NATIONAL SECURITY
THREATS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

The concept of India's strategic autonomy will be called into question if India does not develop demonstrable military capability and upgrade its doctrinal thinking in tune with changing nature of wars and prevailing environment. Strong dissuasive capability backed by political resolve is required for India to protect its interest and shift from pure territorial bias to more interest-based capability. Even more important is reorientation of political mindset that looks upon soft power and *status quo* as the best options, leaving India open to coercion and dealing with unabated proxy war.

Full scale conventional war is less likely in the future. Conflicts will be fought in all spaces – land, air, sea, undersea, space, cyberspace and most importantly in our minds. Future wars will transcend beyond geographical boundaries and will be technology intensive, ambiguous and complex. Impact of technology will be far more evident. These wars would be fought on all fronts – physical, economic and psychological and characterised by uncertainty and reduced time for decision-making.

Non-state Actors

Sub-conventional conflict perpetrated by non-state actors will increase both in scale and technology. Spectrum of conflict could range from conflicts between states, with non-state actors and their proxies resulting in blurred boundaries between regular and irregular warfare. These groups in the future could acquire better capability and greater lethality to pose a serious threat especially in case of acquisition of weapons of mass destruction. Non-state actors and asymmetric threats would emerge centre stage in future security situations.

Armed forces will be required to undertake low intensity border wars as well as insurgency fuelled by foreign powers. Such conflicts are likely to prolong indefinitely as conflict resolution requires many contradictory influences. More chances of hybrid conflicts involving conventional as well as sub-conventional threats.

Challenges like energy, water and mass migrations will manifest themselves as discernible threats. Depleting crucial natural resources like water and energy specially oil, will see greater rivalry for markets and resources, thereby increasing regional instability. Cross-border migrations resulting in demographic inversions are likely to increase specially in impoverished regions creating large-scale demographic upheavals leading to grave security threats.

Global warming and disaster management will be issues to contend with. Disasters likely to be exacerbated both in frequency and intensity due to global warming resulting in increased deployment of armed forces for the same, affecting operational capability. Global warming's greatest impact will be on availability of water resource, escalating tensions in the region.

Changes in structure of global economy, communications and new technology ushered in by revolution in military affairs (RMA) will continue to have greater effect in coming decades. Offensive use of information warfare especially cyber space and options of non-contact war will give the adversary the ability to cause disruption and destruction and degrade the war waging potential even before the battle is actually joined. New challenges to national security emerging from terrorism, ethnic diversity, proliferation of small arms, narcotics trafficking and religious extremism in the region.

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National Security Objectives

While there are no formally stated national security objectives by the government, however, over a period of time the following have generally been accepted:
• India's unity and territorial integrity to include land and maritime borders, island territories, EEZs, maritime trade routes and airspace.
• Peaceful, prosperous and friendly neighbourhood – ensure mutually beneficial ties within the region (immediate neighbourhood) in tune with our national interests and ability to prevent their destabilisation, which could have adverse security implications for India. Develop capability to effectively contribute towards security and stability in international affairs consistent with our policies and stature.
• Sustained inclusive economic growth and provision of energy and raw materials to ensure adequate defence budget allocation.

• Political stability and internal social harmony – by securing the country against any threat based on religion, language, ethnicity, socio-economic dissonance etc.
• Credible capacities for defence against all threats.
• Developing mutually beneficial ties within the region.
• Accelerate indigenous defence production.
• Address emerging threats of Information warfare with special reference to cyber warfare.
• Combating terrorism – Today the epicentre of international terrorism lies in Asia in India's neighbourhood with non-state actors redefining terrorism and proxy wars.
• Relations with the Indian Ocean Region rim countries creating safe zone for trade.
• Develop critical infrastructure and industry with security implications.
• Ensure food security as part of strategic autonomy.
• Improve energy efficiency and develop renewable resources in accordance with environmental concerns and provide for energy security. Climate change to be addressed on the basis of international equity and shared global responsibility.

External Threats / Challenges

India would wish to proceed on its peaceful path of development. However, it would be naïve not to take into account the threats and challenges it faces in this regard both in the conventional and sub-conventional domain. These could be from regional powers, proxies, non-state actors or global threats with their own manifestations in the Southeast Asian context.

China

The growth of China and increasing disparity is of disquiet, more so in the military domain. With triggers as existing threats are long-term and could manifest in all domains.

Triggers

• The unresolved territorial and boundary dispute – it is unlikely to be the main trigger for the conflict, however, it has the potential to be an excuse for initiation of a conflict.
• Competing space – regional and neighbourhood, especially India's interest in South China Sea and South East and East Asia.

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• Energy and other resource oriented issues.
• Water woes.
• Violent rebellion in Tibet post Dalai Lama phase.

Threats
• Poses long-term threat / challenge, hence limited / full-scale war not ruled out.
• China's military capability development and improvement of logistic infrastructure in Tibet is India centric.
• Enhanced involvement in PoK, especially the Gilgit-Baltistan area, resulting in a *de facto* third party status in Kashmir.
• 'String of pearls' strategy encircling India with the prime focus on enhanced presence in Indian Ocean Region for power projection and influence.
• Multi-front threat, a reality in collusion with Pakistan.
• Damming of rivers will have a contagion effect on India – with no agreements existing; a potential threat.
• Use of Information Warfare – Cyber warfare, deception and intense psychological warfare as detriments of a non-contact war in peacetime or as a prelude / part of hostilities.

Pakistan
Present trends bode ill for Pakistan and unless it changes tack it will continue to be a source of instability and terror. The nuclear arsenal and its security is a major cause of concern. It is likely to remain on short fuse with possibility of conflict.

Triggers
• Unsettled border dispute in J&K – likely main and central cause.
• Another terror attack on India supported by Pakistan could be a significant trigger, but may not culminate into a full-fledged armed conflict.
• Contradictions between various institutions in Pakistan requiring diversion of public attention could culminate into a conflict.
• Support to terrorist / jihadi groups operating out of Pakistan.
• An internally unstable Pakistan.

Threats
• Radicalisation and Talibanisation of Pakistan.
• Pakistan's nuclear and missile development programme.
• Limited conflict – recurrence of Kargil-type operations remains a possibility.
• Pakistan's proxy war in Kashmir

Pak-China Collusion
The core of China's strategy in South Asian Region revolves around its strategic alliance with Pakistan by providing unprecedented levels of nuclear and conventional military support to Pakistan.

Pakistan has become a vassal state of China, by even allowing positioning of Chinese troops in PoK. Hence in any future conflict both countries will collude with each other to carry out mutually supportive military operations. For India, this implies fighting simultaneous wars on two widely seperated fronts virtually amounting to a two-front war – a reality in the future.

Afghanistan
Talibanisation of Afghanistan aided and abetted by Pakistan constitutes a major threat. Deteriorating security environment in Af-Pak region is the greatest challenge to regional stability. The area is the main centre of Islamic extremist fundamentalism, drug trafficking and illicit trade in arms. The withdrawal of US forces has further increased the uncertainty.

Sub-conventional Threats
Proxy war and insurgency fuelled, aided and supported by Pakistan and China in J&K and the Northeast – this is also manifesting itself in the Naxalite affected areas.

Irregular/ asymmetric war involving non-state actors may occur concurrently across the entire spectrum of conflict. The prevalence of such groups in armed conflicts has added layers of complexity to conflict management and resolution.

Left wing extremism – increasing Naxalite violence is rapidly emerging as a major threat with distinctive features. Though, an internal threat could be exploited by Pakistan and China.

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CBRN Threats
Region encompassing South and East Asia is home to largest concentration of nuclear capable states. Nuclear overhang more volatile in India-Pakistan context compared to relatively stable India-China context. Proliferation of nuclear technology – rogue elements getting their hands on WMDs is a serious threat and challenge. Nuclear weapons have encouraged greater reliance on proxy, low intensity and asymmetric warfare. Role of biological weapons in a non-contact war cannot be overemphasised.

Aerospace Threats
• Enhanced Chinese space capabilities, especially in ISR.
• Space could be the new frontier of conflict in the future.
• Anti-satellite capability and Ballistic Missile Defence.

Maritime Security
• Threat to island territories requires capability of intervention operations.

• Threat to oil platforms and drilling rigs from marine terrorists.
• Sea piracy becoming a major threat.
• China's 'string of pearls' strategy and our strategy to counter the same.
• Security of sea lanes of communications (SLOCs).

Information / Cyber Warfare
Information warfare will gain more relevance and will be the next arena for intensive conflict with no physical boundaries or attributability. It will also constitute the silent war which will carry on during peacetime. With an increasingly wired society it will pose a major 24X7 threat to national security. Cyber war as form of non-contact war can target the populace and influence minds. This form of warfare is likely to be a major national security threat in future both during peace and war, as it is a shift from the physical to the perceptual domain. What is more dangerous is the threat from non-state actors.

Water Conflict
Population pressures and changes in climatic patterns are having adverse effect on availability of water while demand continuously expands. Around the world pressure to control and access water. This is likely to be a major security concern in future both domestically and internationally. India shares rivers and watersheds with Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and China (Indus, Brahmaputra, Ganges, Barak). Chinese plans to divert the Tibetan rivers is a major security challenge.

Energy Security
Oil is a critical energy resource and depletion of this resource in the future will spark tensions and could be a major trigger for conflict in future. Maximum consumption is by both China and India, being the fastest growing economies and developing countries in the world. There is an urgent need to look at alternate energy sources

Global Warming
Large-scale migrations of human population result in ethnic and religious imbalance. Cross-border migrations will result in demographic upheavals leading to grave internal security threats. Food and energy security will pose grave challenges and be a volatile trigger for conflict. Health epidemics, greater potential for failed states in our immediate neighbourhood – impetus to growth of terrorism. Escalation of conflicts over resources. Disasters likely to be exacerbated in frequency and intensity increasing employment of armed forces.

China's string of pearls

Indian Diaspora
Large Indian Diaspora is spread all over the world and their security and safety is a major challenge. This has been starkly evident in the Arab crises where a sizeable Indian Diaspora had to be moved out of countries like Syria, Libya and Egypt. The ongoing crises in the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) where, while India was successful in rescuing the nurses from Kerala, the whereabouts and fate of the 30 workers from Punjab remains unknown – this will remain a major security challenge in the future.

Footnote
The 21st century has been spoken of as the Asian Century with its largest share of humanity. Aspirations of this populace, their desire for development, demographic pressures amongst others, constitute a heady and explosive mix with potential for conflict. India due to its location, size and democratic strength must be the catalyst to ensure regional peace and security. This can only come about if backed by technological, economic and military prowess.

Fundamentally the Indian security environment is skewed with multidimensional threats posed by two nuclear powers acting in collusion in our neighbourhood. The concept of India's strategic autonomy will be called into question if India does not develop demonstrable military capability and upgrade its doctrinal thinking in tune with changing nature of wars and prevailing environment. Strong dissuasive capability backed by political resolve is required for India to protect its interest and shift from pure territorial bias to more interest-based capability. Even more important is reorientation of political mindset that looks upon soft power and *status quo* as the best options, leaving India open to coercion and dealing with unabated proxy war. **D♦A**

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