

## Managing Threats to Our Security

**T**oday, India is facing threats to her security from various quarters. The threats are both from within and from without. The threats are in the forms of outright enemy incursions as reflected in such instances as Kargil, low-intensity proxy war as in Kashmir, threats like nuclear strikes from unidentified sources or non-state actors, refugee influxes from across the border threatening the country politically, culturally and economically, religious fundamentalism, narco-terrorism, proliferation of small arms, many environmental hazards flowing in as a result of indiscriminate use of earth's resources by developed and developing countries, cultural invasion through media and economic insecurity of the country induced both by instability in the world market and inability at the domestic level to cope with changes induced by the forces of globalisation.

The hydra-headed problems of poverty, weak economic base, unemployment, narrow regionalism, Naxalism, communalism, infra-nationalism, secessionism, corruption, terrorism and weak institutional structure—all pose grave threats to the national security of this country. If we really mean to manage our national security well, then we would have to work at all these levels and take a comprehensive and holistic approach to the issue of national security in the absence of which the continued survival of Indian Nation may be endangered.

Before looking at threats from without, one should try to put one's own house in order. India's image as a 'soft state', as termed by Gunnar Myrdal in his celebrated work *Asian Drama*, has to be tackled first. This negative image perhaps derives from the fact that key institutional structures of the state are either in shambles or non-functional leading to her incapacitation at many levels and this has paralysed the economy and polity in irrevocable ways on the one hand and encouraged fissiparous tendencies along the margins on the other. A run-down bureaucracy, a rickety legislature, an indecisive executive and an overall image of a non-performing government does impact negatively on national security.

The first task confronting the Indian state is to raise an effective institutional structure to manage the affairs of the state and this will have its beneficial effect on the issue of national security in the long run. It is argued that a good infrastructure and responsible

government would be of no use unless and until we have a very alert, awakened, responsible and participative civil society. And to have such a civil society, there is a need to invest a lot in the human resource of the state. This would also mean that everyone is well-fed, well-clad and well-cared-for. Otherwise, a starving and unemployed populace often transforms into a disaffected subject and poses new threats to national security, as was also attested to by Kautilya in his famous book, 'Arthashastra'. Moreover, Indian state has to demonstrate its impartiality in the authoritative allocation of values and resources.

It is a fact that the Indian nation is facing lot many challenges from many disgruntled sections of Indian citizenry, because of a perceived bias in terms of value allocation by the Indian State. Hence, the people managing state power have to be careful in securing—what Rawls once said—'distributive justice' for its citizens and they have to ensure that the developmental pie does not get so unevenly distributed as to engender such circumstances which threaten the very survival of the state or nation. It is absolutely necessary to engineer developmental processes in such a manner that all the sections of Indian society are co-opted respectfully into the national mainstream. The government of the state should also see to it that there is no social injustice or inequity in the society as that often engenders social unrest leading to the break-up of the country—as was the case in East Pakistan in 1971. To misquote Machiavelli, the government should not only be doing justice, but should also appear to be just.

Also, the galloping rate of population growth needs to be brought down to match the resources of the country. It has definitely outpaced the resources at its command. The mismatch often creates instability and unrest in the society, which definitely is not good for the country. To ward against this, we need to have a very healthy economy with an efficient industrial and agricultural base. Again, a healthy economy requires good infrastructural base and a good mix of economic policies to support it.

Then, the political culture of a country should also be such as to provide a cushion to its national security. In a country like India, very often, competitive/populist democratic measures create problems like narrow regionalism, communalism, secessionism and infra-nationalism, which also prove suicidal to the national security. So, an effective national security management could be predicated on a reasonably responsible political culture with a very wide democratic base meaning thereby that we need to have an effective all-inclusive participatory democracy.

After we have all the above, we could think of other aspects of our national security. It is often said that India does not have a national security doctrine and it is often said to be toying with a concept of 'strategic ambivalence'. A very reputed security expert, George Tanham also feels that India lacks a 'culture of strategic thinking'. And even after the National Security Advisory Board led by the doyen of Indian strategic think tanks, Mr. K. Subrahmanyam came out with such a doctrine, we have not bothered to accept the same.

India's national security management continues to be ad hocish and reactive. The Kargil Committee Report pointed out many chinks in our security armour and, then, there was a Group of Ministers Report, which visualised many changes in our national security management, but we are yet to see some positive changes on the security front. The National

Security Council, formed to effectively manage country's security has proved to be still-born with the government hardly using it as a tool for security management.

All one means to say here is that the government needs to be more serious and systematic about the national security management. It should not only have a crystal clear perspective and policy on national security, but it should also put in place the required institutional structures. National security is a full time job and requires a full time National Security Advisor rather than the one who also works as the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. The long-felt need to have a Chief of Defence Staff for proper coordination among the different wings of our armed forces also needs to be seriously considered.

At a time when Alvin Toffler's 'Third Wave' (i.e., communication and information revolution) is sweeping the world, we have to see to it that we are not unsettled by this phenomenon—more so when we claim to be good at it and propose to make India a 'knowledge society'. And to the credit of the government, we already have the Report of the Information Task Force (led first by Jaswant Singh and later by K.C. Pant), which has extensively talked about this aspect of national security. The point one is trying to make here is that we should be ready against any attempt to invade our vast vital database through an information warfare either by enemy states or non-state actors. E-governance and e-security should go hand in hand for best results.

George Washington, the first President of the United States of America, had said, "If you want peace, be prepared for war". So, even though we may be the professed messiah of peace, we should keep our war machine properly oiled—meaning thereby that we need to be extra careful not only about our intelligence-gathering and processing, but we also need to take proper care of the training of our soldiers so as to enable them to face new security challenges more effectively. At a time when we have openly professed to have a nuclear deterrence and have declared to use the same in case there is a nuclear attack against this country, we need to have a very well-managed command, control, communication, intelligence and information (C3I2) system in place otherwise this nuclear God may turn out to be Frankenstein's Monster or our own 'Bhasmasur' which could devour its own creator.

Then for any country to manage its national security well, it is important that she is self-sufficient in her defence procurements. For a very long time, India has been dependent for her defence procurements on Russia or erstwhile USSR. But for an effective national security management, a country should diversify her defence procurements, which India has already been doing as reflected in her procurements from Germany, France, Israel, United States of America, United Kingdom and Netherlands. But as far as possible, it is always advisable that a country should be self-reliant in production of its vital defence equipment otherwise this may expose her weaknesses in times of crisis. And thankfully, India has come out with a vision which aims at meeting, at least, 70 per cent of her defence requirements through domestic production over the next ten year period.

It is against this background that we need to understand the threat to our national security and make necessary interventions as suggested in a more synergised and planned fashion otherwise we shall continue being caught off guard as experienced through various incursions

on our civilian and security infrastructures from time to time, not to speak of loss of precious lives. One is sure that with a determined government and visionary policy making, we shall be able to overcome some of these problems in our security management.

### **Salient points**

- Today, India is facing threats to her security from various quarters.
- Before looking at threats from outside, one should try to put one's own house in order.
- India's image as a 'soft state' has to be tackled first.
- A run-down bureaucracy, a rickety legislature, an indecisive executive and an overall image of a non-performing government does impact negatively on national security.
- A starving and unemployed populace often transforms into a disaffected subject and poses new threats to national security.
- The galloping rate of population growth needs to be brought down to match the resources of the country.
- India's national security management continues to be ad hocish and reactive.
- National security is a full time job and requires a full time National Security Advisor rather than the one who also works as the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister.
- George Washington, the first President of the United States of America, had said, "If you want peace, be prepared for war".
- For any country to manage its national security well, it is important that she is self-sufficient in her defence procurements.