become a major internal security challenge. Recent history has shown that protests and demonstrations have the potential of turning into civil wars like the ones that have ravaged Syria. The disruptive potential and far-reaching consequences of agitations witnessed during last few years in Kashmir[6] and other parts of the country, underscore the inescapable requirement of a coordinated strategy to manage them. Some of the contradictions that have impacted this realm are constitutional provisions which underscore that "every situation in which the security of state is threatened, is a public order problem."[7] However, it is also stated that while The Indian Union Government is mandated to protect the states against 'external aggression' and 'internal disturbances',[8] the maintenance of public order or ensuring safety/peace/tranquillity is the prime function of state governments.[9] These contradictions leave crucial voids in the effective and efficient management of agitations which can be bridged only through a synergised strategy.

Most armed conflicts in the post-World War II period have been fought within the borders of nation-states, where the dominant form of strife is internal conflict, and the enemy is more of an opponent: fellow citizen whose aim is not to destroy the security forces (SF) but to gain control over the thinking and behaviour of people.[10] From peaceful dissent to public expression of discord in the form of agitation to civil unrest and subversion to insurgency and civil war, internal-conflict can take any form to cause public disorder/anarchy which can lead to decay, destruction and eventual disintegration of the state. Unambiguous understanding of these forms of conflict is therefore necessary to formulate a calibrated response in India, which concurrently faces a multiplicity of external threats that have shown signs of blending with internal security fissures to derail India's progress towards leading power status.

Broad Causes of Agitations in India

Agitations are an inseparable part of a vibrant democracy like India and help establish transparency and accountability. A country with 1654 minor/major languages, six major religions, 52 major tribes, 6,400 castes/sub-castes[11] has the potential for generating mass movements on religious, social, linguistic and ethnic issues. Compounded by social evils and inapt governance, India is also experiencing what one observer called a "churning period, with people's frustrations boiling over poor roads, shoddy

schools, rising inequality and the pervasive reach of official corruption."[12] Lieutenant General RK Nanavatty, an accomplished practitioner-scholar argues, "Conflict is inherent in democratic societies, whereas some forms of dissent are legitimate, use of organised force and violence to achieve political, social or economic objective is not; it is illegal and unjustified." The common causes of unrest in India can be summed up under the heads of social, communal, economic, administrative and political. The key features of each cause are listed in the chart as follows:

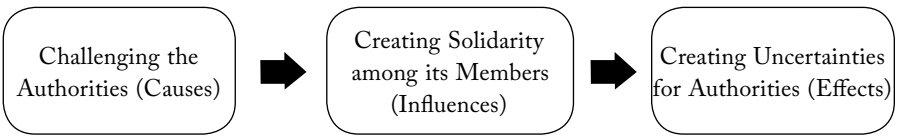
SOCIAL	COMMUNAL	ECONOMIC	ADMINISTRATIVE	POLITICAL
• Crimes Against Women • Social Inequalities • Societal Divides • Caste System • Oppression • Regionalism	• Religious/ Ethnocentricism • Fundamentalism • Superstition • Gender Biases • Ideological Beliefs • Indoctrination	• Poverty and Unemployment • Lack of Development • Income Inequality • Lack of Dignity of Labour • Environmental Issues	• Non Inclusive Policy Formulation • Poor Governance • Prolonged Inaction • Corruption • Lack of Transparency • High-Handed Approach	• Vote Bank Politics • Political Crimes • Non Redressal of Grievances • Nepotism • Lack of Accountability

Agitations have evolved rapidly over the last decade due to increased globalisation/interdependence, proliferation of satellite TV and mobile/ internet connectivity. Social-media manipulations and fake websites have developed immense potential to cause/divert/exasperate/influence or neutralise agitations by spreading misinformation/fabricated news/ rumours, or by promoting engineered narratives and propaganda.[14] As a result, there has been a steady rise in the frequency and intensity of agitations in India, which warrants serious attention. The requirement of analysing the effects of agitations has become even more pronounced since the latest 'Civil Unrest Index' report by a leading 'data modelling, risk analysis and strategic forecasting company Verisk Maplecroft' placed India in the top 20 extreme countries in the world that faced the risk of agitations.[15] If India is to emerge as a major economic and a global power in the coming decades, it cannot be an 'extreme risk country' on the index used by business houses to evaluate threats, physical risk to employees, transport disruptions and damage to assets. A country aspiring to attract foreign investments needs to be a low-risk destination and must evaluate agitation dynamics more seriously.

Answers also need to be found about the persisting and deep-rooted external influence that Pakistan exerts on agitations in J&K, and the latent potential for similar influence in Punjab. Having realised the

power of mass protests during the Arab Spring, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) began a 'non-terror front' against India in Nov 2014.[16] Instigation of agitations in Jawaharlal Nehru University and Kashmir Valley in 2016 could very well be part of such strategy to raise the violence bar to keep India's security forces engaged internally in every possible way.

The success of an agitation depends on its causes, influences and effects. Renowned social scientist Tarrow[17] describes three features of a movement. The correlation between the features as depicted in the chart that follows, explains the importance of understanding the causes and influences of agitations to alter the effects.



The effects or outcome of an agitation are determined largely by the kind of mobilisation and internal/external support it generates. The more disruptive an agitation, the more responsive the state is. Interestingly, the outcome depends on the intermediary outcomes resulting from persuasion, mediation, talks, external factors and internal abetment, all of which dictate whether the agitation heads in the direction of more violence, or resolution of the dispute/discontentment.

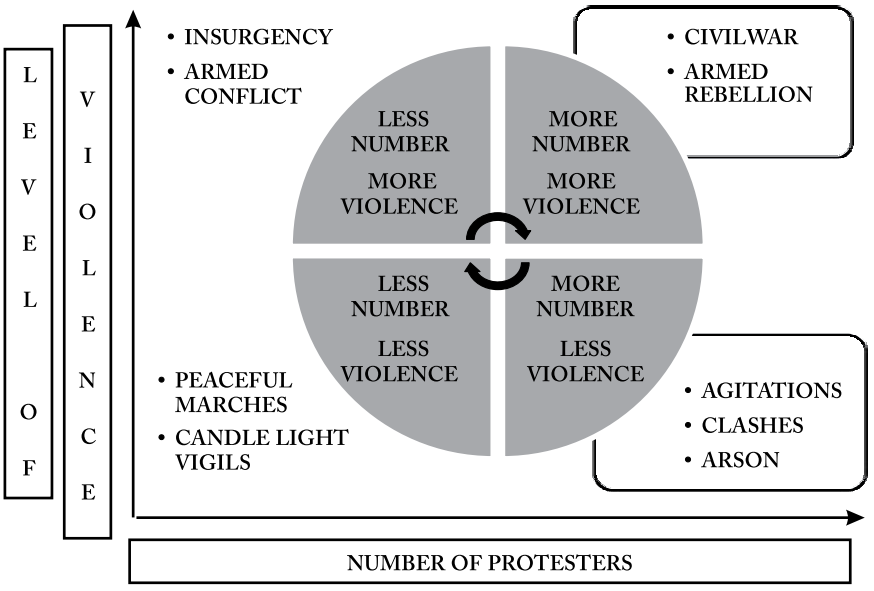
Influences

Five key factors have been identified which influence agitations. The character (violent/peaceful) of the agitation is invariably and strongly impacted by ***leadership***. A true and inspirational leader with age-old practice of *Anshan* (fasting) can lead a movement successfully even in today's world and mobilise thousands of people as demonstrated by Anna Hazare during the initial months of the countrywide agitation against corruption in 2011. A movement launched for ***a just cause***, believed or perceived to be just, gathers momentum and becomes self-sustaining. The Nirbhaya Movement though propelled into public view by media became self-propelling as people, especially the youth and women, aligned themselves for a cause. Killing of a black man by police was the 'just cause' for the recent mass-agitations in USA with posters of 'justice, black lives matter and I can't breathe.'[18]

Social Media has been the single most powerful influence on agitations in the last decade. It enables 'mass self-organisation/communication, provides collective sense of identity,[19] empowers with accelerated exchange of real-time information' and is driven by virtual, faceless leaders. The live coverage of the events makes the functioning of the security forces more challenging and accountable by reducing 'information asymmetry' between them and the protesters. The course of an agitation is greatly influenced by the ideological/moral/financial ***abetment*** or incentives offered to the protesters before or during the agitation. Reported involvement of a group called 'Pinjra Tod'[20] during the 2019-20 violence in Delhi and circulation of communally volatile videos which incited the masses are live examples of internal and external support. The ***inability, inaction and inadequacies*** of the administration to act in time or ineptly to handle an agitation may also influence its future course. In most instances, the responsiveness of the state determines the effectiveness and trajectory of the agitation.[21]

Types of Agitations

Dictionaries describe the word 'agitation' as "the act of attempting to stir up public opinion for or against something," or "a persistent and sustained attempt to arouse public feeling or influence public opinion (as by appeals, discussions, or demonstrations)." Protest waves and civil wars are interconnected intimately through a dynamic process, though the determinants of the transition differ. Agitations or protests manifest in various forms, from individual statements to mass demonstrations and aim to influence public opinion or government policy. When the protests as forms of self-expression are restricted due to governmental policy, economic/religious/social reasons or media, they may assume the form of civil disobedience, or other vociferous/violent forms of resistance. When the agitations are not managed well and result in a political and governance vacuum, they can morph into insurgencies or civil war.[22] As the appeal of the movement broadens, it can become self-sustaining and absorb the heavy hand of the state. The figure below represents the various genres of agitations and public protests and the relationship between numbers and levels of violence.[23]



Some Agitation Models

Since India has not formally articulated a strategy that seeks to first understand and then to prevent/manage agitations, a cursory examination of other models may be instructive in evolving an India-centric model. The British model describes protests as activities undertaken to support or oppose an event, idea, campaign or policy. The Chief Inspector of Her Majesty's Constabulary[24] highlights five types of protest activity. These are *Organised Declared Protests, Non-Declared Planned Protests, Non-Declared Spontaneous Protests, Long-Term Protests* and *Violent Protests.* Each of these have specific risks with spontaneous, long-term and violent protests having significantly heightened risks of violence and requirements of trained manpower and resources to control them.

Crane Brinton structured the American Revolution into seven stages.[25] He described how a normal agitation emanating from public criticism of a regime, when joined by the people in large numbers, can become a national movement. Despite British repression to control the situation, widespread dissatisfaction and belief in the safety of numbers drove the Americans to a revolution. Intellectuals orchestrated the violence and ensured a calibrated transfer of power after a long struggle for freedom.

While in a modern Indian context, the independence struggle was largely a non-violent agitation directed at an external colonial power, it cannot be likened or templated to any of the internal fissures that have been experienced in a post-colonial and democratic India. While revolution or regime change is unimaginable, it is important to revisit history to understand that timely decisions/indecisions regarding concessions/repression can turn the tide of any agitation/movement. The street protests in Kashmir have become violent on numerous occasions and Pakistan has exploited the sentiment to incite a separatist insurgency that have displayed hues of a proxy war. It has also been proven that lasting culminations of insurgencies have been shaped more by social, political and economic change and less by military action.[26]

The Indian Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) describes four broad categories of IS issues (not challenges) in India as 'terrorism in the hinterland, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) in some areas, security situation in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and insurgency in the North-Eastern States.'[27] Words like protests, agitations, unrest or demonstrations do not even figure in the Annual Reports of MHA. It is evident that MHA does not consider them as IS issues/challenges. Although the Constitution of India in Article 355 specifies that it is the duty of the Union to 'protect the State against external threat or internal disturbance,' yet IS does not figure anywhere in the three lists of the Seventh Schedule. Under Article 352, the President has to make a 'Proclamation of Emergency' in case there is an armed rebellion in any state or the entire country. The Fifth Report of the 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) outlined,"A democratic society is necessarily characterized by public expression of dissent arising from socio-economic, political and cultural factors." It also mentions, "Every situation in which the security of state is threatened is a public order problem." Public order problems become chronic if their root causes are not addressed adequately and due to misgovernance. 'Absence of any disturbance' means Public Order, which is strengthened when the liberty and dignity of citizens is protected. While petty crimes can be termed as Law and Order issues, violent agitations/communal clashes would be threats to public order whereas more serious threats like terrorist attacks would threaten the security of the state.

The Indian Police Act of 1861 and the reports of the MHA over the years do not have any clear gradation of agitations/protests.

Referring to David H Bayley,[28] a well-known authority on Indian Police, the Fifth Report on Public Order does mention three types of public violence: *violence of remonstration, violence of confrontation* and *violence of frustration*.

Dynamics of Agitation

The effectiveness of an agitation/movement depends on its ability to generate popular support. People can be mobilised by convincing them about what is supposedly right (ideological), or who is right (organisational-religious/political leanings), peer-pressure and/or incentives.[29] The genuineness of the cause (real or perceived) brings people to the streets. While it is easier for people to join a peaceful protest as it is a simpler and a less risky option, emotive or manipulative disruptions can easily turn the movement into a violent one.

The success of any agitation has often depended on the government's responsiveness to disruptions caused by it. To influence a public policy, the movement must have a convincing narrative and get maximum concessions before the supporters start becoming weary and the frequency/participation decreases. The relative success of the Nirbhaya protests was because of its strength of logic and purpose and its shocking impact on policy makers.

Direct or proxy support in various forms (material/financial/moral or ideological) from another country/organisation, helps in sustaining/legitimising the movement. Cutting its external support including linkages with leaders residing outside is essential to limit the movement's expansion. A movement with a planned strategy has the potential to achieve transformation by reacting to contingencies with calculated plans.[30] The transformation of the secessionist movement in J&K since the 1990s into a state-sponsored covert war is a result of such transformative nimbleness. Weakening such a move is largely dependent on partial/alternate concessions, or through calibrated coercion/inducement that weakens the movement to such an extent that the external actor ceases to see value in supporting the movement.

Accurate analysis of the scale and intensity of escalation of agitations based on the contributing dynamics is essential to offer a well-calibrated state response. A proposed escalatory model[31] is offered as follows:

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INTENSITY	Public Order	Peaceful Agitations	Internal Disturbance	Internal Conflict	Internal Armed Conflict
	Normal day-to-day life issues	Candle light vigils	Civil disobedience	Communal clashes	Insurgency
	Petty crimes	Peaceful marches	Vociferous/violent protests	Clashes between mob & forces	Armed rebellion
	Social problems	Dharnas/Sit-ins	Wide-spread demonstrations	Rioting / looting /arson	Terrorism / extremism
	Law & Order transgressions	Peaceful processions	Running clashes	Inter group rivalries	Civil war

SCALE

Internal Danger-Kautilyan Philosophy

Kautilya offered sage advice to his king on internal dangers to the state when he wrote in the Arthashastra, "Various kinds of dangers for a nation are: that which is of external origins and internal abetment; that which is of internal origins and external abetment; that which is of external origins and external abetment; that which is of internal origins and internal abetment. Of these four kinds of dangers, internal dangers should be gotten rid of first; for it is the internal troubles, like the fear from a lurking snake, that are more serious than external trouble."[32]

Nothing can be more pertinent today as India's internal fissures are being exploited by others to distract it from its developmental goals. It is time India heeded to Kautilya and took measures to safeguard national interests against the potent internal dangers manifesting as protests/agitations/unrest. Kautilya explained intrigue carried out by locals in concert with foreigners as very serious and added that it increases as the state prospers. The following combinations exemplify the intrigue perpetrated by India's neighbours:

PAK	CHINA
KASHMIR	LEFT WING EXTREMISM
KHALISTAN	INSURGENCY IN NORTH EAST
RADICALISATION	LEFTISTS/COMMUNIST INFLUENCE

After analysing some invaluable lessons of Kautilya's Arthashastra,[33] a suggested framework of action in present times to prevent and manage dissidence can be distilled from his writings. On *governance*, his key tenets revolve around welfare-oriented governance, provision for incentives to law-abiding citizens and strict punishment for offenders. He also highlighted

the importance of preventing divisions in society on communal, racial or gender bias. A key determinant in the Arthashastra for ensuring stability is *intelligence gathering* that is based on feedback on problems faced by citizens and mechanisms to prevent misinformation and foreign incitement. Walking the talk figures prominently in Kautilya's writings as he stresses on *policy implementation* and *acting on relevant feedback* as key features of the credibility of a leader and his confidence in engaging in participatory decision-making. A follow on to policy implementation is the consequent identification of different entities that constitute a threat to the state and crafting diverse strategies to counter them based on the drivers that propel these constituencies.

Tough Challenges-Weak Tools

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Project, a US-based non-governmental organisation compiles real-time data of agitations and political violence from across the globe. Data of protests compiled from mid-May 2019 to mid-May 2020[34] shows that the density/frequency of riots/protests is among the heaviest in India.

Despite a huge number of protests/riots/agitations/unrest and a high crime-rate, India has an extremely low Police to Population Ratio. As per the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD) Report[35] 2017, against the sanctioned strength of 192/100,000 people, only around 150 policemen are held. The comparative data from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)[36] of the ratios of policemen/100,000 people of some important and strife-torn countries are as follows:

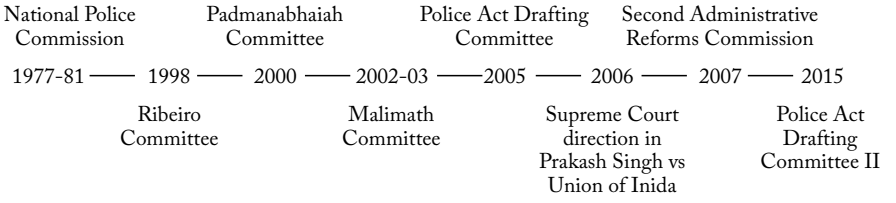
Country	Ratio	Country	Ratio	Country	Ratio	Country	Ratio
India	**192 (150)**	USA	206	Australia	272	New Zealand	194
Mexico	355	Colombia	368	Chile	314	Peru	383
France	331	Germany	298	Russia	412	Belgium	333

Ironically in India, new-age challenges posed by several protests and agitations are controlled by lesser numbers of overcommitted police-personnel with vintage legal and administrative provisions. These forces are often under-equipped, inadequately trained, ill-informed and overworked. Suggesting India's secure transformation, former National Security Advisor, Mr Shiv Shankar Menon,[37] has rightly observed, "India often relies on 19th century legal and administrative instruments to deal with 21st century threats."

Constitutional Provisions. Article 19 of the Indian Constitution gives rights to freedom of speech/expression, to assemble peacefully/without arms and to form associations/unions. The same article also allows the state, in the interest of sovereignty/integrity of the country and/or public-order to impose reasonable restrictions. Though 'police and public order' are subjects of the states, Article 249 empowers the Parliament "to make laws with respect to any matter in the states," however the parliamentarians have seldom used these provisions for controlling agitations/IS.

Legal Provisions. There are numerous legal provisions like The Indian Penal Code(IPC)-1860; The Public Safety Act-1927; The Indian Arms Act-1959/1983; The Unlawful Activities(Prevention) Act-1967/2008; The Criminal Procedure Code(CrPC)-1973, National Security Act(NSA)-1980; The Indian Explosives Act-1884; and The National Investigation Act-2008, which are adequate. However, with the changed scenario and technological advancements, their efficacy remains suspect and warrants revision.

Archaic Police Act. The Indian Police Act dates back to 1861. Despite numerous committees including the National Police Commission, recommending major reforms, no major changes have come by.[38] In 2005, constant criticism forced the central government to constitute a Police Act Drafting Committee under Dr Soli Sorabji, which submitted a comprehensive Model Police Act in Oct 2006[39] for effective, efficient and people friendly policing. It was revised to a Model Police Bill 2015[40] with no further progress thereafter. Some states have brought-in changes but have ended-up just amending the 159-year-old act. The flowchart that follows, shows the expert bodies[41] on Police Reforms:



Since agitations/protests are not mentioned as threats to internal security in any government document, there is no specific law/act to deal with cases related to them. Reactive measures for IS were taken after assassination of Mrs Indira Gandhi, by enacting Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) in 1985 which lapsed in 1995. Similarly, after the attack on Parliament, Prevention of Terrorist Act (POTA) was enacted in 2002 but repealed in 2004. At present externally sponsored terrorism or IS issues are dealt either by IPC/Criminal Procedure Code (1974), or by acts

legislated by some states like Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), or the only exclusive anti-terrorist law in-force, the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA)-1967[42] with repeated amendments in 2004/2008/2012/2019.[43] The Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act (PDPPA)-1984, which provisions imprisonment/fines[44] for those who damage public property, was used to attach properties of vandals in Uttar Pradesh but was opposed for its inherent deficiencies.[45] Even the Information Technology (IT) Act-2008 seems redundant in today's fast-paced world where mobile/internet connectivity drive the unrests. Surprisingly instructions to shutdown communication in troubled areas are still being passed based on the Indian Telegraph Act 1885[46] as can be seen from an MHA order passed in 2019.

Preparedness to Prevent Agitations

Although multiple agencies like National Investigation Agency (NIA), Multi-Agency Centre (MAC), National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) exist, their remit is largely restricted to tracking terrorism and LWE. The collection of intelligence about the brewing unrests is left to the state police and the Intelligence Bureau (IB). Despite widely deployed field units of IB and regular exchange of information with other agencies at Subsidiary MAC (SMAC), rarely have agitations/protests been predicted in advance. As per the 2017 Data on Police Organisations, 114 cyber cells and 39 social media cells[47] were functional in India. The grossly insufficient number of cells cannot monitor the ever-increasing flow of internet/social-media traffic of 687/629million[48] internet/mobile-internet users. The interlinkages/exchanges between cyber/social-media cells beyond district/state level and coordination with District Information/Informatics Officers or other agencies including Army are minimal.

As per Enforcement Directorate (ED),[49] large sums of money were routed through illegal channels to Popular Front of India (PFI), the organisers of the CAA protests. Though refuted by PFI yet such financial linkages always remain suspicious during agitations. Apart from ED, Combating Financing of Terrorism (CFT) Cell, Fake Indian Currency Notes Coordination Centre (FCORD), both under MHA, and Terror Funding and Fake Currency (TFFC) Cell of NIA share intelligence/information amongst agencies about financial linkages, but remain focused on terror financing.

Despite introducing self-governance through local bodies and launching numerous initiatives to enhance accountability/transparency through e-governance, citizen participation towards good governance remains limited.

While government services are accessible to people through e-Kranti, mygov.com and several other e-forums, there are very few forums for public debate on/before policy formulation. This non-inclusive approach to governance generates dissent and could be the root-cause of discontentment in the build-up prior to some kinds of agitation.

Preparedness to Handle Agitations

Since the state police is usually the first responder in almost all cases of public protests or agitation, some of the challenges faced by them merit some examination and conform to much of the same that has precipitated the widespread call for police reform. These include shortage of manpower and inadequate/sub-standard safety/riot-gear[50] and sub-optimal living conditions.

Despite improved mobile connectivity, almost 200 police stations in country have limited or no mobile/wireless communication.[51] If mobile/internet connectivity is snapped during agitations, there is no redundancy for want of a functional Police-Network (POLNET). Leave alone technology infusion in complex agitation situations, it is at a nascent stage in basic policing too. The use of Artificial-Intelligence (AI) and procurement of CCTVs, body/drone-cameras for facial-recognition and crowd-control/tracking is still a work in progress. The limited availability of special-purpose vehicles like water-canon/mine-protected/riot-control vehicles impedes safe mobility during agitations and riots that turn violent.

Despite the Sarakria Commission Report highlighting that 'internal disturbance' caused by 'violent agitations' endangers security of the state and mandates the Union Government to assist the state under Article 355 of the Constitution, the deployment of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) or Armed Forces to assist the states cannot be forced upon them. After assessing the situation, an area can be declared as 'disturbed' for which it is desirable but not obligatory for centre to consult the state government. Vital time is lost therefore in debate and discussion between the states and the centre before the CAPF or Armed Forces are deployed in 'disturbed areas' with enhanced powers under Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)1958.

'Management of Masses' is a highly strenuous and specialised task involving the optimum use of persuasion, coercion and/or force. High levels of empathy, training in measured employment of force, calibrated use of non-lethal/lethal weapons, patience to exercise restraint and tolerance for abuses/stones are required to tackle agitations. Most agitations in democracies have political ramifications with a high likelihood of political parties exploiting

their disruptive potential. Absence of adequate checks and balances, allow political parties/individuals to promote illegitimate interests[52] and germinate manipulation/prejudice. It also creates atmosphere of dissatisfaction, corruption and non-accountability/transparency.

Synergy between concerned departments of the centre and the state in federal systems is essential for effective prevention and management of unrest/agitations. In the Indian context, the absence of inter-departmental or inter-ministerial policies or doctrines for a whole panoply of IS threats impedes a comprehensive 'whole of the government/nation' approach to resolve issues concerning internal/national security. A clear public communication strategy to sensitise citizens that there are serious ramifications of engaging in disruptive agitations with adequate constitutional provisions for punitive measures such as preventive detention of ring leaders/instigators[53] before/during the agitations can prove crucial in managing agitations effectively.

Looking Ahead

A Proactive Preventive Strategy

From a macro view, a sequenced strategy that addresses the entire spectrum of agitation (before, during and after or when it starts, then intensifies, turns violent and then subsides) is essential. Transparent, efficient, accountable and inclusive governance forms the bedrock of any agitation prevention strategy. 'Bridging Divides' is an essential strategy that creates groups of activists to reach-out to all sections of society to prevent misunderstandings/misgivings/tensions. Communal-harmony groups and interfaces need to be created in all villages, towns and cities to discuss and resolve contentious issues. Effective intelligence gathering about imminent protests and unintrusive monitoring of the society are keys to preventing agitations. Speedy police reform to address the deficiencies that were highlighted earlier in the paper is an inescapable imperative for a well-oiled preventive strategy.

Persuasion and punitive action must feature in an escalatory matrix within a proactive preventive agitation management strategy. While persuasion must include formal dialogue mechanisms between the administration, law and order agencies and protestors themselves to complete the information loop to citizens, it must be accompanied with preventive deployments of forces and subtle segregation of instigators and gang leaders to deprive the agitating masses of leadership. Information dominance through the portrayal of smart narratives and blocking of volatile content is essential. These must be

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directed towards local/domestic/international audiences with active support of social media platforms and internet service providers.

The decision to shut down communication/internet must be taken carefully. While it contains spread of misinformation/rumours/infuriating messages, it also impacts government communication/information dissemination. Intermittent or locality based blackout can be considered. Having unearthed external linkages or money trails, the instigators must be named and shamed publicly for their role in inciting mobs for furthering their own financial and political ambitions. External and internal linkages of protesters must be widely publicised and there should be little hesitation in summoning diplomats of the countries that are deemed to be involved in inciting protesters and interfering in India's internal affair.

The use of 'hard power' must be driven by focussed and actionable intelligence and backed by judicially empowering provisions. The police and other security forces must recognise the tipping point when persuasive actions may need to be complemented with calibrated punitive action. These could include blocking of lanes and roads, or booking and dislodging protestors unconditionally under a cognizable offence. Lastly, the use of force must be calibrated and directed initially only at dispersing or controlling the protestors with adequate warnings/announcement of intent to use force. Only if the force is equipped with excellent protective gear, will it have the resilience and ability to absorb the initial impact of physical contact with an agitating, belligerent or even violent crowd and break it up without subjecting the mob to tear gas or resorting to the extreme step of opening fire.

Legislative Possibilities

It is within the realm of possibility to propose a new act for 'Maintenance of Public Order and Management of Agitations' as part of the various provisions granted under the constitution for providing 'safeguards and accountability'. These can be citizen-friendly and non-draconian with the following key constituents:

- Mandatory prior permission for agitations and nominations of marshals to help the police in controlling mobs of protestors.
- Allocation of a separate area for agitations and protests.
- Blocking of Roads to be a cognizable offence.
- Blacklisting and publicising of names of vandals and instigators
- Attaching their properties to make good public and private losses.
- Financial scanning of agitation leaders and suspected instigators.
- Ban on religious places for holding agitations and protest meetings along

with a ban on using loudspeakers for making divisive, incendiary and secessionist speeches.
- Preventive arrests of potential instigators with credible intelligence and backed by judicial oversight.
- Prohibitory deployment of police or SF.
- Strict social media norms with mild punitive measures for spreading rumours, misinformation, rhetoric and fake news.
- Safeguards with accountability for police, SF and civil administration.

Conclusion

Agitations and protests as rightful expressions of dissent and discontent have always been a part of the Indian democratic system. Improper management of agitations can become major internal security challenges as they have a propensity of spiralling into insurgencies/civil war. A clear understanding of why and how agitations manifest and how they are evolving with the changing dynamics of media/social media influences is mandatory before formulating a strategy to prevent/manage them. The need of the hour is to prevent/manage agitations in the most efficient manner as also underscored by Kautilya who viewed internal security threats seriously and advised resolute actions to thwart them. A practical, simple, humane, consistent, responsive and flexible agitation management strategy with the limited but decisive and calibrated use of force is the way ahead. When empowered with strong laws, efficient government machinery, information dominance and well-trained and equipped personnel, India will be on track to consolidate as a responsible and progressive democracy.

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India's Maritime Information Fusion Centre (IFC-IOR) can Significantly Enhance National Security

Ian Rodwell-Lynn

Abstract

The security and prosperity of India is tied to the seas, not just as the primary means of connectivity and trade, but also for resource, defence and influence. However, as much as the seas promote stability, commerce, resource acquisition and opportunity, they also play host to malign elements. Accurate, timely and germane maritime information is vital to identify the illicit activity. The Indian Navy supported by the Indian Coastguard launched the Maritime Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in December 2018 to facilitate this requirement. This article attempts to benchmark this organisation against proven extant International Maritime Information Organisations and evaluates how India can develop this impressive facility to better exploit available maritime information and thereby enhance national security.

Introduction

To the East, South and West of India there is water. The 7,516-kilometre coastline abuts the Bay of Bengal, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. To the North are high mountains and two non-conformist neighbours. India's geographical location as the prominent peninsular state within the region enhances strategic importance and advantage. National security and prosperity are tied to the seas not only as the primary means of connectivity and trade, but also for resource, defence and influence.[1]

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As much as the seas promote stability, commerce, resource acquisition and opportunity, they also play host to illicit maritime practices including piracy and armed robbery, trafficking in drugs and people, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU), weapons proliferation and terrorism. History shows that criminals are unconstrained by the borders that inhibit enforcement authorities. The first step in countering illicit maritime activity is to understand it, including what it is, where it is taking place, why it is happening and who is involved.

India launched the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in December 2018 to address these requirements and act as a sharing hub for maritime data. The aim of the IFC-IOR is to strengthen Maritime Security (MarSy) in the region and beyond.[2] The framework of the IFC-IOR is based on three pillars—confidence and capacity building amongst partner nations, maintaining extensive and continuous linkages to ensure comprehensive Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) and the use of high-tech methods and analytic tools to undertake traffic analysis.[3]

The Maritime Domain is a series of global commons. The lack of visible borders, low populous and vast regulatory challenges offer huge latitude to the entities that use them. Maritime Security (MarSy) of the maritime domain, as a concept, starts at the baseline of one coastal state, and extends to the baseline of another. Although MarSy has no universally accepted definition, national doctrines and strategies imply holistic agreement.

Defining Maritime Security

In a recent strategy paper, Lt Gen DS Hooda highlights several key aspects of an aspirational National Security Strategy (NSS). He states that National Security is an all-encompassing term and should be a guide for all organs of the state.[4] The NSS Objectives outlined in the paper all have a maritime link.[5] These are as follows:

- Protect national sovereignty.
- Secure territorial integrity.
- Promote international affairs.
- Ensure a peaceful internal environment.
- Create a just, equitable, prosperous, and risk-free life and livelihood.

Following from this is an imperative that India's Maritime Security Strategy (MSS), "Ensuring Secure Seas", should be subservient to the NSS. Its objectives are the protection of the Indian homeland, maritime dominance

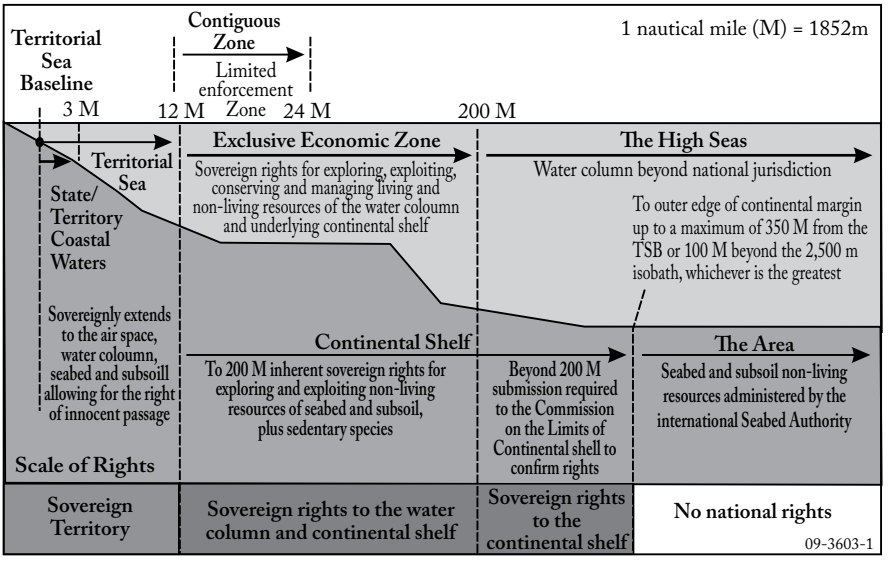
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in the region and securing overseas trade. They align well with the five NSS Objectives. Given Hooda's comments, the MSS should be the principal government directive for all departments, and not just those traditionally associated with the sea.

The Maritime Domain

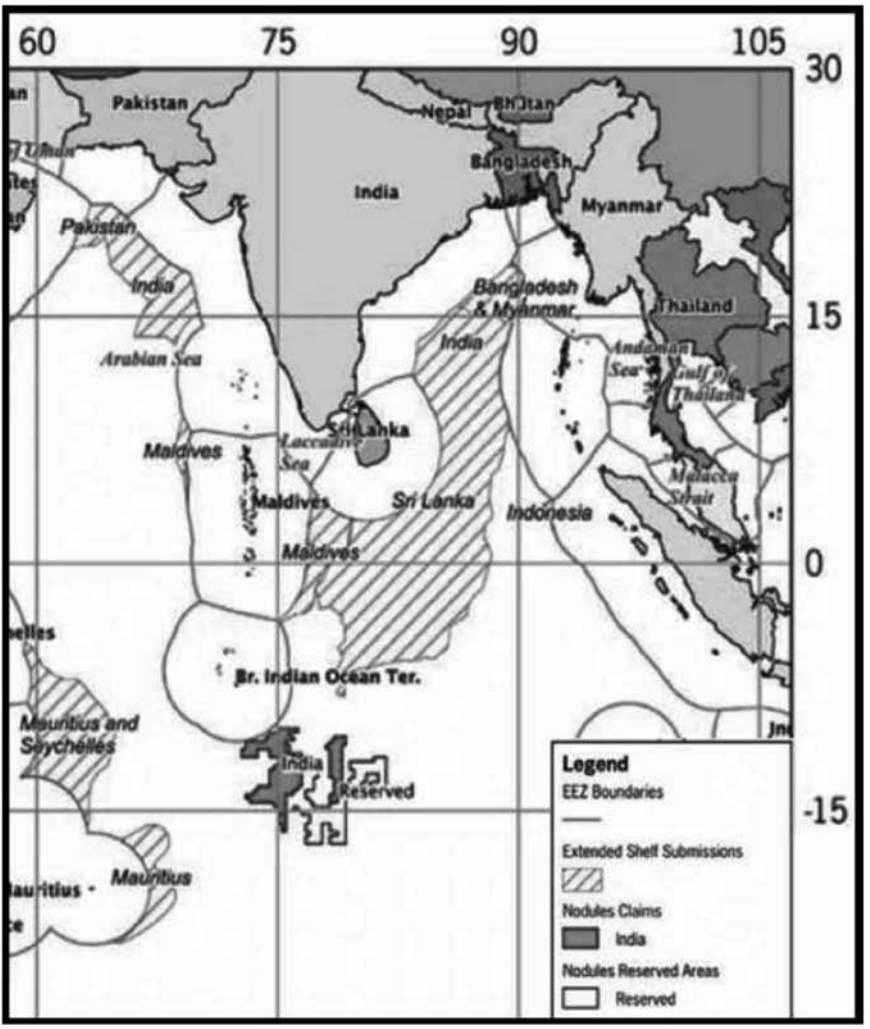
The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea[6] (UNCLOS) provides the framework for the governance of the oceans. It articulates the geographical limits of maritime zones (Figure 1)[7] and defines the rights and responsibilities of states' use of the world's saltwater mass; it is the basis for the conduct of maritime commerce and resource management. Although most countries, including India, have signed, ratified and adhere to the convention, observance is not universal.[8]

Figure 1: United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) Zones



Domestic maritime expanses[9] are the only area of the maritime domain given interdictory legislative powers. Commercial opportunities (fishing, offshore energy assets, and seabed resources) are coincident with India's Territorial Sea (TS), Contiguous Zone (CZ) and Exclusive Economic Zone, (Figure 2).[10] Within the same geographical area seaborne trade, shipping, transiting vessels, pleasure craft, ports, coastal infrastructure and undersea pipelines and cables exist.

Figure 2: India's EEZ, Continental Shelf and Nodule Claims



States have only very limited interdiction, boarding and inspection rights for vessels outside of their TS and CZ.[11] The limited geographical extent of this area presents a risk to a coastal state; a ship travelling at a modest 20 knots can cross the TS in as little as 36 minutes. However, experience suggests that several hours are required to complete a comprehensive interrogation process, especially for a vessel flying a convenience flag[12] As such, although information gathering within the domestic maritime area is an imperative, it should be building on known collated information, either collected when a target was at range or held in a database.

Levels of Threat & Information Processes

A key facet of MarSy is to understand the participants. The geographical location of a Contact of Interest (CoI) alone does not facilitate the understanding of a threat. There is initially a requirement to classify contacts as either suspicious or legitimate, and then interrogate the suspicious actors to understand intent. As such, there are at least two levels of understanding required. The first is a Recognised Maritime Picture (RMP) which involves an agreed level of identification and tracking of all contacts in an area of interest.[13] The second is Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) which enables the effective understanding of any vessel that could impact the security, safety, economy, or environment.[14]

An RMP works on reverse logic as it needs to discount rather than accredit CoIs through a process that determines those that do not pose a threat. MDA is a multi-dimensional expansion of a CoI that can unpack objectives. The aim of MDA is to collect sufficient, specific and holistic information to build options to enable the decision/action process, commonly referred to as 'actionable intelligence'.[15] While RMP invariably requires several primary inputs,[16] secondary inputs will be required for the MDA process.[17] MDA collection should be triggered by contacts raised as suspicious by the RMP process, intelligence reports, a random check or an exercise.

Although the bulk of primary information is usually unclassified, or of a low classification, the same is not true for many secondary aspects. Additionally, information pertaining to suspicious vessels that are not required to automatically transmit their location (such as yachts and pleasure craft) may require specialist capabilities to gather the required information which maybe associated with intelligence agencies. These numerous secondary sources or specialist capabilities are often cross-government and can only be exploited with inter-ministerial, departmental and agency collaboration. Given that much of the activity of interest will take place far from land, originate overseas, be on a foreign flagged vessel or be masked by legitimate activity, it is unrealistic to expect a single country to hold all the answers. Malign actor activity therefore necessitates access to regional neighbours and international partners' information.

A major challenge to MDA is the proper fusion, synchronisation and combination of the information gathered. When countries and agencies agree to share information, their domestic or political motivations, legal practices, lexicon or organisational formats for data storage can differ markedly. Countries which have shared development spaces can avoid prolonged non-automated analysis.[18] MDA outputs frequently feed

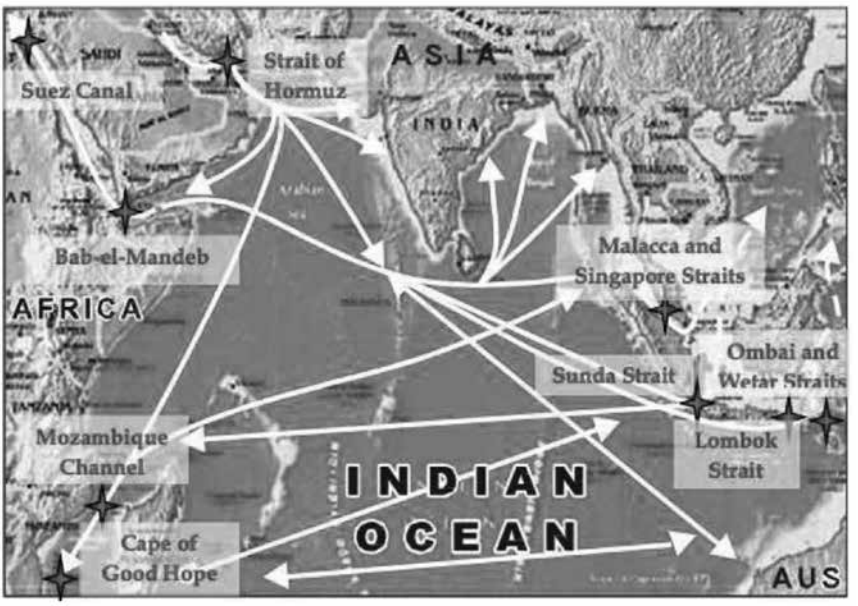
operations or provide evidence in court. The issue of 'Legal Admissibility'[19] should be at the core of information sharing and record management principles.

INDIA'S MARITIME CHALLENGES

Energy Security, Trade and Fishing

India's energy security is dependent on the maritime domain. Eighty per cent of its crude oil requirement is imported by sea, with the Persian Gulf and Africa[20] as the major sources. Within its EEZ, India has 6 large oil fields, whilst the gas fields meet 80 per cent of the domestic requirement. These present significant terrorist targets.[21]

Figure 3: International Sea Lanes of the IOR



The IOR facilitates the movement of the largest tonnage of goods in the world. Two-thirds of the global oil shipments, one-third of bulk cargo and half the container shipments pass through IOR SLOCs annually (Figure 3).[22] Crucially 90 per cent of India's trade also arrives by sea. The global connectivity, vast size of the vessels and diversity of cargo and crew make them susceptible to malign influences and opportunists. The protection of infrastructure, the safe passage of the vessels and the understanding of the crew is essential.

India's marine fishing legislation[23] aims to ensure sustainable fishing, protect the interests of traditional fishermen[24] and minimise IUU activity. However, the regulation of licenses, geo-position reporting and interdiction of IUU vessels is not universally enforced.[25] There is a need to better understand the activity and intent of fishing vessels, as well as the capacity of the fishing grounds. This is not only for sustainability reasons, but also for sovereign integrity and to identify criminal activity where fishing is used to mask illegal actions.[26]

Crime, Terrorism, Piracy and Trafficking

Illegal actors and trans-national crime organisations exploit extant legitimate maritime behaviour as cover. There are thousands of vessels operating around India's coast, carrying out trade, resource harvesting or recreational activity. Most of these vessels stick to conventional shipping lanes or fishing areas and attract little attention; yet this is where much of the threat exists.

The most difficult aspect of smuggling or trafficking is the sea-land transition. Coopering from larger vessels to smaller ones out of sight of land avoids unnecessary attention, especially if it is masked as business as usual. Once the illicit cargo has been transhipped to smaller vessels it becomes much easier to smuggle "the product" into the adjacent state. Sailing and fishing vessels remain largely inconspicuous if they have not previously been identified as a target; this was evidenced in the '26/11' Mumbai terrorist attack. Fishing vessel surveillance although planned is only partially enforced. Pleasure craft, day boats, sailing vessels and cruisers operate without the need for tracking or licencing.[27] The RMP challenge they present is vast.

The rise in regional tensions, including the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Aden, has seen the manifestation of non-traditional MarSy challenges such as piracy and terrorism. The lucrative and isolated nature of sea trade presents an ideal target. Piracy off the coast of Somalia plagued the Gulf of Aden from 2004 to 2016 with a resultant impact of up to $7 billion per annum.[28] The trafficking of narcotics within the IOR is on the increase; much of it originates from the Makran Coast spanning Iran and Pakistan.[29] Transhipment via the Maldives and Sri Lanka is a problem and according to UNODC, the high port volumes in Sri Lanka facilitate transhipment and international distribution through regional routing of other vessels. Enhanced cooperation between the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and India is required to counter this immediate threat. The Seychelles, Mauritius, Comoros and Madagascar would also benefit from Indian assistance to arrest similar challenges.

The key to these challenges, as well as countering weapons proliferation and the illegal movement of people, is the incorporation of a coordinated approach. Governments and single state enforcement agencies are restricted by lines drawn on a chart, whilst malevolent actors freely cross them. The Indian Narcotics Bureau states that regional cooperation is good, however, the lack of a "legal finish" in this domain suggests otherwise.[30] Reprioritisation of funding, better use of national assets[31] and improved utilisation of agency international agreements are necessary to exploit pathways to known knowledge.

Rules Based International System (RBIS)

State actors have a history of using high density shipping, surveillance inefficiency, disparate activity and the variance of UNCLOS to mask endeavours aimed at gaining a tactical advantage. The Chinese Research Vessel Shi Yan 1 was escorted from Indian waters in November 2019 despite claiming to be conducting scientific research as authorised under UNCLOS, when however, it was conducting spying activity near the strategic islands of Andaman.[32] Pakistan is alleged to be aiding and abetting the training of maritime militias. Admiral Sunil Lanba, a former Indian naval chief, stated in 2019 that terrorists were being instructed in surface and sub-surface combat skills to continue with the destabilisation of India as a state policy.[33] With the Mumbai Terror attacks still fresh in the mind, and a neighbouring China expanding its influence, the imperative to swiftly identify and treat such potential threats is essential.

As new spaces are demarcated and safeguarded, major powers are increasingly violating RBIS requirements. China and Russia's reshaping of adjacent saltwater masses goes against international convention, and although being a signatory to UNCLOS, they make no apology for their actions. Both states are using non-military vessels to enforce their political motives, thereby distancing the state from military intent.[34] The extra effort required in countering state led activities can benefit other parties; terrorists frequently optimise a lack of security for their own ends as demonstrated off the coasts of Indonesia, Somalia and West Africa. To reinvigorate the status quo a country that pushes back against the rules-based order must be held to account. If the fault lies with the legislative make-up, then the rules need to be adjusted. Gathering evidence to hold a country to account, or to understand required rules adjustment, relies on

legally admissible facts. It is essential that great power bullying does not nullify other states' legal rights and threaten their maritime and economic security.

INDIA'S MARITIME INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

National enforcement to ensure sustainability of natural resource, freedom of operations and national security is required to at least 200 nm from the baseline. Every vessel, regardless of intent, must present a legitimate purpose to avoid unnecessary attention. The domestic maritime domain is the area that needs the greatest definition of activity, especially sea-land transition opportunities. The RMP should be able, at the very least, to recognise and highlight vessels displaying unusual behaviour such as an unregulated or unexpected stops, transhipment opportunities, movement incompatible with declared activity (especially fishing and pleasure craft) and ships not manoeuvring or reporting in accordance with standard regulation.

Within the IOR, threats criss-cross maritime jurisdictions. Although the Indian Navy has played a significant role in countering piracy, terrorism and smuggling, its ability to meet increasing threats rests on it receiving current, correct and admissible information in sufficient time to make a decision and respond. The composition of the cargo, crew and ownership hierarchy (and their penchant for illegal activity) is as important as course, speed and track of the vessel to garner intent. The RMP within the IOR needs to better understand all larger vessels. It is imperative that a nation like India with significant maritime interests develops the capability to investigate criminality, terrorism and safety breaches, RBIS infringements and sanction breaking. This requires a better understanding of the offences being committed and the compiling of evidence that will stand up to international scrutiny.

International Cooperation

International cooperation and coordination is essential to counter maritime threats and rusted partners with similar goals are essential to facilitate sensitive information exchange. India is a member of most of the Indo-Pacific organisations (Figure 4), has bilateral and tri-lateral agreements and participates in specialist groups such as ReCAAP.[35]

Figure 4: Indian Regional Associations

Organisation	**ASEAN**	**BIMSTEC**	**BRICS**	**IORA (COM)**
Purpose	Economic growth, peace and security	Technical and Economic Cooperation	Non-interference, equality, mutual benefit	Promote Economic Cooperation
Formed	1967	1997	2006	1997
Members	Brunei Darussalam Cambodia ***India-Partner status*** Indonesia Lao PDR Malaysia Myanmar Philippines Singapore Thailand Vietnam	Bangladesh Bhutan **India** Myanmar Nepal Sri Lanka Thailand	Brazil China **India** Russia China	Australia, Bangladesh Cormuorus, **India** Indonesia, Iran Kenya, Madagasar Malaysia, Maldives Mauristious, Mozanbique Oman, Seychelles Singapore, Somalia South Africa, Sri Lanka Tanzania, Thailand UAE, Yemen
Organisation	**QUAD**	**SAARC**	**Shanghai Cooperation Organisation**	
Purpose	Strategic Dialogue	Regional Cooperation	Regional Security	
Formed	2007	1985	2001	
Members	Australia **India** Japan USA	Afghanistan Bangladesh Bhutan **India** Maldives Nepal Pakistan	China **India** Kazakhstan Kyrgyztan Russia Pakistan Tajikistan Uzbekistan	

These relationships afford Indian a degree of latitude when determining foreign policy whilst also enabling a degree of strategic autonomy. Although this would seem to be logical to maximise options, it should not override close ties with like-minded nations. Regional alliances, though beneficial, have their challenges; it has taken years for ASEAN to formally refute China's maritime claims in the South China Sea.[36] Additionally, exchanging sensitive information requires complete trust. A country must ensure the recipient will afford the same level of protection as the originator, not always easy in large groups where hierarchy and political motivations change frequently.

Regionally, the most likely association to bring realisation to India's maritime aspirations is Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Membership includes key African countries whilst avoiding India's contentious western

and northern neighbours. Further afield it is the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) which may eventually emerge as the critical international instrument to manage the China maritime challenge. Importantly, with the Quad also comes the potential for access to pertinent developed maritime information. Each Quad member is a respected expert in their own region of the globe. Between them, they can monitor a large portion of the world's saltwater mass. European waters are the obvious omission and arguably, the UK is best placed to fill this gap. The UK National Maritime Information Centre is recognised internationally for its best practices, and its close ties with all the Quad members makes it a natural partner to enhance capability.

OPERATING MODELS–INTERNATIONAL FUSION CENTRES

There are numerous International Maritime Information Organisations globally. Although all provide valuable output, they use different operating models and achieve varying levels of maritime activity awareness. Among these, Australia, Singapore, United Kingdom and United States have organisations that are held in high esteem.

The Australian Maritime Border Command (MBC) performs many of the roles that equate to a Coastguard. It utilises a coordinated whole of government approach integrating relevant stakeholder effects. It achieves a shared understanding of civil MarSy threats in the Australian Maritime Domain.[37]

The Indian International Fusion Centre-IOR (IFC-IOR) underscores India's governmental approach, and effort, in line with the vision of Prime Minister Modi towards *Security and Growth of All in the Region* (SAGAR). It aims to enhance MDA and focuses on the IOR, coordinating activities through maritime information sharing, cooperation and expertise development. The IFC-IOR is collocated with the Indian Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC). Both organisations are controlled by the IN with support from the Indian Coast Guard (ICG). The logicality of this decision for the IFC-IOR is not straightforward. Although one of the ramifications of the 26/11 attacks was to invest the IN with overall charge of India's MarSy, the ICG retains responsibility for EEZ enforcement, coastal protection, coastal radar and AIS feeds. Given that lead department is the IN, it is not surprising that apart from the primary tasking, it is the IN which also considers tasking requests from other national and international agencies. Linkages to other countries exceed 40 and include many recognised fusion and maritime centres.[38]

The Singapore Information Fusion Centre (SIFC) uses a shared MarSy picture to focus on non-traditional MarSy threats[39] specific to its area of operation. It provides actionable information to regional and international navies, and maritime agencies, when dealing with MarSy threats and incidents. Although it does not produce MDA, its strength lies in collating and analysing voluntary reporting, regional information sharing and identification of trends. Future aspirations will see it expand to create a global, as opposed regional, picture.

The UK National Maritime Information Centre (NMIC) is an independent governmental entity. It is a maritime information collaboration and fusion organisation with a global remit, as opposed to an intelligence agency. It focuses on real time information rather than longer term strategic analysis and trend identification. It is collocated with the UK's Joint Maritime Operations Coordination Centre[40] they are both integral aspects of the newly formed Joint MarSy Centre (JMSC).[41] NMIC representatives come from UK ministries, departments and organisations with an interest in the maritime domain. The NMIC is the single point of contact for maritime information in a time of emergency or threat. The key to the success of the NMIC is its independent nature, co-location of subject matter experts and systems, and eradication of barriers between agency and departmental needs.

The US National Maritime Intelligence-Integration Office (NMIO) is the principal advisor to the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) on maritime issues and is the unified maritime voice of the US Intelligence Community with a global remit. Its operation centres around domestic and global facilitation of intelligence integration and information sharing to create and maintain optimal collaboration and unity of effort that results in improved MarSy. It has a clear manifest to support the Global Maritime Community of Interest (GMCOI)[42] to locate, track and defeat maritime threats to the US and its partners.

A Comparison

There are significant differences in the approach of these organisations that are reflective of their differing objectives. The UK and US operate global models. The interlinking of cross government and global information is essential to get the level of granularity required to achieve MDA. The cross-government approach utilised by the NMIC has brought equity among stakeholders ensuring that tasking of the facility is open to all. Their bespoke systems and international linkages enable a near global RMP, and targeted

MDA for emergent activity and specific events. The US NMIO provides a completely different function, and although it is neither an intelligence production centre, nor an information fusion centre, it nevertheless serves as the principle advisor on MarSy with its comprehensive outward looking international engagement which empowers global reach.

Australia operates a similar model to the UK, but focuses on the protection of the homeland and the regional maritime domain, as opposed to a global remit. It follows a whole of government approach to comprehensively defeat multifarious maritime threats. The MBC is unique as it controls the enforcement element, effectively providing a one stop solution to domestic MarSy that includes full RMP and targeted MDA for specific events.

Singapore and India operate a regional model with a reliance on OS and White Shipping data without fusion of national cross government aspects. Singapore operates as a regional hub concerned with identifying trends and concerns relating to a specific area of interest. Both models achieve regional unity and awareness, as well as partial RMP. Automated inclusion of fishing vessel and radar data by India would enable a near RMP data set. ILO standards ensure consideration of multifaceted threats and near global reach, however, the current capacity output is unlikely to enable the comprehensive enforcement challenge being addressed by Australia, the UK and the US.

Challenges and Options for India to Achieve MDA

India needs to determine exactly what it wants the IFC-IOR to achieve if it is to avoid a possible stagnation should it continue its current trajectory. Currently it is operating at a level coincident with Singapore whilst articulating a capability closer to Australia, the UK and the US. To achieve NSS and MSS objectives, all federations, ministries, departments and agencies which have a stake in the seas should contribute to national maritime policies, plans and outputs. As India's Maritime Doctrine states, "It is much broader than any specific component." [43] No single entity (country, ministry, department or agency) holds all the legal jurisdiction or capability to achieve the information gathering necessary to independently 'unpack' a CoI. It is only through expeditious comprehensive trusted cooperation that the protection of the security, safety, economic and environmental objectives associated with MDA can be realised.

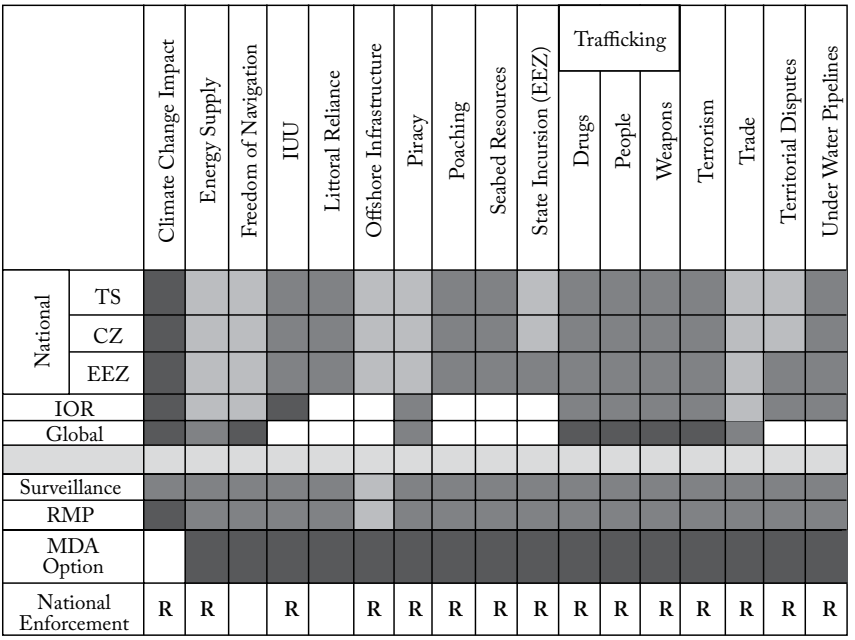
The IFC-IOR should be considered a national, as opposed to its current status as an IN asset. This is a real challenge in India given its geographical vastness, bureaucratic hurdles and departmental agendas; one of the key enablers needed is the seamless bridge of the military, coastguard and civil

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divide. The IFC-IOR offers an opportunity to do this. What is important is to break down the barriers, agree a common purpose, enable access, operate transparently and report to an external body.

Equality in standing, tasking and contribution of all integrated elements is essential to maximise integration and interagency awareness of complementary missions. Experience suggests empowerment of the SMEs on an equal footing expedites access to in-depth knowledge of an area, legislative understanding appropriate to the potential offence, inputs from key database systems and departmental action. The UK and Australia have found that collocated equitable teams are a force multiplier. Not only is it important to have all national maritime systems co-located to extract required information, but also to fuel the discussions between members. Meetings to discuss cases are also vital to ensure transparency and to extract information that is only known to parent organisations. Figure 5 is an unclassified assessment of India's extant MarSy information availability.[44]

Figure 5: India's Maritime Information Risk Matrix



The requirement to forge robust international relationships is an imperative for India as it seeks to expand its maritime influence and emerge as a power of significant consequence. Classified information sharing during MDA investigations requires trusted alliances with partners having near aligned political and economic agendas to ensure all parties benefit. Trust must be an enduring state and afforded maximum protection, as it takes decades to build and minutes to destroy. For the IFC-IOR to be able to really add value to the international maritime ecosystem, it needs to be able to meaningfully reach out to overseas partners. ILOs help, but to avoid polarised military professionalism the IFC-IOR must also embrace ILOs outside the military domain. If non-military risks are not added into the equation then the IFC-IOR will not truly understand the maritime threats and the associated risks that affect India. Without that knowledge, the full value of international engagement cannot be realised. India's traditional autonomous relationship strategy is not conducive to effective maritime information exchange; the QUAD, UK and IORA may be natural partners.

Prospects and Recommendations

Within India's federal structure, the sheer number of organisations and individuals involved with matters maritime, is staggering. Yet if IFC-IOR is to achieve MDA it will need to effectively engage the full spectrum of maritime actors. The UK found that removal of governance from the military encouraged greater cross government integration. Australia has made it a joint organisation and the US facilitates its national bodies to achieve this requirement.

A National Strategy for Maritime Security (NSMS), as opposed to a MSS, with its focus on the specific role each body of government plays, should articulate a solution to the complex problem of areas of responsibility and bring transparency. It would provide the policy, delineation, roles and deliverables of each component of India's MarSy puzzle. By articulating a clear definition of individual department, agency and organisations responsibilities it will facilitate a clear delineation of aims. It will enable departmental growth within policy parameters, allocation of finance and organisations to be held accountable for non-delivery. It will enable India to clearly articulate what operating model it wants to follow, a regional one or a global one. It is the latter that India should aspire for. Although India is not yet exploiting all known maritime risk related information, the IFC-IOR is an excellent example of a proactive institution aiming to counter growing maritime risk. The following recommendations are not meant to detract from the significant advances that have been achieved to

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date and it is understood that some of the recommendations may already have been be planned.

In terms of the overall IFC-IOR development, it is imperative that future milestones be mapped and monitored closely. There is also an urgent need to construct a classified Maritime Information Requirement Risk Matrix (MIRRM). This is essential to understand all available national and international sources that could be utilised for RMP and MDA construction, and to comprehend information gaps. RMP information requirements must be constructed accurately to achieve actionable intelligence for TS, CZ, EEZ, HS and other key areas by vessel type and threat.

Creation of synergies along with expansion of departmental representation within the IFC-IOR would create equality within the establishment. This would enable standard tasking and reporting mechanisms to facilitate ease of communication for all national organisations, as well as, facilitating smooth international engagement and the sharing of critical information. An automated fusion engine with simple data analytics to generate a classified and unclassified RMP from multiple national and international inputs would be the technological backbone of such an initiative,

MDA Requirements

Having addressed the RMP challenges, the next step would be to clearly define the MDA information requirements to create a threat classification process that determines which vessels should be raised from RMP to MDA status. The following critical steps are essential:

- Promote information sharing, cross government briefing and joint analysis to ensure exploitation of all known information.
- Establish classified and non-classified capabilities to encourage discreet agency and intelligence service integration.
- Increase information availability to the IFC-IOR.
- Develop access to merchant vessel secondary data through interfaces with the police, Customs, IB, RAW, DIA, MEA, DG Shipping, IPA.
- Ensure fishing vessel compliance with legislation and increase sea and shore inspections to enhance detection of IUU, poaching, masked intent and international encroachment.
- Increase international liaison and intelligence gathering of narcotics movements including the Makran Coast, port exploitation and transhipment and coopering risks; to enable a "legal finish."
- Understand regional and international Freedom of Navigation and SLOC compliance.

Conclusion

The article seeks to offer options to India's national security establishment to redefine the IFC-IOR as a national asset. It also highlights the need to define steps to improve synergies between the multiple departments, agencies and organisations with both direct and indirect maritime stakes. During this process of streamlining structures for RMP and MDA, it must be decided whether the IN or a non-military body is best placed to be the enduring controlling department. The IFC-IOR has the potential to become the principle Maritime Information advisor to the national leadership in times of crisis. This aspect will only be further bolstered through robust international cooperation that adds on to a capability of effectively monitoring an extended EEZ and at-risk maritime areas in a maritime space (IOR) that is seeing increasing contest. India's maritime security will be significantly enhanced in the decades ahead should the IFC-IOR emerge as India's central maritime point of contact for international partners.

Notes

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7. Philip Symonds, Mark Alcock and Colin French "UNCLOS Zones" (2009), http://www.ga.gov.au/ausgeonews/ausgeonews200903/limits.jsp.
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9. Territorial Sea (TS), Contiguous Zone (CZ) and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)
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16. Primary Information: Name and type of the vessel, location, speed, course, ports of departure and arrival, track history, registration, owners, operators, cargo, crew and passengers–the exact level of required information will differ by vessel type. Comprehensive RMP information is required for large ocean-going vessels such as bulk carriers and cruise ships. The level of information required for national fishing vessels, coastal traders and day craft will be less but must still be able to determine whether it poses a threat.
17. Secondary Information should expand the primary and will again differ by the vessel type and assessed threat. For example, required details about the vessel could include, but not be limited to: where and when it was built, deck plans, modifications, current appearance, access and egress arrangements in port and at sea, levels of safety, insurance companies, history of infringements and previous interdiction / inspection results, etc. Flag information should not only contain current and historical facts. It should also detail compliance of the flag state, ease of access for information, criminal activity associated with it, etc. Obviously as secondary data requirements expand the points of origin become more diverse.
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23. Marine Fishing Policy of 2004, and The Marine Fisheries (Regulation and Management) Bill 2019 - Indian Government (2019). "The Marine Fisheries," http://dof.gov.in/sites/default/filess/BILL.pdf.
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38. Maritime Security Center Horn of Africa (MSCHOA), EU's Critical Maritime Routes in Indian Ocean (CRIMARIO), Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC) Madagascar, Information Fusion Center (IFC) Singapore, Virtual Regional Maritime Traffic Centre (V-RMTC) Italy, Regional Centre for Operational Coordination (RCOC), Seychelles, MARSEC Centre, ALINDIEN, Maritime Information Centre for Awareness (MICA), Brest France, Stable Seas and International Maritime Bureau - Piracy Reporting Centre (IMB-PRC).
39. These include Theft, Robbery at Sea, Piracy, Maritime Terrorism, IUU, Contraband and weapon smuggling, Irregular Human Migration (IRM) and financial crime with a maritime nexus.
40. The Joint Maritime Operation Coordination Centre (JMOCC) is responsible for coordinating operations in UK waters to support national security.
41. By 2023, JMSC will sit at the heart of a holistically designed UK Maritime Security System, fusing intelligence, data and capability to deliver a whole-system response to maritime security threats, increasing our understanding and maximising operational impact.
42. GMCOI is considered to be federal, state, territorial, tribal, industry and academia.
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The Future of the US-Afghan Policy and its Implications for India

Nicholas Melin

Abstract

The February 2020 US-Taliban Peace Agreement was an unprecedented shock to the regional security environment after 20 years of the US' presence and investment. President Biden's recent troop withdrawal announcement has only further pressurised the situation, leaving Afghanistan's neighbours in uncertain positions even as all recognise a failed Afghan state is in no one's interests. India cannot afford to adopt a wait-and-see approach that risks its 20-year investment in Afghanistan, the prospects for economic connection to Central Asia, and its security. As an emerging global power, India must avoid focusing on a 'US withdrawal' narrative that does not capture the US commitment to Afghanistan's future and the region. Instead, India should leverage the opportunities afforded by the peace process to deepen its relationship with the US in an area of mutual interest, invest deeply in the diplomatic effort to build a regional framework to support Afghanistan, and take control of its security interests by funding the Afghan Military and directly engaging the US on counterterrorism collaboration. India also must minimise friction with Pakistan while the peace process is ongoing and define parameters for both nations' interaction in Afghanistan.

Introduction

"It's time to end the forever war."[1]

With these words in his speech on April 24, 2021, to the American people, President Biden declared with finality that September 11, 2021, will

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be the end date for the US troop commitment to Afghanistan. Whether they supported or opposed it, nations in South and Central Asia had nevertheless become accustomed to the reality of the multi-decade US military effort to forge a democratic and inclusive state within a region that has been described as the graveyard of empires. The sudden announcement of a US-Taliban Peace Agreement in February 2020 was therefore a shock to the regional security environment that was followed by a year-long period of fierce debate. Would the US stay after May 2021? Would the US completely wash its hands of Afghanistan? Will Afghanistan collapse? These questions, along with the steady drumbeat of opinion pieces trumpeting America's strategic failure, created an atmosphere of uncertainty which has emboldened the Taliban and retarded regional efforts to forge a sustainable, post-US security environment.

With the US President's announcement, however, the region's strategic problem is now clear. On September 11, "American [and international] troops [won't] be used as a bargaining chip between warring parties in other countries."[2] While the US will remain diplomatically and economically invested, Afghanistan will be free of foreign troops with or without a finalised peace agreement between the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and the Taliban. The onus for forging long-term stability now lays with Afghanistan itself and its regional neighbours.

Given its significant investments in Afghanistan and the risks posed by instability in its neighbourhood, India should consider taking a leading in this process alongside other interested global and regional powers. There are manifest opportunities for India to strengthen its bilateral relationship with the US in ways that align with both nations' vital national interests, expand India's regional leadership and influence, and mitigate risk to its own homeland. By examining the US context informing the Peace Deal and President Biden's decision, India's enduring stake in Afghanistan, and the status of the negotiations, it is possible to identify a series of concrete steps that India can take in the final phase of the Afghan War.

The US Context: Why a Deal, Why a Troop Withdrawal and Why Now?

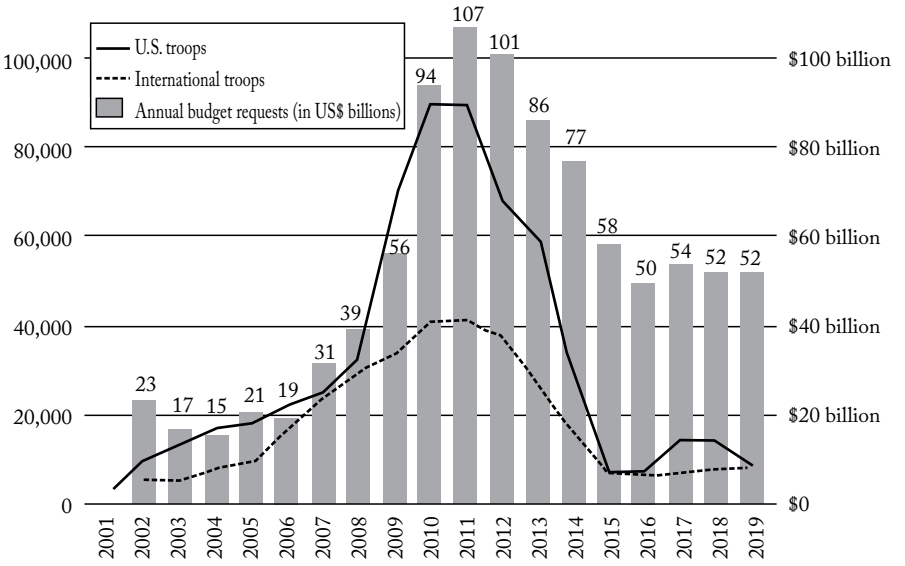
While any attempt to contextualise the longest war in US history will inevitably be incomplete, it is nevertheless important to highlight the fundamental continuity in US desired end states from 2001 to today.

The peace process is the culmination of a continuous process advocating for a negotiated settlement between the GIROA and the Taliban, and not a sudden break from engagement in Afghanistan and the region. The cost of the various foreign wars the United States and its allies have waged since 2001, of which Afghanistan is only one, has galvanised public opinion and politics in a fashion that necessitates a change in approach. Given that the US has always intended for the war it launched over 11,000 km from its borders to conclude with a withdrawal of military forces and transition of power, it is the ways to achieve these ends, and the associated means required which evolved in both scope and complexity as the 20-year war progressed.

The Taliban proved to be a remarkably resilient adversary, regrouping in Pakistan and waging an escalating insurgency that has leveraged both local sympathy and external support. Thus, what was envisaged by the US policy makers as a short and decisive war transformed into a protracted, population-based counter insurgency effort in conjunction with the construction of Afghan governance and security structures. It is therefore unsurprising that the US began to seek a negotiated settlement between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban as early as 2011. The Obama administration sought to open direct negotiations for an end to the war but were stymied by the Taliban refusal to directly negotiate with the Afghan Government.[3] While the Trump administration's decision to agree to direct US-Taliban peace agreement in 2020 was a departure from previous administrations' approaches, the effort to secure a negotiated peace in Afghanistan has remained constant for almost a decade.[4]

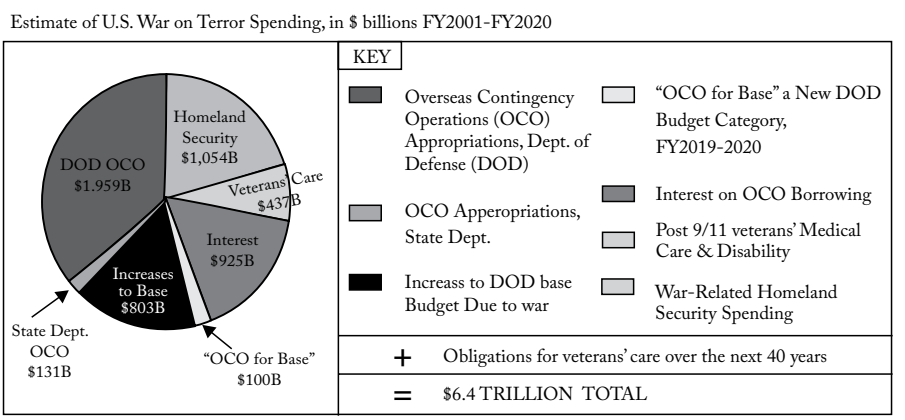
The scope of direct US commitment to Afghanistan is illustrated in Figure 1. Over 20 years, the US has spent $952 billion and, at its peak, deployed over 100,000 Soldiers.[5] To put this number into context, US direct expenditure in Afghanistan alone is almost double that of the 2021 Indian Budget.[6]

Figure 1: US and International Troop Deployments, and US Budgetary Expenditures in Afghanistan[7]



This cost would, by itself, be sufficient to influence US policymakers. When combined with the $880 billion the US has spent fighting wars in Iraq and Syria, the total price tag jumps to over $1.8 trillion. Even this total, however, fails to capture the full cost. As Figure 2 shows, an estimate of the US war spending that is inclusive of interest on money borrowed to prosecute the wars, veterans care, and increased security structures within the US skyrocket to an estimated $6.4 trillion over the last 20 years.[8]

Figure 2: Estimate of Total US War on Terror Spending[9]



Beyond the economic cost, the human toll of the conflict and impact on other strategic priorities must also be considered. The US military suffered 2,448 deaths and 20,722 wounded during the Afghanistan conflict. Additionally, over 2 million US soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines were deployed to both Iraq and Afghanistan over the 20-year period.[10] The focus placed on these two conflicts undoubtedly detracted from the US's ability to address other security challenges, such as the rise of China. Perhaps reflecting this realisation, the recently published 2021 Interim National Security Strategic Guidance commits to ending "forever wars" and devotes only one sentence of the 24-page document to the Afghan conflict.[11]

The bottom line is the status quo with respect to the US engagement in Afghanistan is unsustainable. President Biden succinctly summed up the US view as follows, "I'm now the fourth United States President to preside over American troop presence in Afghanistan: two Republicans, two Democrats. I will not pass this responsibility on to a fifth."[12]

The Stakes for India

For India, disengagement from Afghanistan or a regional marginalisation is not an option. In fact, it could be argued that a stable Afghanistan is critical for India considering that its economic and cultural relationship with Afghanistan stretches back across millennia. Moreover, all regimes in power throughout Indian history have had to contend threats and instability emanating from Afghanistan, whether in the form of invading armies in the past or terrorists today. Throughout most of the last century, India has enjoyed positive relations with Afghanistan. From 1933 to 1973, bilateral relations with King Zahir Shah were cordial, and were maintained with the succession of communist governments following the Soviet invasion in 1979. Indo-Afghan relations broke down, however, during the Taliban Regime from 1996 to 2001, with the Taliban supporting Pakistan as well as international terrorism, most notably by aiding the hijackers of India Airlines Flight IC-814 in 1999.[13]

After reopening its embassy in Kabul after the Taliban's fall in 2001, India has focused its efforts on provision of developmental aid, support to Afghan institutions through diplomacy and strengthening economic ties.[14] India is the largest regional contributor to Afghanistan, having given over $3 billion to date.[15] While the list of development projects is long, it is notable that India built the Afghan Parliament House and has engaged in multiple hydroelectric and road projects across the country.[16] India's provision of COVID supplies and vaccines to Afghanistan is only the latest in a long-

line of relationship building overtures.[17] India's bilateral engagement with GIROA has borne fruit in the form of sustained, positive relations and influence. In a 2015 nationwide poll, 62 per cent of Afghans rated India as the most positive international actor in the country, whereas only 3.7 per cent chose Pakistan.[18]

Economically, India has sought to increase trade with Afghanistan, currently valued at $1.5 billion annually, despite Pakistan's refusal to allow transit for Indian commerce to Afghanistan.[19] A prosperous and stable Afghanistan is beneficial to India not only in terms of direct trade, but perhaps more importantly as a conduit to building Indian economic linkages and influence in energy-rich Central Asia, a region where its influence has been significantly eroded in recent years by China India's construction of the road linking Iran to Afghanistan's Ring Road is a concrete example of how India is seeking to develop physical and economic connectivity to Central Asian States.[20] The success of this effort, however, requires a stable GIROA with which India can deal.

Perhaps most pressing is the threat to India emanating from Afghanistan. The Taliban has maintained warm relations with Al Qaeda whose subsidiary, Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), directly targets India. Lashkar-e-Taiba, the terrorist group responsible for the 2008 Mumbai attack, maintains an affiliation with the Taliban as well as utilises safe havens within both Pakistan and Afghanistan.[21] Even the Pakistan and Taliban-aligned Haqqani Network has taken hostile action against India and is responsible for the 2008 and 2009 attacks on the Indian Embassy in Kabul.[22]

India's ability to advance its interests in Afghanistan over the last 20 years and mitigate risk emanating from the country has been supported in part by the massive US investment and military presence. While India took the step in 2011 to enter into a Strategic Partnership Agreement with Afghanistan and commence training of Afghan Security Forces, it has no security presence in country to guard its interests.[23] For India, therefore, enabling a successful peace process and continued US engagement may be among its most pressing near-term foreign policy challenges.

Assessing Peace Negotiations post-US Troop Withdrawal Announcement

In a few months, US and international troops will depart Afghanistan and either the nation will be stabilised or war will rage on and perhaps intensify. The path it takes will be determined by the progress of the peace process, which has been characterised over the last year by delays, escalating

violence and rhetoric by the Taliban indicating a lack of commitment. While there is growing consensus on the need for a revised approach, the main tenants of the US-Taliban Agreement and the US-GIROA Joint Declaration, signed on February 29, 2020, remain in force. They require that the Taliban "prevent the use of the soil of Afghanistan by any group or individual against the security of the US and its allies," the US and allied military forces withdraw by May 2021, and the Taliban join intra-Afghan negotiations with GIROA.[24]

Based on these requirements, the process is off-track. While direct negotiations have occurred, they only commenced in September 2020—a full six months late. The US has publicly declared it is leaving a full four months after the stipulated May 2021 deadline, and as a result the Taliban has walked away for now from the negotiating table. Perhaps most disturbing, however, is the deliberate and escalating Taliban attacks on Afghan security forces and civilian targets in violation of the spirit of the agreement. Recognising the need for action to get back on track, the US Secretary of State is leading an urgent effort, which India has publicly supported, to accelerate peace talks and potentially change the agreement altogether.[25]

In his speech, President Biden has now laid out the broad outlines of the US approach both to troop withdrawal and regional support thereafter. While different from the desires of many in the region, to include India, the President's decision brings needed clarity to the peace process. The US has committed to the following:

- Withdrawing troops by September 11, 2021.
- Sustaining funding for the Afghan National Security Forces, GIROA, humanitarian aid and development.
- "[Intensifying] diplomacy with the Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban, countries in the region and around the world."[26]
- Asking countries "to do more to support Afghanistan, especially Pakistan, as well as Russia, China, India and Turkey."
- Reorganising counter-terrorism capabilities and assets in the region to prevent the re-emergence of terrorist of threat to the US homeland from "over the horizon."
- Holding the Taliban "accountable for its commitment to not allow any terrorists to threaten the United States or its allies from Afghan soil."[27]

What does the evolving peace process and President Biden's announcement mean for India? There are at least five primary areas impacting Indian equities that remain unaddressed.

- The 2020 agreement and the President's speech stipulates that both the Taliban and GIROA must not provide safe haven or allow extremist groups to target the US and its allies. Is India considered a US ally?
- The focus of US concern appears to be on extremist groups seeking to target the America and Europe and not, necessarily, on those seeking to target India.
- The US is seeking to develop a regional framework to support a post-withdrawal Afghanistan. Will it be inclusive of the interests of all regional stakeholders? For such a framework to work, there should be an agreement amongst regional states that balances influence within Afghanistan. India cannot allow China, with the support of its ally Pakistan, to fill the vacuum and continue to advance its economically coercive Belt and Road Initiative at India's expense.
- What steps can be taken to encourage Pakistan to take a constructive role?

With Taliban negotiators directly coordinating their strategy from within that state, there are legitimate concerns about Pakistan's, and potentially China's, direct influence on the peace process in ways that are contrary to India's interests.

- Finally, and perhaps most importantly, India's position in Afghanistan is grounded in its bilateral relationship with GIROA. A change in complexion or collapse of this government because of failed negotiations jeopardises India's entire 20-year investment.

As the Biden Administrations works through the 'how' associated with the President's guidance in conjunction with its allies and partners, there is a window of opportunity for India to engage in process, address the above unanswered questions, and secure its interests.

Seizing Opportunities

India would do well to reflect on its current approach to the peace process. The environment in Afghanistan will radically change in only five months, with implications for India's security and its economic prospects for decades to come. Deeper collaboration with the US on Afghanistan at this critical moment offers several opportunities that are worthy of consideration:

Engage with the US on the New Way Forward

The US' investments in Afghanistan in the last twenty years have been substantial. America has vital interests in the region and the US diplomatic

and economic support will continue. In fact, it could be argued that increased commitment from regional states, like India, decreases the cost and risk to the US and could further reinforce long-term commitment and engagement in a country 11,000 km from its borders. By capitalising on areas of opportunity, India can both avoid potential friction in the bilateral relationship and instill a constructive and active mindset within its own national security community with respect to this challenge.

Embrace Afghanistan Collaboration as a Win-Win

Indian and the US strategic interests are converging in several domains. From a vibrant economic partnership in which the US is India's largest trading partner to increasingly close security ties in the Indo-Pacific region, it is clear both global powers are seeking ways to further collaborate.[28] Indian and US collaboration has had its friction points, especially when the US seeks cooperation in ways that adversely impact Indian interests. Notable examples include Indian participation in sanctions on Iran that have impacted its energy supplies and regional influence, and continued US pressure on India to decrease defense acquisitions from Russia despite its investment in and dependence on Russian military equipment.[29]

Afghanistan represents an opportunity for India to step forward and further contribute to an area of shared Indian-US interests. For the Afghan government to survive, it will require significant support. Split with internal divisions, it was only after intense US pressure and threat of aid cuts that President Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah agreed to a unity government in May 2020.[30] Afghanistan is also heavily dependent on foreign aid, requiring a subsidy equivalent to 40 per cent of its GDP at a cost of over $8 billion each year.[31] Moreover, the US pays the Afghan National Army's salaries and provides over half of the security force's maintenance and supply requirements. Taken together, the US provides 80 per cent of public security spending, and 85 per cent of all donor security support.[32]

Given its positive relationship with the GIROA, India is in a unique position to influence the internal dynamics at play within Afghanistan. India has sent representation to the Doha negotiations after a request from the US, and Indian investment in the peace process is growing. By decisively committing to the peace process as a US partner and in support of the GIROA, India guards its 20-year investment and provides a strong regional advocate for the Ghani Administration. It can also seek to clarify those elements of the US-Taliban Peace Agreement and the new Biden plan which do not address Indian concerns.

Though India's economic commitments are the largest in the region, Afghanistan's needs are tremendous. The US and the Afghan Government would undoubtedly hail an Indian decision to contribute to the maintenance of the Afghan base budget and/or security funding. It would also provide India useful leverage with any future Afghan Government, regardless of its composition. It might additionally provide India flexibility within the India-US strategic relationship to be selective on its support for those US priorities which do not align with its interests.

Invest in the Regional Framework

The US is organising regional support under the auspices of the United Nations with particular focus on Russia, China, India, Pakistan and Turkey.[33] Within the current political context, however, significant tensions exist between America and at least three of the five primary participants, as identified by President Biden in his 14 April speech. India's long-maintained strategic autonomy and constructive relations with all regional actors, except for Pakistan, give it the ability to act as a mediator in the series of engagements in the coming months.

Commitment to building a viable regional framework will both support the US as a strategic partner and position India for post-settlement influence. While resistance from Pakistan is a near certainty, India should drive forward diplomatically to define its equities in Afghanistan. Focus points for such a discussion could be as follows:

- Defining the contributions to Afghan security and stability from each of the participating nations, to include the US.
- Achieving regional agreement on the need for the peace process to remain Afghan-owned and led.
- Ensuring each nation's investments and access interests in Afghanistan are protected.

It may also be time, as US Special Envoy Khalilzad has suggested, for India to consider a discreet outreach to the Taliban in conjunction with the US There is credible evidence of multiple factions within the movement, and that the Taliban has demonstrated an ability to moderate its policy positions after considering Indian interests, especially on the Kashmir issue.[34] India stands alone amongst regional governments in their lack of engagement with the group at this point. This has bolstered India's credibility with GIROA but, perhaps, narrowed India's options for influence on both sides of the peace process. Such engagement must occur at India's pace and without outside

pressures. Nevertheless, this type of engagement is not without precedent. As the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan collapsed in the 1989, Rajiv Gandhi's administration engaged discreetly with the various Mujahideen factions. This relationship-building proved a useful hedge for India when Afghan government collapsed in 1992.[35]

Deepen Investment in Afghan Security Forces and CT Cooperation with US

Finally, it is worthwhile for India to review the approach to achieving its security interests with respect to Afghanistan. As the US draws down its commitment, the weight of supporting Afghanistan's security needs will have to be shared. The Afghan Government Ministries, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the National Directory of Security (NDS) are all capable institutions which were not present in 2001 and need to be sustained. ANSF has been in the lead in Afghanistan since 2014 and possesses the capability with external support to maintain internal security.

India is already committed to Afghan security through its 2011 pact with GIROA, and should consider further intensifying its own funding, training and logistical support. At the same time, India possesses a diverse set of regional relationships it could leverage to advocate for increased support to Afghan Security Forces. A collective approach to funding could both stabilise the country and ensure a balance of influence. As deploying its own forces could be destabilising, the best way India can ensure a stable security environment within Afghanistan is by maintaining capable and well-funded Afghan Security Forces.

There is tremendous value in directly engaging at a senior level with the US on the future of counterterrorism (CT) operations in South Asia. As President Biden detailed in his speech, the US is developing its plan to continue CT operations from over the horizon into Afghanistan to both mitigate the threat emanating from the country and ensure that both the Taliban and GIROA keep their promises to deny safe haven to extremist groups. As the US currently has no active basing agreements outside of Afghanistan itself, there is a great deal of work to be done to reposition in the next five months.[36] Given India's deep collaboration with the US on CT since both the 2001 attack on the US and the 2008 attack on Mumbai, India is an equal partner in the CT effort. This is a core area of India–US collaboration where US leadership will undoubtedly appreciate direct Indian engagement and potentially deeper cooperation.

Overcoming India-Pakistan Friction

In any discussion on Afghanistan, Pakistan is unquestionably 'the elephant in the room.' Without Pakistan's advocacy with the Taliban, any peace deal will be impossible to achieve, let alone maintain. From a US perspective, a stable Pakistan that is focusing its attention on Afghanistan is essential. The recent ceasefire on the Kashmir Line of Control represents a major step towards quieting Indo-Pakistani tensions in the near term. Also, the repeated statements by both Prime Minister Imran Khan and General Bajwa, the Chief of Staff of the Pakistan Army, on the need for peace with India may provide the opportunity for stabilising dialogue that could positively impact the outcome in Afghanistan.[37]

While on the surface it might appear that finding common ground with Pakistan on Afghanistan is unlikely, the combination of Pakistan's own need for a stable neighbourhood and the potential for positive sum gains for both nations may offer a window for limited collaboration. Historically, Afghanistan has afforded Pakistan strategic depth against India. In the wake of its devastating defeat in the 1971 War, Pakistan's military establishment saw the need for space to mitigate against Indian deep penetrations into Pakistani territory. Through its support of the Mujahedeen in Afghanistan in the 1980s and their success against the Soviets, Pakistan discovered the value of irregular proxies as a tool and saw the eventual emergence of a friendly regime in the Taliban. Though India and Pakistan's nuclear status now obviate the need for strategic depth and Pakistan is dealing with the negative impacts of extremism within its own borders, Pakistan remains committed to maintaining its influence in Afghanistan through the Taliban.[38]

Pakistan, however, needs a stable Afghanistan. With active insurgencies seeking autonomy or outright independence in both Baluchistan and the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas, Pakistan can ill-afford further chaos emanating from Afghanistan. Pakistan suffered 319 terrorism-related incidents within its borders in 2020 alone. Though down from a high of nearly 4,000 incidents in 2013, groups like the Pakistani Taliban, AQIS and the Islamic State continue to leverage sanctuary across the Afghan border.[39] Pakistan needs a functional Afghan government with whom it can deal on this and other security issues. Given its own financial difficulties, Pakistan also recognises the need for an Afghan government sufficiently acceptable to the international community that it continues to receive financial support. Finally, and maybe most importantly in Pakistani eyes, it wants to minimise Indian security presence and influence, as it suspects India of fomenting separatism and insurgency within Pakistan.

A shared desire for stability in Afghanistan, combined with the potential for mutually beneficial economic agreements, might be sufficient to establish a détente between India and Pakistan with respect to Afghanistan's future. India and Pakistan make up 88 per cent of South Asia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and 86 per cent of its population.[40] The World Bank estimated in 2019 that the trade potential between India and Pakistan is worth $37 billion a year, but actual trade at that time only amounted to $2 billion.[41] The establishment of trade and transit rights between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan that unlock this potential would economically benefit all three actors and decrease the dependence of Afghanistan on foreign support.

Economic connectedness, however, is at an all-time low. India and Pakistan have suspended all cross-border trade since 2019, to include confidence-building trade across the Line of Control in Kashmir and closure of air linkages between the two countries.[42] Moreover, in the wake of the Pulwama attack in Kashmir, India revoked Pakistan's Most Favored Trading Partner designation.[43] While transit trade is currently allowed from Afghanistan to India, Indian trade with Afghanistan through Pakistan is prohibited.[44]

A trade agreement between the 2nd, 5th and 37th largest countries by population on the planet that allows shared access to Central Asia would be transformative. The trade restrictions which both India and Pakistan currently have in place are cards to be played in any negotiation over Afghanistan's future. While India's economic strength and Pakistan's challenges might lead actors on both sides to resist a change to the status quo, the resumption of trade ties between the two countries and stabilisation of Afghanistan is unquestionably a win-win. Given India and Pakistan's historical animosity, this kind of initiative might seem lofty. The Modi government has consistently demonstrated strength and resolve with respect to its western neighbour. This could allow India to negotiate from a position of strength both in bilateral talks and in US-sponsored regional discussions. In any event, neither side has the luxury of time. Within months there will be a new power dynamic in Central Asia. For both India and Pakistan, Afghanistan is vital.

Conclusion

The February 2020 US-Taliban Peace Agreement was an unprecedented shock to the regional security environment after 20 years of US presence and investment. President Biden's troop withdrawal announcement has

only further pressurised the situation, leaving Afghanistan's neighbours in uncertain positions even as all recognise a failed Afghan state is in no one's interests.

India cannot afford to take a wait-and-see approach that risks its 20-year investment in Afghanistan, the prospects for economic connection to Central Asia, and its security. While there are risks, especially with respect to relations with Pakistan, the potential benefits of a stable and open Afghanistan are much greater. As an increasingly confident global power, India can leverage the opportunities afforded by the peace process affords to deepen its relationship with the US in an area of shared interest. The benefits of this collaboration would not simply be bilateral. Rather, they would contribute to the establishment of a durable, regional solution from which all would benefit.

Such an effort would nest with India's long-standing role as a moral leader and advocate for peaceful, multi-lateral solutions to conflict. Indeed, Indian leadership is already taking constructive steps, as evidenced by Foreign Minister Jaishankar's recent advocacy at the Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference for an expedited peace process through direct talks and a United Nations-led regional conference. The Foreign Minister's call for "genuine 'double peace', that is, peace within Afghanistan and peace around Afghanistan" is the right approach, and India is the right nation to take a leading role in achieving it.[45]

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Strategic Underpinnings of China's Offensive Strategic Posture on the Northern Borders of India

Vikas Choudhary

Abstract

PLA proclivities on the Northern Borders of India have progressively assumed aggressive connotations. This discourse is driven by three linked narratives. First, a change in threat perception perceived by Chinese strategists and the growing comprehensive national power of China, has triggered a fundamental evolution of China's military strategy of Active Defense from a defensive to an offensive orientation. Second, the transformational dimension of deep military reforms is empowering the PLA to execute offensive operations on an informatised platform. Third, and predicated on the first two narratives, the PLA has moved towards an increasingly pre-emptive and offensive strategic posture along its contested borders with India. Keeping in view that there is now a widespread realisation that China represents the main long-term security threat for India, there is a need to unravel the strategic underpinnings of the India-specific changes to PLA military strategy through a close examination of Chinese writings on the subject.

Introduction

On the frozen and barren mountainous confluence of the Himalayan peaks and the Tibetan Plateau in Eastern Ladakh and Sikkim, blunt and deadly weapons were used with feverish ferocity in mid-2020. Border dynamics between India and China, thereafter, would never be like before, as the literature of protocols and confidence-building measures found

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itself consigned to the dustbin. Not an accident, the series of unprovoked transgressions and clashes in Eastern Ladakh and elsewhere through the Spring and Summer of 2020 was triggered by a transformation of China's military posture on the Northern Borders of India, even as the COVID-19 Pandemic was sweeping across India and the rest of the world with calamitous portends. An understanding of this altered landscape demands a scrutiny of China's changing military strategy and reforms, which are in consonance with China's aim of changing the contours of regional and international order to conform to its imminent rise. This article argues that China's progressively offensive strategic posture on India's northern borders is predicated on its increasingly offensive military strategy.

China's Increasingly Offensive Military Strategy

Military strategic guidelines embedded in PLA literature are open expressions of China's military strategy.[1] *Science of Military Strategy-2013* (SMS-2013), authored at the PLA Academy of Military Sciences (AMS), is the holy grail of China's military strategy. Published 12 years after the second edition (2001), it is authored by 35 strategists and is widely considered the fountainhead of China's evolving military strategy, and has profoundly influenced the PLA.[2] In the past, Chinese military thinkers considered invasion (by Soviet Union or by the US) as the main threat, apart from the re-unification challenge (Taiwan).[3] *SMS-2013* was largely unavailable for foreign observers until February 2021, when it was translated and made accessible to the world by the US-based based China Aerospace Studies Institute.[4] This article will draw on the original Chinese document, the recent English translation and other sources to analyse the recent changes in China's military behaviour towards India.[5]

Defensive to Offensive Orientation

Chairman Mao's dictums "*Lure the enemy in*" and "*We will not attack unless we are attacked, however, if we are attacked, we will certainly counter-attack*,"[6] epitomised the essence of evolving China's military thought—Active Defence (*Jiji Fangyu*), which underwent the first evolutionary change in March 1956, when the legendary PLA leader, General Peng Dehuai presented strategic guidelines demanding preparations to inflict enough damage on invaders to enable transition from strategic defence to offense.[7] Strategic Guidelines-1980, mandated layered defensive positions supplemented by small-scale mobile warfare to counter Soviet threat,[8] triggering creation of combined arms Group Armies (GAs). By

1987, PLA divisions were converted to mechanised/motorised/infantry divisions. [9]

A receding threat of full-scale invasions resulted in changed strategic guidelines: "*winning local wars under modern, especially high-technology conditions*."[10] This mandated introduction of 'pre-emption', especially for operations ranged against Taiwan.[11] Further, emphasis shifted to joint operations and integration, which found expression in "*zhengti zuozhan, zhongdian daji-integrated operations, key-point strikes*."[12] In 2004, new strategic guidelines: "*winning local wars under informatized conditions*" were adopted. Precepts such as '*system of systems confrontations*' and *integrated joint operations*[13] were articulated, marking growing consciousness and graduation from merely 'coordinated operations of different services' to 'fully integrated joint operations.'

Realising that 'information' will play a leading role and not merely be an 'important condition' of warfare, the 2014 strategic guidelines were changed to "*winning informatized local wars*," a concept which finds eloquent expression in *SMS-2013*. In fact, the defensive orientation of Active Defense has been progressively transformed into an offensive strategy, which continues to wear the veneer of a defensive cloak.

Among the several new strategic concepts which give Chinese military strategy its offensive orientation, a few instructive ones are discussed here. Strategic Space *(Zhanlüe Kongjian)*, Strategic Layout and Posture are intriguing and ambiguous[14] paradigms and such is their importance that *SMS-2013* has devoted an entire chapter on it.[15] A consciousness of China's expanding strategic interests enabled conceptualisation of 'strategic space': space that China requires for its growing power and historical rectifications of concepts of nationhood. Encompassing land, sea, air, space and network dimensions, crucially, strategic space expands from sovereign space to global public space, and mandates the PLA to develop capabilities to expand and dominate this space. *SMS-2013* elucidates a grandiose Chinese vision of strategic space.[16]

Within strategic space, strategic layout is contoured by an acute situational awareness of strategic strengths and resources. Strategic layout facilitates adoption of a favourable strategic posture to counter threats based on the available and projected capabilities. Thus, for Chinese thinkers, a strategic layout is a framework within which a comprehensive strategic posture emerges that is shaped by situations, threat perceptions and comparative equation with adversaries in terms of ratios, dispositions, manoeuvres and much more.

The concept of Forward Defense *(Qian Yan Fangwei)*[17] expands battle spaces beyond borders and implies that in the future, China's wars will be fought on adversary territories or the global commons. Hence the requirement of strategic space radiating and extending outwards.[18] *SMS-2013* completely transforms the strategy into an offensive one, when it states, "*only through possession of strategic attack capability and building of strategic attack posture, … can we open up new paths to political resolution of issues…We place strategic attack as an important operational category of vigorous defense.*"[19] Further, this prompts true *jointness* and conceptualising '*information*' as an independent tool, shortening the OODA loop.[20]

Till the first decade of 21st century, the concept of '*War Control*' was predominant (*SMS-2001*). By 2013 (*SMS-2013*), it graduated to effective control *(Youxiao Kongzhi)*, and aims at '*controlling*' the entire continuum of struggle (peace-time to wartime).[21] Effective control suggests that the PLA intends controlling the Full Spectrum of conflict that ranges from generating strategic situations that are advantageous to China for which strategic balance and stable peripheries are important criteria.[22] Effective control further argues that China will employ 'military deterrence', and 'non-war military actions,' to prevent crises from escalating to wars. Interestingly, it also encompasses exploitation of crises to generate strategic situations which otherwise would be difficult to execute during peace-time.[23] The Doklam Crisis of 2017 can be viewed as the creation of a 'strategic situation' to consolidate PLA presence on the Doklam Plateau, an event difficult to execute during normal times.

The final step of effective control is to calibrate the conduct of war, if it is unavoidable, to ensure that the military goals conform to political goals. Effective control of war includes several tenets from Sun Tzu that call for caution in extending wars and expanding political goals based on operational gains. It also deals with swift ending of wars in a controlled manner once political goals have been achieved. As per *SMS-2013*, once China had achieved major political goals of Sino-Indian 1962 War, China ceased operations to give India space for political talks.[24]

Adversaries and Deterrence

Notably, Chapter 5 *SMS*-2013 stipulates preparations not only for the main strategic direction (Taiwan and Western Pacific), but also to fight local informatised wars against continental threats (India), with a powerful enemy

in shadows (US).[25] Deterrence emerges as the most important element of Chinese military strategy as suggested by Denis Blasko, a China specialist and former Senior fellow at the National Defense University, Washington DC.[26]

SMS-2013 metaphorically integrates deterrence and warfighting as the '*soul of war' (She Zhan Yiti- Qi Hun Zai Zhan),*[27] contextualising deterrence as a '*way of warfighting*.' Further, the Chinese contend that in certain circumstances, deterrence encompasses "*fight a small battle to deter a large war*".[28] Deterrence is also aimed at controlling the spread of kinetic operations horizontally (other sectors), as well as vertically (towards the nuclear domain).

China has concluded that deterrence based on conventional integrated precision targeting weapons is multi-dimensional, highly effective, and flexible, thus, making deterrence by informatised conventional weapons superior towards realising political objectives.[29] China's concept of deterrence as a 'system of systems' can be visualised as a credible triad, with the three vertices formed by 'nuclear forces', 'conventional precision forces', and 'information attack-defence forces', seamlessly operating on an informatised space enabled platform.[30]

Finally, visualising future wars as more unexpected and shorter, they incentivise quick transition from peacetime to wartime, or the integration of peace and war *(Ping Zhan Jiehe)*.[31] To achieve this, the PLA's information operations straddle the space defined as peacetime, crisis-time and wartime, and their targets include civilian and military infrastructure, giving military strategy the flexibility of blending an offensive orientation with a rapid transition to conflict termination.

Summary

Changing perception of threats within a nimble strategic community in contemporary China has transformed Active Defense into an offensive strategy. Among the several tools that were envisaged to execute this change, the important ones include pre-emption, informatisation, forward defence, strategic space and the twin integrations: deterrence-warfighting & peace-war. This article will now further dwell on the connect between Chinese military reforms, military strategy, and their impact on China's strategic posture on the northern borders of India.

Impact on the Northern Borders of India

Offensive Strategic Infrastructure

The enhancement of its offensive strategic posture on India's northern orders, particularly along the Line of Actual control (LAC) is a sub-set of China's overall expansion of strategic space in multiple directions. China's non-military expansion of strategic space in South Asia find expression in China's economic engagement through the Belt Road Initiative (BRI), China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which includes the construction of dual use ports and exerting covert political influence by leveraging its economic influence. Benchmarking these initiatives with the sub-concepts of strategic space, layout and posture are instructive as the they indicate the intent and ability of the CPC to convert intellectually generated strategies into on-ground-initiatives and outcomes.

Cloaked in the garb of 'Campaign to Open Up the West' (*Xibu de kaifa*), in 2000, China intensified development of strategic infrastructure in Tibet and Xinjiang.[32] Plachta and Murton note, "*China has militarized large expanses of Tibetan Frontier to provide for a strategic buffer zone,... Similar to previous confrontations along the border, recent violence in the Galwan Valley was triggered by build-up of infrastructure near the LAC between India and China.*"[33] The past decade has witnessed relentless infrastructure development in TAR. Enhancement of surface communications has been complimented by laying thousands of kilometres of fibre-optic cable and construction of several small aperture radar satellite stations. Plenary sessions (March 4-11, 2021) of the National People's Congress and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference recently approved China's 14th Five Year Plan (2021-25) and the Long-Range Objectives up to 2035, which include several hydroelectric projects on lower reaches of Yarlung Tsangpo and a massive dam (three times the Three Gorges Dam) on the Great Bend of the Brahmaputra.

Several strategic projects will be executed in these timelines, including upgradation and extension of the G219 and G331 national highways, to run parallel to G318 Sichuan-Tibet Highway. Tibet's mainland links will expand on completion of the high-speed Chengdu-Lhasa railway and development of Shigatse as a rail transportation hub. Twenty new border airports will be built by 2025, including Tashkurgan (near Karakoram Pass, South Xinjiang MD, enhancing threat to Daulet Beg Oldi and Depsang Plains) and Longzi (opposite Middle Sector in Shannan County).[34] Rapidly developing strategic

infrastructure clearly supports a forward expanding offensive strategic posture.

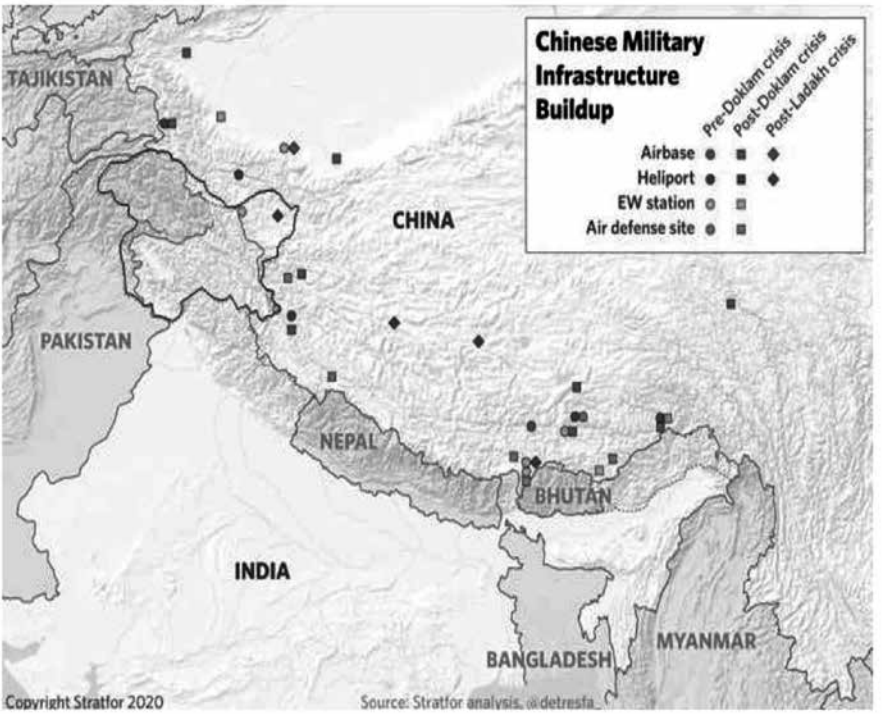
Aligned with the imperative of strategic posture extending beyond borders, China has extended infrastructure vectors beyond its territory. For example, opposite Naku La (North Sikkim),[35] open source imagery shows Chinese track beyond its earlier limits and entering foreign territory. Another example is the extension of road and military infrastructure into Western Bhutan, since 2017.[36] Myers (*New York Times*) exposed construction of a new village (*Xin Pangda*) two km inside Bhutanese territory, with military infrastructure mushrooming close-by in 2020.[37]

Enhanced Military Concentration

By 2017, the PLA's fibre-optics layout from Lhasa stretched to Ngari (West) and Nyingchi (East), complimenting 58 V-set satellite stations. Airpower projection witnessed construction of nine additional airfields in TAR. PLARF deployment included versions of DF-21 medium-range ballistic missiles, DF-15 and the new DF-16 short-range ballistic missiles.[38] Since 2017, China has more than doubled airbases, air defence emplacements, heliports, etc., near the borders.[39] Gonggar and Hotan airbases have witnessed major upgrades, including hardened fighter aircraft shelters, upgraded missile sites and ammunition storage sites. Gonggar Airbase has seen flying by latest fighters and Z-20 Attack Helicopters; Hotan hosts J-20 fighters, AEW & EW aircraft, and drones. Logistics have been upgraded at several other airbases including Shigatse, and new infrastructure to house the PLA's new Combined Arms Brigade (CABs) have come-up South of the Yarlung Tsangpo.[40] Imageries reveal road connected hardened ammunition bunkers two kilometres from Sinche-La (near Doklam & China-Bhutan border).[41] Concrete buildings, hardened artillery positions, including underground facilities have been constructed on the northern slopes of Doklam Plateau.[42] Further North-West, opposite Naku La, PLA has extended its reach making roads, permanent military fortifications 4 km from the border in last one year.[43] On May 8, 2020, China commenced a two-year project of constructing a new military training base at Drowa village in Lhoka Prefecture close to the borders (184 km from Tawang).[44] Three CABs of 77 have been moved into Tibet, doubling the total number of CABs deployed in Tibet to six (three CABs of Tibet Military Division were already deployed).[45] Since 2017, third-generation Dongfeng Mengshi off-road tactical armoured vehicles have proliferated close to Northern Borders.

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Chinese Infrastructure Build Up[46]



Integrated Joint Forces & Enhanced Deterrence

The PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF) is the prodigious offspring of the dialectic unity achieved in Chinese military strategic thought that conflates integrated joint forces, deterrence and the paramountcy of information in war. A unique Chinese construct which integrates space, information and psychological warfare, shortening the OODA loop, PLASSF directly catalyses the sinews of combat power generation. Upgradation of the Second Artillery to a full-fledged service as PLA Rocket Force (PLARF) with tangible enhancement of capability further boosts combat potential. Creation of the five joint theatre commands, as also the Joint Logistics Support Force,[47] is shepherded by the latest offensive interpretation of Active Defense. Military reforms since December 2015 and conform to the creation of leaner combat structures that involve the reduction of 5 x Combined Corps (CC) out of the total 18 x CCs.[48] For the first time, one joint theatre command (amalgamating PLAA, PLAAF, conventional elements of PLARF & PLASSF) integrated at the battalion level, confronts Indian forces on the Northern Borders.

Gravitating to the system of systems approach (away from platform-centric), the 13 CCs comprise 82 CABs[49] (with CA battalions), 15 Special Operations Forces Brigades and 15 Army Aviation/Assault Brigades as punch elements, presenting a significant offensive posture. CABs, the multi-dimensional integrated elements of warfighting at the tactical level, with application controlled at Theatre level, allow PLA's Western Theatre Command to tangibly enhance deterrence credibility along the LAC. Evidence regarding manifestation of the new military strategy on the Northern Borders is irrefutable and represents an outwardly expanding strategic posture through proliferation of CABs, military fortifications and communications (extending beyond borders). All this has rapidly changed the situation on the ground and made the PLA threat pre-emptive and rather ominous.

Analysis

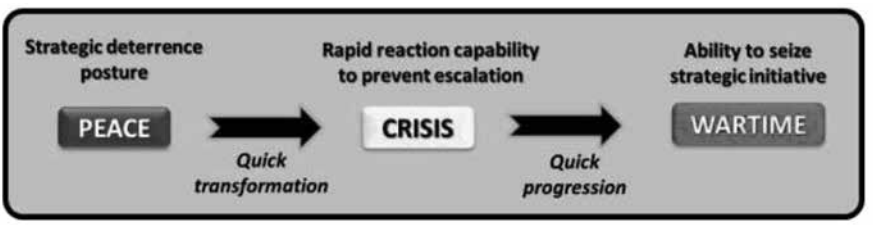
Theoretical foundations of Active Defense fit well with core values of Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist-Maoist CCP ideology, which in turn drives the distinct brand of military strategy with Chinese characteristics. As China's journey inexorably accelerates towards the realisation of its 2050 goal of a China that stands tall, the framework of its defensive military strategy has turned offensive. However, offensive military strategies present ideological contradictions to communist frameworks. The totalitarian regime of China labours to engineer it as a dialectical unity between strategic defence and operational & tactical offense by contriving twin integrations: '*deterrence & war-fighting*' on an informatised landscape, and '*peace & war*' on the time-continuum, thus transforming Active Defense into an offensive strategy.

'Informatisation' having transformed the nature of military conflicts according to the Chinese, is the foundational element providing an offensive orientation. Sub-concepts of strategic space, layout and posture, forward defence and effective control, contribute towards making the military strategy offensive. Growing economic heft has enabled China to transform its military strategic posture into an outwardly radiating one, wherein the key to victory is a 'system of systems' approach with forces structured to prosecute '*long distance offensive and focused joint operations*.'

The predominant military narrative of China is the projection of a credible multi-domain deterrent (offensive) posture. PLA thinking revolves around a worldview that war and peace are different waypoints on the journey which is interrelated and connected. Since 'peacetime' is transitory, China must continue to prepare for war in peacetime, including offensive activities, which others may find illegitimate.

China's current military strategy fosters a proclivity to control the matrix of war (if deterrence fails). This has enabled re-imagining the elements of military strategy as offensive sub-concepts. Almost parallel to execution of military reforms, a holistic strategic posture honest to the latest trajectory of Active Defense has emerged opposite India's northern borders, which as per evidence is clearly extending outwardly in orientation.

Essence of China's Military Strategy. The representation that follows encapsulates the essence of China's military strategy:



Conclusion

History will perhaps attest that China's latest military reforms guided by the changed military strategy have been the deepest, widest and most profound changes in the history of the People's Republic of China. In other words, PLA's defensive military strategy has assumed offensive connotations; its reforms are aligned to this offensive strategy, and the resultant offensive military posture manifested on the northern borders of India has created a pre-emptive threat which warrants holistic cum affirmative actions to counter them.

Notes

1. David M. Finkelstein, "China's Military Strategy," Asia Policy No. 4 (July 2007), pp. 67-72.
2. Shou Xiaosong, *Zhanlüe Xue (2013 Nianban)*, Junshi Kexueyuan Junshi Kexue Chuban She (Academy of Military Science, Military Science Press, September 24, 2013).
3. M. Taylor Fravel, *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy since 1949* (Princeton Studies in International History and Politics, April 23, 2019), Chapter 4, pp. 135-38.
4. China Aerospace Studies Institute (CASI) which is under the Air University of the U.S, founded 'Project Everest' in 2013, which is defined in the website (https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/CASI/Display/Article/1611279/china-aerospace-studies-institute-casi-mission/) as a 'strategy design start-up'. Project Everest, 'In Their Own Words' series carries out translation of Chinese documents to enhance understanding of Chinese thinking. China's Academy of Military Sciences published the seminal volume "*Zhanlüe Xue (2013 Nianban)*, i.e. Science of Military Strategy- 2013", widely regarded as the most authentic Chinese resource on China's military strategy. On 08 February 2021, Project Everest in conjunction with CASI published the English translation of the Science of Military Strategy-2013, thereby allowing access to the volume for non-Chinese language readers.
5. The author of this paper is a Chinese language interpreter, and has worked in China (as the Defence Attaché) from 2014 to 2017. During the period of stay at China, the author read major portions of the original Chinese language book "*Zhanlüe Xue (2013 Nianban*)," published by

Junshi Kexueyuan Junshi Kexue Chuban She (Academy of Military Science, Military Science Press, September 24, 2013).

6. M. Taylor Fravel, "China's Changing Approach to Military Strategy: The Science of Military Strategy from 2001 and 2013" (The Jamestown Foundation, January 2017), p. 63.
7. Fravel, *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy since 1949*. Chapter 3, pp. 92-4.
8. Ibid., Chapter 5, p. 171.
9. Ibid., Chapter 5, pp. 175-7.
10. Ibid., Chapter 6, pp. 182-91.
11. Ibid., Chapter 6, pp. 184-5.
12. Ibid., Chapter 7, pp. 218-20.
13. Ibid., Chapter 6, pp. 185-6.
14. Fravel, "China's Evolving Military Strategy," n. 6, p. 59.
15. Xiaosong, *Zhanlüe Xue-2013 Nianban* (Science of Military Strategy-2013). Chapter 11 titled "*Zhanlüe Kongjian he Buju*" (Strategic Space and Layout), of the Chinese language book dedicates 15 pages (pp. 241-55) and utilises three sections to elucidate Chinese thinking on strategic space, layout and posture
16. Ibid., Section 1, Chapter 11, pp. 307-9. The Chinese vision is of "*forming a strategic space that has key-points, is divided into echelons, is mutually supporting and linked, with the home territory as reliance, the two ocean regions (Pacific & Indian) as key-points, and the network space as the crux*."
17. Appropriate interpretation of the term '*qianyan fangwei*' is important to decipher the subtle nuances of the change in military strategy, due to the introduction of this concept to the overarching architecture of Active Defense. Translation of '*qianyan*' is 'forward' and that of '*fangwei*' is 'defence'. While Fravel in his essay "*China's Changing Approach to Military Strategy: The Science of Military Strategy from 2001 and 2013*" adheres to this translation, the translated volume of Science and Military Strategy (2013) by CASI, published on February 8, 2021, under Project Everest, terms it "Forward Edge Defense". The article shall conform to the translation by Fravel, i.e. "Forward Defense," since it is considered a more accurate interpretation.
18. Fravel, n. 14, p. 57. See also "In Their Own Words: Foreign Military Thought- Science of Military Strategy (2013)," Chapter 5 (July 8, 2021), p. 131.
19. *In Their Own Words: Foreign Military Thought – Science of Military Strategy (2013)*, Chapter 5 (July 8, 2021), p. 132.
20. Ibid., Chapter 6, Section 2, p. 156. Chinese strategic thinkers opine that 'forward defense' gives rise to the requirement of jointness and a lead role for information in war, which in turn facilitates decision making superiority, activities superiority and even victory superiority
21. Ibid., Chapter 5, Section 2, p. 135.
22. Fravel, n. 14, pp. 61-62.
23. Fravel, n. 14, p. 63. Interestingly, the article contextualises seizure of Scarborough Shoal in April 2012 as a product of creation of a strategic situation to firm in presence.
24. *In Their Own Words: Foreign Military Thought- Science of Military Strategy (2013), by China Aerospace Studies Institute*, Chapter 6, Section 5 (July 8, 2021), p. 164.
25. Ibid., Chapter 5 (July 8, 2021): p. 145. Chinese strategists mandate the PLA to be prepared to fight local informatized wars in the secondary strategic direction, with a background of a powerful enemy interference, & also be prepared for small, medium & large-scale operations.
26. Dennis J. Blasko, *China's Evolving Military Strategy,* "Section IV- Chapter 10: China's Evolving Approach to Strategic Deterrence," (The Jamestown Foundation, January 2017), Chapter 10, p. 335.
27. Ibid., p. 343.
28. Ibid., p. 344.
29. *In Their Own Words: Foreign Military Thought- Science of Military Strategy (2013)*, by China Aerospace Studies Institute, Chapter 7, Section 1 (July 8, 2021): 171.
30. Ibid., pp. 184-185. SMS-2013 contends that deterrence system should focus on five elements: 1. Lean & effective 'informatized nuclear strike' strength; 2. Informatised conventional operational strength; 3. Information attack-defence strength with local superiority; 4. Flexible and diverse space strength; and 5. Integrated deterrence strength of people's war with innovative development.

31. John Costello and Peter Mattis, *China's Evolving Military Strategy*, "Section III- Chapter 6: Electronic Warfare and the Renaissance of Chinese Information Operations" (January 2017): 196-9.
32. Nadine Plachta and Galen Murton, "The Tibetan Frontier: From Regional Boundaries to Disputed Borders Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Highland Asia," (November 2020): 8, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346030748_The_Tibetan_Frontier_From_Regional_Boundaries_to_Disputed_Borders_Routledge_Handbook_of_Contemporary_Highland_Asia, April 2021.
33. Ibid., p. 10.
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40. Rezaul H Laskar, "China bolstering Tibet military infrastructure" (February 8, 2021), https://tinyurl.com/4b44d5t5.
41. "China's mad infrastructure push along LAC alarms India" (November 24, 2020), https://tinyurl.com/2cs5z899.
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44. Shweta Desai, "Beyond Ladakh: Here's how China is scaling up its assets along the India-Tibet frontier" (June 3, 2020), https://tinyurl.com/4a9e7drr.
45. Dennis J. Blasko, "The PLA army after 'below the neck' reforms: contributing to China's joint warfighting, deterrence and MOOTW Posture," Journal of Strategic Studies, 44:2, pp. 149–83 (December 27, 2019), p. 164.
46. Image dated February 22, 2020, courtesy https://tinyurl.com/a5heuky6.
47. Dennis J. Blasko, n. 45.
48. Xinhua, "Full text of Xi Jinping's report at 19th CPC National Congress" (October 18, 2017), https://tinyurl.com/3hmujyf4.
49. CABs are modular, self-contained outfits capable of executing independent operations. CABs retain terrain specific flexibility in terms of their order of battle. Variants of CABs include 'Heavy, Medium (including amphibious), Light Plains and Light Mountain' CABs. CABs have a total of 04 x Combined Arms Battalions, and one battalion each of Air Defence, Artillery, Reconnaissance, Combat & Logistics Support. To the best of knowledge, six PLA Division as of date have not been brigadised.



NDC Journal

Alumni Corner

The Naga Conundrum and the Way Forward

Shokin Chauhan

Abstract

This article argues that north-east India is not a single entity with a common political destiny. It is predominantly inhabited by tribes which exist with a fair degree of diversity and autonomy even among themselves. These tribes owe their existence to continuous flows of migrations from Tibet, Indo-Gangetic region, the Himalayas, present Bangladesh and Myanmar. Further, what distinguishes these strategic tribal communities is that some of them have still not accepted the idea of India, resulting in the continuation of India's longest insurgency in Nagaland. There is a need to understand certain core issues of this extremely vexed issue and frame political and military responses with sensitivity and wisdom to bring an end to this insurgency.

Introduction

North-east 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 km, connects the North-Eastern Region with mainland India. The region shares an international border of 5,182 km, with the neighbouring countries,[1] 395 km, with Tibet Autonomous Region, China in the north, 1,643 km, with Myanmar in the east, 596 km with Bangladesh in the south-west, 97 km with Nepal in the west and 455 km with Bhutan in the north-west. It comprises an area measuring 262,230 sq km, almost

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8 per cent of that of India.[2] The region is predominantly inhabited by tribal people who have enjoyed a degree of diversity and autonomy even within their own tribal groups. The region's population is a result of migration flows from ancient times, from Tibet, Indo-Gangetic region, the Himalayas, present Bangladesh and Myanmar. What distinguishes these states from the rest of the country is the sensitive geopolitical location with the existence of diverse ethnic groups with different historical backgrounds.

The tribal communities in north-east India are living on the fringe of three great political communities, India, China and Burma.[3] Historically, these tribal communities have played roles of buffer communities, while others emerged as bridge communities between these three important political communities. Despite its 40 million population accounting for only 3.1 per cent of the Indian population, the region assumes great geopolitical importance due to its terrain, location and peculiar demographic dynamics, and is one of the most challenging regions to govern. Post-independence from colonial rule, the history of this region has been marred by bloodshed, tribal feuds and under-development. Protracted deployment and operations by the Indian Army (IA) and the Assam Rifles have been instrumental in reducing the levels of violence and stabilizing the security situation to ensure that civil governance elements have functioned sporadically over the last three decades.

In 1817, the Burmese Empire invaded Assam, and annexed the independent Kingdom of Manipur in 1819. In 1823, the Burmese also annexed the Kingdom of Cachar, a strategically important area that was the gateway to Bengal. In March 1820, Britain officially declared war on Burma, a war which ended two years later with the signing of the Treaty of Yandabo. One of the key outcomes of the treaty was that the Naga community emerged as a political entity on February 24, 1826, the day representatives of the Kingdom of Burma and the British military signed the Treaty of Yandabo wherein Burma renounced all claims to Assam and Manipur.[4]

The empowerment of these Naga tribes, was therefore, a strategic move by the British to create a buffer zone and resist the westward expansion by Burma, which was at that time the most powerful kingdom in Southeast Asia. Burma's expansion 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 approximately with the present-day borders of Bangladesh and North Bengal.[5] 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 southern flank of the border between Burma and the British sphere of influence.[6]

Origins of the Naga Insurgency-Understanding the Past

The origins of Naga dissent or the beginning of the thought of an armed secessionist struggle that converted to a long-festering insurgency is traceable to colonial patronage. This probably manifested itself in the British backing of a rudimentary "club" in 1918. Called the "Naga Club," and comprised informally of some Naga government officials, who submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission on January 10, 1929, demanding independence for the Nagas. Reflecting in the memorandum, the club argued, "*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."*[7]

All 20 signatories hailed from Kohima and belonged to the Angami tribe. No representative of any other Naga tribe met the Simon Commission, wherein they explained to the commission: "*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, a small population and fear of an impending "alien" rule. The Nagas feared that their minority presence in the Council of the Assam province would be politically inconsequential and the Naga Club further encouraged the formation of several tribal-based Naga councils such as the Lotha council in 1923, the Ao (a Naga tribe) council in 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 to give it a firmly political role.

Beginning of Naga Dissent

This Council, which acquired a new name, "*Naga National Council"* (NNC) in 1946, 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 June 19, 1946, indicating a desire to be constitutionally included in an autonomous Assam with local autonomy and "a separate electorate" for them.

The NNC was a moderate pro-government body intending to improve the economic condition of the Nagas through constitutional means. The NNC, in a landmark[8] move, signed a "Nine-Point Understanding" with the

Government of India, represented by the British Governor of Assam, Sir Akbar Hydari. It may be argued that it was in conformity with the spirit of a detailed letter written by Nehru to the NNC that the Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord was signed in June 1947. This 9-point Accord was signed at Kohima after three days of discussion from June 26-28, 1947, along with representatives of the following tribes: Western Angamis, Eastern Angamis, Kukis, Kacha Nagas (Mzemi), Rengmas, Semas, Lothas, Aos, Sangtams and Changs. Through this Agreement, which was signed for a period of ten years, 'the right of the Nagas to develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes' was recognised. On judicial matters, the agreement duly constituted 'Naga Courts according to the Naga customary law'. The Accord ensured complete authority of the Council on agriculture. It was also stated in the Accord that 'no laws passed by the Provincial or Central Legislatures, which would materially affect the terms of the agreement or the religious practices shall have legal force in Naga Hills without the consent of the Naga Council.' In other words, Naga Council was accorded a legal and statutory recognition by this Accord. Clause 9 of the understanding mentioned the "renewal" or the "re-negotiating" of a new agreement after 10 years.[9]

Early Years of the Naga Armed Insurgency

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, it was the small Naga National Council (NNC) "Independence group" led by Phizo which declared Naga independence on August 14, 1947. The group comprised members from Khonoma village and the southern and eastern Angami group, most of them being relatives and extended family members of Phizo. Despite Phizo's declaration of Naga independence, there was no violent outbreak of movement or insurgent activity. Rather, in a peaceful atmosphere, on August 15, 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 (GOI) did not accept.[10]

By June 1955, a rift between Phizo's group and the moderates widened and inter-factional assassinations commenced. Many of those who opposed Phizo were assassinated, prominent among them being one of the founding members of the NNC, T Sakhrie. In 1956, the NNC declared the formation of the underground "Federal Government of Nagaland." The underground activists started a forcible recruitment drive alongside killings of the informers

and other dissidents. Increased incidents of violence in Nagaland can be traced from 1955 onwards, as the Indian Army was inducted into the region to supplement the Assam Rifles and the Assam Police in trying to quell the armed Naga secessionist movement.[11]

Following these factional clashes and the increasing threat to his leadership, Phizo fled to Dacca on December 6, 1956. The Pakistani government then arranged for an El Salvador passport for Phizo, as he first sought refuge in Zurich in May 1959. Michael Scott, an English missionary and a sympathiser with Phizo's interpretation of the "Naga cause", reportedly helped Phizo get to London on June 20, 1960.[12]

The division within NNC resulted in the signing of the 'Sixteen Point Agreement between the Naga Peoples' Convention and the Government of India' in July 1960. It is through this agreement that a consensus was arrived at to constitute a state in the territories known as Naga Hills (Tuensang Area). It was also decided that the state of Nagaland shall be under the Ministry of External Affairs of GOI. Several concessions were accorded to the state of Nagaland to substantiate the autonomy that was promised by the GOI. Clause 7 of the Agreement reads:

> *"No Act or Law passed by the Union Parliament affecting the following provisions shall have legal force in the Nagaland unless specifically approved by majority of the vote in the Nagaland Legislative Assembly:*
> - *The Religious or Social Practices of the Nagas.*
> - *Naga Customary Laws and Procedure*
> - *Civil and criminal justice so far as these concern decisions according to Naga customary law. The existing laws relating to administration of civil and criminal justice as provided in the Rules for the Administration of Justice and Police in the Naga Hills district shall continue to be in force.*
> - *The ownership and transfer of land and its resources."*[13]

Birth of the State of Nagaland

Nagaland was merely a district (Naga Hills district) of Assam until 1957. 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. The NPC remained very active and organised three Naga People's Conventions during 1957 and 1960. In its very first session held at Kohima from August 22-26, 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. Nehru met the NPC delegation on September 25, 1957, to discuss this issue.

The formation of Nagaland as a full-fledged state within the Union of India resulted in the nomination of an interim body of 42 members which functioned as the de facto council of ministers from February 1961, with Dr Imkongliba Ao as chairman of the interim body and P Shilo as chief executive councillor. Shilo went on to become the first chief minister of Nagaland. This 16-point agreement acknowledged the distinct status of the Naga community within the India federal system. It ensured that no act or law passed by Parliament would affect the religious and social practices of the Naga tribals, their customary laws and procedure of criminal justice 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. Unfortunately, the NNC argued that the 16-point agreement was a complete "sellout" of the Naga political cause. Ultimately this growing animosity between the NNC and the NPC resulted in the assassination of Dr Imkongliba in 1961.[14] The Naga Federal Government (NFG) emerged as an expansion of the NNC with a formal military wing in 1959 and marked a turning point in the trajectory of the conflict.

The establishment of the state of Nagaland led to another turning point because by this time, a sizable group of over ground Naga leaders had emerged, who chose to participate in the electoral democratic political system. This 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 on several issues with the NNO leadership and aligned itself with Phizo's secessionist underground movement. In the aftermath of the total boycott of two earlier Indian general elections in 1952 and 1957, the NPC and the Interim Body confronted the first test of "democracy" and successfully organised the general elections in Nagaland in January 1964. Amazingly, over 70 per cent of Nagas exercised their franchise. This resulted in the growth and maturing of electoral politics and its coexistence with the insurgency in Nagaland, and has continued right till the national elections of 2019.[15]

The Naga Peace Process Amid Factionalism

In 2010, the noted journalist, B.G. Verghese observed, "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."[16] The peace talks of the 1960s resulted in several Naga People's Conventions, the 16-point agreement and the establishment of a "Peace Mission" which finally resulted in signing of a "Cessation of Fire" or a Ceasefire from May 23, 1964. By 1966-67, the venue of the peace talks shifted to New Delhi where six rounds of talks were held. However, the Federal Group started violating the terms of the Cease Fire and sent groups of its cadres to China both for military training and for procurement of sophisticated arms. In August 1967, Phizo and his host, Advisor Revd. Michael Scott, were alleged to have gone to New York to table the "Naga issue" in the United Nations, which they failed to push through.

In 1967, the Indian Parliament enacted 'The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act to counter the growing secessionist movement. On August 31, 1972, the Governor of Nagaland suspended the practice of extension of suspension of military operations and declared the NNC, NFG and Naga Federal Army (NFA) as unlawful associations within the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967. NNC, which declared popular sovereignty in 1956, adopted a provisional Constitution of the Federal Government, called *The Yahzabo of Nagaland* in 1963 which was amended in 1968. Divided into 12 parts and having 140 articles, the *Yehzabo* declared that "[t]here shall be but one citizenship throughout Nagaland, that is to say, there shall be no citizenship of the Unit as distinct from that of the Nation" (Article 9). While through the *Yehzabo,* the people of Nagaland solemnly acknowledge that "the sovereignty over this earth and the entire universe belongs to almighty God alone," it, however, recognises both Christianity and Naga religions as religions of the state. *Yehzabo* of 1968 also proposed to establish national institutions in Nagaland based on "the common ideals of democracy, justice, liberty, equality and fraternity among the people composing it."[17]

By the end of 1968, an anti-communist faction calling itself the "Revolutionary Government of Nagaland" came into being, following a series of splits within the NNC and NFG, largely along "tribal" lines. The GOI

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did not extend the ongoing ceasefire and active hostilities recommenced. A Nagaland Peace Council was formed once again at the initiative of the church leaders with a liaison committee which succeeded in persuading the NNC and the NFG, who sent six representatives for discussions with the GOI.[18]

Shillong Accord and Why it Failed

A consequence of the church-driven peace initiative, the 'Shillong Accord,' was signed between the Governor of Assam, L.P. Singh, and the NNC and the NFG on November 11, 1975. The Naga leaders who signed the Shillong Accord represented the NFG and NNC and the accord was accompanied with the surrender of several cadres with their arms. The outcome of these discussions was compiled into a three-point agreement as highlighted:

- 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.

Clause 3 of the accord stated that "reasonable time for the underground representatives to formulate other issues for discussion for the final settlement". This has remained unimplemented, since many of the Naga National Council (NNC) leaders steering the movement from overseas did not agree to endorse the agreement. They criticised the agreement arguing that it was signed by "representatives of the Naga underground," rather than the organisations like NNC or the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN). During the negotiations prior to the signing of the agreement, Isak Chisi Swu, the NNC vice-president, and Thuingaleng Muivah, its general secretary, with 150 insurgents, who were transiting through Burma on their return from China, rejected the agreement terming it as a betrayal by the NNC. They swore to fight on for unquestionable sovereignty. This led to the creation of a group called the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) from their old organisation NNC on February 2, 1980.[19]

The Birth of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN)

The manifesto of the NSCN was based on the principle of "socialism" for economic solutions based on the slogan "Nagaland for Christ." Animosity and rivalry, again based on tribal affiliations, developed within the leadership of NSCN and two factions, the NSCN (Issak-Muivah" (I-M) and NSCN (Khaplang) (K) loosely emerged by April 1988. New waves of conflict, clashes and confrontation within the movement finally led to an irreconcilable division in the NSCN and the consolidation of its two factions along tribal lines. The faction led by Chairman Isac and General Secretary Muivah (NSCN-IM) comprised mainly the Tangkhul Nagas, while the other faction was led by its Vice President, S.S. Khaplang (NSCN-K). Khaplang originated from the Konyak tribe based in Myanmar and was supported by members of his tribe and those armed cadres who belonged to villages located in Myanmar. On April 30, 1988, members of the Khaplang faction attacked the General Headquarters of the Muivah group and killed several armed cadres belonging to the tribes supporting Muivah- Issak, the Tangkhuls and the Semas.

Phizo died in exile in London in 1990 and after his death, the NNC split into two factions, one led by Adinno, Phizo's daughter, and the other by Khadao Youthan, an old associate of Phizo. Clashes amongst these factions became frequent and many Nagas, including those not connected with these groups, were killed. The NSCN (K) further split in 2011 to form several splinter groups called NSCN (Khole-Khitovi (KK)) and NSCN (Khitovi-Neokpao) (NSCN (KN)). Prolonged violence gave way to the hope of peace when NSCN (IM) signed a Ceasefire with GOI in 1997 followed by NSCN (K) in 2001. In 2012, the Myanmar based NSCN (K), entered into a CF Agreement with the Government of Myanmar since their main camps were in Myanmar. Several attempts for peace in the past have not yielded the expected results.

The progress of talks between Underground groups (UG) and the GOI suffered a setback in 2015 with the NSCN (K) unilaterally abrogating the CF Agreement and ambushing a column of 6 DOGRAS, killing 18 soldiers and injuring 15 more. This decision of the group led to another split and resulted in the formation of NSCN (Reformation) (R). NSCN (K) further went on to join hands with other regional insurgent groups from Asaam and Manipur such as 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 has further split into smaller factions, with these smaller factions adopting extremely violent tactics to establish themselves as entities. Gradually, the entire Naga movement degenerated into a violently

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criminal network bereft of any ideological moorings. This has made the prevailing situation even more difficult to deal with especially since the most of group's armed cadres engaged widely in extortion and criminal activities.[20]

The 2015 Framework Agreement

Termed as "historic" by the NSCN (I-M), this agreement was signed after over 80 rounds of talks between the government and various stakeholders. Though the details of this agreement are still classified, the government in a statement said that 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. You are also the guardians of our eastern frontiers and our gateway to the world beyond."[21] Later a similar framework agreement was signed with the NNPGs (Naga National Political Groups) which consists of seven groups including the NSCN (Reformation), the NSCN (NK) and the splinter group of the NSCN (Khango).

NSCN (I-M) also signed a Framework Agreement with GoI, which though classified 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 radical organisations. This framework agreement too has not led to a permanent peace, and in August 2020, the NSCN IM released copies of the confidential Framework Agreement and insisted on a change in the interlocutor who is currently the governor of Nagaland, Mr RN Ravi. Later, on October 16, 2020, the main leader of the NSCN (I-M), Muivah, expressed strong reservations against moving forward with the agreement in an interview with the journalist, Karan Thapar. It was an interview designed to upset and even annoy the government at the Centre and it starkly revealed the sharp differences that still separated the National Socialist Council of Nagalim (Isak-Muivah) from the Indian government. Repeatedly, and forcefully, the general secretary of the NSCN (I-M) argued that "the Nagas will never be part of the Indian Union nor will they accept India's constitution." "We have

stood our ground on these two non-negotiable issues and we shall continue to stand till the last man standing."[22]

Is a Resolution in Sight?

It may be argued that ever since the ceasefire of August 1997, several rounds of talks have been held in India and abroad between various factions of the Naga movement. The NSCN (I-M) has emerged as the largest faction and one that is most inclined to take forward the delicate negotiations which began in August 2015. It last held discussions in December 2020 with the government appointed interlocutor, Mr Ravi, the Governor of Nagaland, and would probably be re-joining these talks again in 2021. Unfortunately, the NSCN (I-M) started losing trust in the interlocutor by July 2020 and refused to interact with him thereafter. In response, the government has appointed senior officials of the Intelligence Bureau to continue the talks.

The main issue of "sovereignty" to include a separate flag and constitution has become difficult to resolve. Several experts suggest dealing with this issue with greater flexibility. The other issue to reflect on are the issues of trust and a willingness to revisit innovative solutions within India's constitutional federal system that have shown promise in the past. The fact that the Naga leaders have almost moved away from their 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.

The Indian government must exercise pragmatism while dealing with these vexed issues. In the final analysis, the imperatives of a permanent peace must drive the contours of a lasting agreement which should not be derailed again. In fact, the need for demonstrating greater sagacity and circumspection is greater now than ever before. The current phase of peace parleys must not be aborted half-way and left for future resolution. While much of the onus rests on the government, the flip-flop and intransigent approach of the NSCN (I-M) and groups that support irrational demands must soften given the realisation that the movement is too fractured to coerce the government. There is no doubt that an end to "Naga insurgency" will have an enormous impact on the prevailing peace within tribal north-eastern societies. The success of India's Look East policy too will depend significantly on the success of these peace talks.

What is clear is that the mainstream Naga society and its youth have undergone a huge transformation over the last 30 years. Today's educated Naga youth identify 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. However, concerns about the militarisation and brutalisation of its local society mainly due to six decades of continuous armed conflict, and the continuous imposition of the 1958 Armed Forces Special Powers Act, need to be addressed and rectified. What is essential is that regardless of a political solution, New Delhi along with Naga elders, must find a way to re-assign and convince the approximately 4000 armed cadres of the various groups to lay down their weapons and accept a handsome stipend and vocational training instead. This will go and long way in accelerating the peace process that will hopefully lead to an enduring political solution.

What is also abundantly clear is that the current threat from China has affected and altered the external and internal environment in the north-eastern parts of India. The possibility of China renewing its interference in the north east with non-traditional means like cyber warfare and renewing the supplies of arms to Naga rebels through proxies cannot be ruled out. When one adds the increasing threat of cross-border terrorism, the growth of Islamic extremism, the narcotics–arms nexus, illegal migration and left-wing extremism, the situation could gravely impact the security of India's already fragile north-east. Permanent peace in this region is an imperative for India's accelerated development and cannot be delayed any further.

Notes

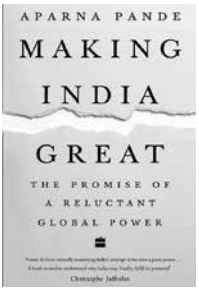
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NDC Journal

Book Reviews



Making India Great: The Promise of a Reluctant Global Power

Aparna Pande
(Harper Collins India 2020, 240 pages, Rs. 599,
ISBN 9789353578015)

Reviewed by *I I Kuttappa*

India has always occupied a position of significance in the affairs of the world because of its geographical location and size, its biodiversity, the socioeconomic prowess of its people to generate wealth over the centuries, its rich natural resources and the influence of the cultures and religions of its people. India has seen countless invasions, migrations and empires, becoming a melting pot of cultures and ideas, a fountainhead of wealth creation, a cradle for religions and a source of political power. Modern India, emerged from the ruins of the Second World War, free from its colonial masters but torn apart by its partition, in abject poverty and saddled with myriad socioeconomic problems. With this backdrop, Aparna Pande sets out to explore the potential and promise of India to transform itself into a developed and powerful nation with global influence and the ability to project true hard power. Her book comes at a time when China is actively challenging the pole position occupied by the United States and is seeking to reshape the geopolitical landscape on its own terms and conditions. The book, therefore, is an important appraisal of India's future prospects in the comity of nations and the influence it could have on an emerging world order in the backdrop of the China–US rivalry. Though a concise volume covering only 158 pages, the author's swathe is wide, covering India from Chanakya to Modi and examining all facets of India, in a logical, building-block approach backed up by extensive footnotes and a comprehensive bibliography.

Aparna Pande begins by examining the dual influence of ancient India's socio-religious-cultural impact and the effect of India's colonial past on

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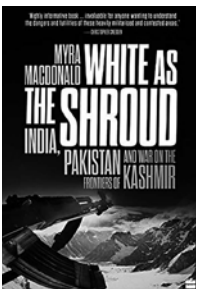
modern Indian thinking and the policies adopted by successive Indian governments. This sets the tone for the underlying idea of the book and the author's proposition that India's inward looking approach and belief in its historical strength impedes its self-awareness and tends to hold it back from realising its true potential. The next chapter on Human Capital brings out the enormity of the challenges India faces in tackling poverty, gender equality, minority affirmative action, health and socioeconomic equality. It elucidates clearly how having a vibrant democracy, an open pluralistic society and a mixed economy are India's strengths. After this, India's economic potential is discussed with an emphasis on the post-reform era, the inadequacies of Indian policies and their tardy implementation. It also explores ideas to improve the economic performance and draw out the full potential of India's demographic dividend and entrepreneurship skills.

Her critical analysis of India's foreign policy and its military and grand strategy are two chapters which are the essence of the book. The author does make a balanced analysis of the lacunae in Indian foreign policy, the problems besetting the Indian Armed forces and the impact of the overall absence of a grand strategy on India's domestic and foreign relations. At times, this analysis tends to be somewhat contradictory. Though the author acknowledges the poverty caused by colonialism, the poor economic state of the country and the fragile human security scenario prevailing in India, yet she feels that India has not made sufficient investment in its military. The book correctly draws out the inevitable geopolitical rivalry between India and China and forecasts that India's active and contested border with China, the tussle to control smaller nations in South and South East Asia and the dominance of the Indian Ocean, as areas where both the Asian giants would play out their rivalry. It also brings out the stark difference between the military and economic strengths of both the nations and India's weak position in all indicators vis-à-vis China.

The author argues that the rise of China will result in a tremendous amount of uncertainty for India and countering Chinese aggression whether economic or military is a challenge that India must contend with and prepare for. India's traditional preference for a multipolar world rather than a bi or unipolar world is likely to bring India closer to the US and the book forecasts a more formal US-India alignment along with other likeminded democracies (Japan, Australia, South Korea) to counter Chinese influence in the Indo-Pacific. While acknowledging that India is a Status Quo power, a strong case is made out for India to abandon its old non-aligned mind set and shun its reluctance to enter formal pacts with other nations to safe

guard its subcontinental interests, uphold the liberal rules based international order and ensure an open security architecture for its vision of the Asia Pacific region.

In the context of a Grand strategy for India, the author's commentary on the inefficiency of the Indian bureaucracy, the two steps forward one step back policy swings of the government machinery, the poor state of civil-military relations and the urgent need for reinvigorating and modernising the strategic decision-making apex organisations of the country are prescient and insightful. The debilitating effects of continuing caste and minority politics, even after 70 years of Independence, on the socio-economic fabric of the country are enunciated clearly. The book discusses the dangerous emergence of religious majoritarianism, rising religious extremism and intolerance towards dissent as major factors leading to domestic instability and comments that these are hardly the hallmarks of a country looking for a more global role. The author asserts that these are challenges that must be countered in order to throw off the weight of poverty, invigorate the youthful population, bridge the socioeconomic and gender gaps so that the true potential of the country is unlocked. All in all, 'Making India Great' offers fresh insights into old problems and is an extremely readable and relevant book in the light of the emerging new geopolitical dynamics in a post-Covid world. It serves as an excellent primer to the uninitiated as well as for regular India watchers to explore problems that are confronting India and offers some good insights into the possible solutions to India's dilemmas and the future trajectory India would take on its march to greatness.



White as the Shroud: India, Pakistan and the War on the Frontiers of Kashmir

Myra Macdonald
(Hurst & Company, London, 2020, 224 pages, Rs. 2571, ISBN: 9781787383982)

Reviewed by *Adarsha Verma*

South of the great watershed that separates Central Asia from the Indian subcontinent, Siachen Glacier, the highest battlefield presents a gritty saga where limits of human endurance contest the conditions in one of the toughest and most inhospitable terrains in the world. Numerous tales of courage and fortitude have been written in blood on the desolate crests of the Saltoro Ridge unknown to public consciousness. The rationale for the Siachen conflict and narratives of numerous encounters have always remained an enigma to the uninitiated. It is in this context that the book *White As The Shroud: India, Pakistan and War on the Frontiers of Kashmir* becomes an engrossing account of this super high-altitude battlefield with meticulously researched accounts from both sides of the battle zone. Blending the geographical and historical landscape within the context of wars along the Indo-Pak borders, the author through her absorbing storytelling presents fascinating insights into the minds of soldiers who dauntingly face the cold weather, harsh terrain and enemy fire without trepidation. The book also highlights the *confusing and nebulous nature of borders and wars* in these areas. Travelling to fringes of battlefields of Siachen and Kargil from both sides, the author has recreated conflict settings through meticulous interviews, interactions and visits and has succinctly established that the Siachen and Kargil wars were intimately connected.

The book comprises sixteen well woven and interlinked chapters that end with an epilogue. The initial three chapters introduce the intricacies of the

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geography of Leh, the Nubra Valley and Siachen in rich detail. Interspersed with a sprinkling of the history of delineation of Indian borders with both Pakistan and China, these chapters lay the foundation for understanding the rigours of training and tenuousness of military logistics which make war at these altitudes *improbable yet possible*. The fourth chapter focusses on the quiet resilience of the soldier (*Jawan*), linking up geography with physiological challenges of men deployed at these dizzy heights for pride and loyalty to the unit and the flag. The tenacity of these men can be gauged from the fact that nearly 1000 Indian soldiers (*and perhaps a similar number of Pakistani soldiers*) have laid down their lives due to exigencies of weather and terrain.[1] Highlighting the regimental system being followed in both armies, the author has captured the essence of the loyalty which soldiers display towards their units on both sides in ways that victory and defeat become irrelevant. (pp. 85).

The next two chapters trace the evolution of borders of India with Pakistan in the west and China in Eastern Ladakh from the early thriving trade between Ladakh and Lhasa. A fleeting account of the history of Kashmir's frontiers and border wars between India-Pakistan and India-China form the focus of these chapters wherein accounts of military officers reflect the strategic importance of Siachen and Indian apprehensions of Pakistan-China collusivity.

In the next chapter, the author attributes the Siachen war to *different factors coming together at the wrong time.* Cartographic errors which seemed to have originated in the US Defence Mapping Agency and further progressed by the Pakistani authorities would have gone unnoticed had mountaineering expeditions not been authorised by Pakistan. Perceptions of cartographic aggression by Pakistan, likelihood of Pakistan–China collusion in the Depsang Plains in Eastern Ladakh, and the strong protest notes to Indian patrols by Pakistan triggered alarm bells in India. The Indian Army moved into Siachen days ahead of Pakistan, only to be spotted by the Pakistani Director General of Military Operations, after which began the scramble for heights along the Saltoro Ridge, signalling the start of the Siachen War. The eleventh and twelfth chapters are high points of the book where the author outlines the capture of Bana (erstwhile Quaid) post by India, located at an altitude of 21000 ft. Narrated to the author by Sub Maj Bana Singh, the survivor of the gritty hand-to-hand fight, chronicle of events leading to the capture of the post is spine-chilling and engrossing. Even the narration of Pakistani counter attack on Indian posts of Ashok and U-Cut as response to the capture of Bana Post, though unsuccessful, makes for powerful and poignant reading. The next chapter (*Stalemate*) covering the race between

both armies for occupation of Chumik Glacier, in South East Saltoro Ridge dominating the Pakistani posts is again a tale of human endurance, perhaps mutated, as legends do, into many different forms (pp. 147).

The last three chapters encompass the run-up and execution of the Kargil Conflict. Myra Macdonald concludes that Pakistan has never had an honest reckoning with itself over the Kargil War and that the original plan was vague. Pointing to many versions, she argues that it is likely that what started as a tactical operation was expanded beyond its original aims by the overreach of military commanders. The new phase of unpredictability in Indo–Pak relations has been highlighted. The final chapter, *Epilogue*, is interesting as it covers events in brief post the Kargil War, primarily India's changed stance of proactive punitive strikes, abrogation of Article 370 delineating special status to Jammu and Kashmir and the India-China Galwan clashes in June 2020. Myra concludes with a cry of anguish over the absurdity of war over desolate uninhabitable positions and suggests having this region as a land without borders, positing that the pursuit of borders where none existed earlier, was contributing to instability. Prophesising that the inhospitable terrain will continue to remain dangerous as *wars fought over these mountains have much to do with the confidence and insecurities of countries around them*, the book suggests that border management protocols be put in place by countries buttressed by buffer zones to make frontiers safer.

The deliberate non-inclusion of maps due to contested frontiers on ground is an attempt by the author to ensure a universal acceptance of her book. Few illustrations or maps giving out relative geographical positions would have however, facilitated an easier understanding of the numerous ridges, glaciers, valleys and inter se disposition of forces. Reconstruction of the battles fought, through interviews and interactions, are bound to have gaps due to relative positions on both sides. This takes nothing away from the honest and easy-to-read storytelling based on narratives from people who took part in battles in this cold and hostile terrain. Overall, the book is ideally structured and is an engrossing read with a fine thread of well-researched history that runs through the chapters. Relating accounts of both sides of the battle zone, *White As the Shroud* is an open narration of facts and is a must read for all students of military history and strategic studies.

Note

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Submission Guidelines for Authors

General

Kuutneeti: A Journal of the National Defence College, New Delhi solicits contributions from course participants, faculty members, alumni and Subject Matter Experts (SME) on the entire panoply of issues directly or indirectly related to global and national security. These could be in the form of Commentaries, Journal Articles and Book Reviews. While commentaries must be 2500-3000 words, it is desirable but not compulsory to have end notes. Journal pieces must be between 4500-5000 words and accompanied by robust end notes. References and bibliography are not required. Course participants and SDS's must note that it takes quite an effort to create an abridged version of an ongoing thesis and the latter must identify potential pieces midway through the thesis process and initiate a dialogue with the editor to ascertain the suitability of the topic for publication should the author be interested. Book reviews would be between 1000-1500 words and involve a book that has been published in the last two years. Alumni are welcome to submit pieces for publication.

Style

All long journal articles must be accompanied by an abstract of 150 words. The word count is not inclusive of the abstract or end notes. Authors are to use Arial Font (size 12) and select English (UK) MS Word. Anything that has been extracted from a previous work must be cited in end notes. Endnotes are preferred to footnotes and the citations must conform to the Chicago Manual Style which can be accessed at: https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html

The full name and address of the author, along with brief Curriculum Vitae (100 words), should be submitted. The contribution must be submitted by email to ndcjournal.kuutneeti@gmail.com

The Editor retains the right to make alterations and would reach out to the author if the alterations impact the flavour of the article. Should the author have objections to the changes, the article would be dropped.

Commandant's Reflections
From the Editor's Desk

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ALUMNI CORNER

14. The Naga Conundrum and the Way Forward
    Shokin Chauhan

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