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## CHAPTER

# *India's National Security Policy*

*After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:*

- External and internal threats
- Asymmetric war and Pakistan policy
- Limited war and incursions
- Pathankot, Pampore, Uri and talks
- Sino- Pakistan axis
- China's One Belt and One Road initiative and India
- North East insurgency and naxalism
- Threat of ISIS to India
- Human and Material capability strategy
- Deterrence through denial strategy
- Maritime conflict with China
- India's Blue Economy Strategy
- Pakistani asymmetric defense capability
- India's response to Pakistan
- India as USA's hedge against in doctrine

To understand India's national security doctrine, it is important to understand the politico-strategic setup of India. Apart from this, the two other factors that have played an important role in India's security policy are British colonial rulers (and their heritage) and the impact of the Partition on India. Nehru certainly has had the biggest imprint on the security policy of the initial years. The external threats for India have remained the same over time while the internal threats have evolved as a part of our unfolding political discourse. At the external level, an important threat to India is that of Pakistan. India has fought four wars with Pakistan (1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999). Since the 1980s, Pakistan has resorted to asymmetric warfare in Kashmir. However, since Pakistan has now acquired nuclear weapons, the possibility of a full-fledged war has diminished because both are nuclear players. Pakistan has resorted to limited incursions in the past few decades. This kind of limited incursions are visible all over and a classical case is that of the Kargil War of 1999. India has always tried to engage with Pakistan through dialogue despite the 2001 Parliament attack and 2008 Mumbai attacks. However, the rapprochement has been severely affected due to the ongoing limited war.

To understand India's national security, we also have to understand the concept of National Interests. The origin of the term national interests goes back to the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>

century. Charles Beard has studied the history of the concept in his book- The idea of national interests. He asserts that the idea of national interests emerged parallel to the idea of nation states. The older terms like 'will of the Prince' were now replaced with terms like vital interests and national interests. Such terms were able to mobilize the will of the public very effectively. A scholar named Joseph Frankel also agrees that the origin of national interests goes back to the period of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He asserts that the ancient Greek city states confused politics and metaphysics. Such confusion prevented the origin of the concept of national interests in the ancient times. In the medieval times, the world was majorly feudalistic. That kind of world again prevented the rise of the concept. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century today, though the term national interest has become very fashionable, still, there is no global consensus on an exact definition for the same. For India, its national interests are the core values of the Indian society. India's national interests include the welfare of Indian people, protection of its political beliefs and its national way of life. India's national interest is its self-preservation. India intends to achieve these national interests through maintenance of territorial integrity. Today India witnesses conventional and sub-conventional threats that have slowed down its economic growth. India however knows that to maintain territorial integrity, a dominant defense force is required. The defense forces of India have tackled the proxy wars (from Pakistan) and other external threats and insurgencies. However, India still lacks a coherent defense and a security strategy or a policy document. There are two reasons why India's National Security strategy document is missing. Firstly, in India there is a lack of consensus at the political level on what exactly are the internal and external threats India witnesses. Secondly, the government is unable to develop a coherent strategy to address the core security problems. Thus, it clearly reflects that the core problem is a lack of consensus on what exactly constitutes problems in national security. Keeping in mind this, we have to remember that the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed the concept of war. Now full-scale wars are unlikely to happen. A new dimension of war in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is limited, intense and short wars that will involve all dimensions from air, land, water, space, cyberspace, electro-magnetic spectrum to psychological war. India needs to gear up to these challenges as it is witnessing such conflicts. The recent India-China stand-off in Doklam is a classical example of psychological war.

In the recent times, with the coming of the new government in 2014 in India, a full diplomatic outreach was envisaged to open talks again but the Pathankot air base attack in January, 2016 and the June, 2016 Pampore attack have once again stalled talks. In September, 2016, Pakistan again violated ceasefire and attacked a base of army soldiers in Uri. As a consequence of Uri attack, India decided to cancel any ongoing talks with Pakistan. The Indian government also announced the decision to isolate Pakistan globally. India used the UN General Assembly platform to condemn Pakistan for sponsoring terrorism. In the General Assembly debate in September 2016, India highlighted the role of Pakistan in sponsoring terrorism and also branded it as a state trying to destabilise South Asia. India also presented the human rights violation undertaken by Pakistan in the Baluchistan region of Pakistan at the UN. Due to the Uri attack, India also conveyed its decision of its refusal to participate in the SAARC summit in Pakistan in November, 2016. As a response to the Uri attack, on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2016, the Indian army retaliated against Pakistan by crossing over the Line of Control and carrying out a surgical strike using the special para forces of the army inside the Pakistani territory to eliminate the terror launch

pads on the other side of the Line of Control. This is the first time since 1971 that the Indian army had crossed the LOC to carry out a surgical strike in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) region. This has gone on to add a new dimension in the management of Pakistan.

In the security policy of India, China is widely recognised as our second external threat after Pakistan. India, after independence, initially did not perceive China as a threat. During the Nehruvian era, India focused on rapprochement but 1962 changed the equation between the neighbours. Subsequently, in 1963, Pakistan also gave a territorial chunk of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (POK) to China, which led to the formation of a new Sino–Pak axis becoming a threat to India. From 1964, as China tested nuclear weapons, these nuclear weapons of China pulsated as a new threat to India. India and China have tried to resolve border problems without any success till date. China also continues to deepen engagement with Pakistan through its One Belt One Road<sup>1</sup> initiative and String of Pearls<sup>2</sup> Strategy. China also continues probing operations on the border and to raise issues with India due to its having granted Dalai Lama sanctuary. It also refuses to reconcile India's status of a nuclear weapon state.

Domestically, India has firstly witnessed insurgency in the North East and secessionist movements in Punjab. While the problem related to the North Eastern states has been brought under control to some extent through concessions and dialogues, the Punjab problem needed military intervention. India, at the domestic level, has also witnessed Maoism owing origin to land appropriation issues. Over a period of time, Naxalism has become one the biggest internal security threat for India. Evidence has also been found pointing to state sponsored violence by Pakistan in an attempt to cause social unrest in India.

India has, over a period of time, built up human and material capabilities. At the human resource level, India has a superior military and a paramilitary force. The superiority can be judged by the fact that India provides military training to a host of nations in the world. At the level of material capabilities, the dependence upon foreign suppliers is high and domestic indigenous production capability is relatively slow. More attention needs to be paid on domestic military industrial complexes.

To tackle China, India's national security strategy is to create deterrence through denial. India has deployed trained and specialised mountain personnel along the entire border with China. It has upgraded road and other military infrastructure to establish a base. For instance, India has upgraded an Airstrip in Tezpur, Assam, enabling take off and landings of Sukhoi Su–30, a twin-engine, two-seat super manoeuvrable fighter aircraft that India imports from Russia. A 90,000 strong mountain strike corps are stationed in the region. In August, 2016, the NDA government had given a green signal to the deployment of Brahmos missiles in the Indian North Eastern region. All these initiatives are planned to ensure denial through deterrence. For effective deterrence, India has invested in long range missiles to project power. The competition from China in the Himalayas is weak and is now emerging at new places. The new theatre of action is maritime conflict in the Indian Ocean where China, through the maritime Silk Road initiative, is increasing military and naval presence and building up economic cum security ties in the region. India's response to the naval assertion by China is to nurture closer cooperation with the US, Mauritius,

Seychelles, Japan, and so on. This newfound naval cooperation with Africa under the rubric of Blue Economy of India gives India the needed muscle. India has also deployed its navy with Vietnam in South China Sea for protection of sea lanes of communication (SLOC), denying China any space for assertion. This is another form of denial exercised by India. To tackle the external threats from China, India needs to develop a strong naval strength. A strong navy can not only browbeat China, but also act as a strong deterrent. India has to remember that its security horizon extends from the Strait of Malacca to Hormuz. USA has a strong naval presence in the Middle East but the persistent Shia-Sunni conflict in the region has made it more volatile. Due to the shale gas revolution, USA's presence in the Middle East will decline. This gives India an opportunity to extend its umbrella to provide security. For this, a strong navy is mandatory. The growing India-US proximity has created a perception in China that USA could use India as a Pivot to contain China. Thus, China has been compelled to economically engage with India. But, the Chinese economic engagement is based on a belief that India favors status quo at the border level. India has to assert to China that it will not be enmeshed with the economic logic of boosting trade at the cost of tranquility at the border. India has to convey a strong willingness to resolve the pending border dispute. In the wake of recent Doklam crises, India needs to develop critical military infrastructure at the border level on the immediate basis.

At the level of Pakistan, despite overwhelming evidence of Pakistani state involvement in terror strikes on Indian soil, India has managed to stave off an all-out war and instead use diplomatic channels to undertake dialogue. In 2013, when Nawaz Sharif was elected, hopes of dialogue increased. But in Pakistan, the military continues to dominate the foreign and security policy and does not favour balance in Indo-Pakistan relations. However, the asymmetric military capabilities of Pakistan at present and its inability to match the military capabilities with India in the future acts as a source of frustration for Pakistan. This asymmetry has caused insecurity in the Pakistani military, which sponsors terrorism and uses terrorist groups as proxies against India. India continues to remain vulnerable through coastal and border levels with Pakistan—gaps from where terrorists usually infiltrate. India does not resort to a retaliatory strike strategy or even a pre-emptive strategy for Pakistan as the basic criterion of the Indian national security doctrine is to negotiate with Pakistan through dialogue. Moreover, Pakistan has stated clearly that if India resorts to conventional attacks, Pakistan would resort to nuclear escalation. This is the reason India invests in ballistic missile defence capabilities to stop any nuclear escalation.

At the international level, India still does not aggressively try to build alliances with the US. One reason is that, despite India's pointing out of evidence of Pakistani involvement in symmetric warfare against India, the US continues to engage with Pakistan. This confuses the Indian National security apparatus as to whether there is at all genuine interest from the US in the matters of any potential strategic cooperation. To that extent, however, the recent deepening of Indo-US cooperation signifies US acceptance of India as a strategic hedge against China.

Our national security doctrine, as clear from the discussion in the chapter, is a mixed bag. There is an absence of coherence in strategy as different approaches are used against different threats. India certainly needs a more coherent doctrine for future.

## Can India and US Emerge as Strategic Powers

No definite answer can be provided for this question. After 2014, the US's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan came. India, which had considerable politico-economic presence in Afghanistan, has since wanted to see what steps the US undertakes to contain Pakistan and ensure that Pakistan does not allow the entry of Taliban to counter India in Afghanistan. India is not officially a part of the Pivot to Asia<sup>3</sup> policy by the US, but unofficially supports the agenda as it would not like to antagonise China. India also has adopted a wait-and-watch policy to see how the US reacts to the technology transfer agreement between France and Russia. Thus, the USA's post 2014 Afghan–Pakistan policy and its response to technology transfer by European powers will make India decide upon its future course of action as far its relation to the US is concerned.

A future national security strategy for India should include the core elements as mentioned below:

1. Maintaining territorial boundary at all levels from air to land to sea.
2. Ensure security of the Indian coastline from aggression and infiltration by state and non-state actors.
3. Early resolution of boundary issues pending with Pakistan and China by investing political and diplomatic capital.
4. Protect India from cyber stacks by developing offensive cyber capabilities.
5. Developing covert capabilities (under R&AW) to tackle ISI in Pakistan
6. Emerge as a Net Security Provider from West Asia to East Asia with special emphasis on prevention of destabilization in the neighborhood.
7. Achieve domestic self-reliance in defense production by 2025 and seek to evolve a proactive strategic culture.

1. The Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st-century Maritime Silk Road, also known as the Belt and Road Initiative (B&R) and The Belt and Road (B&R), is a development strategy proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping that focuses on connectivity and cooperation between Eurasian countries, primarily the People's Republic of China, the land-based "Silk Road Economic Belt" (SREB) and the oceangoing "Maritime Silk Road" (MSR). The strategy underlines China's push to take a larger role in global affairs, and the desire to coordinate manufacturing capacity with other countries in areas such as steel manufacturing. It was unveiled in September and October 2013 in announcements revealing the SREB and MSR, respectively. It was also promoted by Premier Li Keqiang during the State visit in Asia and Europe. It was the most frequently mentioned concept in the People's Daily in 2016.

2. The String of pearls is a geopolitical theory on potential Chinese intentions in the Indian Ocean region. It refers to the network of Chinese military and commercial facilities and relationships along its sea lines of communication, which extend from the Chinese mainland to Port Sudan. The sea lines run through several major maritime choke points such as the Strait of Mandeb, the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz, and the Lombok Strait as well as other strategic maritime centers in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, the Maldives, and Somalia. The term as a geopolitical concept was first used in an internal US Department of Defense report, "Energy Futures in Asia." The term has never been used by official Chinese government sources, but it is often used in Indian media.

3. This was a policy announced by Barack Obama whose main objective is to shift its attention to East Asia as the epicenter of world affairs, so as to "strengthen...bilateral security alliances," to "expand...trade and investment," to "forg[e]...a broad-based military presence," and to "advance[e]...democracy and human rights" in the region, among other things.