

CENTRE FOR ADVANCED STRATEGIC STUDIES

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Editor's Note

“The man who does not read has no advantage over the man who cannot read.”

- Mark Twain

It is my privilege to present the 4th issue of our Quarterly Journal. While the reader's response is very encouraging, it is nice to be able to elicit support from various experts to bring out issues which are not only important but also topical.

In tune with the recent policy enunciated by the Prime Minister of 'Look East, Link West', this issue carries an article on fostering our engagements with East Asia and also looks at near West, an area of great concern. This issue carries a seminal article on Afghanistan especially in view of the drawdown of US led coalition troops by the end of this year. With the events in Af-Pak region remaining fluid and dynamic, the article is a great source of historical perspective to understand this complex issue of geo-strategic importance.

There is a Frankenstein in the making in the form of ISIS, which has the potential to alter the entire geo-politics of the Middle East and would be of significant concern to India, if it is not stymied in time. The issue carries an assessment on this important topic.

In the bouquet of other articles, diverse areas have been covered including an article elaborating possible focus areas, which the new Government could implement. There are articles also on Food Security, Cyber Security and the important growing sector of Civil Aviation.

As mentioned in the last editorial Note, the Centre has started bringing out Book Reviews. A review on the book written on reflections of life at sea as a merchant marine has been published in this issue.

I once again thank the authors and readers for their whole hearted support to this nascent endeavour by the Centre of Advanced Strategic Studies, Pune.

With greetings on the festive season and wishing you all Happy Reading,

Jai Hind



(Bhushan Gokhale)
Air Marshal (Retd)
Director, CASS

28th September, 2014

Are The Good Days Coming ...?

Air Chief Marshal PV Naik (Retd)

INTRODUCTION

The euphoria of the epic general elections is over. As per statisticians, at least 33% of the voters are absolutely thrilled at their sagacity. The mood in the country is upbeat despite El Nino and the economic slowdown. Although the average citizen knows in his/her heart of hearts that things cannot change in a hurry the mounting inflation and the dismounting subsidies are already causing heartburn. In the meanwhile, by all reports, the PM and hopefully his team seem to have buckled down to putting in place a more responsive and hygienic system of governance, not government, mind you.

Today the South Asian Region ranks as one of the three flashpoints in the world along with the Middle East and North Korea. Within this region lies a group of Nations in troubled transition to modernity, their external discourse damned by internal contradictions. In a world moving towards integration, many of these Nations remain torn by ethnic and religious strife, economic disparities and political instability. For obvious reasons, it is full of turmoil. Internal dynamics and external influences have led to increase in the degree of uncertainty.

As a member of this region, India remains vulnerable to the disturbances spilling over from her neighbours. India herself is at a crossroads. We witness this giant stirring into wakefulness – into an awareness of its power today. This rise in stature brings with it greater responsibilities and a larger role in regional as well as global affairs. This demands not only a change in policy, internal and external, but a fundamental change in our very thinking, ethos

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and value system. This, then, is the challenge before the Modi government. They are in an unenviable position of having to balance the vast burden of public aspirations with some hard headed, tough governance on the one hand; boost the sagging economy on the other hand; and, at the same time, convince the world that we are not to be trifled with. What, then, should the priorities before the Modi government be?

PRIORITIES: AN OVERVIEW

The Modi government has been blessed with a massive mandate by the people of India. Public participation and media hype have, perhaps, been unprecedented in recent history. But therein lies the rub. Now everyone from the chaiwala to a CEO feels he/she is a major stakeholder and is demanding the government start delivering the goods. Let us have a brief glance at the people's priorities.

Top Ten: Some of these are checking corruption, taming inflation, reviving economy, boosting manufacture, agriculture etc

Powerful: These incl denationalization of coal sector, corporatization of railways, establishing a land bank etc

Defence: Includes increase in budget, streamlining acquisition procedures, boost indigenous capability etc.

External: These range from Indo-US relations; to dealing with China and Pak ; to relations with neighbouring states, the look East policy etc.

I have merely tried to list a few illustrative priorities. The 'etc' at the end includes myriad others equally vital. So how does a government deal with such a massive number is the question, I am sure, on everybody's mind. One way is to qualify them into Essential, Desirable and routine. Many of them will have to be sounded out against the political sounding board. Some of them will be kept in abeyance as non productive. Some will have to be dictated by the emerging International scenario. Whatever be the disposal, one common thread runs through the entire process. They all have to be measured against a common time base. Time is of the essence chiefly because this government has taken over the reins at a time when India is at the cusp of its political and economic power.

I am fairly sanguine that the PM and his cabinet are more than seized of all the nuances. Their efforts are visible in Lutyen's Delhi already. What I would attempt to do in this paper is to put forward some of my views, for whatever they are worth, specifically related to the Defence and Security scenarios.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

One aspect that has been conspicuous by its absence is National Strategy. Simply put, where we are and where we wish to be in, let us say, 20 or 40 years time. I am sure someone must have articulated some thoughts, someone must have worked towards a formulation, at least some of our leaders must be familiar with it. How come, then, that almost all our endeavours, be it foreign relations, arms acquisitions, bills/ ordinances, internal security, or key appointments, smack of ad-hocism ? The lack of strategic direction ultimately contributes to a lack of national character and a lack of National will, two maladies we have been afflicted with for decades.

National Strategy comprises many disciplines. To name a few, Defence, security, economy, agriculture, industry, diplomacy, foreign relations. Once the National strategy is defined, debated, modified and enunciated, it defines the broad path to follow, regardless of who is in power. All other strategies like military, economic, industrial; etc will flow from it. The process of formulation must start now. A group of experts from as many fields as practical should be tasked to present the first draft in a time bound period. Let it first be debated within the government and then publicly. Media must be taken on board at a predetermined time. Thereafter we need to publish a White Paper for the benefit of the world so that others are also privy to our thinking. March 2015 could be the target date.

EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

We have laws, rules, regulations for every conceivable contingency. Our problem is implementation. Effective implementation involves every citizen, but more so it is dealt with by the Bureaucracy and the Police.

The Police: Generations have been sent into paroxysms of laughter by the antics of policemen and women on celluloid. The public is contemptuous of them. The second emotion they evoke is fear. People consider them depraved and deprived and are generally despised. This is partly a carryover from the colonial days when they were actively used to further the nefarious activities of British rulers. In the 67 years after independence their lot has not improved. What can one expect of a policeman who is understaffed, underpaid, underhoused ; misused and abused by his political masters? The common excuse given is that it is a State subject and the Centre can only suggest. If we want effective implementation, we have to immediately and

earnestly improve their lot. Some suggestions are :-

- Amend the archaic Police Act. A long pending issue.
- Improve their pay scales, their living and working conditions, their access to better technology and weapons. Insist on States compliance.
- Recruit to fill deficiencies.
- Control of the police must be with police officers and not with politicians. This is a sensitive issue and this is where the wheels of progress get stuck. Unless we overcome this resistance we condemn the police to continuing purgatory.

The Bureaucrats. The Nehruvian era saw the rise of bureaucracy. This is one single group responsible for the poor governance that ails our country today. Their rise was aided and abetted by indifferent or ignorant ministers who preferred to let the bureaucrats run ministries. Rampant sycophancy was the direct result and national interest and governance were the victims. The BBC serial “Yes Minister” reflects the Indian milieu so beautifully. Of course there are some excellent bureaucrats but they are few and far between. The problem has always been a lack of accountability. The Ministers were so overly dependent on them that they could not make demands on them or take them to task. I am very happy that our PM has made it his first priority and the results are already showing in North and South Blocks, if the media is to be believed.

INTERNAL SECURITY

The dimensions are staggering. At one end is the individual security of citizens, especially women. The other end of the spectrum comprises Naxals, the NE States, Article 370 and outfits like HUJI and IM. As far as individual security is concerned, policing is the only immediate answer. We have already discussed this earlier. Let us address the others.

Naxals: Let me relate an interesting story. I made a courtesy call on the then Home Minister. Over a cup of coffee when I asked him if the Naxals were a problem, he gave me a 10 minute talk explaining that there was no Naxal problem and isolated incidents were being cited to exaggerate the issue. He gave me a lot of pamphlets to prove the point. I then went to the Home Secy's office. Lo and behold! He gave me the same spiel. Be that as it may, Naxals are a problem today born out of socio-economic and socio-political repression. These need to be addressed but this will take its due course. Of short term concern is the boots on ground, the killings and

attacks on policemen and people. The Naxal freedom of movement must be controlled. It involves :-

- Para Military Forces (PMF) ops under a central planning agency involving all stakeholders. The socio-political/economic balm must be applied simultaneously. Synergy is the order of the day.

- Improved leadership, training, infrastructure and technology are the prerequisites to such endeavours. Some Organisations may need restructuring and rejuvenating.

- Extensive use of air power in terms of drones, choppers for recce and support roles.

- I feel it has to be an ‘out’ to ‘in’ approach with PMF operating out of few, well protected bases conducting ops and returning to safe homes, first securing easier areas, then venturing onto the more difficult ones.

NE States, HUJI, IM etc: The NE States must be brought into the mainstream. They have contributed significantly to national wealth and have been ignored. Build up of road/rail infrastructure should be a priority. I have clubbed orgs like HUJI to point out a salient difference . Naxals, Nagas are indigenous, rural. Their ire is against indigenous indifference, maltreatment or misgovernance. The ‘jihadi’ orgs, on the other hand, project the agenda of external powers with separation from the Union as their prime objective. So while one needs to be resolved by winning the hearts and minds, the other needs ruthless eradication.

J and K: A problem we have faced and fought over for decades. It is not likely to be resolved in the near future. However, it is equally vital for us not to forget that Kashmir is an integral part of our union. I am of the opinion that Article 370 needs to be relooked at for its relevance today. Obviously, it is too early to resolve this problem . It must not be forgotten, however. Article 370 must continue to be discussed openly at regular intervals so that the people become aware of all its nuances.

EXTERNAL SECURITY

India’s strategic perspectives are shaped by her history, geography, geopolitical realities and the demands of real-politik. Our native culture, our innate traditions of trust and tolerance, and our vision of world peace shape our national character, which, in turn, impacts on our international relations. These vital parameters are as relevant today as they have been earlier. India shares borders with 11 neighbours. Our relations with some

are uneasy and with some, hostile. Any unrest within this somewhat hostile neighbourhood spills over into our borders in many forms; and with depressing regularity. Unless these geo-political cross currents affecting us are quietened, they would continue to thwart our desire to move forward. Hence the first priority becomes improving relations with our immediate neighbours. They have been hostage to regional political blackmail in the past. With this massive mandate the Govt needs to move decisively forward. The PM has already given indications by his visit to Bhutan.

Among the neighbours, Pakistan remains an immediate concern. We do need to continue dialog on our own terms but not by bending over backwards. I do believe that initiating military to military dialog will be an out of box step likely to pay dividends. Start at an innocuous level like medical, meteorological, sports exchanges, invitations to seminars; etc and see how it pans out. It is important that our politicians repose complete faith in our military. As a policy we must insist on Pak stopping support to terrorism before dialog can progress.

China is our major concern. We must engage China but engage them from a position of strength. We have a window of 10 to 15 years in which to strengthen the NE in terms of infrastructure. Our missile reach must increase so that deterrence is achieved. The Naval presence in the Indian ocean must be more tangible. But these are long term. In the short term we must engage China in infrastructure and trade. Be patient. Chinese think in terms of a thousand years. They have long memories. One last input. They set a lot of store by 'face'. Loss of face cannot be countenanced. This reduces chances of major misadventures.

Look East policy has been reenergized during Manmohan regime. I am confident that the PM will pursue this actively. Japan, Vietnam, Myanmar have a lot to offer us. In fact, presently our national interests also show a congruence in the face of Chinese stance in the South China sea. Australia, however, needs to be taken with a pinch of salt in view of her other alliances. I feel relations with USA, Russia, EU, UK, Israel, the Arab World are on track and part of the long term perspective.

National Interest is something we Indians need to learn from the Americans. Regardless of the provocation, national interest must always dictate MEA actions. Though the frequency has reduced, we have looked so foolish standing on our high moral horse time and again at the cost of our national interests. I agree that the internal situation does colour our

external relations, but at one stage the MEA had achieved the impossible. We had poor relations with all our neighbours. This is something we have to correct from the word go.

DEFENCE

The Defence Secretary is responsible for the defence of India. The Army, Navy and the Air Force are attached offices to the MOD. Here lies the Defence conundrum. Perpetuated by the innate civil-military trust deficit since the Nehruvian era, no government has addressed this malaise over the last six decades. Events in neighbouring countries have strengthened the trust deficit. The result is the Armed Forces of India have no say in the decision making process; the Security apparatus functions with minimal Services inputs; civilian control over the Military has been misinterpreted to ridiculous levels and bureaucrats rule the roost. The topic deserves an entire chapter, nay, an entire book. I wish to make some brief suggestions to the Govt which may ameliorate some of the ill effects.

Integration: MOD and the Services must be integrated and brought on par with other ministries. Lip service has been paid this aspect many times. We may start at lower levels like Director/Col equivalent and gradually build up after stabilization. Rescind the order terming Services HQs as attached offices and make them a part of the decision making process.

Budget and Procurement: Defence Budget needs to be upped to at least 3 % of GDP. This is pending for many years. The argument given is that even now there is unspent money at the end of the FY. This is basically due to a couple of reasons. Firstly it is sometimes done deliberately by Finance so that reallocation to other sectors can be done. Secondly it is due to incompetence or indifference at bureaucratic level because they have no accountability. Lastly it happens due to inherent delays in the Defence Procurement Procedure(DPP). This came into vogue in 2006 and has been refined. I do not think it can be refined further. We need to take a new look at it, simplify it and make it more effective.

Middlemen: All corruption in defence deals is attributed to this species. Time and again the media throws up their notorious names and the damage to the exchequer. We must understand there is no country in the world where foreign companies operate without middlemen. They may be termed agents or facilitators or liaison. In India the rules of business are

so complex that our own companies would find it difficult to prosecute business without liaison, not to talk of foreign firms. The government had tried to register names of middlemen a decade ago. The terms and conditions were so onerous and intrusive that, naturally, none came forward. We need to permit middlemen, register them and ensure they pay their taxes for what they receive. This will achieve transparency and in fact reduce corruption. A common belief is that this is one of the ways to enhance party funding and hence the reluctance to permit middlemen.

Indigenisation: No doubt it is a crying need. We are one of the biggest importers of arms in the world. Indigenization does not happen overnight. We have to create conditions for it to happen. Over the next ten years we are likely to spend 230 bn dollars on defence. At 30 % offsets the figure comes to a staggering amount. Can our industry handle such offsets? Does our private sector have the strength and capacity to absorb such amounts? We need to simplify our rules to enable the private sector. Perhaps increasing FDI in defence from existing 27% to 60 or 75 % may be the answer but it needs detailed examination. There are two things we need to set in motion earliest. First is a reorg of DRDO and Ordnance Factories to make them accountable and efficient. The second is a restructuring of HAL, our biggest PSU to make it more capable. The results will be visible in three to four years and gradually we would move towards indigenization.

Pending Issues: I have clubbed together some issues that could be addressed early. One Rank One Pension (OROP) is an issue affecting morale of thousands of veterans and needs resolution. Second, the 7th Pay Commission, like its predecessors, has no representative of the Services. Passing strange but could be remedied. Third, a vast country like ours whose soldiers have fought so many wars does not have a National War Memorial of our own. I feel it is a National shame and needs to be put right.

CDS: Any discussion on Defence reforms is incomplete without reference to a CDS. Many acknowledged experts feel that this is the panacea that will set right everything. They are even ready to accept a purely cosmetic appointment of a permanent Chairman of COSC. My views are certainly different.

Different countries have different formulations of CDS. In some, CDS looks after Operations and the three Chiefs provide the forces. Others have the CDS in charge of Training, provisioning, logistics, intel.

In some countries he looks after Budgeting and procurement. We need to decide what type of CDS is most suitable for us. Joint Operations doctrine naturally flows down to Theatre Commands. This is effective when you envisage regular operations away from the homeland. We do not envisage such ops. Exigencies can be dealt with by special joint ops.

Joint ops need technology which enables the Cdr to control remote areas of influence. We do not have such technology. We have not laid sufficient stress on Jointness in career progression. That means only those who have served on joint billets can be promoted beyond a certain level. I feel that a CDS is a must. But first we need to decide on what type we need. We need to start grooming personnel for joint ops and we need to start developing necessary technology. The need of the hour is the Army needs tanks, howitzers, ammo. The Navy needs ships, submarines, torpedoes, missiles. The Air Force needs aircraft, missiles, radars. Let us complete ongoing contracts to restore and refurbish our fighting forces first before restructuring them.

My take on CDS may be summarized thus. Let us start the debate, develop technology. In three to five years, let the CDS look after budgeting and acquisitions for all the Services, besides Jt Comds, Strategic weapons, Intel. Most importantly, he needs to be the single point of military advice to the RM and the PM. We should think of a parallel approach with the Def Sec dealing with inter ministry issues and the CDS with military issues. Will the Govt accept so much power vested in one military person? Will the bureaucracy permit such a trespass on their traditional turf? These are questions we have to answer first.

CONCLUSION

We Indians do not have a national character. We do not have a national religion. We are not agreed upon a national language. We do not understand national interest. We do have national pride but are not sure what for. We do not have a Brand India. We were ruled by foreigners for thousand years and the scars manifest themselves in our behavior. We got our independence with very little bloodshed thanks to the struggles of a few great men and women. So not everyone has felt the pain. We got democracy before literacy. Hence we undervalue it. We are not responsible citizens and we do not take our duties and responsibilities as a citizen seriously. It boggles the imagination that despite these impediments we

have continued as a successful democracy for more than 60 years. We are deeply emotional. Once we take someone to our hearts, we raise him to the highest pedestal, a demi God.

Shri. Narendra Modi, our PM, is one such individual. The public manifestation is the massive mandate given him in the recent elections. Every Indian expects him to set things right. Sometimes I sympathise with him because the sheer weight of public expectations must be wearing him down every day. Time is at a premium. He has taken over the reins of government at a time when India's stock is low in the world in terms of credit rating. The inaction of the outgoing government has left him with myriad problems. World economy is in a slowdown mode. El Nino is delaying the monsoon. The war in Iraq has affected oil. Prices of common goods are rising. He has thousands of priorities in front of him and he knows that, finally, hard, unpalatable decisions will have to be taken.

My thinking on how to handle some of the priorities has been put down in this paper. I am sure the government is aware of most of them. Some measures to clean up the administration have already been initiated in Delhi. I have made special mention of priorities in Defence and Security sectors. All priorities will have to measure up against a time graph. Some have to be done now. Some have to be started now for the effect to be felt later. Some will have to be sounded out against the political sounding board or the international environment. Some will have to be abandoned after a cost benefit analysis, to be tried out at a more propitious time.

Whatever be the method, it has to be a combined effort. Not only the government but the opposition has to fall in line on issues dealing with National Interests. The whole country will have to learn to tighten their belts for some tough measures. We citizens will have to exert the National Will to overcome the ills of corruption, delayed decisions and lack of governance. Remember, there is no magic wand. We have to be patient. We have to give the government sufficient time. I have no doubts that if each one of us exercises more discipline, does our own job sincerely and keeps National Interest in mind, the good days will come and India will once again take its rightful place in the new world order.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL PV NAIK (RETD.)



Air Chief Marshal PV Naik, PVSM VSM was born on 22 July 1949 and commissioned into the Indian Air Force on 21 June 1969. After initial schooling in the Sainik School, Satara, he graduated with the 33rd course from the National Defence Academy.

In a distinguished career spanning forty years, the Chairman COSC and CAS has flown a wide variety of combat and trainer aircraft. After initial training on the HT-2, he has flown the Vampire and the Hunter, and has had extensive operational experience on all variants of the MiG-21. He is a Qualified Flying Instructor with vast instructional experience and a Fighter Combat Leader from the prestigious Tactics and Air Combat Development Establishment (TACDE). He was selected as one of the first eight pilots to convert to the MiG-23 BN in the erstwhile USSR, and was responsible for its induction into the IAF. Besides commanding a front line fighter squadron, he has commanded an important fighter base and air force station at Bidar. He has been the Directing Staff at TACDE and the Defence Services Staff College.

During his career, the Air Chief Marshal held numerous important staff appointments in different headquarters. He was the Senior Air Staff Officer at HQ Western Air Command, the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Central Air Command and the Vice Chief of Air Staff, prior to his appointment as the Chief of the Air Staff. He also took over as the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee on 01 April 2010.

The Air Chief Marshal is a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, and an alumnus of the National Defence College. He is a recipient of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal.



An Assessment of the Developments in Gulf and West Asia

Amb KC Singh (Retd)

The Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India traditionally had two divisions dealing with the Middle East. The Gulf Division focused on the six Gulf Coordination Countries (GCC) and the rest further West were clubbed under West Asia and North Africa.

The dynamics in the two regions were seen as distinct from Indian view point. GCC with the 6million odd Indians, source for oil, gas and remittances and a major merchandise trading block with India slowly grew in Indian policy attention. Concomitantly Indian pre-occupation with West Asia receded after the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel in 1992, Cold War ending and the predominance of the U.S. in driving the West Asia peace process. The time for slogan-mongering appeared over as India, undertaking economic reforms, began adjusting its foreign policy posture to the post Cold War era. While the Palestinian issue remained on Indian agenda, it was pursued without evangelical disregard of India's relations with the rest of the world.

The new certainties of 'uni-polar' world began to be challenged by the mutating forces of radical Islam. Early signals of this were the attack on US embassies in East Africa in 1998 followed by the bombing of USS Cole in 2000. The emerging asymmetric challenge was graphically spelt by the 9/11 attacks on U.S. in New York and Washington. The U.S. interventions that followed, in Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003, set the vast region from S Asia to the Maghreb on a churning that is still underway. While

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U.S. was able to stabilise Iraq enough to hand over power to a civilian government and exit in 2011, the process in Afghanistan is underway this year.

Consequences flowing from the US military interventions and other developments had a cascading effect on the entire region, breaking the division between the Gulf countries and those further West. The U.S. took out two of Iran's biggest foes, liberating it from its boxed-in position, when it overthrew Saddam Hussein in Iraq and the Taliban in Afghanistan. Iran's freedom of action enlarged exponentially, despite its pre-occupation with the nuclear issue. While Iran was gradually chipping away at US influence in Iraq, finally leading to the election of Prime Minister Nouri-al-Maliki, an Iranian ally, US battled with an Al Qaeda associate led by Abu Musah-al-Zarqawi, who had embedded himself amongst the Sunni tribes of Central Iraq.

As Al Qaeda-sponsored radical Islam travelled West from its birthplace in the tribal areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, unshackled Iran and Iraqi Shias liberated from Saddam's bondage unleashed the Shia-Sunni contest, slowly encompassing an arc running from Pakistan to Lebanon. This drama may have been limited to Iraq had another development not supervened suddenly and unexpectedly. The death of a street vendor in Tunisia on Dec 18, 2010 led to street protests and the deposing of the entrenched President Zine-al-Abidine Ben Ali. From there popular uprisings against autocratic rulers spread like an airborne virus overthrowing the governments of Tunisia, Egypt (twice), Libya and Yemen. In Bahrain and Syria the regimes are still wrestling with their opponents. Arab Spring, spreading Eastward from Tunisia, and Al Qaeda led radical Islam, blowing westward from Pak-Af met with full force in Syria.

The region is now battling the outcome of these three developments: Shia-Sunni contestation, Sunni radical Islam and Arab Spring. It can be argued that U.S. had stabilised Iraq and essentially routed Zarqawi led Al Qaeda affiliate by a comprehensive strategy of counter insurgency, given the acronym COIN. That instead it was mishandling by the popularly elected government of Maliki acting in a partisan manner, isolating the Sunnis and Kurds and functioning as an Iranian stooge in the Syrian civil war which created the fertile ground for ISIS upsurge. Perhaps President Barak Obama too by not acting after the red-lines on the use of chemical weapons were breached in Syria allowed the situation to drift. It is also unlikely that

US was unaware of the increasingly poor and divisive governance in Iraq and thus erred in not pressing Maliki hard enough to rectify.

ISIS or ISIL took root however in the rudiments of the old Zaqawi network and the Syrian civil war, where the Shia-Sunni power play aligned Iran and Hezbollah on the side of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and countries like Qatar, Saudi Arabia and U.A.E. behind a motley group opposing him. The altered power equations between U.S. and its western allies and Russia over Ukraine provided a neo cold War context to the Syrian internal developments. Russia was solidly on the side of the incumbent regime, defending its last toe-hold in the Levant and a critical port on the Mediterranean. Turkey, which controlled the whole Levant till the First World War got sucked again into the imbroglio due to simply its 1200 kilometre border being too long and porous and its Sunni population empathising with Sunnis of Syria and Turkish Kurds with their ethnic kin in Syria and Northern Iraq.

While Syrian support to Sunnis in Iraq, in 2005-7 when US was fighting the Al Qaeda fed insurgency, was known as U.S. had evidence from the Mount Sinjar region in 2007 of Syrian help to Al Qaeda fighters, the plot got inverted with the Syrian civil war commencement in spring 2011. The Sunni triangle in Iraq that the U.S. under the leadership of Gen Patreus had won back through COIN and outreach to the tribes began to drift away from the Iraqi government post U.S. withdrawal of troops from Iraq in 2011. With Iranian material and military help and Russian defence supplies Syrian regime was able to hang onto power and a stalemate of sorts developed. U.S. despised the Syrian regime but was unwilling to mount an air campaign against it after their horrible experience of how Libya was panning out with rival militias capturing elements of the erstwhile Libyan state. Although the Gulf sponsors egged on the West to decapitate the Syrian regime, the doubtful or even dangerous nature of the opposition groups, the clear dominance of Salafist or Al Qaeda related groups dissuaded robust military intervention.

Nature as they say does not brook a vacuum. Nor apparently does a civil war that has reached a balance of opposing forces. Figures of casualties are estimated to be over 200,000 and displaced persons close to 6.5 million, or one third the population of Syria. From this was born the ISIS in April 2013 or as it preferred to be called the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Its ambition to link the Sunni majority of Syria to the Sunni minority in

the Iraqi heartland, between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, was apparent from its nomenclature. Iraqi government should have read the warning signals and acted to harden their borders with Syria and improve their frayed relations with the Iraqi Sunnis. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki on the contrary continued to assert ham-handed Shia dominance laced with easy access allowed to Iran to ferry help to the beleaguered Syrian regime.

The fall of Mosul to the marauding ISIS fighters, the second largest Iraqi city, and the sudden collapse of Iraqi forces and loss of all their equipment and weapons systems shocked the world. The leader of the group Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared an Islamic State and crowned himself the Caliph, taking the name Ibrahim. ISIS had arrived, possessing now territory across two nation states, controlling large cities and crossing points into Turkey and Jordan. It also soon gained access to oil fields and even a couple of critical dams. It was not a poppy growing Taleban surviving on handouts of sponsors in the Gulf and Pakistan. It was an entity with aspects of a putative state.

Using the shock and awe of the ISIS gains, along the twin river axes of Euphrates and Tigris on which are located the major towns, the Kurds decided to grab Kirkuk, the site of one of the biggest Iraqi oil-fields, which traditionally the Iraqi government had denied them to ensure they did not gain economic self-dependence, as prelude to political independence. It is assessed that ISIS could not have succeeded with their 30,000 odd fighters, which is the C.I.A estimate of their numbers, without help of former Baathist military elements of the Saddam army, called the Nakshbandis, and widespread though not total support of the Sunni tribes. A conspiracy theory surmises that their rise was also facilitated by the Syrian government to force U.S and their GCC allies to be forced to choose between the diabolical new force, which President Obama in his UNGA address on Sep 24 has called “network of death”, and the Syrian regime which all told does not threaten Western security.

The ISIS having positioned itself as the face of global jihad had to follow the logic of its irrationality. The beheadings of Western abductees, mass murder of surrendered troops and compelling Christians to convert or leave caused global disgust and anger. The result has been a gradual but inevitable reaction led by U.S. and its motley group of allies from the region and Europe.

US President Barak Obama at the UN for the High Level segment of

the 69th session of UNGA presided over leaders attended meeting of the UN Security Council. A unanimous resolution was passed urging countries to introduce laws to eliminate the financing of terror, something that even earlier post 9/11 UNSC resolutions had also enjoined, but in addition to also have legal means to stop those travelling abroad to join terror groups.

On September 24, President Obama in a focussed and strongly worded address to the UN General Assembly, after what many in US and abroad have called Obama's prevarication over fighting terror in Syria and Iraq, spelt out US strategy to deal with radical Islamist groups like ISIS. He reassured that USA was not and shall not be at war with Islam, specifying four areas requiring action. First is to see ISIS "degraded, and ultimately destroyed." Second he urged the world, especially Muslim communities, to reject the ideology of ISIS. Third he conceded that the causes that fire this hatred need addressing and lastly he urged the Islamic nations to channelize the energies of their people into constructive pursuits.

US had already widened its air campaign from attacking ISIS in Iraq to their assets in Syria. Pentagon spokesman explained it as attacking both ISIS' teeth, as in Iraq, and its tail in Syria, where its command and control and oil refineries earning it vital cash were destroyed. Both UAE and Saudi Arabia, unlike their reluctance in the past to be seen aiding US' war on terror, released human interest stories about the exploits of their air crews participating in the attacks.

President Obama's analysis of the problem of faith based radicalisation raises the question about what future portends. Can US air power, intelligence and training combined with political moves in Iraq and Syria roll back the ISIS or even, President Obama said, destroy it? Or will USA and allied boots be required on the ground to do some heavy lifting. President Obama has two years of his presidency left. Other US presidents have delivered diplomatically in their last two years. The hurdles in the US path are the following.

Firstly, a defiant Russia upping the ante in Ukraine, to which too President Obama devoted adequate time in his UNGA address, combined with Iran would not make it easy if reconciliation in Syria means the ouster of the Assad regime. It is possible, and Syrian government is also so hoping, that US would have surmised that Assad as the known evil is preferable to the unknown band of ISIS and their clones. If so, where does that leave Turkey, Iran and the Gulf rulers? Similarly, the new PM of Iraq is critical

to creating an inclusive environment to win back the loyalty of Sunni tribes, without which no military campaign to eject ISIS will succeed. Accompanying this would have to be at least a *modus Vivendi* between Iran and Saudi Arabia, so that the Shia-Sunni friction does not create the breeding ground for radical forces.

Secondly, it is possible that with GCC countries throwing their lot openly against ISIS, there may be a blow-back which brings terror to GCC cities, particularly the more permissive ones catering to foreigners and tourists. It is also likely that US may again raise the need for India to join their renewed war on terror, if not directly then at least by helping with capacity building and training. The last time a serious demarche was made was when the Vajpayee government was asked by US to send troops to Iraq.

The problem for India would be two fold. Forty odd citizens of India are still being held by ISIS and thus like Turkey India would be chary to put their life in danger by joining the campaign against them. There is also the question of its political acceptability in India as India has never sent troops for joint operations abroad except under the UN flag.

Thirdly, India has little knowledge of the European and US citizens now with ISIS, as well as its own citizens and those of Pakistan. The Syria-Iraq melting pot may produce tomorrow's deadlier jihadist, having more intimate knowledge of India. There is also a danger that competition between Al Qaeda left to spreading its global reach through outsourcing while ISIS captures the imagination of youth by actual success may turn India into a battlefield for recruits. Already there are some reports to this effect and let us hope that no polarisation takes place in the society which may only facilitate the work of foreign recruiters.

Unfortunately, looking at the focus of President B Obama's 2014 UNGA address it is obvious how far he has moved from his Spring 2011 speech supporting Arab Spring and seeking the ouster of President B. Assad. Egypt is back under a military dictator masquerading as an elected president. Bahrain uprising of majority Shia under a minority Sunni ruler has been squashed by brute force, largely on loan from S Arabia and UAE. Iranian nuclear issue is still unsettled due to mismatched expectations between what Iran and US and EU.

India watches the developments with a distracted eye, the Modi government's focus being the immediate periphery in the SAARC and the power play in the Indo-Pacific between China, Japan, India, Russia and US.

GCC is India's largest trading partner as a group, with two way trade of \$ 145.7 and \$ 181 in 2011-12 and 2012-13 respectively. Moreover 6 million odd Indians live and work in the Gulf countries. Also India imports most of its oil from the region. In 2013 the figures were Saudi Arabia (20%), Iraq (14%), Iran (6%) and the rest of the Middle East (22%).

India has to rethink its strategy for dealing with this sensitive region that may see as yet decades of turbulence or even disruption. India must diversify its oil imports by shifting to safer regions. The size of the Indian expatriate community in will not shrink till economic growth in India causes wages and opportunities in India to rival or exceed those in the Gulf. India must also help develop alternative duty free entry ports for Indian exports to the Gulf and Central Asia that are outside the Gulf i.e. on coast of Oman or Chahbahar port of Iran. More immediately India must sharpen its intelligence assessment of ISIS and any possible links within India. Because radicalisation in faiths has multiple causes, the battle too will be a long and complex one.

AMBASSADOR KC SINGH (RETD.)



Amb. KC Singh, joined the Indian diplomatic service in 1974 after obtaining a Masters degree in English Literature and a Bachelors degree in Law. He retired from the service in May 2008, having risen to the post of Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs. Besides serving in different capacities in Indian Posts/ Missions in Cairo, New York and Ankara, he served as Deputy Secretary to the President of India (1983-87). He held several senior positions at headquarters including that of Joint Secretary for administration, head of the Consular, Passport and Visa Division and as Spokesman of the Ministry. He was Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates (1999-2003) and then to Iran (2003-05). Returning to headquarters he became Additional Secretary (International Organisations) as well as the Co-ordinator for Counter-terrorism. He finally held the post of Secretary (Economic Relations). He is on the Board Of Governors, Forum for Strategic Initiative. Amb Singh is regularly invited by various TV channels for rendering expert opinion and also writes occasional columns for the Outlook magazine as well as op-ed pieces for the New Indian Express.

What Ails Indian Civil Aviation?

Air Marshal BK Pandey (Retd)

HISTORY OF INDIAN CIVIL AVIATION

The birth of civil aviation in India is generally associated with a flight on February 18, 1911, undertaken by Henri Piquet a French pilot. At the controls of a two-seat Humber bi-plane, Henri Piquet flew from Allahabad to Naini, a distance of mere six miles with the flight lasting barely 13 minutes and created history. The Humber bi-plane that took off from a polo field in Allahabad, was carrying a sack full of 6,500 letters flagging the first commercial civil aviation flight in India and the world's first airmail service. However, there are other events related to the early days of civil aviation that are also credited as 'firsts' in the development of the civil aviation industry in India. In 1910, the youthful Maharaja of Patiala, Bhupinder Singh, who was keenly interested in this newly emerging discipline, pioneered the birth of civil aviation through privately owned aircraft. The Maharaja dispatched his Chief Engineer to Europe and placed orders for three aero planes that included a Bleriot monoplane and two Farman biplanes. The consignment of three aircraft was delivered in India later in the same year.

The year 1910 was also witness to an effort by a team of aviators and engineers from England and Belgium headed by Captain WG Windham who in December that year, brought into India, a number of aero planes for flying display at the Industrial and Agricultural Exhibition being held at Allahabad. The Airports Authority of India (AAI) regards this event as the

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being the origin of civil aviation in India as the AAI celebrated completion of 100 years of Indian civil aviation in December 2010 and described it as a 'Historical Milestone'.

Regular air service in India was launched in December 1912 with the commencement of the first domestic air service between Karachi and Delhi. This venture was undertaken by the Indian State Air Services in collaboration with the imperial Airways, UK. The first airline that was truly Indian, was launched three years later i.e. in 1915, by Tata Sons Ltd as a regular airmail service between Karachi and Madras, the venture being named as Tata Airlines. This was a totally private venture by the house of Tatas without any support from the government. In 1946, Tata Airlines was renamed as Air India and by 1947, the number of operators of privately owned air transport companies in independent India had grown to eight. In 1948, the Government of India in partnership with Tata Sons Ltd, launched Air India International Ltd. In March 1953 the Air Corporations Act was passed by the Indian Parliament and the entire airline industry was nationalised leaving just two state owned players on the civil aviation scene, Indian Airlines Corporation (later renamed as Indian Airlines) and Air India International, the former for domestic operations and the latter to cover the international sector.

A NEW BEGINNING

In the wake of de-regulation of the civil aviation sector following the first round of economic liberalisation in the early 1990s, a number of private airlines emerged on the scene. These were Jet Airways, Air Sahara, Modiluft, Damania Airways, NEPC Airlines, East West Airlines and Jagson Airlines. Unfortunately, by the end of the decade, only Jet Airways, Air Sahara and the tiny Jagson Airlines remained, the others folded up owing to business models that proved unsustainable in the face of fierce competition amongst the other adversities the new carriers in the private sector were confronted with. This in turn proved to be a powerful disincentive to the private sector venturing into the Indian Airline Industry.

The second wave of revival in the Indian airline industry was ushered in by Captain GR Gopinath in 2003 with the launch of Air Deccan based on the low-cost, no-frills model. The innovative approach infused fresh hope amongst potential investors and once again the decade witnessed the arrival of new carriers on the scene namely, IndiGo Airlines sponsored by

Interglobe Enterprises, SpiceJet the new avatar of Modiluft, the glamorous Kingfisher Airlines sponsored by the UB Group, GoAir from the Bombay Dyeing Group and Paramount Airways, a venture by the South India based Paramount Group. However, the decade was witness to mergers and consolidation as well. In the year 2007, the then Minister of Civil Aviation Praful Patel orchestrated the merger of the two state-owned carriers Indian (erstwhile Indian Airlines) and Air India, the new entity was branded as Air India. In the same year, Jet Airways bought off Air Sahara and Kingfisher Airlines acquired Air Deccan. Paramount Airways that had a unique business model that did not prove to be viable and consequently, the airline ceased operations by the end of the decade. Two years later ie in 2012, Kingfisher Airlines too closed down, a development that left the industry dazed and the travelling public somewhat bewildered.

THE INDIAN AIRLINE INDUSTRY TODAY

Today, Indian the carriers that have managed to survive the upheavals in the airline industry and continue to operate are Air India, Jet Airways, IndiGo Airlines, SpiceJet, GoAir and the newly launched Vijaywada-based, low-cost, regional carrier Air Costa as well as the Chennai-based AirAsia India. Although commercial aviation in India is over 100 years old, the real growth in the airline industry has taken place only since the 1990s. Currently, India stands as the ninth largest aviation market in the world and aims to reach the third slot by the end of the decade. However, in terms of domestic traffic today, India is the fourth largest, ranking behind the United States of America, China and Japan. Yet India has the dubious distinction of being the least penetrated markets in the world with just about two per cent of the population of 1.2 billion having access to air travel. The potential of growth therefore is undoubtedly enormous and waiting to be exploited.

Driven more by optimism than the prospects of handsome returns, India's airline industry continues its relentless struggle to survive. With passenger traffic growing at an annual rate of around 12 per cent, the opportunities in the airline industry appear promising. But the harsh reality is that barring perhaps IndiGo, all other carriers have accumulated heavy losses over the last few years with the national carrier in the lead. In fact, in the Indian airline industry today, all agencies involved with the industry, directly or indirectly, with the exception of the airlines, are

minting money.

With the government having finally allowed foreign airlines to invest in Indian carriers, Jet Airways that posted a loss of Rs 2000 crore as on March 31, 2014, has found a saviour in Etihad Airways that has picked up 24 per cent stake. SpiceJet which has cumulative losses of over a thousand crore of rupees as on March 31, 2014, is also reported to be looking for a foreign investor. GoAir is believed to have suffered only a moderate loss. The national carrier Air India is also expected to post a loss of Rs 3,900 crore during the financial year ending March 2014, down from Rs 5,200 crore it posted at the end of the last financial year. Air India has embarked on a comprehensive turnaround plan for which Rohit Nandan, the Chairman and Managing Director has been given an extension of three months to see through the effort. But as long as Air India is allowed to run as a department of the central government and not as a commercial venture, there can be little hope of a successful turnaround. But what is somewhat intriguing is that the airline industry continues to be in the doldrums despite the rising demand in air travel, decent load factors, largely no frill service and improved on-time performance.

Undoubtedly, there is fierce competition amongst the carriers to capture market share and this compels the airlines to maintain their fares at sometimes unrealistically low levels. And with the aggressive entry of the low-cost carrier AirAsia India and in the near future that of "Vistara" (or Expanse), the full service carrier established through a joint venture between Tata Sons Ltd and Singapore Airlines, the competition will only get further accentuated. The prospect of confronting the challenge posed by the entry of the two new carriers must certainly have driven a chill down the collective spine of the existing Indian carriers! But more than competition, what can kill the Indian airline industry is the hostile environment the carriers are operating in. Some of the facets of the hostile environment are elaborated on in the succeeding paragraphs:-

a. Price of Aviation Turbine Fuel: The price that Indian domestic carriers have to pay for Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) is 65 per cent higher than what the foreign airlines pay for ATF lifted not only abroad but at the Indian airports as well. This is on account the inordinately high tax regime and the multiplicity of taxes imposed on ATF in India. As the expenditure on ATF constitutes around 45 per cent of the total operating cost of an airline in India and ex-India operations are only a

small part of the business of Indian carriers, they are really not in any position to compete against foreign carriers. Apart from taxes imposed on ATF by the central government, the states levy sales tax that ranges from four to 30 per cent. The levies under various heads imposed by the central government on ATF totals up to 35 per cent of the basic cost. In addition, sales tax is charged by the state governments that are not uniform and vary sharply from state to state ranging from as low as four per cent in some cases to as high as 34 per cent in others. Overall an airline could end up paying around 70 per cent of the basic cost of fuel as tax. This is clearly exorbitant, unaffordable and crippling for the airline industry in India. The government should consider bringing the tax down to reasonable levels, possibly at four per cent and ensure that it is uniformly applicable throughout the country.

- b. Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO):** The MRO sector is one of high investment and needs a minimum level of clientele to be sustainable which is not readily available. This segment of the aviation industry has not kept pace with the rapid expansion of the airline industry largely on account of lack of support from the government as well as the high taxes imposed by the government on MRO services availed as also customs duty on spare parts imported for aircraft undergoing overhaul. Exemption of customs duty on import of aircraft engines that was in vogue till 2012, has for some reason, been withdrawn, much to the detriment to the MRO industry.

The existing high tax regime that includes service tax at the rate of 12.36 per cent together with value added tax at 12.5 to 15 per cent has made the MRO services in India 30 per cent more expensive compared to those available in other countries such as Singapore and even Sri Lanka. Most Indian carriers continue to send their aircraft for MRO services outside India as it works out to be less expensive even though it means enhanced period of grounding for the aircraft. There is a crying need to modify the tax regime in respect of Indian MRO industry to make it attractive for domestic carriers and competitive internationally.

- c. Airport Infrastructure:** If there is one factor that has been a real impediment in the growth of the airline industry in India, it is the lack of airport infrastructure in the country. This deficiency can be best understood when a comparison is made with the state of airport infrastructure in the United States of America (USA). India has a total

of just under 500 airfields including unused and abandoned airstrips. Of these 132 are functional operating domestic as well as international flights. In the USA, that has a population that is around 25 per cent of that of India, there are more than 15000 operational airports. While in the recent past there has no doubt been a perceptible improvement in airport infrastructure in the metros and other major cities of India such as Bangalore, Hyderabad and Kochi that handle around 70 per cent of passenger traffic, progress in the effort to create Greenfield airports in Tier II, Tier III and Tier IV cities or activate existing air strips in disuse at these locations, has been excruciatingly tardy. This is the primary reason why regional aviation in India is yet to take off. For the Indian airline industry to grow at a respectable rate, it is the population in the smaller cities and towns that needs to be provided easy access to air travel. The government has now identified 50 locations to build new airports, but this may not be adequate. There is clearly the need to build many hundreds more of low-cost no frill, austere airports with just the basic services across the nation to boost regional connectivity. India has now reached a level of growth where regional aviation can play a major role in further economic development.

- d. The Burden of Levies:** On account of the crushing burden of taxes and levies, growth of the civil aviation industry in India remains stunted. Indonesian carriers operate over 500 airliners and have around 750 on order. Compare this with India that has a population five times that of Indonesia, where Indian carriers fly around 400 airliners and have 470 on order. Section 10 (15-A) of the 1961 Income Tax Act, which exempted airlines from levy of income tax on aircraft lease rentals issued by foreign lessors, was withdrawn in 2007 and withholding tax imposed. This has created enormous difficulties for the aircraft leasing industry. The relevant section of the IT Act should be restored to provide the badly needed relief to the cash-strapped industry. Service tax has been imposed on passenger service fee (PSF) collected by airlines on behalf of the airport operators. Recovery of PSF should not be subject to service tax as it was not being charged towards services of air transportation provided by the airlines. Compared to the situation abroad, airport charges in India that include landing and parking charges, are inordinately high on account of which not only are foreign carriers inclined to shy away from the Indian skies, but even the Indian carriers find the financial

burden unbearable. It would be desirable to levy airport charges that are reasonable and internationally competitive to make operations to India financially attractive. Indian airports generally aim to rake in returns to the tune of 16 per cent on their investments. This is in jarring contrast to the wafer thin margins of one per cent that airlines globally operate on. There is certainly a need to correct this gross imbalance.

BUSINESS AVIATION

Business Aviation is a relatively new segment of the aviation industry in India. Even though India has the potential to offer one of the strongest and most lucrative market in the world for business aircraft, both piston and jets, it continues to be perhaps the most neglected sector in the civil aviation industry. The market for business aircraft in India is around 12 percent of the global market and is larger than that of China or Japan. As per the Business Aircraft Operators Association (BAOA), at present, there are 525 business aviation aircraft including private jets, helicopters, turboprops and piston engine aero planes registered in India. With a growth rate once projected at 12.5 percent per year, the number of business aircraft in India was once forecast to rise to 1,783 by the end of the decade. However, with few signs until now of substantial aviation policy reform, estimate by BAOA has been revised drastically to 922, approximately half the earlier figure touted earlier. Also, as per Rohit Kapur, President BAOA, the number of de-registered aircraft is on the rise. This is a worrisome trend indeed.

The growth of Business Aviation in India is adversely affected by a number of factors, the most notable being that this segment of the industry regarded as a luxury meant for the elite and is often described as ‘corporate excess’. Nothing could be further from the truth. Today Business Aviation serves as a catalyst for economic growth making a significant contribution to GDP and consequently to the prosperity and well being of the nation. Business aircraft provide the fastest means of transportation and connectivity not only to the remotest corner of the country but also across the globe thus facilitating speedy business-related interaction, something that surface transportation or even airlines cannot match. With the help of long range business aircraft, Indian corporate can expand with relative ease, their reach on a global scale to improve efficiencies and exploit market opportunities. In an Indian economy that is being increasingly globalised,

the role of Business Aviation will become all the more important in the future.

Given the critical importance of Business Aviation, there is an imperative need to address the issues that could prove to be impediments for this sector of the Indian civil aviation industry. Some of these are as under :-

- a. Regulatory Framework:** As it stands, the regulatory provisions applicable to Business Aviation are those that were drafted for the airline industry and in fact serve more as regulatory barriers rather than facilitators. Given the vastly different operating paradigms, it would only be logical and appropriate to have a separate regulatory provisions to cover this critical segment of the Indian civil aviation industry.
- b. Licensing of Aircraft:** There are far too many agencies that control licensing of business aircraft. These are the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Civil Aviation, Directorate General of Civil Aviation, Bureau of Civil Aviation Security and the Airport Authority of India. The time taken to make a business aircraft operational, is inordinately long, cumbersome and frustrating. There is definitely the need for simplification of the process and the introduction of a Single Window Clearance System for obtaining a licence for a new aircraft.
- c. Duty on Import of Aircraft:** Currently, an aircraft imported by business houses for personal use, attracts import duties between 19 and 21 per cent, while one imported for commercial operations attracts duties of 2.5 to 3 per cent only, as the latter is not subject to countervailing duty and special additional duty, which are equivalents of taxes such as excise and VAT on domestically manufactured items. Such a duty structure enhances cost of business aircraft making it affordable for many thus restricting growth in this segment.
- d. Human Resource Issues:** The business aviation segment is afflicted with paucity of appropriately qualified personnel and the situation is expected to only get worse with further growth of the sector. Besides, training facilities for the skills required is pitifully low. This compels Indian business houses owning business aircraft to employ technically qualified personnel from abroad thus adding to the cost.
- e. Inadequacy of Infrastructure:** Growth of dedicated infrastructure has lagged far behind the rate of growth of Business Aviation. Consequently, India's corporate aviation has failed to keep pace with the rest of the

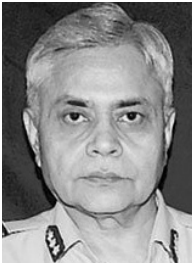
world. The metros and other major airports do not permit business aircraft from operating at or through these airports at peak times owing to shortage of parking space and heavy traffic. Visiting business aircraft are penalised heavily if they over stay. Owing to lack of heliports, civil helicopters have no option but to operate at or through regular airports where they are subject to crippling restrictions and are accorded the lowest priority for takeoff and landing. Lack of dedicated infrastructure by way of heliports, erodes the advantage of rotary wing aircraft. On account of an existing rule that is somewhat archaic, no commercial airport can be built within 150 km of an existing one thus preventing major airports to have satellite airports that can facilitate Business Aviation. There is also the need to increase the number of Fixed Base Operators (FBO) to handle Business Aviation flights as also provide the ground facilities required.

- f. Lack of MRO Facilities:** The Indian business aviation market is complex from a maintenance perspective as it has over 60 different aircraft types consisting of jets, turboprops and helicopters. Each type of platform requires specifically trained technical manpower, tooling and approvals from regulator as well as the OEM to enable an MRO to offer world-class maintenance services. Creation of this infrastructure requires a level of investment both initial and recurring, which most MROs will not find economically viable to support as the clientele is not large enough to make business viable. A significant percentage of the business aviation fleet in India depends on OEM approved facilities in Europe, UK and the US for their heavy maintenance and modifications. MRO's in India need to upgrade their facilities to meet with global certification such as from EASA in addition to OEM certification as that will enable customers to access globally certified quality of maintenance services locally at their operating base. The other key challenge which is faced by the industry is non availability of spare parts in the region which leads to frequent grounding of aircraft for lack of spares. Currently, the MRO industry in India is facing the problems of high service tax, high royalty charges amounting to 13 per cent by airport operator and inordinate delay in customs clearances for spare parts imported.

CONCLUSION

The NDA government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi would be currently preoccupied battling the host of major problems confronting the nation. However, one area that is relatively new on the scene but nevertheless critical for the economic wellbeing of the nation, is the Indian civil aviation industry. This industry is just a decade old and ever since its emergence on the Indian scene, it has been engaged in a constant and desperate struggle for survival. In fact, it is somewhat difficult to understand how the civil aviation industry in India continues to remain afloat in a financially hostile environment. The Indian civil aviation industry is optimistic that the NDA government will give this sector the attention it deserves and adopt the necessary measures to pull it out of the morass it is descended into, so that it is able to find its rightful place on the global civil aviation scene as well as make a meaningful contribution to the national economy.

AIR MARSHAL BK PANDEY PVSM AVSM VM (RETD)



Commissioned into the Transport Stream of the Indian Air Force in December 1964, Air Marshal BK Pandey is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Pune; Defence Services Staff College, Wellington and the National Defence College at Delhi. During the nearly forty years that he served with the Indian Air Force, the officer held a number of important command and staff appointments which included command of Air Force Station, Agra, Deputy Commandant of the National Defence Academy and Air Officer Commanding in Chief, Training Command of the Indian Air Force. He was deputed by the Government of India to the Republic of Singapore Air Force as a flying instructor and served in a diplomatic assignment at the Embassy of India in Kabul, Afghanistan during the turbulent years post Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

Since his retirement from the Indian Air Force in 2004, the officer has been engaged in writing for journals related to military and civil aviation published from Delhi.

Crisis In Afghanistan – The End A strategic Challenges Post Us Withdrawal

Lt General Amitava Mukerjee (Retd)

INTRODUCTION

The ongoing crisis in Afghanistan has reached a critical stage with the US/NATO decision to pull out of Afghanistan by the end of December 2014, signaling strategic defeat, having failed to suppress a determined insurgency by the Afghan Taliban. This has been the longest war in American history in the immediate aftermath of the audacious 9/11 Al Qaida terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre [WTC] and the Pentagon. After expending a lot of blood [over 2300 US troops killed and 23000 wounded] and treasure [approximately \$800 Billion to \$1Trillion], the American and NATO forces are in a state of war fatigue, with little or no decline in the intensity of insurgency after 13 years of Operation Enduring Freedom, resulting in an insecure and unstable political and economic environment in Afghanistan with the added danger of destabilizing the entire region.

The fateful decision to call it a day for the US/NATO military intervention and a phased transition of security operations to the newly trained Afghan National Security Forces [ANSF] by end 2014, was taken at the November 2010 Lisbon NATO Summit, which was attended by President Karzai. This was reiterated by President Obama in his 22 June 2011 address to the nation [soon after the killing of Osama Bin Laden by American Special Forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan] in which he painted an optimistic picture of improving security environment in Afghanistan, justifying the planned American exit by

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2014. This also served as a prelude to Obama's presidential campaign for his reelection in 2012! However, the ground reality in Afghanistan told a different story with a relentless Taliban insurgency spreading across Afghanistan, with increasing doubts on the operational effectiveness of the fledgling ANSF troops, and serious apprehensions regarding the future destiny of Afghanistan post 2014. Recently, this has been complicated by President Karzai's refusal to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement [BSA] which would codify the role of remaining US/ISAF forces in stabilizing in the critical decade of transition, and charges of fraud in the 2014 Presidential Elections, further increasing the uncertainties of a secure and stable Afghanistan. However, this has been sorted out presently by US aided compromise having reached between the two contending candidates. We now have Dr Ashraf Ghani as President with Dr Abdullah Abdullah as the Prime Minister. The sticky point of BSA has also been sorted out by recent signing of this agreement between USA and Afghanistan.

However, before carrying out a detailed analysis of the strategic challenges that confront Afghanistan in the wake of the draw down of US and International Security Assistance Force [ISAF] forces from Afghanistan, it would be essential to understand the complexities of the existing political, economic and security situation and the roots of US strategic failure in Afghanistan.

PRESENT SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

Political Environment

The principle political problem lies in the shaky legitimacy of the 12 year old Karzai regime due to widespread charges of electoral rigging in the 2004 and 2009 Presidential elections and more recently in the 2014 Presidential Elections, reflecting the low level of integrity of the Independent Election Commission, reportedly stuffed with Karzai nominees. There is a simultaneous loss of credibility in the present regime due to its failure to check systematic electoral malpractices, massive corruption, nepotism and criminal misbehaviour of some Karzai cabinet colleagues and provincial governors who were ex-war lords or who were involved in the lucrative drug industry.

According to a detailed December 2013 report by a German Afghan analyst, Thomas Ruttig of the Afghan Analysts Organisation, the development of Afghanistan's democratic institutions continues to be weak without the

essential balance of power between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. Further, Karzai's executive branch of the government had degenerated into a toxic mix of Islamists, ex-war lords and erstwhile Mujahdin leaders who also dominate the legislature and the judiciary. The obvious result is bad governance based on the politics of patronage and corruption. According to Ruttig, a disturbing development hindering Afghanistan's transformation into a liberal democratic Islamic country, is the emergence of an unofficial circle of radical jihadi advisors whose agenda is to impose a retrograde Wahabi style Islam in Afghanistan which militates against establishment of genuine democracy. The numerous ex-warlords and commanders of the Mujahdin War and the disastrous Civil War have been disarmed only superficially, contrary to the 2001 Bonn Agreement and many retain their private militias creating law and order problems. Some of them have been ensconced in positions of power and have taken control of key sectors of the economy such as import-export business, construction, real estate, banking, the mining sector and the 'contract' industry fed by the billions of dollars of aid and reconstruction funds flowing from abroad. The overall state of governance therefore remains poor with growing dissatisfaction among the people who have suffered the ravages of continuous conflict since the overthrow of King Zahir Shah by his Prime Minister Daud Khan in 1973. Some of these inherited challenges will have to be faced by the current disposition.

Socio-Economic Environment

Human Resource Development: Despite the three decade long period of violent conflict which took millions of lives and totally disrupted the social fabric of Afghanistan, there has been significant improvement in the overall state of human development in the last decade and the country is undergoing a historic process of fundamental social and economic change, thanks to generous aid from the US/ World Bank and other international aid agencies. The most dramatic improvement has been in the field of education with a ten fold increase of 10.5 million children going to 16000 schools, including 2.8 million girl children, which is a record for Afghan female education after the disastrous experience of the Taliban regime. However Afghanistan has a long way to go as far as female literacy is concerned, which remains at an abysmal 18%. Health care parameters have also shown improvement after 2001, particularly in Infant Mortality Rate, access to clean drinking water and sanitation, but, life expectancy still remains at a low level of 50 years.

Economic Development: Afghanistan falls in the category of a 'Heavily Indebted Poor Country' and its economic development is almost entirely aid dependent. About 95% of its GDP [PPP] is aid driven with a false picture of high GDP growth of 10.2% in 2012. This has plummeted to 3.2% in 2013 after the US/NATO decision to exit Afghanistan by 2014 and the declining international aid levels in 2013 after President Karzai's refusal to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement. The international community in the 2012 Tokyo Summit has pledged \$ 16 billion in aid covering a period of 4 years to spur economic growth but made it conditional on implementing good governance and curbing corruption.

The illegal \$ 2.3 billion opium based drug economy is estimated to contribute 22% of the Afghan GDP and is a major generator of corruption and narco-terrorism which constitutes a serious threat to nation building, and economic development. It also provides a major source of revenue for the Taliban estimated at \$ 60 - \$ 100 million a year. The drug network reportedly embraces segments of the top political/bureaucratic apparatus at the centre and the provinces and includes the law and order machinery as well as the intelligence agencies on both sides of the Durand Line. Afghanistan currently produces 90% of the world's opium amounting to around 5500 tons in 2013 [an increase of 49% compared to the previous year] and feeds the refined heroin trade on a global scale, to USA and Europe through Pakistan, India, Iran and Central Asia.

Afghanistan is endowed with rich mineral deposits and hydro-carbons worth trillions of dollars which has not been exploited due to decades of conflict and insecurity. China has taken the lead in exploiting the huge copper deposits of 5.5 million tons, the world's second largest, in the Aynak area of Logar province and was granted a lease for 30 years in 2007 for \$ 3 billion. Due to lack of infrastructural development such as a supporting road and rail network and insecurity, the project has not taken off so far and is likely to be renegotiated. Similarly the Indian SAIL- led consortium won a \$ 11 billion project to exploit the rich Hajigak iron ore deposits in Bamyan province, but due to mounting security risks and political uncertainties in 2014, SAIL has not yet signed the final contract. India remains one of the largest donors of socio-economic aid to rebuild Afghanistan's road and power transmission infrastructure as well as numerous projects to upgrade the social sector amounting to a total commitment of \$2.3 billion which has been greatly appreciated by the Afghan people.

Security Environment

Obama's Surge Strategy: On assuming his first presidency in 2009, President Obama carried out a detailed policy review of the Afghan War and emerged with an integrated 'Af-Pak Strategy' which holistically addressed the political, economic and military dimensions of the conflict covering both Afghanistan and Pakistan, This was based on the belated recognition that Pakistan was a key factor in the perpetuation of the Taliban insurgency. The security component of this strategy comprised beefing up the US military forces by a 'surge' of over 30,000 troops, employment of US Special Forces in targeted counter terrorism [CT] operations and increasing the precision drone strikes combined with an accelerated build up Afghan state institutions and the expansion of the ANSF. Simultaneously, a combined economic and military aid package [\$ 7.5 billion each] was provided to Pakistan over a period of 5 years with strict stipulations regarding stepping up Pakistan's counter insurgency operations in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas [FATA], and improving the human resource development of this backward region .

In practice, the Surge Strategy was an initial success in reversing the Taliban control over the southern provinces, eliminating the middle level Taliban leadership by focused counter- terrorism strikes and regaining control over all provincial and district capitals thereby reducing the Taliban capability to mount major military operations. The failure to reinforce the success of the 'surge' operations and the sudden US decision to pull out all US/ISAF forces by 2014, defied military logic.

Present Operational Scenario: The overall security situation continues to be grim, with the rapid depletion of US/ISAF forces and total take over of the security responsibilities in practically all the provinces by the ANSF. The provincial and district capitals are under the control of the ANSF, but the countryside , particularly in the South and East are dominated by the Taliban[Quetta Shura] and their allies such as the Haqqani Network , taking advantage of the operational void created by the pull out of US/ISAF forces from the outlying provinces. The Taliban influence is also rapidly spreading to the North and West and Kabul's fortified defence parameter is being repeatedly penetrated, as witnessed by recent assassination strikes, IED and suicide bombing attacks in the capital, suicide attack on the Indian consulate in Herat and rocket attacks on Kabul Airport. In fact, 2013 has been one of the most violent years of the 13 year old conflict. According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan [UNAMA], the Taliban has launched 962

attacks in 2013 resulting in 2959 civilians killed and 4821 wounded out of which 796 women and children were killed and over 2400 were wounded. 2014 promises to be more violent with 1564 civilians killed [17% increase] and 3289 wounded [28% increase] in the first six months. Even after 12 years of Counter Insurgency [COIN] operations by US/ISAF forces, the Taliban and its affiliates have demonstrated their resilience by maintaining a strength of approximately 30,000 fighters even after suffering approximately 20,000 to 30,000 casualties over the last decade, thanks to continuing bad governance and regular reinforcements and logistic support from their Pakistani sanctuaries in North Waziristan.

Effectiveness of the ANSF: The accelerated expansion of the fledgling ANSF was part of Obama's Surge Strategy and gathered pace after the Kabul International Conference on Afghanistan in July 2010, in which a key decision was taken to transfer operational control from the US/ISAF forces to the ANSF in five phases, by October 2013. Starting from a modest size of 50,000 troops in 2007, the ANSF gradually increased to 90,000 in 2009. Thereafter, with increased US funding amounting to around \$ 60 Billion, the NATO Training Mission- Afghanistan [NTM-A] implemented the herculean task of expanding the ANSF from 90,000 to 352,000 troops by the end of 2013 along with the necessary training infrastructure. By October 2013, the ANSF was taking the lead in security operations against the Taliban in all the provinces including the sensitive South and the East. This became evident from the pattern of casualties in 2013 where the ANSF troops suffered 4551 killed which was four times the US/ISAF casualties during the same period, indicating the serious shortcomings in the quality of training and leadership of the ANSF.

The verdict on the effectiveness of ANSF has been mixed. The American Army Chief, General Ray Odierno revealed in October 2013 that only two out of 29 Afghan National Army [ANA] Brigades were combat ready, whereas the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [CJCS], General Martin Dempsey stated on 20December 2013 that the ANSF was capable of overcoming the Taliban, provided the US/ISAF forces continued to give essential intelligence, communications, logistic and fire support to the ANSF operations. According to a comprehensive study in February 2014 by the US CNA Corporation [a prestigious professional analysis organization mandated by the US Congress], the ANSF, despite many shortcomings of abbreviated training, lack of effective leadership, intelligence, fire support and logistics capability, had performed reasonably well in 2013 and were successful in standing up to the Taliban's

intensified operations in large parts of Afghanistan. Their main achievement has been preventing the Taliban from seizing and holding important areas of the district and provincial centres and other key political targets, despite decreasing US/ISAF support.

The future security environment is therefore fraught with risk due to the uncertain outcome of the presidential elections, the travails of government formation and the growing trust deficit between President Obama and President Karzai, besides the continuing crisis of bad governance and the Pakistan factor, which will be discussed subsequently. To comprehend the strategic challenges that confront Afghanistan post- 2014, it would be essential to first assess the roots of US strategic failure, which has led to the US/NATO decision to exit prematurely from Afghanistan by end 2014. One will have to wait and watch the outcome of the bilateral security arrangement signed between US and Afghanistan which will allow certain number of ISAF troops to be maintained within the country.

ROOTS OF US STRATEGIC FAILURE

Flawed US Grand Strategy

The neo-conservative dominated George W Bush presidency is considered by many political analysts, to be a geo-strategic catastrophe due to the twin strategic failures of the disastrous preemptive invasion of Iraq on false pretexts, and the invasion of Afghanistan in response to the audacious Al Qaida terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre in New York on 9 September 2001. The main US justification for launching Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan within weeks of 9/11 was the sanctuary provided by the Taliban regime to Osama bin Laden and his radical jehadi terrorist organization, Al Qaida. This is despite the fact that 15 of the 19 suicide hijackers were Saudi citizens and the alleged brains behind the attack was a Pakistani, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. The Taliban regime other than providing sanctuary had nothing to do with the planning and execution of this terrorist attack! In hindsight, a more focused counter terrorism operation aimed at capturing Osama bin Laden and destroying the Al Qaida infrastructure in Kandahar and Khost, would have been a more pragmatic option, rather than undertaking the impossible task of stabilizing and rebuilding a failed state which Afghanistan had become by 2001, with woefully inadequate resources.

Lack of Clear Strategic Objectives: The initial US objective was limited to the capture/killing of the Al Qaida leadership [Osama bin Laden and his chief lieutenants] and removal of the Al Qaida sanctuaries in Afghanistan. This was expanded to the Taliban regime change, but defeat and capture of Taliban forces and the subsequent securing and stabilizing Afghanistan was not included as a strategic objective, resulting in allocation of totally inadequate forces, enabling the Taliban and the Al Qaida to escape into Pakistan. Subsequently in 2010, President Obama's 'Surge Strategy', which was successful in eroding the Taliban control over the Southern and Eastern provinces for the first time, was a short duration operational spurt and was not based on a sound strategic objective of containing the Taliban and compelling them to negotiate a political solution from a position of strength. Thereafter, instead of maintaining the momentum of the 'surge', at least up to 2015, President Obama's hasty decision to pull out all US/ISAF forces by end 2014 without achieving any viable long term political or military objective, constituted a major failure of US grand strategy and sent the wrong signals to the Taliban. The time deadline for draw down of US/ISAF forces by end 2014 was also most inopportune as it coincided with the crucial presidential elections and the formation of the new government, a period which warranted a high level of security presence to ensure free and fair elections and smooth transfer of power in a democratic transition.

Shortage of Ground Forces: Donald Rumsfeld's [President George W Bush's Secretary of Defence], obsession with the technological brilliance of RMA style warfare, resulted in the monumental blunder of maintaining a light foot print in Operation Enduring Freedom, in the belief that air power based on precision guided munitions, could win wars with minimum ground forces. Initially, the ground forces 'footprint' was so light that it was practically invisible, comprising the rag-tag Northern Alliance and a Special Forces Group and elements from the CIA Special Activities Division backed up by air delivered precision guided munitions [PGMs]. Except at a few locations such as Mazar-e-Sharif, Kunduz and Kandahar, there was very little ground fighting, conducted primarily by the Northern Alliance forces supported by US air power. The Taliban forces cleverly evaded combat and disappeared in the countryside, retreating into sanctuaries in the Federally Administered Tribal Area [FATA] in Pakistan.

By 2003, only 7000 US and 5000 ISAF troops from 40 different NATO/ Allied countries were available, to secure the entire area of Afghanistan, a

country the size of France with a population of 30 million! In the ensuing security vacuum, the Taliban quickly reorganized and re-equipped in FATA and Baluchistan, with clandestine Pakistani assistance. By 2004 a full blown insurgency was raging in Afghanistan, starting in the Southern and Eastern provinces and rapidly spreading to the North and West and the capital, Kabul. Belatedly, the US/ISAF forces were gradually built up to 140,000 troops by 2011 after the “surge” which was too little and too late, as the Taliban had already seized the initiative over large parts of Southern and Eastern Afghanistan by then. This strategic failure was committed despite the fact that the latest US Counter Insurgency [COIN] doctrine and its post-World War 2 historical experience of occupation and restoring normalcy in a defeated country, required an ideal force level of 20 troops per 1000 population, which would work out to around 672,000 troops for securing and stabilizing Afghanistan! One of the major factors responsible for this sad state of affairs, was the Bush Administration’s monumental blunder of simultaneous launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, without securing and stabilizing Afghanistan. The concurrent Afghan War was deliberately starved of sufficient ground forces as well as development funds in the critical years 2002 to 2008, resulting in the consequent destabilization of Afghanistan by a rejuvenated Taliban.

Inadequate Economic Assistance

The December 2001 Bonn Agreement and the subsequent 2002 Tokyo Conference laid out a blue print for the rebuilding and reconstruction of war ravaged Afghanistan. However, the allocation of economic resources to achieve this noble objective was a mere \$ 42 per capita as compared to \$ 250 per capita for similar missions in Bosnia, East Timor and Rwanda! Between 2002 and 2009, the total ODA for Afghanistan was only \$26.7 Billion which was woefully inadequate to meet the multiple challenges of nation building, reconstruction of infrastructure and human development. It is only after 2009 that the international donors stepped up their economic aid to \$30 Billion, which was double the 2002 - 2009 aid figures. Therefore, the massive task of rebuilding Afghanistan’s infrastructure and upgrading its human development in a secure and stable environment remains an unfinished task.

Failure to Counter Pakistan’s Perfidy

The US intelligence agencies with its decade long partnership with

Pakistan's ISI in the Mujahdin War, has been fully aware of Pakistan's perfidious role in providing sanctuary to the Taliban and Al Qaida after their escape from Afghanistan and facilitate their reorganization, re-equipment and training which enabled the revival of a widespread insurgency in Southern and Eastern Afghanistan from bases in FATA and Baluchistan. This concern has been voiced in recent years by US Chairman JCS, Admiral Mike Mullen and several defence analysts. The irony is that Pakistan which has been conferred the title of a "Non- NATO US Ally", has been perfidiously arming and equipping the Afghan Taliban, particularly the Haqqani Network, from bases in North Waziristan, to launch terrorist attacks in Afghanistan which has inflicted large US/ISAF and ANSF troop casualties. Despite concerted efforts by US military commanders in Afghanistan, CENTCOM Commanders and Secretaries of Defence, Pakistan has stubbornly refused to launch military operations against the Afghan Taliban, particularly the Haqqani Network in North Waziristan on the pretext of insufficiency of forces!

The American strategic failure lies in its inability to compel Pakistan to cease its perfidious activity, by using military instruments such as intensified drone strikes on the Taliban and Al Qaida leadership targets in FATA and Baluchistan , or employing economic/financial leverages such as cutting down or stopping various ongoing US military and economic aid programmes as well as World Bank/ IMF loan packages, which provide a vital lifeline for Pakistan's battered economy. The US strategic leadership appears to have disregarded a Rand Corporation study which clearly brings out that insurgencies which enjoy full logistic and training support from cross border sanctuaries in a neighbouring country, are very difficult to defeat or eradicate! The US has somewhat half-heartedly launched drone strikes in North and South Waziristan and assassinated some prominent Tehrik-e-Taliban leaders but has totally avoided hitting the Afghan Taliban leadership [Mullah Omar and the "Quetta Shura"] in Baluchistan , perhaps due to its larger geo-strategic compulsions in this region. It may be mentioned in this context that President Karzai's recent diatribe against the Americans includes the grouse that US/ISAF strategy in the war against the Taliban and Al Qaida was deeply flawed as their sanctuaries beyond the Afghan borders [meaning in FATA and Baluchistan !] were not being attacked and eradicated. This has been echoed by Carlotta Gall, a reputed New York Times journalist in her latest book, 'The Wrong Enemy – America in Afghanistan, 2001 – 2014' in which she has stated –

“Pakistan, supposedly an ally, has proved to be perfidious during the violence in Afghanistan, for its own cynical hegemonic reasons. Pakistan, not Afghanistan, has been the true enemy.”

Flawed COIN Doctrine – Excessive Use of Fire Power and Collateral Damage

The combined impact of the faulty US focus on Iraq, and the RMA obsessed launch of OEF employing precision guided munitions with minimum ground forces, triggered a pattern of COIN operations with an over reliance of air power in the US/ISAF operations against the Taliban insurgents. Use of minimum force, one of the basic dictums of waging successful campaigns against insurgencies, is an integral part of the latest US COIN doctrine, which was systematically violated in the Afghan war. The Afghan War will be remembered in the history of warfare for its excessive use of aerial fire power by a large variety of fighters, bombers, gun ships, attack helicopters and armed drones against Taliban insurgents armed with light infantry weapons, resulting in significant collateral civilian casualties. According to statistics released by the Air Force in the HQ Central Command, US/ISAF forces launched on an average over 20,000 close air support [CAS] sorties a year [including more than 1700 weapon release sorties] between 2009 and 2013, with significant collateral damage. Even PGMs delivered by fighters/bombers/attack helicopters and drones such as Predator and Reaper which have been successful in taking out many Taliban leaders, have caused collateral civilian casualties. The Bureau of Investigating Journalism has estimated that between 2004 and 2013, there have been 364 drone strikes which killed approximately 3091 Taliban fighters and caused more than 680 civilian casualties including women and children. Daniel Byman, an analyst with the US Council of Foreign Relations has opined that for every high/mid ranking Al Qaida or Taliban leader killed by drone strikes, approximately 10 Afghan civilians have been killed. This partially demolishes the myth created by certain PGM proponents, on the ‘humanity’ of precision air power! The collateral damage inflicted on Afghan civilians by indiscriminate use of air borne fire power has become one of the drivers of replenishing the insurgency with fresh recruits and has been constantly highlighted by President Karzai in his complaints to President Obama.

Bad Governance and Corruption

The US shares the Karzai Government's massive failure to establish good governance and eradicate widespread nepotism and corruption over the last 12 years. After the quick Taliban regime change, the US was primarily responsible to secure and stabilize Afghanistan and lay the foundations for good governance to facilitate effective socio-economic development. Karzai was the chosen American nominee as Interim President by an 'orchestrated' Loya Jirga in 2001, which was followed by two Presidential tenures with US backing from 2004 to 2014 replete with charges of electoral malpractices and bad governance. The new 2004 Afghan Constitution drafted under US tutelage, also contained the seeds of an over powerful centralized presidency without adequate checks and balances, which was conducive for bad governance. The US must therefore share responsibility for Karzai's failure to deliver good governance. According to a young US Army officer who served with 10 Mountain Division in North East Afghanistan, the Afghan people have lost faith in the democratic process and lost confidence in the US backed Karzai leadership which has adversely affected the integrity of the US/ISAF mission and stunted the growth of a vibrant democratic Afghan state and its institutions and civil society.

The Scourge of Corruption: Afghanistan today is ranked as the most corrupt country in the world [tied with North Korea and Somalia!] by Transparency International in its 2013 report. It has also been reported recently that dollars packed in suit cases and back packs have been delivered every month to President Karzai, courtesy the CIA! All told, tens of millions of dollars have been delivered to Karzai according to current and former advisers of the President. Khalil Roman, Karzai's Deputy Chief of Staff [2002 to 2005] termed it as 'ghost money' which came in secret and left in secret. Shockingly, Karzai is reported to have stated in 2010, that the US was not his sole benefactor and that the Iranians also gave him bags of money for which he was grateful to the Iranians! It appears that the US in its eagerness to secure and stabilize Afghanistan has fed the all pervasive culture of corruption in present day Afghanistan, thereby tarnishing the credibility of the Karzai regime as well as the integrity of the US objective of transforming Afghanistan into a stable democracy. An American official is believed to have stated that the biggest source of corruption in Afghanistan is the United States!

Corruption was also employed as an instrument of subverting the Taliban in the early days of the US military intervention, to compensate for inadequate ground forces. The CIA is reported to have handed out millions of dollars

in cash to certain Taliban groups, to buy security. Anthony Cordesman, a respected analyst of the US Centre for Strategic and International Studies in his report, “How America Corrupted Afghanistan”, has particularly criticised the American military contracting system in which the bulk of the money spent inside Afghanistan went through poorly supervised military contracts and aid projects, which were funneled through a limited number of Afghan power brokers who set up corrupt companies which did not perform and showed poor results! Greatly indebted to the Northern Alliance for providing the ground forces for evicting the Taliban from Kabul, the Americans turned a blind eye to the brutalities and corrupt practices of many of their leaders [termed warlords] such as the Uzbek, Ahmed Rashid Dostum and the Tajik, Mohammad Qasim Fahim who later was made a Marshal and Defence Minister by President Karzai. The US support and endorsement of the warlords, many of whom assumed positions of power in the Karzai government, enabled them to control and dominate the entire economic and military aid contracting system as well as the lucrative drug industry. According to a recent by the UN Office of Drugs and Crime [UNODC], powerful government officials, the ANP/Local Police and regional power brokers and traffickers enrich themselves with 75% of this ill gotten wealth, under the benign gaze of the US backed Karzai government.

The pervasive spread of institutionalised corruption has a baleful effect on the entire political and socio-economic fabric of Afghanistan. Besides eroding the government legitimacy, it threatens the economic and stability and security and harms the prospects of democratic transition. Over time such widespread criminal activity has become the largest obstacle to development as it prevents the effective delivery of government services which further alienates the people who hold America ultimately responsible for the lack of security, instability and the culture of corruption. In addition, this dissuades potential aid donors and drastically lowers investment and economic growth both in the short and long term.

To address this growing malaise, the US Congress established a Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction [SIGAR] to carry out an objective audit and investigation of waste, abuse and fraud related to more than \$96 Billion of economic and military aid provided by the US for rebuilding the Afghan economy and the ANSF. Recently, Obama’s selected appointee as SIGAR, John Sopko has in a series of revealing audit reports brought out blatant cases of squandering tax payers money by the US Defence Department , the State Department, and by the US Agency for International

Development [USAID] which has created a firestorm between the SIGAR and the US State and Defence Departments. It is no wonder that President Karzai in an interview with the BBC in October 2013, was bold enough to charge that the major source of corruption was the hundreds and millions of dollars of contracts given out indiscriminately to buy Afghan loyalties and compliance with US interests.

FUTURE STRATEGIC CHALLENGES OF AFGHANISTAN

Nature of the Challenge

Afghanistan faces a critical year in 2014 followed by a crucial decade of transition [2014 to 2024] comprising a complex set of challenges, in the wake of the US/ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan post 2014. For purposes of analysis, the strategic implications of the premature withdrawal of US/ISAF forces, can be disaggregated into three distinct challenges in the coming decade. These are the Challenges of Political Transition after the 2014 Presidential Elections and the Economic and Security Challenges, which will shape the future course of democratisation and socio-economic transformation of Afghanistan along with its impact on the regional security environment.

The Challenge of Political Transition

The political transition is already in a state of turmoil with Dr Abdullah Abdullah one of the two major presidential candidates alleging wide spread electoral rigging and fraud in the run off Presidential Elections held in June 2014, and threatening to establish a parallel government based on his major lead over his rival Dr Ashraf Ghani, in the first round of elections held in April 2014, which could jeopardise the fragile gains achieved in Afghanistan over the past decade. However, this uncertain situation has been overcome recently with US enforced compromise, in which Dr Ghani has assumed the post of President and Dr Abdullah Abdullah has been appointed as Prime Minister with special powers.

The Historic 2014 Presidential and Provincial Council Elections: Defying the intense pre-election Taliban efforts to disrupt the elections by a combination of high publicity suicide attacks and bombings to intimidate candidates and voters, the April 2014 presidential elections were held in an environment of immense enthusiasm and high turn out of approximately 58% [as compared to 35% in 2009] out of over 20 million registered voters. Some of

the positive features of this historic election were the registration of 2.5 million new voters, including 1.5 million women, three female vice presidential candidates and 300 female candidates for the Provincial Assemblies. There were huge election rallies and three major TV debates, unprecedented in Afghan political history, in which the major presidential candidates discussed vital issues such as security, the economy, corruption and the Taliban threat, all indicating the thirst of the people for a healthy democratic political order.

Conduct of the Presidential Elections: The eight final candidates for the future President presented a wide cross section of the Afghan political scene, dominated by ethnic Pashtuns. This included five former ministers, Dr Abdullah Abdullah [ex- Foreign Minister from the Northern Alliance of mixed Tajik – Pashtun parentage,], Dr Ashraf Ghani Ahmedzai [former World Bank executive and ex- Finance Minister, a Pashtun] , Zalmay Rassoul [ex-Foreign Minister, a Pashtun], Abdul Rehman Wardak [ex- Defence Minister, a Pashtun] and Hidayat Amin Arsala [former Finance/Foreign Minister and Vice President, a Pashtun] ,one former Governor, Gul Agha Sherzai[ex-Governor of Kandahar and Nangarhar provinces, a Pashtun] and one Salafi Islamist, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf, also a Pashtun.

The preliminary results showed Dr Abdullah well ahead with 45% of the votes, and Dr Ashraf Ghani trailing behind with 31.5% of the votes. Zalmay Rassoul, President Karzai's favoured candidate, received only 11.37% of the votes, reflecting the disenchantment of the people with the Karzai government. The remaining five Pashtun candidates' polling percentages were in single figures. The pattern of voting indicated some healthy trends which augured well for the future. Dr Abdullah who is considered more of a Tajik due to his close association with the famous Mujahdin leader Ahmed Shah Massoud of the Northern Alliance, made a dent in the Southern and Eastern provinces by getting more votes than his Pashtun rival Ashraf Ghani, in two Pashtun dominated provinces, Farah and Wardak! Dr Abdullah also won the majority votes in three Uzbek Northern provinces despite the selection of Ahmed Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord, as Dr Ashraf Ghani's vice presidential candidate. Similarly, Dr Abdullah won decisive victories in the Hazara populated provinces in Central Afghanistan. An analysis of the preliminary election results indicated the emergence of Dr Abdullah as the likely front runner in the second round of elections which were reinforced by reports of public declaration of support for Dr Abdullah as the next President, by two losing Pashtun candidates, Zalmay Rassoul and Gul Agha Sherzai. This

indicated that Dr Abdullah would emerge as the winning candidate by getting more than 55% of the votes in the run off elections and lead to the formation of a multi-ethnic stable democratic government.

The Run – Off Elections Crisis: The second round of run off presidential election was necessitated as no candidate got more than the stipulated 50% of the votes. The run off elections were held on 14 June 2014 under the continuing threat of the Taliban to disrupt the elections. Once again, the Afghan people demonstrated their determination to exercise their franchise to select their choice of president who would deliver good governance. Despite over 150 Taliban attacks which caused 46 killed [including 11 police officers and 15 ANA soldiers], the voters displayed enthusiasm by turning out in large numbers to vote. The euphoria generated by the effective conduct of the first round of elections was however rudely shattered by Dr Abdullah's allegations of large scale electoral rigging and fraud in favour of his main rival Dr Ashraf Ghani, in the run off elections. Dr Abdullah's charges included abnormal increase in the voter turn out by 200% to 300% in some of the Pashtun dominated Eastern Provinces due to "vote stuffing" and electoral fraud, allegedly engineered by the Chief Electoral Officer Zia-ul-Haq Amarkhil, which gave a false lead of over one million votes to Dr Ashraf Ghani. Dr Abdullah therefore flatly refused to accept the election results and even threatened to form a parallel government which drew a sharp response from President Obama and a veiled threat of cutting off all US and international economic and military assistance unless both presidential candidates realised the gravity of the situation and followed the democratic process of change of government.

To resolve this dangerous political impasse, the US Secretary of State, John Kerry air dashed to Kabul for urgent meetings with both Presidential candidates on 12 July 2014 and after 20 hours of protracted negotiations and some arm twisting, achieved a diplomatic breakthrough in hammering out a deal which would involve an audit of all 8 million votes cast, supervised by the UN and ISAF, to provide the vital legitimacy to the election process.. The final result of the recount would be accepted by both candidates without any further protests. Kerry's diplomatic success in defusing a serious political crisis, included an ingenious provision of formation of a "national government of unity", whoever wins the final vote, which was agreed by both sides. This would provide a key role to the losing candidate in the formation of the new government. President Karzai, who is suspected by some Afghan analysts to be behind this murky episode, reluctantly agreed to delay his successor's

inauguration beyond the stipulated date of 02 August 2014. Another interesting feature of Kerry's election deal is a reported framework agreement to reshape the Afghan government from its current centrally structured all powerful presidency, into a parliamentary system, with a prime minister serving as head of government and a president functioning as head of state. Since such a radical change would necessitate constitutional reform, which would take two to three years, an interim solution would be to make the winner the President and the runner up, the new appointment of Chief Executive. The next few months will therefore be crucial for deciding Afghanistan's political future with the dynamics of government formation in a totally new political landscape and the new government's ability to deliver good governance, to serve as the foundation for rapid socio-economic progress in a secure environment.

Reconciliation with the Taliban: It is well recognised by all that there was no military solution to the long standing crisis in Afghanistan and a political resolution was the only long term solution. However, all attempts made so far, towards a political reconciliation with the Taliban have failed to produce any tangible results in weaning them away from the path of violence and assimilating them into the political mainstream due to their rigid Islamist stand. The major reasons for this unfortunate state of affairs are the lack of unity among the three main actors, the Afghan government, the US and Pakistan, to hammer out a satisfactory political solution due to their conflicting strategic interests and the obduracy of the Taliban to agree to any kind of a political compromise. Though the Afghan government's efforts to reintegrate the lower level Taliban foot soldiers have met with limited success with around 7375 Taliban fighters and local commanders weaned away and assimilated in the Afghan mainstream, efforts at reconciliation with the Taliban leadership through the medium of High Peace Council was torpedoed by the assassination of its head Syed Burhanuddin Rabbani in September 2011 by two Taliban suicide bombers reportedly directed by the Quetta Shura sanctuaried in Pakistan. As a result, the five- step road map to establishing peace and harmony after the withdrawal of foreign troops by 2015, remained an unimplemented scrap of paper. Simultaneously, secret efforts made by the Americans, bypassing the Afghan government, over a period of five years, to draw the so called moderate factions of the Taliban to the negotiating table in Paris and Qatar, have met with failure.

To complicate matters, Pakistan has entered into peace negotiations with the Tehrik- e - Taliban Pakistan [TTP], a clone of the Afghan Taliban, which appears to be more of a charade, as Pakistan continues to follow its duplicitous

policy of sheltering and supporting key elements of the Afghan Taliban which has a symbiotic relationship with the Pakistani Taliban. Pakistan has also been an obstacle to Afghan and American peace making efforts by calibrating the availability of the Afghan Taliban leaders, who are all ensconced in Quetta and FATA , as it wants to be in control of the negotiating process, for maximum leverage in the new political dispensation in Afghanistan post- US withdrawal after 2014. The recent launching of Operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' [Sword of the Prophet] by the Pakistan Army/Airforce in North Waziristan, has however put an end to any peace negotiations with the TTP, for the present.

Economic Challenges

The economic challenges facing Afghanistan in the decade of transformation are daunting and covered with uncertainties due to Karzai's refusal to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement [BSA] until the formation of a new government after the Presidential elections. Future availability of economic and military aid in accordance with the pledges at the Tokyo Summit and the US - Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement, will be largely dependent on the signing of the BSA. The final outcome of the run-off Presidential elections and the quality of governance that the new regime delivers, will determine the trajectory of the nation's socio-economic growth which has already registered a sharp decline in 2014. The World Bank has estimated that the earliest Afghanistan can become reasonably self reliant will be 2025 and in the intervening period, Afghanistan will be dependent on international aid to stabilize its war - crisis ridden economy, ravaged for over three decades.

Afghanistan enjoys a unique demographic dividend with almost 70% of its population of approximately 29 million between the age of 15 and 29 years. Employment generation to the tune of 400,000 to 500,000 additional jobs a year have to be created for which good governance , a secure environment and a sustainable high rate of economic growth , are essential ingredients. To make the Afghan economy financially self sustainable, there is an urgent requirement for according higher priority to the agricultural, mining and hydro-carbon sectors. The biggest challenges in transforming the agricultural sector are restoration of the irrigation system destroyed by decades of war and the vice like domination of poppy cultivation as a lucrative cash crop for production of opium and heroin, which feeds the parallel economy and provides a rich source of illicit funding to the Taliban, while depriving the government of revenue. The mining and hydro-carbon sectors have the potential for

generating additional employment to the tune of around 200,000 additional jobs and increased revenue. Urgent measures are required to be taken by the new government to improve the security environment, the connecting rail/road infrastructure and establish an effective legal and regulatory framework, to enable the implementation of these ambitious copper mining, iron ore/ steel production projects in the Logar and Bamyan provinces and hydro-carbon projects in the Amu Darya basin.

Security Challenges

The formidable security challenges facing Afghanistan in the coming decade of transformation, will determine Afghanistan's peace, stability and socio-economic development after years of conflict. The principle factors which will shape the future security environment of Afghanistan are, the fate of the crucial Bilateral Security Agreement, the integrity and outcome of the Presidential Elections, the ability of the next government to deliver good governance and eradicate corruption, the operational effectiveness of the ANSF to counter the inevitable resurgence of the Afghan Taliban, Pakistan's Afghan policy, and the regional geo-political environment which includes the competing strategic interests of the US, Iran, India, China, Russia and the Central Asian Republics.

Bilateral Security Agreement [BSA]: Despite concerted efforts by President Obama, Secretary of Defence Chuck Hagel and US military commanders in Afghanistan, President Karzai has refused to sign the BSA until the outcome of the Presidential elections and formation of the next government. He has also laid down certain stipulations for its signature such as initiation of peace talks with the Taliban, stopping all night operations by US Special Forces, scaling down air strikes and giving the Afghan Army the leading role in all future operations against the Taliban. Other major points of difference between President Obama and President Karzai have been the issue of US guarantee of Afghan security after 2014 and action against Pakistan as the major supporter of the Afghan Taliban. Paradoxically, the Loya Jirga summoned by Karzai in November 2013, endorsed the BSA and so did the Afghan Defence Minister, Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, and the Afghan Army Chief, Lt General Sher Mohammed Karimi. Recently the two front runners in the Presidential elections, Dr Abdullah Abdullah and Dr Ashraf Ghani, have fully endorsed the BSA to be signed at the earliest in the national interest. India has also supported the BSA and urged Karzai to sign the agreement

in the interest of overall peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. The latest trends in the Afghan Presidential elections and the election deal related to charges of election fraud, negotiated by the US Secretary of State, and the possible formation of a government of national unity, strengthen the possibility of formation of a stable multi-ethnic government supported by Dr Ashraf Ghani and Zalmay Rassoul by end August and signing the BSA by September 2014.

The security implications in the absence of the BSA, are indeed grim. The Pentagon has recommended two options regarding the quantum of US/NATO forces in Afghanistan after 2014. The first option would be "Limited Withdrawal", leaving 5000 to 10,000 troops for Counter Terrorism operations and training/logistic assistance, including limited air and intelligence support. The second option would be the 'Zero Option' which implies complete withdrawal of all US/NATO forces by 2014, with its damaging consequences. General Joseph F Dunford in a testimony to the US Senate Armed Forces Committee in March 2014 warned that in the event of US exercising the 'Zero Option', the ANSF would be operationally hobbled without effective intelligence, air support, and logistics and would pave the way for the return of the Taliban and Afghanistan once again becoming a deadly sanctuary for jihadi terrorist groups, endangering both global and regional security.

On 27 May 2014, President Obama made an important policy statement regarding the role of US forces in Afghanistan after 2014, clarifying the doubts and controversies surrounding the 'zero option' and the uncertain fate of the Bilateral Security Agreement. The President stated that after 2014, the US would leave a residual force of 9800 troops which would be tapered down to around 5000 troops by the end of 2015, and by the end of 2016, draw down the forces to embassy level protection and security of Bagram Air Base. It is expected that NATO would augment this force, though reluctantly, by around 5000 troops, mainly from UK, France, Germany and Canada. The focus of this residual force would be on improving the training and leadership of the ANSF, mentoring them in CI operations, and conducting counter-terrorism operations by Special Operations Forces against the 'remnants of the Al Qaida and its affiliates'. Obama's decision is based on the declared statements of both Afghan presidential candidates that they would endorse the pending Bilateral Security Agreement after the formation of the new government, which has now taken place.

US Strategic Objectives in Afghanistan Post 2014: The launch of

Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2011, and the consequent Taliban regime change, was based on two immediate US strategic objectives. The first was to disrupt, dismantle and defeat AlQaida and its affiliates and prevent their return to Afghanistan, and the second to stabilize and strengthen its institutions so that it could never again be a safe haven for international terrorism of the Islamic jihadi variety. These objectives have not been fully achieved so far due to various reasons, as analysed in the preceding paragraphs. The keenness of the Americans to make Afghanistan sign the BSA and retain a minimum US military presence, is driven by certain deeper long term geo-strategic objectives which would have a great impact on Afghanistan's future as well as regional security. Significantly, the fine print of the Draft BSA includes the leasing of nine military bases to the US after 2014 for an indefinite period. These bases cover all the key areas of Afghanistan, which are Kabul, Bagram [the largest existing US base], Mazar-e-Sharif in the North, Herat in the West, Kandahar in the South, Shindand in Herat Province, Sharab in Helmand Province in the South, Gardez South of Kabul, and Jalalabad in the East. The draft document gives the US the right to deploy American forces on these nine bases including the two biggest, Bagram and Kandahar. These long term US strategic objectives can be assessed as under:-

- Domination of future Central Asian energy resources in the Trans-Caspian region and control of the flow of oil and gas Southwards through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India, bypassing Russia and Iran.
- Integration of Afghanistan into a new trade and transit architecture, linking Afghanistan with Central Asia and South Asia through a rail/road network for the promotion of enhanced trade and commerce with better access to markets on both sides, as part of the long term US 'New Silk Road' project. In this ambitious strategic project, Afghanistan is envisioned to become a regional hub at the crossroads of Eurasia.
- The proposed establishment of nine permanent military bases is designed to keep an eye on Iran in the West with its nuclear ambitions and involvement in the Syrian conflict; in the North maintain a strategic watch on the unstable Central Asian Republics and the troubled Xinjiang province of China, and in the South keep an eye on politically unstable nuclear Pakistan with the growing power of the TTP and its close links with the Afghan Taliban.
- With signs of a 'New Cold War' emerging from the Ukrainian crisis in Europe and an increasingly assertive China dominating oil and gas resources

in Central Asia, the proposed US military bases in Afghanistan would fill a vital gap in any future containment of China in Central Asia. Simultaneously, the US wants to restrict the revival of Russian power in the former Central Asian Republics and prevent the emergence of a possible future Eurasian Alliance between Russia and China.

The Pakistan Factor:

Pakistan's perfidious Afghan policy in the post 9/11 Operation 'Enduring Freedom' period, has a long history dating from Daud Khan's coup against King Zahir Shah in 1973, to present times in 2014, which has adversely affected Afghanistan's security and created regional instability. Pakistan's Afghan policy has been driven by its insecurity over the disputed Durand Line which has never been recognized by Afghanistan, and the fear of creation of an independent Pashtunistan or a Greater Afghanistan, embracing approximately 28 million Pashtuns in Pakistan and about 17 million Pashtuns in Afghanistan. Daud Khan's non-recognition of the Durand Line and support for creation of Pashtunistan, led Pakistan to create the first Mujahdin leaders such as Burhanuddin Rabbani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to foment Islamist insurgency in Afghanistan in the mid 1970s. This was expanded into a full fledged insurgency in the shape of a ten year Mujahdin War by rallying Islamic radical elements throughout the world, to defeat the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, in close coordination with the US CIA, and Saudi Arabia. Following the Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, Pakistan was directly responsible for the creation and expansion of the Taliban and its overthrow of the Najibullah government after six years of bloody civil war.

As discussed earlier, the most duplicitous feature of Pakistan's Afghan strategy after the Taliban defeat and regime change in 2001 by US and NATO forces, was the clandestine sheltering, training, rebuilding and launching the restructured Afghan Taliban in a renewed insurgency against the US/NATO forces in Afghanistan from 2003 onwards, while still remaining a 'Non NATO US Ally'! Under this privileged status, Pakistan has received \$ 25.9 billion dollar in economic and military aid from the US since 9/11 to date, which has been primarily used to modernize Pakistan's military machine against India, instead of fighting the Taliban !

A complicating factor in Pakistan's Afghan policy, is the emergence of the Pakistani incarnation of the Afghan Taliban, i.e. the Tehrik-e- Taliban Pakistan

[TTP] in 2007 and its bold terrorist strikes on strategic targets in FATA as well as the hinterland in Punjab and Sind. embroiling the Pakistan Army in major counter insurgency operation involving approximately 150,000 troops. Though the objectives of both the Taliban are different, it is the reported establishment of TTP bases in the Afghan border provinces of Kunar and Nuristan, allegedly supported by the Afghan National Directorate of Security in a 'quid-pro-quo', which has raised alarm in Pakistan. In fact, the notorious Maulana Fazlullah of Swat fame, emerged from his refuge in Nuristan an Eastern border province of Afghanistan, to take over the reins as the new Amir of TTP after the assassination of its leader Hakimullah Massoud by a US drone strike in November 2013. In the meanwhile, peace negotiations between the Nawaz Sharif government and the TTP have spluttered into a shaky ceasefire with no real breakthrough, which was interrupted by a brutal massacre of 23 captured Pakistani Frontier Corps soldiers by the Mohmand chapter of the TTP. Lately, the abortive peace process has come to a grinding halt after the Pakistan Army, for the first time, launched a major ground operation, 'Zarb-e-Azb' against the Afghan Taliban in North Waziristan, supported by Air Force fighter aircraft, Army attack helicopters, armour and artillery. Once again, the focus of Pakistani operations appears to be limited to the TTP bases and foreign militants from Uzbekistan and Xinjiang sheltering in North Waziristan and not the Afghan Taliban, which Pakistan still nostalgically considers a strategic asset!

Pakistan's Strategic Dilemma: The evolving symbiotic bond between the Afghan Taliban and the TTP poses a strategic dilemma and a challenge to Pakistan's national security. The new imponderables in Pakistan's Afghan strategy are the uncertain fate of the US-Afghan BSA, the rapidly declining US/NATO force levels and the outcome of the Afghan Presidential Elections. Pakistani strategic planners have belatedly realized that a drastically diminished US/NATO military presence in Afghanistan, aggravated by a sharp reduction in US and International economic and military assistance, would cripple the ANSF's operational capability and decelerate Afghanistan's socio-economic growth, which may result in the take over of the Southern and Eastern Pashtun provinces by the Afghan Taliban after 2014, resulting in a fresh flood of refugees into FATA, Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. With the trans- Durand line operational integration of the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, this would destabilise the entire North West frontier region of FATA, Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan and spread the Taliban virus to the Punjab heartland and

Sind, which would not be in Pakistan's national interest. Pakistan's vision of achieving "strategic depth" by establishing a Talibanised pro- Pakistan satellite state in Afghanistan, after the US/NATO withdrawal in 2014, may therefore be undergoing a process of review and change.

In this context, Pakistan's National Security Advisor, Sartaj Aziz, at the end of a Pakistan – US strategic dialogue in January 2014, stated that any power vacuum that might occur in the wake of the US/NATO forces drawdown, should only be filled by Afghans and there should be a regional non interference approach implemented by all the countries of the region including Pakistan. He also added significantly that Afghanistan would not be able to achieve peace and stability, if external powers support their proxies and foment ethnic/ sectarian conflict. Similarly, Tariq Fatemi, Nawaz Sharif's Foreign Affairs Adviser stated recently that in any future peace talks with the Taliban, Pakistan would not be in the drivers seat and would only play a supporting role, which is a departure from the earlier policy of control of the outcome of any peace negotiations with the Taliban.

Pakistan's paranoia of "strategic encirclement" by India persists due to India's generous economic assistance and growing goodwill and influence in Afghanistan. The Indo- Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement signed by President Karzai and Manmohan Singh in 2011 and Karzai's request for Indian military assistance in the form of weapons and equipment, has aggravated Pakistan's fears of encirclement by an Indian strategic pincer in any future Indo- Pak conflict! This kind of paranoia could adversely affect the current Pakistani review of its policy of seeking "strategic depth" in Afghanistan, which has always found strong support in the Pakistani military establishment which tends to dominate Pakistan's defence and foreign policy.

The recent pronouncements by Pak-based Taliban groups endorsing their cooperation to the ISIS is likely to complicate the security situation emanating from Pakistan to both Afghanistan as well as India.

THE REGIONAL STRATEGIC DIMENSION

General

Afghanistan's strategic location in relation to Central Asia and the Indian Sub-continent has made it a fertile ground for geopolitical rivalry between the world and regional powers. The American exit from Afghanistan, irrespective of the quantum of minimum forces left behind, will certainly create a strategic

vacuum which is likely to trigger a new version of the 19th Century Great Game among the competing strategic interests of the world and regional powers. India has already expressed concern about the security and stability of Afghanistan, with drastically reduced US/NATO support and dwindling international aid. India's greatest concern is Afghanistan becoming a powerful base for Islamic jihadi militants, in the event of the Taliban regaining control over Afghanistan after 2014 with Pakistani assistance, intensifying the threat of Islamic jihadi terrorism in JandK and the rest of India.

INDIA'S STRATEGIC INTERESTS

India faces three key challenges in Afghanistan in the near future:-

Ensure the Sovereignty and Integrity of Afghanistan: India must facilitate the holding of free and fair presidential and parliamentary elections in 2014 and 2015 and assist in the formation of a multi-ethnic democratic government of national unity, as proposed recently by the US, which satisfies the aspirations of all sections of Afghan society. Towards this objective, India must engage with all ethnic groups vying for political power, instead of backing only the Northern Alliance with its major Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara ethnic groups. In particular, India must engage with the Pashtuns, both Taliban and non-Taliban, many of whom feel alienated by the Tajik and Uzbek dominated Karzai government. The Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group, who have wielded political power ever since Ahmad Shah Durrani created the state of Afghanistan in 1747, are bound to play a major role in any future multi-ethnic political dispensation after Karzai. India should also intensify its efforts to transform the operational efficiency of the Afghan National Army by expanding its leadership training and providing carefully calibrated weapons/equipment and logistic capabilities, in consultation with the US/NATO, keeping in view the sensitivities of Pakistan.

Prevent Subversion of the Political Transition: India must reinforce recent efforts made in the Istanbul Process of November 2011, the Heart of Asia Conference of June 2012 and the follow up decisions of the Kazakhstan Conference in 2013, to involve all the regional powers in ensuring that Islamic militant groups and external forces do not subvert Afghanistan's difficult political transition. India should take the initiative with US support, to hold an international conference after the results of the Presidential Elections, to take stock of the political transition and draw out an Afghan- led road map towards achieving political stability and faster socio-economic development

with cast iron guarantees of eliminating all forms of external interference, cross border militancy and and terrorist sanctuaries. The present anemic UN Mission in Afghanistan [UNAMA] should be substantially strengthened with international observers and monitors by the UN Security Council, to ensure implementation of these security guarantees

Integrate Afghanistan into a Regional Economic Framework: Pakistan is the main obstacle to the creation of a seamless trade and energy transportation architecture integrating Afghanistan with Pakistan, India and the SAARC states in the South, Iran in the West and the Central Asian Republics, China and Russia in the North. India should initiate carefully crafted confidence building measures with Pakistan to allay its fear of “double envelopment” by India, so that energy and trade transit routes between India and Pakistan are opened up and linked to Afghanistan, Iran and Central Asia for the economic benefit of the entire region. In this regard, India should extend support to the revival and implementation of the US ‘New Silk Road Project’ to integrate the economies of India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics. Ideally, India, Afghanistan and Pakistan need to enter into a triangular dialogue to stabilize Afghanistan and provide socio-economic assistance in a coordinated and transparent manner through unrestricted rail/ road routes through Pakistan connecting all three countries.

Prevent the Resurgence of the Taliban in Kabul: India must use all its political and diplomatic acumen to prevent the possibility of a Taliban take over of Afghanistan after the US/NATO withdrawal of forces by 2015/2016. Revival of a second Taliban regime would have disastrous consequences, setting back the decade of socio-economic development and Afghanistan becoming the global sanctuary and training ground of Islamic jihadi terrorist groups and its spread into the Central Asian Republics, Xinjiang, India and Pakistan and destabilising the entire South and Central Asian region. This can only be prevented by the creation of a strong, stable and democratic Afghanistan with a coordinated multilateral effort by the US, EU, Russia, China, India, Iran, and the Central Asian Republics and of course Pakistan.

Iran

Iran, with its 936 Km border and shared ethnicity [Afghanistan has 6.2 million Shias – 19% of population], language and culture, has an important stake in the future of crisis ridden Afghanistan. In the recent past, Iran has played a key role in the destiny of Afghanistan. Iran based Shia militants

participated in the Mujahdin War against Soviet military intervention between 1979 and 1989. Thereafter, Iran sided with the Northern Alliance during the Afghan Civil War [1991 to 1996] and post 9/11, supported the US and the Northern Alliance in ousting the Taliban regime during Operation Enduring Freedom. Iran also played a constructive role in the 2001 Bonn Conference which laid out a road map for a free democratic Afghanistan and largely supported the Karzai government and the US/NATO effort to counter the resurgence of the Taliban.

With the impending exit of US/NATO forces from Afghanistan by 2014, Iran is apprehensive of the establishment of permanent US military bases in Afghanistan as per the US-Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement of 2012 and the Bilateral Security Agreement which is likely to be signed by the new government by the end of 2014. In the backdrop of the American demonisation of Iran centred around its nuclear programme and support to the Alawite Bashar Assad regime in the Syrian Civil War, Iran is apprehensive that the US military bases in Afghanistan would be used to strike the controversial Iranian nuclear facilities, in the event of a breakdown in the on going nuclear talks between the US and Iran. US needs to recognize the rise of Iran as a key regional power in the Middle East with its legitimate rights as an NPT signatory to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes and stop demonizing Iran for its pro- Assad posture. A political solution in the intractable Syrian crisis and a breakthrough in the current 'P-5 plus 1' effort to break the deadlock in the nuclear negotiations, would enable Iran to play a constructive role in the establishment of peace and security in Afghanistan..

In reality, Iran along with the US, India and its Central Asian neighbours, share a common strategic interest in preventing any Taliban take over of Kabul which needs to be pursued in the overall interest of Afghanistan and the larger region. Current efforts by India to establish an alternate road link from the Iranian port of Charbahar to Central Afghanistan and onwards to the Central Asian Republics, needs to be intensified and interfaced with the proposed US 'New Silk Road' and the 'Heart of Asia Project'. This would break Afghanistan's landlocked isolation and dependence on Pakistan and provide the much needed logistic infrastructure to exploit Afghanistan's rich copper and iron ore deposits.

China

China's strategic interests in Afghanistan centre around keeping its troubled province of Xinjiang free from the contagion of jihadi Islamic fundamentalism emanating from the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban networks and exploiting the rich mineral and hydrocarbon resources of Afghanistan. In the past, China had played a significant role during the Mujahdin War [1979-1989] by providing arms and funding to the mujahdin groups, through the ISI along with the US and Saudi Arabia. However, after the eviction of the Taliban regime by US/Northern Alliance forces in December 2001, China has avoided assisting the US/NATO operations against the Afghan Taliban and has been muted in its criticism of Pakistan's perfidious Afghan policy, even though the Xinjiang jihadi groups are being trained by the Afghan Taliban in North Waziristan, perhaps due to the fact that its "all weather" ally, Pakistan considers the Afghan Taliban as a strategic asset!

Over the last few years, the security situation in Xinjiang has deteriorated with large number of terrorist strikes and suicide bombings by a variety of Islamic Uighur militants such as the East Turkistan Islamic Movement [ETIM] and the Turkistan Islamic Party [TIP], aided by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan [IMU]. In 2012, 190 terrorist attacks were recorded in Xinjiang. With the recent spate of Uighur terrorist attacks escalating beyond Xinjiang, in Beijing, Guangzhou, and Kunming, China is deeply concerned about the possible revival of the Taliban in Afghanistan after the departure of US/NATO forces in 2014, as this would intensify the Uighur insurgency. China is therefore pressurizing Pakistan to crack down on the Taliban and Uighur bases in North Waziristan and their allied TTP groups within Pakistan. Operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' launched by the Pakistan Army, is perhaps a response to such pressures from its 'all weather ally', China!

China's ambitious Aynak multi billion dollar copper mining project has not taken off because of the insecure environment created by the Taliban. Similarly, China's long term vision of establishing the Gwadar – Kashgar Energy, Trade and Transit Corridor, along with Pakistan, will be jeopardized if Xinjiang is destabilized by an intensified Uighur insurgency. In this complex geo-political scenario, India, China and the US, have a clear convergence of strategic interests in Afghanistan to prevent the return of Taliban rule and assist in the rapid economic development of Afghanistan. China with its fast developing economy and enormous foreign exchange reserves, is bound to play a major role in Afghanistan's future economic development. China

also does not want the jihadi Islamist ideology of the Taliban to spread from Afghanistan to the Central Asian Republics with whom China has developed long term energy production and transportation linkages through Xinjiang, to feed the energy hungry Chinese economy.

Central Asian Republics [CAR]

More than 2000 kilometres of common borders, history and culture, unite Afghanistan's destiny with Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Through turbulent periods of Central Asian history, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens have settled in significant numbers in Afghanistan, constituting approximately 40% of the population of Afghanistan. Two historic events have made a huge impact on the security and well-being of Afghanistan due to this common ethnic heritage. The first was the Mujahdin War [also called the Soviet Afghan War], following the 1979 Soviet military intervention, in which the Afghan Mujahdin and foreign jihadi fighters bled the Red Army. The success of the Afghan Mujahdin in this war and the subsequent establishment of the Taliban regime, resulted in the ideology of Wahabi Islam spreading in the Pashtun belt in Afghanistan and permeating to the adjacent Central Asian Republics, particularly Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The second event was the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, leaving the Central Asian Republics in a state of political and economic disarray. Taking advantage of the Soviet era suppression of Islam in the Central Asian Republics, Saudi Arabia spread Wahabi Islam, particularly in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan with the help of Wahabi missionaries trained in Saudi funded madrassas in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This triggered the birth of Islamist political parties such as the Islamic Renaissance Party in Tajikistan and also spawned jihadi terrorist organisations such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan [IMU] in 1998 with reported Pakistani ISI funding. A direct consequence of the rise of this jihadi form of Political Islam in Central Asia was the bloody Tajik Civil War [1992-1996] and the spread of Islamic jihadi terrorism by the IMU in the Ferghana Valley in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Throughout the Afghan Civil War [1991-1996], the Taliban regime [1996-2001] and the post9/11 US led Operation Enduring Freedom, which ousted the Taliban regime, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were deeply involved in supporting the Uzbek [led by Rashid Dostum] and Tajik [led by Ahmed Shah Massoud] components of the Northern Alliance. The IMU, on the other hand, forged links with Afghan Mujahdin leaders such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar

with the blessings of the ISI, and subsequently integrated their operations with Al Qaida and the Taliban against the North Alliance and US forces after 9/11. The IMU, is the most well organized and trained jihadi terrorist organization which along with the Taliban and the Xinjiang Islamic militants such as the ETIM, has the potential of posing a serious security threat to the entire Central Asian region and Xinjiang as well as Afghanistan and Pakistan. The IMU's present strength is assessed to be around 2500 to 4000 fighters based in North/South Waziristan. It is significant that Tahir Yuldashev, the IMU emir, was assassinated in South Waziristan by a US Predator drone strike in August 2009 and under pressure from both US and China, Pakistan has recently banned the IMU as a terrorist organization. In response to the TTP/IMU attack on Karachi International Airport on 08 June 2014, Pakistan has launched a major joint operation targeting the TTP, IMU and other foreign militants, using air power and ground forces including armour and artillery, in the on going Operation "Zarb-e-Azb" in North Waziristan. The Afghan Taliban has not been seriously targeted so far, perhaps due to the lingering Pakistani objective of retaining some leverage in any future peace making efforts towards a political solution in the Afghan quagmire.

Afghanistan as the Land Bridge between Central Asia and South Asia

Integration of Rail Links: Studies carried out by the Asian Development Bank [ADB] and World Bank indicates that the GDPs of landlocked countries such as the CARs and Afghanistan could be 50% higher, as a result of comprehensive regional cooperation. Sustainable economic growth in this entire region would be largely dependent on integrating regional trade coupled with excellent rail and road communications. The most dramatic development in the trade and economic relations between Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics, has been the ADB funded commissioning of the Hairatan – Mazar- e- Sharif rail line in December 2011, linking Northern Afghanistan to Uzbekistan and onwards to Russia and China, with future plans for a southward link to Kabul and the Aynak copper mining project in Logar province. This will radically improve the load carrying capacity of the Northern Distribution Network and expand trade and commerce with the CARs, Russia, China as well as Europe. China is also constructing a 921 kilometre North- South rail link between Kabul and Uzbekistan in the North and with Pakistan in the South. The other important strategic rail network planned is the ambitious Turkmenistan- Afghanistan-Tajikistan Rail Project

which was inaugurated by the three Presidents in June 2013 in Turkmenistan. Estimated to cost \$ 1.5 to \$ 2 Billion, the 635 Kilometres rail line will connect gas rich Turkmenistan with Afghanistan and Tajikistan enhancing trade and commerce between these three countries and the entire Central Asian region. To extract maximum regional economic benefit, these new Afghanistan – Central Asian rail networks are proposed to be integrated with the Afghan domestic rail development plan which will link with the Pakistani rail system at Torkham and Chaman, with the future possibility of connecting with the Indian Rail Network.

Development of North – South Road Corridors: Exploiting Afghanistan's strategic location as a land bridge between Central Asia and South Asia through North- South road corridors with Afghanistan as the hub, has the potential of increasing overall trade by as much as 15% in the entire region, with major economic benefits for Afghanistan. Afghanistan's primitive road network comprise about 3300 kilometres of national highways out of which the largest part is the 2300 kilometre Ring Road that links the country's major regional centres of Herat, Kandahar, Maimana, Mazar- e – Sharif, Sheberghan and Kabul., with connecting exits to Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan and outlets to the sea in Iran [Chahbahar and Bandar Abbas] and Pakistan [Karachi and Gwadar]. A related ADB study has identified 52 potential road corridors covering a total of 13,600 kilometres which would connect Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan with Afghanistan and onwards to the ports in Pakistan and Iran and the enormous markets of India. Simultaneously, a 705 kilometres East -West Corridor is also being developed to link Herat in the North West to Kabul in the East to improve internal trade and commerce. The development of these road corridors would create alternate routes for increased flow of trade and commerce and focus Afghanistan's central role as the facilitator of regional economic cooperation and growth.

So far the implementation of these road corridors has been admirable, thanks to generous funding and effective supervision by US AID, ADB and other international donors, amounting to around \$ 3 Billion since 2002, facilitated by the security provided by the US/NATO forces and the ANSF. This colossal effort involves rebuilding over 3100 kilometres of regional roads and the Ring Road, with particular emphasis on the Bamyan region of Central Afghanistan, which had been neglected for long, and therefore economically backward. This enormous infrastructure project has enabled linking remote

provinces and districts with all the neighbouring countries with significant socio-economic benefits to the people and enhanced trade and commerce with the outside world. India's construction of the 218 kilometre Delaram - Zaranj highway, costing \$ 110 million, linking the Iranian port of Chahbahar with Zaranj on the Iran – Afghan border with Delaram on the Afghan Ring Road, through the thick of Taliban resistance, has been a major strategic achievement in establishing an alternate trade route between India, Iran, Afghanistan and the CARs, bypassing Pakistan.

The economic benefits of the multifarious rail and road projects will be immense. The ADB estimates that Afghanistan's exports will increase by 202% with the creation of approximately 4.1 million additional permanent jobs. The flow of trade is expected to increase substantially at the two major Afghanistan – Pakistan road crossings [Spin Boldak and Torkham] with an annual increase of two-way freight of around 4.6 million tons and similar increases at the crossing points between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This would inevitably have a force multiplying effect on employment generation and increased revenue so badly required by Afghanistan. ADB estimates that these road corridors would increase Afghanistan's GDP by \$1.8 billion and per capita GDP by 36%.

The New Energy Great Game and Afghanistan

There is a fascinating new version of the 19th Century Great Game being played between the US, Russia and China for control of the enormous oil and gas resources in Central Asia and the Trans- Caspian region, in a war of oil and gas pipe lines with Afghanistan emerging as an important player. This geo-strategic contest centres around the access and transportation of Central Asian oil and gas. In the Soviet era, oil and gas from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan were all transported through a network of oil and gas pipelines running Northwards for indigenous consumption in European Russia and export to Europe. After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, US and European oil multi-national companies, under the strategic direction of American policy planners, embarked on a concerted drive to wean away the Central Asian Republics from their economic dependence on the new Russian Federation and weaken the Russian domination of Central Asian energy. This resulted in a major effort by the West to gain access to the oil and gas resources of the CARs mainly on the Caspian Sea off-shore area and construct new oil and gas pipelines aligned away from Russia and Iran. Thus was born the 1768

km Baku- Tbilisi- Ceyhan [BTC] oil pipeline constructed between 2003 and 2005, which for the first time transported oil from oil fields in Azerbaijan to the Mediterranean coast through Georgia [both are ex – Soviet republics], diverted away from Russia. In this unique strategic contest, it is China that has emerged as the front runner in exploiting Central Asian oil and gas by its aggressive energy diplomacy and finalizing long term supply of oil and gas from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in a decisive fashion. In an amazing engineering feat, China has already constructed the 2228 km Kazakhstan – Xinjiang Oil Pipeline and the 1833 km Central Asia- China Gas Pipeline connecting Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Xinjiang, in record time, to feed China's meteoric economic growth.

Trans – Afghan Natural Gas Pipeline: In this new energy ‘Great Game’, a strategically significant gas pipeline project has emerged from the ashes of the Cold War, to transport Turkmenistan's rich gas resources from the Daulatabad Gas Field southward through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. The project germinated during the Taliban regime in the form of a 1680 km gas pipeline, named the Trans Afghan Natural Gas Pipeline or better known as the Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan Pipeline [TAPI]. This was inspired by one of the main US geo-strategic interests in Central Asia after the Cold War, i.e. control of the rich hydrocarbon resources in Central Asia and weakening the hold of the Russian Federation over the ex-republics of the Soviet Union. Though the US did not establish diplomatic relations with the Taliban government between 1996 and 2001, in 1997 the US held serious negotiations with the Taliban government to exploit Turkmen natural gas and construct the TAPI pipeline by a consortium led by UNOCAL, a major US oil/gas infrastructure company. After the Al Qaida terrorist bombings of the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar-e-Salam in August 1998, all contacts with the Taliban on the TAPI gas pipeline project were frozen.

The project was revived only after the ouster of Taliban regime in December 2001 by the US, taking all the four countries involved, on board, i.e. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Protracted negotiations were held between 2002 and 2009 regarding several contentious issues such as availability of natural gas and security guarantees due to the volatile security environment and the disturbed political situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan.. Finally, all four countries signed a series of agreements in 2010 and 2013 laying out the framework of the gas pipeline project and the norms for natural gas sale and purchase. The details of the consortium that will implement the

TAPI project is currently being finalized and construction expected to start in 2015. One of the major benefits of the TAPI pipeline will be the economic stabilization of Afghanistan by its expected revenue earnings of approximately \$ 400 million a year as transit fees, and generation of employment. All this of course hinges on the overall security environment in Southern Afghanistan which is dominated by the Taliban and the insurgency in Baluchistan.

Russia and Competing Strategic Visions of US and China

After the disastrous Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and the ensuing break up of the Soviet Union in 1990/1991, the successor state, the Russian Federation has maintained a low profile in the tumultuous events following 9/11 and the American global war on terror focused on Afghanistan. Russia broadly supported the US/NATO led Operation Enduring Freedom, the ousting of the Taliban regime and elimination of Al Qaida bases in Afghanistan, due to the shared threat of the rise of Islamic jihadi militancy in Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Caucasus region. Lately, Russia has viewed with anxiety the failure of the American effort to decisively defeat the Taliban and bring about stability in Afghanistan despite 13 years of combat, and is therefore critical of President Obama's decision to drastically reduce the US/NATO forces without fulfilling the original mission. Russia's principle concern is the possible return of the Taliban in Kabul and the spread of its jihadi ideology to the troubled Central Asian Republics and destabilization of the entire Central Asian Region. Russia is also worried of the threat of Talibanisation of its strategic South Caucasian region such as Dagestan, Chechnya and Ingushetia, already in the grip of a violent Jihadi insurgency.

Russia, though supportive of the US alternate logistic route to Afghanistan, the Northern Distribution Network [NDN], is firmly opposed to any permanent US military presence in Afghanistan or establishment of US military bases in the Central Asian Republics and has welcomed the closure of the US Manas Transit Base in Kyrgyzstan after July 2014.

There is a clear convergence of Russian and Chinese geo-strategic interests to distance the US from Central Asia, in order to maintain their respective control and domination over the rich hydrocarbon resources in the Trans-Caspian region. To counter American strategic inroads into Central Asia, Russia is pushing to strengthen the region's main security bloc, the Collective Security Treaty Organisation [CSTO], to bolster its influence over the former Central Asian republics of the Soviet Union, by signing mutual security

agreements for prolonging the deployment of Russian forces in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan along the vulnerable Afghan border. The US vision of post-conflict Afghanistan and Central Asia is centred around the “New Silk Road” project designed to integrate the economies of Afghanistan, Central Asia and South Asia, into the West dominated global markets and re-orient the Afghanistan and Central Asian militaries towards the Euro-Atlantic world, facilitated by US military bases in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The competing Russian vision is the creation of a Eurasian Union integrating the economies of Russia and China with the former Soviet Republics of East Europe and Central Asia with the European Union, coupled with a collective security organization in Central Asia based on the CSTO and SCO framework, which excludes US/NATO. This strategic contest is a hangover of the Cold War and needs to be transformed by a cooperative arrangement between CSTO/SCO and US/NATO based on shared security concerns related to combating terrorism, countering the spread of Jehadi Islamic fundamentalism and controlling the drug menace, which emanate from the volatile region of Afghanistan and Pakistan. There exists a third Chinese strategic vision of its own land version of the New Silk Road linking Europe with the Caucasus, Central Asia and Xinjiang combined with the Energy Corridor linking the Central Asian Republics [CARs] with Xinjiang and the proposed China-Pakistan Economic Corridor from Gwadar to Xinjiang, and a Maritime New Silk Road linking China’s ports on the Asia-Pacific sea-board with the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.

CONCLUSION

The year 2015 will be one of reckoning for the future destiny of Afghanistan and an acid test for the ANSF in their war against the Taliban with minimum support from a dwindling US/NATO force which will be available for a limited duration of around 18 months. So far despite high casualties, with intelligence, air and logistic support, the ANSF with the limited time of raising, has performed admirably in the transitional period of 2013/2014, in major CI operations against the Talban without the direct involvement of US/NATO forces. Besides the security situation, it is the effectiveness of the post-election democratic transition in end 2014/2015 and the new government’s ability to deliver good governance, eradicate corruption and establish the rule of law, which will largely decide the future of Afghanistan.

Continued economic and military assistance from the US and the international community will remain critical to sustain Afghanistan's socio-economic growth, develop infrastructure and generate employment, in a secure environment. Political stability, security and good governance, will dictate the flow of international aid in accordance with the aid pledges made in the Tokyo Summit. Employment generation for approximately 8 million unemployed young people, out of a population of 31 million, will require the rapid exploitation of Afghanistan's agriculture and rich mineral and hydro-carbon resources for which infrastructural development and a secure environment are essential requirements.

A key factor influencing future peace and stability will be the role of Pakistan and its failed strategy of employing the Afghan Taliban as a strategic asset to achieve its age old objective of 'strategic depth'. The recent launch of Operation 'Zarb-e-Azb' by the Pakistan Army and Air Force in North Waziristan after the TTP's terrorist strikes on Karachi Airport, is indicative of a possible paradigm shift in Pakistan's national security strategy, which augurs well for the future of both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pakistan's belated recognition by its security establishment that the greatest threat is not posed by India but by the Taliban and their jihadi allies, who are threatening to tear up the country for their narrow Islamist objectives, is a welcome development. However there are disturbing reports to the contrary that the Pakistan Army was mainly targeting the TTP and the foreign militants during Operation Zarb-e-Azb, while permitting the hard core Afghan Taliban to melt away into the adjacent Afghan provinces and FATA Agencies, indicating that the Army and the ISI may still be retaining the option of meddling in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.

With the successful democratic transition in Afghanistan and the new Indian Prime Minister's initiative to invite the SAARC leaders to the swearing in ceremony and Modi reaching out to Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the time is opportune to adopt a bold regional initiative in stabilizing Afghanistan along with the integration of trade and commerce between South Asia and Central Asia through unhindered surface communications. To supplement this effort, a set of confidence building measures need to be adopted between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan to allay Pakistan's fear of India's growing influence in Afghanistan and to address both India's and Afghanistan's concerns of Pakistan's use of Islamic jihadi terrorism as an instrument of state policy.

The Taliban and Al Qaida along with its hydra headed jihadi affiliates, are still alive and kicking in Afghanistan, as witnessed by the spate of recent Taliban terror strikes in Kabul, Herat and Paktia province and inroads into the strategic provinces of Kapisa and Nangarhar close to Kabul. The next Afghan president has daunting multiple challenges i.e. establishing a credible multi-ethnic government delivering good governance, combating the Taliban insurgency and hammering out a political solution, bolstering a weak economy, eliminating endemic corruption, countering the drug menace, enforcing the rule of law and creating a national Afghan identity cutting across ethnic and tribal lines. This herculean task of nation building can only be achieved by good governance delivered by a dedicated exemplary leadership in a secure environment, supported by continued international economic and military assistance. In the days ahead, India is bound to play an important role in this monumental effort of nation building and promoting regional development in an environment devoid of externally inspired jihadi terrorism.

LT GENERAL AMITAVA MUKHERJEE, PVSM AVSM (RETD)



- Served in regiment of Artillery for first 3 years and thereafter 37 years in the corps of Army Air Defence.
- Field service in NEFA [Arunachal], Jammu/Kashmir, Assam and Bangladesh. Combat experience in 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak wars.
- Commanded a regiment, missile group, and a brigade.
- Staff and operational planning experience at combat formation level and Army HQ/joint services level.
- Important appointments held in military operations directorate, Defence Planning Staff, manpower planning and officer selection/ management system.
- Last appointment was Director General Air Defence in Army HQ for over 4 years.

Foreign exposure

- Have done two training courses in erstwhile USSR in 1972 and 1985.
- Have been member/leader of several defence delegations to USSR/Russia, Holland and Sweden between 1981 and 2000.

Post retirement activities

- Chief advisor-future projects, Bharat Electronics [2002-2004]
- Member governing board, Centre for Advanced Strategic Studies.
- Member, managing committee, Nagrik Chetna Manch.
- Lecturer on subjects related to national and international security
- Member, INTACH and WWF.

India and the Indo-Pacific Region: Implications of the Look East Policy

Prof Shrikant Paranjpe

INTRODUCTION

The post-Soviet era of international relations saw the emergence of a global economy, enormous technological changes, free flow of finance capital and growth of foreign direct investment. Another change was that the non state actors acquired an international legitimacy. Some of the key areas that became significant were ecology and human rights as global social concerns. All this helped to broaden the debate on national security. The concept of security expanded to include political, economic, socio-cultural dimensions of governance, human security and good governance.

This period saw the economic transformation in India when it started the irrevocable economic liberalization and reform process under the compulsion of an economically parlous condition. It also saw India emerge as a nuclear weapons power and sign the Indo-US Civilian Nuclear Cooperation agreement that ended the Indian isolation in the world of dual use technology transfer and sought to end the ideological blinkers on foreign policy. The Indian economic reform program led to a sustained average annual growth rate of about 7 to 8%. India emerged as an attractive 'strategic partner' to countries of European Union, Association of South East Nations (ASEAN) and the United States. Economic diplomacy now emerged as an important tool in Indian diplomacy.

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The nineties saw the opening up of East Asia as an area of interest under what came to be termed as a 'Look East' policy. The term 'Indo-Pacific' that came into use in the last decade was a product of the era of globalization that sought to interrelate the strategic space from the African shores of the Indian Ocean to the Western Pacific coastline. The Indo-Pacific region would be a strategic space that has witnessed commercial, cultural and civilisational exchanges in the past and is likely to experience a closer linkage in what has been described as a "broader Asia". Today, with economic concerns of energy security taking over the debates on external affairs, India has embarked on a more global reach for itself. It is here that one can locate India's policies towards the Indo-Pacific in the contemporary world.

LOOK EAST POLICY

India's Look East Policy (Ministry of External Affairs, 2006-07, p. 122) has evolved through the early 1990s primarily in the area of economics and trade. The Indian economic reform process had generated a new found confidence that encouraged the enlargement of India's economic engagement with East Asia. India had several bilateral agreements with China and Japan. India also became a Sectoral Dialogue Partner (1992) and then a Full Dialogue Partner of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) (1995). In 1996 India joined the ASEAN Regional Forum. Parallel to its ASEAN linkages, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) was created in 1997 to include countries of South and South East Asia. The aim was to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development, accelerate social progress in the sub-region, and promote active collaboration and mutual assistance on matters of common interest. This link between the two regions sought to focus its cooperation in the areas of Trade and Investment Technology, Energy, Transport and Communication, Tourism, Fisheries, Agriculture, Cultural Cooperation, Environment and Disaster Management, Public Health, People-to-People Contact, Poverty Alleviation and Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crimes. The Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC) launched in 2000 was the second initiative through which India sought to establish closer ties with South East Asia. The primary thrust of this effort was to expand solidarity, harmony and cooperation in the fields of tourism, culture and education for the purpose of rapid social

and economic development of the Mekong region countries. With these regional initiatives India is trying to penetrate the ASEAN markets by enhancing the mutual economic benefits, transportation and infrastructural development and energy security. The East -West Corridor project and the Trans- Asian highway are some of the pioneering maneuvers undertaken by the six countries to promote transport facilities. When completed the Asian highway project is expected to link up Singapore with New Delhi in South Asia via Kuala Lumpur, Ho Chin Minh city, Phnom Penh, Bangkok, Vientiane, Chiang Mai, Yangon, Mandalay, Kalemmyo, Tamu, Dhaka and Calcutta.

The first India-ASEAN Summit (2002) meeting saw an expansion in both, the scope and the content of the Look East Policy. One, the geographical footprint of the policy now extended beyond South East Asia; and two, the scope moved away from an exclusive economic focus to security cooperation including joint operations to protect sea lanes and pooling of resources to fight terrorism. (Vo Xuan Vinh, 2012, p. 6) India sought to widen its defence contacts with Japan, South Korea and China; it built closer strategic relations with Vietnam and became one of the founding members of the East Asian Summit (2005). The First East Asia Summit confirmed the legitimacy of Indian role in this region, a role that appeared to be denied earlier in the ASEAN plus Three (China, Japan and South Korea) arrangements.

It was at the Asian Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM+) of 2010 held in Hanoi that India took a publicly assertive position and indicated its willingness to commit itself to the security of Asia Pacific region. The India Defence Minister emphasized the need for security of sea lanes of communication and of the problem of piracy. He made a mention of the role played by the Indian Navy in the Gulf of Aden and stated that India was working to partner with the countries of the Asia Pacific to evolve a cooperative arrangement to tackle piracy in this area. (Headlines India, 2012). In a sense this was a reflection of the India's Naval Strategy that clearly marked the area of Indian interest as one extending from the north of the Arabian Sea to the South China Sea in terms of primary and secondary areas of interest. It argues that a key security requirement is the effective understanding of the activities, events and trends within the maritime domain; at the strategic level domain awareness enables the early identification of potential threats, planning responses, supporting decision-

making and prioritizing resource allocation. (Freedom, 2007, pp. 59-64)

This Indian assertion of its interest in South East Asia and the South China Sea appears to coincide with the shift in American policy towards Asia Pacific in general and India in particular and the Chinese resurgence in terms of its claims in the South China Sea. India's approach towards this region came to acquire a new terminology that, in a sense, indicated the changing Indian world view. Speaking at the India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit in 2012, the Indian Prime Minister talked of a 'stable, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific region' (Prime Minister, 2012). The Australian Defence White Paper (2013) has argued that a new Indo-Pacific strategic arc is beginning to emerge, connecting the Indian and Pacific Oceans through Southeast Asia. It recognizes India's emergence as an important strategic, diplomatic and economic actor that was now 'looking East', and becoming more engaged in regional frameworks. Growing trade, investment and energy flows across this broader region – which would include the Indian Ocean through which some of the world's busiest and most strategically significant trade routes pass - would strengthen economic and security interdependencies. (Defence White Paper, 2013, p. 7)

US AND CHINA

South East Asia provides several opportunities for India in terms of its politico-security and economic policies; India is also likely to face several hurdles in its efforts to extend its influence in this region. Two factors that have an impact on Indian policies are, one, the shift in focus of American policies from Europe to the Asia Pacific region and two, the growing assertiveness of China. Given the positive direction in Indo-US relations, the American shift would appear favourable to India, but there exist uncertainties about the operative dimensions of the policy. As for China, Indian concerns have only expanded in geopolitical terms from the Indian Ocean region to the Asia Pacific region.

President Obama focused on the Asia Pacific as one of the most important regions to the future of the United States, both economically and in terms of its political and security objectives in the world. At one level it signaled an end to the Bush administration's focus on the Middle East and a recognition that East Asia was now the new economic centre of gravity. The American President had made, what he described, a deliberate and strategic decision that the United States as a Pacific nation would play a

larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future, by upholding core principles and in close partnership with our allies and friends. These American postures were billed as a necessary balancing of forces to assure American allies in this region of a continuing American commitment. (Clinton, 2011,) Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated six priorities that were to guide the American policy in the Asia Pacific: (i) Reinforce bilateral alliances; (ii) Deepen relations with emerging powers (China among others); (iii) Reengage with multilateral regional institutions; (iv) Expand commerce and investment; (v) Forge a large military presence and (vi) Advance democracy and human rights. (Swielande, 2012, p.76) Although the relationship with China was addressed at length in the article, two countries that received particular attention were India and Indonesia. The Americans went at length to assure that these initiatives were not aimed at countering Chinese; on the contrary the US welcomed a rising peaceful China. Chinese initial reactions to President Obama's 'Pivot of Asia' were muted and restrained. However, the Chinese made it clear that they would closely observe the impact that the US military strategic adjustment had on the Asia-Pacific region and on global security developments. (The Guardian, 2012) Chinese appear to regard President Obama Administration's "rebalancing" to the Asia-Pacific as a containment policy that seeks to hinder China's ability to catch up with and surpass the American economy and contain Beijing's growing military clout. Thus while on the diplomatic front a major strand of the Asia Pivot is deepening US engagement with multilateral institutions in the Asia Pacific while successfully managing US-China relations; at the military front the US would continue to ensure its military presence.

At the level of South East Asia, the core issue in the US-China posturing is the crisis in the South China Sea. This region is a highway for trade, shipping and telecommunications. It is estimated that 33 percent of world's trade and 50 percent of the world's traffic in oil and gas pass through the South China Sea.(Chakravorty, 2012) Chinese claims to the region are based on the Eleven Dash Line drawn in 1947; this was eventually revised as a Nine Dash Line. It is this Nine Dash Line that China submitted to the United Nations in 2009. Chinese position on the South China Sea is presented in the context of territorial sovereignty and defense of national interest. China adjusted existing administrative bodies by establishing Sansha, a city to administer Xisha, Zhongsha and Nansha

islands and their surrounding waters in the South China Sea and created a garrison command. China's Hainan Province passed a regulation under which measures could be taken against foreign ships entering Chinese territory. (Su Xiaohui, 2013). The major islands under dispute include the Spratly Islands, Parcel Islands, Pratas Islands, Macclesfield Bank and the Scarborough Shoal, over all of which the six South East Asian nations have conflicting claims. American attempts to seek a resolution of the disputes have been rebuffed by China.

In 1999 ASEAN initiated a Code of Conduct document regarding the South China Sea that would constrain China from its territorial ambitions in the region. However there are internal differences within the ASEAN community on how to address Chinese claims in the South China Sea. On one hand there appears to be an underlying concern about what is described as Chinese 'assertiveness' in this region; on the other, there is a disagreement as to the methodology of addressing the situation. This difference is, at one level between those states that are 'claimant states' who have direct interest in the South China Sea and others; at another level the difference is whether to have a bilateral or a regional approach. The July 2012 ASEAN Ministerial Meeting at Phnom Penh saw the inability of ASEAN to come out with a joint communiqué on the issue of 'Code of Conduct' for the South China Sea. (Sieff, 2012) Following an exchange of documents and proposals between the ASEAN and China the two parties agreed on a non-binding political statement called the Declaration of Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. This document sought to institute certain confidence building measures and voluntary cooperative activities. (Thayer, p. 2) While China did not reject the 'Code of Conduct' it felt that the Declaration on the Code of Conduct had not been fully implemented by all the parties. China firmly believes that the disputes must be addressed at a bilateral level and that ASEAN was not an appropriate forum for resolution of the dispute. (Su Xiaohui, 2013). ASEAN's attempts to pursue the implementation of the Declaration and have discussions with China on the Code of Conduct are likely to continue in the near future.

INDIA

Answering a Parliamentary Question on the status of Look East Policy and the action plan to give new dimensions with reference to ASEAN, the

Minister for External Affairs, in March 2013, stated that a) India's Look East Policy, instituted since the early 1990s, is oriented towards deepening India's engagement with the countries of East and Southeast Asia. With the ASEAN, India commemorated 20 years of dialogue relations and 10 years of Summit level partnership at the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit in New Delhi on December 20- 21, 2012. ASEAN Leaders and Prime Minister adopted a Vision Statement on the future ASEAN-India strategic partnership. (b) An Inter-Ministerial Group on ASEAN Transport Connectivity, chaired by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has been constituted to further road connectivity with ASEAN. (c) India has been cooperating with the ASEAN countries in political, security, economic, socio-cultural and development pillars to further integration between India and ASEAN at the levels of the Governments, institutions and people-to-people. In this, India is guided by the ASEAN-India Plan of Action (2010-15) to implement the ASEAN-India Partnership for Peace, Progress and Shared Prosperity. (Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question No.3688)

India's core interests in this region include the following:

Regional Economic Security: India is an 'extra regional power' or a 'periphery' power in terms of the regional state system of South East Asia. It does not have any territorial ambitions in the region but it seeks a greater economic integration with the region. India has the largest number of Free Trade Agreements or Economic Cooperation agreements with East Asian countries. India's trade with the Asia Pacific region has seen a significant increase over the years as has the region's contribution in Foreign Direct Investment in India. In 2009 India and ASEAN signed a Free Trade Agreement in services and investments. This represented a widening of the earlier agreement of FTA in goods. India is also negotiating similar market opening pacts with members of the grouping. India has already implemented FTA with Singapore and Malaysia and is negotiating with Indonesia and Thailand in this regard. The FTA would also pave the way for a regional comprehensive economic partnership (RCEP) that ASEAN plans to establish with its trade partners.

Defence Diplomacy: India's attempts to expand its strategic space in South East Asia is based on its perception of its proximity to the region. Indian position about the new Asian security order is that it should be 'open, flexible and inclusive'.(Menon, 2011) The Indian Prime Minister

accepted that there had been attempts to depict India, along with China and Japan, as potential powers which could fill the vacuum created by the withdrawal of the United States at the end of the cold war. Indian argument has been that its naval presence is seen as a stabilizer for peace and stability in the region. The Indian Navy plays a key role in India's defence diplomacy in this region. India's efforts at developing the Andaman Naval base is looked upon as an indicator of Indian demonstration of its proximity to the region of South East Asia. While Indian naval vessels frequently visit South East Asian ports cooperation regarding capacity building, joint exercises, patrolling piracy infested areas, etc., is limited. In 2010 India conducted exercises in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands with the participation of ASEAN navies. At the bilateral level India has concluded defence arrangements with Singapore and Vietnam and widened its defence contacts with Japan, China and South Korea. Of the several bilateral economic and defence ties that India has sought to build in South East Asia, India's relations with Vietnam has come to symbolize both, Indian willingness or otherwise to demonstrate its strategic ambition and its ability or otherwise to face China. Indian Naval vessel INS Airavat was warned by the Chinese Navy that it was in Chinese waters during its visit to Vietnam. China has also objected to the Indian investment in off shore exploration in specific blocks done jointly by India and Vietnam. China 'advises' India to be cautious in operating in the region and avoid making the situation more complicated. (Su Xiaohui, 2013).

South China Sea: India has a strong interest in keeping the sea lanes open in the South China Sea as it is a key strategic link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific. Apart from ensuring secure energy supplies to Japan and Korea, almost half of the Indian trade with the Asia Pacific region transits through this region. India reiterated its position on the South China Sea during the Indian President's visit to Vietnam in September 2014. In an implicit message to China the joint communiqué between the two countries stated that the two countries 'agreed that freedom of navigation in the East Sea/South China Sea should not be impeded and called the parties concerned to exercise restraint, avoid threat or use of force and resolve disputes through peaceful means in accordance with universally recognized principles of international law, including the UNCLOS-1982'. (Joint Communiqué, 2014)

North East India: India's Look East Policy provides an opportunity for

India to use the proximity of India's North East region to South East Asia and expand the economic space so as to become a vehicle for promoting economic development and socio-security in this region. The areas of focus in the Look East Policy and the North East Region include Connectivity and physical infrastructure to facilitate trade; trade and investment protocols; shortfalls in operationalization of existing assets and facilities and bilateral and multilateral relationships such as tourism, enhanced people to people contacts through cultural activities. (Look East Policy, 2013)

Issues

In the long run Indian policy makers would have to address the following issues:

What would be the nature of commitment that India may be able to give in event of a crisis situation, short of a conflict, in this region? Essentially, at what point would India be willing to accept 'use of force' as an option? These questions carry weight in the context of the assertive role that China is playing in the South China Sea. While India may be an 'extra regional power' it has taken a position that order in this region is of vital national interest to India. This involves freedom of navigation as well as bilateral enterprises such as the one with Vietnam. The debate on revisionism versus status quo has ceased to be relevant in the post cold war situation in South East Asia. The cold war parameters have now changed and a former 'revisionist' power China appears to take a status quoist posture by asserting its territorial claims in the South China Sea. Given the growing strains in China-ASEAN ties, it has now been argued that the countries of South East Asia believe that India can now emerge as a counter to China.

This belief is based on the growth of Indian power capabilities as well as the tacit, yet implicit, understanding that India and the United States share common concerns about rising Chinese aspirations in the Asia Pacific. The belief in the Indian role is based on the defence diplomacy that India has embarked upon in this region over the past decade or two. (Jha, 2011, pp. 47-63). This would include training; joint exercises; provisions for military advisors; visits by ships, aircraft or military units; visits by political personalities; seminars and conferences; etc. India has had a long standing defence cooperation with Singapore starting in the mid sixties. The two countries have conducted joint exercises and India has provided

Singapore land use for training. In case of Malaysia, defence cooperation took a positive turn after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. India has also tried to enhance military to military cooperation with Indonesia. Perhaps the closest defence ties that India has in the South East Asian region are with Vietnam. India has offered military assistance to Laos and is in the process of seeking closer cooperation with Thailand. India has also sought to reestablish linkages with Myanmar that has already developed a close security dialogue with China and Pakistan. The trilateral dialogue between United States, India and Japan has focused on maritime security in this region.(Dikshit, 2012) .

In the context of Indo-US relations, President Obama's visit in November 2010 provided a further impetus to the strategic dialogue that the two countries have sought to achieve. The American expectations as President Obama put it were that India should not only 'look east' but 'engage east' to ensure a greater security in the region.(President Obama, 2010) Speaking on the 'US-India Partnership in the Asia-Pacific region' the US Deputy Secretary of State made a clear reference to the fact that the US is a Pacific power, a matter that was spelt out during President Obama's visit to Australia and the signing of a security agreement with Australia. He spelt out the need for the two countries to cooperate in this region in areas like maritime security, and to build a regional architecture of institutions and arrangements to promote openness, trade, rule of law, human rights etc.(Burns, 2011). However, the second term of President Obama has raised certain questions about US policies in the region. Secretary of State John Kerry, during his confirmation hearing at the US Senate hinted at his discomfort with the proposed rebalance of US military forces in Asia. There appears to be an attempt to move from an American response that addressed China's assertiveness to allowing Beijing to play a more active role, especially in the Korean crisis.(The Indian Express, 2013)

The confrontations in the South China Sea have resulted in an increased militarization in the region. China's insistence on conducting its South China Sea diplomacy on a bilateral basis rather than a multilateral mechanism has complicated the situation. China has failed to respond to the Code of Conduct proposal of the ASEAN, a proposal that appears to have a backing of the United States and India. The ASEAN itself appears to face some difficulties in the designing of a coordinated approach to Chinese policies. The Indian role here appears to be at two levels. One

is a bilateral one wherein it supports countries like Vietnam in its efforts at asserting its territorial rights. The other is a more principled position that demands right of passage in the South China Sea. The key question that remains unanswered is whether India would have the political will to act as a counter weight to China in this region? Such a posture would help India to create an alternative front against China, given the Chinese aggressive posturing in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region with its 'string of pearls' approach. But to what degree would India commit itself to either a 'show of force' or an actual 'use of force' in this region despite the Naval Doctrine that identifies India's area of interest from the North of the Arabian Sea to the South China Sea?

CONCLUSION

Today the Indo-Pacific is witnessing a plethora of free trade agreements and regional trade agreements. These include agreements between ASEAN and China, ASEAN and India, the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) and several bilateral initiatives. The Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) proposal that has a US and Japanese backing and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) backed by China has presented a complex web of such arrangements. India is not a member of the APEC or the TPP. India's Look East Policy has given it the impetus to enter the Indo-Pacific realm of the economics/trade issue area. It needs to build upon this further.

Prime Minister Modi's visit to Japan and the dialogue that the two countries have sought to establish is indicative of the importance that India is placing on its Indo-Pacific agenda. The oblique reference to the 'expansionist' mindset (Wall Street Journal, 2 Sept 2014) of some countries in the region was an indication of the concern about China that both the countries including the ASEAN group share. It is noteworthy that India's relations with Australia have also taken a positive turn with the Australian Prime Minister agreeing to a nuclear deal on the export of uranium to India. (India Today, 5 Sept 2014).

In the long run traditional approaches like military alliances, nonalignment or ASEAN type regional organizations may not provide the necessary strategic alternatives to security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. Given the apparent reluctance of the United States to go beyond a certain limit in its involvement in the region without antagonizing China,

it would be incumbent on such powers like India, Japan, Australia and some of the ASEAN states like Vietnam and Singapore to initiate a form of security architecture that would address concerns of the 'middle ranking' powers of the region. India's economic position, its strategic location along the maritime space between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific provides it the opportunity to play a key role in the region.

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Food Security Of India

Prof MC Varshneya

INTRODUCTION

Food Security means provision of food and nutritional security to whole population of the country, especially children, women, aged persons and weaker sections of the society by ensuring availability of adequate quantity of food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity and self-respect. Also, it should encompass exigencies such as war, security threats, drought, flood and so on.

BACKGROUND

India has a GDP of 1848 billion USD, a reported population of 124 Cr (2011) and projected population of 127 (2013) and 132.6 (2020) crore. Agricultural production of the country was: food grain production 234.4 M t (2008-09), oilseed production 27.7 M t or edible oil production 11.08 M t (40% oil in seed), 285.0 M t sugarcane or 28.5 M t sugar (10% sugar recovery), 68.4 M t fruits, 129 M t vegetables and 108.5 M t milk. Thus, it comes to 15.75 kg food grain per capita per month. The country has food grain storage capacity of 37 M t of Govt. sector and 23M t is hired by the Govt. Thus a total of 60 M t and 30 M t is in private sector (total 90 M t), but sometimes it procures more than 64.6 M t and stores that in the open (bags stacked and covered with plastic sheets). In all such cases spoilage is large. Looking at the spoilage, Supreme Court of India intervened (2012) and referred a query to the Government of India: “ why should not they distribute it free of cost to the poor people of the country ?”

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In 2012, food grain production was reported to be 254.6 M t. Thus, the country has enough food to feed its population. We export rice, wheat, sugar, cotton, fruits and fresh vegetables to different countries of the world. In emergent conditions we import edible oil, pulses, and sugar and fresh vegetables such as onion to control the market prices.

Rural population is almost 69.9% (86.6 crore) as against urban population of 30.1% (37.32 crore). The 50% of rural population (43.3 crore) and 25% of urban population (9.33crore) are considered as poor. Thus, 52.63 crore population can be categorized as poor. Therefore, though the country has enough food to feed its population even than 52.63 crore people remain either hungry or under nourished. The Government and society have to take care for the poor population of India, which may not be getting two square meals daily. The 25% rural population (21.65 crore) and 25 % urban population (9.33 crore), that is a total 30.98 crore, is considered as general or middle class. If the general population is also taken into account, it comes to (52.63+30.98) 83.61 crore.

While, 25% rural (21.65crore) and 50% urban (18.66 crore) total 40.31 crorepopulation may be considered as well-off population in India.

National Food Security Bill-2013

The Government of India has proposed in its National Food Security Bill (NFSB) 2013 to give 7 kg per capita or 35 kg food grain per family of five persons per month at the subsidized price of Rs 3 per kg rice, Rs 2 per kg wheat and Re 1 per kg millet or coarse grain. Considering national population to be roughly 125 Cr (or 250 million families), if poor population only (52.63 Cr) or 105.3million families are considered food grain requirement will be 44.2 Mt only. Some State Governments give 25 kg food grains per family and some others give only 20 kg per family per month, at this rate requirement of food comes out to be 31.5 and 25.2 M t respectively.

In another consideration, if 75% of rural population and 50% of urban population is considered, total population will be (52.63+30.98) 83.61 crore or 167.22 million families, then the Central Government will require 70.23(@ 35 kg), 50.1 (@25kg) and 40.1(@20kg) M t food annually. The Central Government needs further 8 M t for central sector schemes.

The Government procures at the best 30% of food grains produced

by the farmers, thus it should have 76.2 Mt as procured food grains at the declared MSP by the Government.

Table No. 1 Resource Requirement

If 25% of rural households and 50% of urban households are excluded (as in Plan A), the annual resource requirements (including the required provision for the Antyodaya programme) are as follows:

	Grains Requirement (million ton)	Food Subsidy (INR crore)
Plan A	52.4	77927
Plan B	51.5	81524

The grain requirements of Plan B are marginally lower than those of Plan A, and the financial requirements are marginally higher. Even after adding a provision for 'other welfare schemes' (about 8 million tonnes of grain), these figures are well within the bounds of feasibility, especially if the National Food Security Act is 'rolled out' over, say, two years.

Our Approach

National agricultural production viz. food grain, pulses, oil seeds, sugar fruits, vegetables and milk can sustain its present population. Presently spoilage 30% in storage of food grains and in transportation of fruits and vegetables, if saved, can reduce the pressure from Government. Hence, increase in warehousing capacity with better storage facilities and pest and rodent control can add to our food grain capacity. In fruits and vegetable sector making value addition, cold chain and increase in processing capacity and in milk sector drying capacity can help in improving the sustainability of the country.

Our productivity is much less in comparison to USA and China and in some cases against the average productivity of the world hence, research efforts are needed to enhance the productivity.

Providing food at subsidized prices may not prove to be an advisable step, since it will discourage farmers for higher production. Food at subsidized prices should be provided only to BPL population. Moreover, food distribution at the prices less than 50% of MSP may destabilize the

economy. Therefore, following suggestions are made to ponder before implementing NFSB-13.

Table No 2 Minimum Support Price

Minimum Support Prices for 2013-14 (Rs per Quintal)			
Crops	MSP for 2012-13	MSP for 2013-14	Increase
Rice (Ordinary)	1250	1310	60
Rice (fine)	1280	1345	65
Sorghum	1500	1500	0
Sorghum M35-1	1520	1520	0
Pearl Millet	1175	1250	75
Finger millet	1500	1500	0
Maize	1175	1310	135
Pigeon Pea	3850	4300	450
Green gram	4400	4500	100
Black gram	4300	4300	0
Ground nut	3700	4000	300
Sun flower	3700	3700	0
Soybean(black)	2200	2500	300
Soybean (yellow)	2240	2560	320
Sesame	4200	4500	300
Sunflower	3500	3500	0
Cotton(medium)	3600	3700	100
Cotton(long)	3900	4000	100

SUGGESTIONS

1. Procurement of rice and wheat should be done in each state.
2. Food grain Storage should be done in each district preferably in each taluka, so that expenditure on grain movement should be minimized.
3. Food grain outlets should be opened in each village. In border area villages it should be allotted to retired defense personnel and in interior it should be allotted to retired police, BSF personnel so that they can keep watch over security threats developing/ growing in those areas.

4. Security system should be holistic so as to have internal linkages with food distribution system (PDS) to provide supplies in disturbed conditions and information in peace conditions.

5. Food grain should be supplied at 50% of procurement prices only. Proposed prices 3/2/1 is more political and less sustainable.

6. Food grain shops should be encouraged to sell other essential items also viz., milk, kerosene, potato, onion, salt, chilly and sugar, in border and interior areas medicines as well.

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Prof MC Varshsneya was born on 1st July 1945 at Mathura in U.P. Prof. Varshneya had a brilliant carrier in school and college education. He is M.Sc. from Agra University and got Ph.D. training in Agriculture Meteorology from University of Nebraska, Lincoln, USA. He has at his credit 44 years of experience in teaching, research, extension education and university administration. He is an internationally recognized authority in crop modeling. He worked as a member of

High Level Committee constituted by the Government of Maharashtra under the Chairmanship of Dr. M.S. Swaminathan to prepare an Action Plan for Agriculture for coming 25 years and member of Committee on Higher Education of Government of Gujarat. Member of committee constituted by the Govt. of Gujarat under the Chairmanship of Dr. R.K.Goyal, Vice Chancellor, M. S. University, Vadodara “To Evaluate the Safety Aspects of Endosulfan”.

Presently, he is working as

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(a) Director, Savy Software Pvt. Ltd. Pune,

(b) Director, Agricultural Finance Corporation Ltd (AFCL), Mumbai.

(c) Member, Academic Council, Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari, Gujarat.

(d) Member, Committee of Medicinal Plant Board, Government of Gujarat, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

- (e) Chairman, Advisory Council, Uttan Krishi Sanshodhan Sanstha, Mumbai,
- (f) Chairman, Institute of Rural Development and Education, Pune.

He had been elected as President of the Association of Agrometeorologists, Anand for the period of 2009-11 by the General Body of the Association.

He has been awarded –

- “Glory of India Award-2009” presented by India International Friendship Society, New Delhi.
- Bronze Medal in 2009 for e-krishi kiran program by Ministry of Administrative Reforms and Ministry of Information Technology, Govt. of India, New Delhi.
- E-krishi kiran program, in 2013, was also awarded by Govt. of Maharashtra, Mumbai.
- Times of India in 2013 awarded Liquid Bio fertilizer, developed by Anand Agricultural University, Anand during my tenure as Most Farmer’s Friendly Research.
- Best research article awarded by Journal of Maharashtra Agricultural Universities in 2006
- Certificate of Appreciation as Director, CAS in Agricultural Meteorology in 1999 by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research New Delhi.
- Best presentation award on “Impact Analysis of Agro-advisory” by NCMRWE, DST, New Delhi in 2001.
- FAO Fellowship, 1988, Food and Agricultural Organization, Rome.
- He was honoured by Association of Agrometeorologist for his contribution as excellent teacher, who has guided number of M.Sc. and Ph.D. Scholars and his research contributions especially in the field of Crop Modeling, Micrometeorological studies and Climate Change in International Symposium on Agrometeorology and Food Security held during 18-21 February 2008 at Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture, Hyberabad.

Cyber Security and National Development

Dr Cherian Samuel

INTRODUCTION

The Internet and cyberspace have become an indispensable part of modern life, facilitating everything from communication to commerce, governance to health care. As the Indian representative to the Global Multi-stakeholder Meeting on the Future of Internet Governance held in May 2014 succinctly put it, “For India, Internet has been a catalyst of change, propelling economic growth, enabling extended governance outreach, positively influencing the lives of its people and building new narratives of India and its society. Indeed, Internet has been transformative for India”. The impact of cyberspace on virtually every aspect of life in India is only set to increase as broadband connectivity increases from the current coverage of 16% of the population.

Given how crucial cyberspace has been and continues to be for national development, it goes without saying that securing cyberspace is a priority of the first order. More so, because, as repeated reports show, sensitive networks have been subject to breaches time and again, critical infrastructure has been attacked, cyber crime is on the rise, and social networks have become a new medium of spreading disinformation with implications for national security. Maintaining a balance between security and benefitting from the many opportunities provided by the deployment of new cyber technologies is proving to be one of the most vexatious issues of the 21st century.

INDIA AND CYBERSPACE

Many commentaries refer to India as a cyber power,¹ something that might appear to be at odds with the reports regarding the vulnerabilities in

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India's cyber security that appear in the newspapers day after day. The Indian government itself estimates that there are only 556 cyber security experts in the country.² This points to a number of missed opportunities over the years to not only improve cyber security, but also to put India in the forefront of the leading cyber powers of the world.

REVISITING THE NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON IT AND SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT, 1998

As early as 1998, the government of the day had set up a National Task Force on Information Technology and Software Development which in its report and recommendations implicitly recognised the fact that becoming an information technology power house did not rest on one or two policy decisions, but a series of enablers that provided the conditions necessary for a whole ecosystem to flourish.

Among the terms of reference of the Task Force that are relevant even today were the following:

1. Recommend a strategy for the extensive use of Information Technology in all areas of national economy - agriculture, industry, trade and services - as a critical input in making India a global economic power.
2. Prepare the design for building a world-class physical, institutional and regulatory IT infrastructure, which is appropriate for India.
3. Suggest measures for achieving a massive expansion in the use of the Internet by all sections of society, especially in business and education, and development of Indian content on the Internet.
4. Recommend a strategy for boosting the learning and use of Information Technology in Indian languages.
5. Devise a strategy for establishing a strong and internationally competitive domestic manufacturing base for computers, computer components and peripherals.
6. Suggest an appropriate legal frame work for the creation of an IT-based society, with due focus on intellectual property rights (IPR), secrecy, security and safety of information.
7. Recommend how India can leverage its global competitiveness in InfoTech to play a prominent role in the development of IT in other countries, especially those that are underdeveloped.

The Committee had set a number of goals and made recommendations.

Sixteen years on, it is instructive to revisit them both in order to see the extent to which those goals have been achieved, and whether any of those recommendations, particularly to do with, cyber are worth resuscitating.

1. The first goal was to “Accelerate the drive for setting up a World class Info Infrastructure with an extensive spread of Fibre Optic Networks, SatCom Networks and Wireless Networks for seamlessly interconnecting the Local Informatics Infrastructure (LII), National Informatics Infrastructure (NII) and the Global Informatics Infrastructure (GII) to ensure a fast nation-wide onset of the INTERNET, EXTRANETs and INTRANETs. The specific target was to achieve a 30 percent of annual growth rate from the 1998 level of Fibre Optic backbone of 75,000 route kilometres, VSATs of aggregate capacity of over 300 Megabit Per Second, Satellite Transponders of aggregate capacity of more than 3000 Megahertz etc.
2. The second goal was for ‘creating a congenial ambiance for exporters of IT Software and IT Services (including IT enabled services) to reach the export target of US \$ 50 billion by the year 2008’.
3. The third goal was ‘IT for ALL by 2008’. Recognising Information Technology to be a frontier area of knowledge, and also a critical enabling tool for assimilating, processing and productising all other spheres of knowledge, the task force suggested a national campaign to universalise computer literacy and also to spread the use of computers and IT in education.
4. A fourth goal was to enable ‘IT in government’. This contained recommendations of direct relevance to cyber security:
 - (a) An Information Security Agency shall be set up at the National level to play the role of Cyber Cop.
 - (b) A National Policy on Information Security, Privacy and Data Protection Act for handling of computerized data shall be framed by the Government within six months.
 - (c) The cryptology and Cyber Security knowledge and experience developed by the defence establishments shall be suitably transferred to the civilian information security agencies for wider dissemination in the country to increase information security, network security and bring about a greater degree of secure use of EFT, digital signature, etc.³

The recommendations notwithstanding, the priorities of the government lay elsewhere; the Information Technology Act of 2000 largely dealt with only

those aspects of information technology that were relevant to outsourcing with neither the terms cyber security nor cyber crime appearing anywhere in the legislation.⁴ Even the amendments made in 2006 largely added provisions related to outsourcing and indemnifying Internet services against certain liabilities.⁵ It took the Mumbai attacks of 2008 for the government to set in motion the process of amending the bill with the emphasis this time around on cyber terrorism and cyber crime. A number of amendments were made to existing sections and new sections added to take these threats into account.⁶

The moot point is that all four goals suggested by the task force would have had to be pursued with the same amount of vigour for the eco system to be built up. 16 years on, the government has only begun to implement many of these recommendations. Broadband penetration stands at about 10% of the population, with much of it concentrated in urban areas. Recognising the need for expansion, the government is implementing a National Optical Fibre Network (NOFN) Plan which aims to add another 500,000 route kilometres of optical fibre to the 670,000 route kilometres which are already available with public sector companies such as the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd. (BSNL), RailTel Corporation of India Ltd. and Power Grid Corporation. On the flip side, as connectivity expands and grows, the vulnerabilities inherent in the networks also grow.

As regards goal 2, while the target for IT exports has been met, there is still a negligible presence in the area of software products. If an appropriate ecosystem that facilitates product innovation and creation all the way from mind to market had already been in place by now, it would have been well poised to grab the global market for cyber security products that is set to top a billion dollars by the end of the decade, as well as cater to India's own cyber security requirements. The need for own expertise and products in this space is underscored by the revelations that foreign governments have been using the market dominance of their companies to penetrate sensitive networks around the world.

The third goal of *IT for ALL* also incorporated measures for expanding computer literacy and boosting IT in Indian languages. Both these measures, if properly implemented, would have contributed to cyber security by making the common man aware of the perils and pitfalls of travelling on the information super highway without adequate knowledge of its dark side. Incidentally, Recommendation (68) viz; 'An Institute for Computer

Professionals of India shall be set up on the pattern of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India; the Institute will be nucleated by NASSCOM with initial financial support from the industry and the Government' also finds mention as a recommendation in the report of the ***Joint Working Group on Engagement with Private Sector on Cyber Security*** in 2012.

As regards IT in government, progress in implementation of IT initiatives varies across different ministries at the central level and the state levels, and even across states. The deficiencies are most visible in the law enforcement area where various plans to improve information sharing through IT have been pending for quite some time. These include the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) Project,⁷ the NATGRID,⁸ and the National Counter terrorism Centre (NCTC),⁹ all of which have been held up for a variety of reasons ranging from Centre-State dynamics to questions over their legitimacy and powers.

With regard to cyber security per se, the report had recommended the establishment of an Information Security Agency to act as a 'Cyber Cop'. While the intent of this proposed organisation was not clear, the only organisation created was the Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN) in 2004. It was conceived as a nodal agency under the Department of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of Information Technology. Its mandate was 1) to create a safe and secure cyber environment through appropriate policies and legal frameworks. Specific tasks included creating appropriate cyber security standards/guidelines, auditing, networking and points of contact, conducting Cyber Security drills, devising and deploying Crisis Management Plans and Cyber Alert systems, and interfacing with Sectoral CERTS, and Foreign CERTS.

The Mumbai Attacks of 1998 which were considerably cyber-enabled from conception to implementation prompted the Government to amend the IT Act in that year itself.¹⁰ The Information Technology Amendment Act, 2008 provided for a national nodal agency for critical information infrastructure protection which has been set up after it was decided to make the NTRO the nodal agency for critical infrastructure.¹¹ Section 70 of the IT Act, 2000 defines critical information infrastructure as 'the computer resource, the incapacitation or destruction of which, shall have debilitating impact on national security, economy, public health or safety'. The National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC) was established under the National Technical Research Organisation in 2013,

almost five years after being incorporated in the IT Amendment Act, 2008. The increasing instances of state sponsored malicious activities would have been a factor in the creation of this organisation and situating it within the NTRO.

The organisation's official mandate is to 'protect critical infrastructure against cyber terrorism, cyber warfare and other threats'. In pursuit of this mandate, it has been given all powers necessary including interception powers. Oversight is provided by Advisory Council of 17 representatives from different agencies. Among the sectors identified as critical by it are: civil aviation, shipping, railways, power, nuclear, oil and gas, finance, banking, communication, information technology, law enforcement, intelligence agencies, space, and government networks.

There are a number of potential obstacles to the effective working of the NCIIPC. Compared to CERT-IN, it is much less public facing which can prove to be a problem in an environment where much of the infrastructure rests in private hands. This creates problems, not only in co-ordinating cyber-security efforts but also for gauging the extent of the problem, since private companies are reluctant to acknowledge that they have been attacked and more often than not, do not report such attacks.¹²

On the military side also, there is a profusion of agencies, ranging from the Corps of Signals, to the A-CERT (Army Computer Emergency Response Team), to the IT Departments of the various HQs and the IDS. The Defence Information Assurance and Research Agency (DIARA) has been designated as the 'nodal agency mandated to deal with all cyber security related issues of Tri Services and Ministry of Defence' according to a statement made by the Defence Minister in Parliament in 2010.¹³ There has been no official role for the military in cyber security, other than that of protecting its own networks that have been reportedly penetrated on and off.¹⁴ This, despite the Minister of Defence referring to cyber threats as a major threat to the nation in virtually every speech made to the apex military gathering, the Combined Commanders Conference over the past three years.¹⁵

With the cyber arena now recognised as a new domain of war, setting up a force competent to achieve the dual objectives of defending the country from cyber attacks in war and securing the military's network operations in peace is one that requires considerable thought. While the Armed Forces have an advantage in that legacy issues will be kept to a minimum since many of the networking initiatives are only now bearing fruition, the fact remains

that the Army, Navy and Air Force all have their own separate networks at a time where common networks are being created in the interests of efficiency and jointness.¹⁶

In addition to the offensive and defensive aspects, cyberspace also plays a support function. This would entail training at the lower end and re-training at the higher end to incorporate such aspects into overall defence planning and preparedness. While signals have always been seen as a support function, and personnel treated as such, the unfolding environment calls for altered career graphs to draw and retain suitable manpower in a highly competitive environment.

Another area that needs to be addressed urgently is that of cyber crime, which is an invisible cancer that destroys trust in cyberspace and requires urgent mitigating measures. Cyber crime detection can be about the preventive processes and technologies available to an individual, or to an organization, but equal attention needs to be paid to the capabilities or the lack thereof at the law and order level. The former may detect a cyber crime and report it, but unless the relevant authorities have the capabilities and capacities to respond appropriately, there will be a resultant loss of faith in the medium. There should be capabilities and capacities for proper appreciation of the problem, right training of law enforcement agencies, appropriate laws, and the required forensic expertise. For cybercrimes to be taken seriously these not only have to be detected but the detection also has to be recorded. In this regard, the National Crime Record Bureau statistics give a false perception of cybercrime; even if cases registered increased by 60% in 2012 over the previous year, it still amounted to just 2876 cases, which is miniscule when compared to the 94,000 cases of cheating alone which were registered under IPC in 2012. This is the outcome of improper reporting, inadequate monitoring and incompatible databases of the various law enforcement agencies. Studies show that most cases are dismissed for lack of evidence - most of the police stations are not technically equipped for cyber crime investigation and collection of digital evidences. In most states, there are no specialised investigators, or they are present only in the urban areas or state capitals. Electronic evidence is consequently not captured, retained and preserved according to the judicial requirements.

Though law enforcement agencies have tried to rectify these shortcomings, current efforts do not put cyber crime at the center of police training. Most of the training is outsourced, and consequently, the training courses are

short duration courses, cramming everything from investigation to laws to forensics into the curriculum on the practical side. On the theoretical side too, the courses lump the vast universe of cybercrime, from fraud, to identity theft to IPR theft into an unwieldy whole. Law enforcement agencies, and this holds true even for CERT-IN often spend a disproportionate amount of time on particular issues such as defamatory Facebook posts and website defacements and proportionately less time on other pressing issues.

Other areas that also need to be addressed include issues around cloud computing, mobile security, social networking, big data, and the internet of things. The rapidity with which even the newest of technologies scales up requires quick policy responses on the part of the policy makers.

CONCLUSION

The nature of cyberspace is such that it is not enough to focus on a few select areas, but rather to have a patchwork of priorities. The National Cyber Security Policy (NCSP), released in July 2013, is an overarching policy framework and vision document that attempts to present the 'governments approach and strategy for protection of cyberspace in the country'. The NSCP is only one part of a three-part framework including a National Cyber Security Architecture and a National Cyber Security Strategy. Even as the other two legs are awaited, the policy itself has been fleshed out through the promulgation of guidelines, beginning with the Guidelines for Protection of National Critical Information Infrastructure with guidelines for other sectors under production. A national cyber security strategy would perforce fill in the many existing lacunae and gaps in thinking on cyber security within the country. Even if it does not resolve the tensions between the various interests and priorities of different groups, be it the private sector, law enforcement, or national security agencies, or even info-sec professionals, it would spell out the way forward keeping the national interest in mind.

With activities in cyberspace contributing a greater percentage to India's GDP year-on-year, and estimated to cross 5.6% by 2016,¹⁷ and the anticipated acceleration of government's e-governance programmes, creating a safe and secure cyberspace is of paramount importance. This requires regular and sustained interaction between all the interested parties, in government, the public and private sectors.

NOTES

1. For instance, see Interview with John Mroz, President, East-West Institute, India: *An Emerging Cyber power*. East West Institute, 24 September 2012. Available online at <http://www.ewi.info/idea/india-emerging-cyber-power> Accessed on 18 December 2012
2. “An IT superpower, India has just 556 cyber security experts”, *The Hindu* 19 June 2013. Available online at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/an-it-superpower-india-has-just-556-cyber-security-experts/article4827644.ece> Accessed on 20 June 2013
3. Deva, Y. *Secure Or Perish*. Delhi, : Ocean Books, 2001, p.53-54
4. *Information Technology Act, 2000*. Government of India, Available online at www.dot.gov.in/Acts/itbill2000.pdf Accessed on 15 August 2012. While the process around the creation of the IT Act 2000 also included the amendment of various existing laws, including the Indian Penal Code, it did not include provisions on cyber crime per se.
5. The Bill was listed for business in the Rajya Sabha as follows: “To incorporate the recent developments nationally and internationally particularly with reference to provisions related to data protection and privacy in the context of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) operations, liabilities of network service providers, computer related offences, regulation of cyber cafes, issues relating to child pornography, etc.” Available online at <http://164.100.24.167/newsite/lb/legislative/bil/billexpected206.htm> Accessed on 23 February 2012
6. In a panel discussion on cyber security at the Munich Security Conference in February 2011, the Indian National Security Advisor noted that the IT Act empowers the government to “scan Indian cyber space, detect incidents, audit practices, and protect critical and other infrastructure.”
7. Approved by the Cabinet in June 2009. See the Press Information Bureau(PIB) note at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=49261>
8. Approved in June 2011. See the PIB note at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=72527>
9. Notified in February 2012. “Finally, NCTC Gets Govt Notification.” *The Times of India*. 5 February 2012. Accessed on 24 May 2014. <<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Finally-NCTC-gets-govt-notification/articleshow/11761367.cms>>
10. Investigations revealed that the terrorists had used Google Earth used for training, VOIP to communicate with their handlers, and Garmin GPS units and satellite phones were also found in their possession.
11. “Five-year plan in the works to revamp cyber security”, *Times of India*, 18 December, 2012.
12. News of most attacks and incidents of cyber espionage, whether it be on Reliance, ONGC or ITC have invariably been reported by third parties. The companies concerned have not confirmed such attacks, and in some cases have denied these attacks ever occurred.

13. "Hacking of Security Information", Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 27 July 2010. Available online at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=63588> ACCESSED Accessed on 15 February 2013
14. For the latest such incident, see "DRDO, Armed Forces' Computers Hacked - The Times of India." *The Times of India*. 7 Mar. 2014. Accessed on 28 Apr. 2014. Available online at <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/it-services/DRDO-armed-forces-computers-hacked/articleshow/31596891.cms>
15. "Antony Asks Army to Build Cyber Security Capabilities." *The New Indian Express*. 22 Apr. 2014. Accessed on 13th May 2014. Available online at <http://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/Antony-Asks-Army-to-Build-Cyber-Security-Capabilities/2014/04/22/article2182471.ece>
16. Seffers, George. "Lightening the Workload for Cyber Command." *SIGNAL Magazine*. 3 Apr. 2014. Accessed on 13 Apr. 2014. Available online at <http://www.afcea.org/content/?q=node/12599>
17. Amounting to \$242 billion. Boston Consulting Group, BCG Report, *The Internet Economy in the G-20*, March 2012. Available online at www.bcg.com/documents/file100409.pdf

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Military Diplomacy for Enhanced Regional Collaboration

Air Marshal Bhushan Gokhale (Retd)

*“Unfortunately, you can change friends
but not neighbours.”*

- Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Former Prime Minister of India ¹

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century is known to be the Asian Century. As Indians it is nice to know that we along with many of our neighbours will not only steer their own destiny but that also of the world community. With almost 2/3rd the world's population residing in this continent, their well-being and prosperity is bound to impact the rest. Conversely, if the opportunity is not seized, it can also lead to disastrous consequences for the economies and socio-political stability of Asia.

There are already a number of regional groupings in Asia seeking to enhance cooperation in many areas for economic development and increased cultural bonding. However, most of these countries would much rather seek closer relations with extra regional powers for all the intra regional issues, than look closer home for solutions in the neighbourhood. Thus there is lack of any meaningful regional collaboration despite years of

1. Interview of Former PM Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee with the Financial Times, New Delhi on 07 Oct 2002

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repetitious dialogues. After all SAARC has been in existence since 1985 but without any substantial progress on key issues of integration amongst its 8 members, linked with common heritage and culture.

With omnipresent irritants amongst neighbouring countries the world over, historically it is well known that if such cooperation is extended to the areas of Defence, there is a different nuance to the relationship; making it much more substantial and robust. It must be added that such collaborative approach is not akin to the Military alliances like NATO, CENTO or Warsaw Pact, wherein collective use of offensive military action is part of the mandate. Instead, the endeavour should be for cooperation in the areas of Military Diplomacy so as to create conditions for increased Confidence Building Measures and conflict resolution.

MILITARY DIPLOMACY

The goal of diplomacy is to further national interests by peaceful means during the conduct of foreign policy. Since the other nation also aspires for similar goals certain amount of trade off is a given, especially in areas such preferential trade and tariff, access to markets, travel concessions etc to name a few. The principle of reciprocity is generally the common denominator while practising diplomacy.

On the other hand, safeguarding national interests in terms of security and integrity fall in the realm of military, with use of force as the last resort. Military diplomacy then falls between these two spectrums of soft and hard power with emphasis on avoiding war. On the other hand, coercive use of Navies particularly in the 18th and 19th centuries by colonial powers of Europe, led to what was known as ‘gunboat diplomacy’ as demonstrated during the Opium War of 1840.²

Military Diplomacy can also be defined as ‘the use of Armed forces in operations other than war, building on their trained expertise and discipline to achieve national objectives abroad’.³ In United Kingdom there is a broader term known as Defence Diplomacy⁴ which is also used with an aim to ‘dispel hostility, build and maintain trust and to

2. *Sir James Cable (1981), Gunboat Diplomacy. Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan*

3. *Brig KA Muthanna, Military Diplomacy, Journal of Defence Studies, Jan 2011*

4. *UK Ministry of Defence Policy Paper, “Defence Diplomacy”*

assist in the development of democratically accountable armed forces' to make a 'significant contribution to conflict prevention and resolution'. Such diplomacy is defined to include use of Military personnel including service attaches, in support of conflict prevention and resolution'. Defence diplomacy does not include military operations, but subsumes such other defence activity as international personnel exchanges, ship and aircraft visits, high level engagement e.g. Ministers and senior defence personnel, bilateral meetings and staff talks, training and exercises, regional defence forums such as Shangri-La Dialogue, outreach, confidence and security building measures, and non-proliferation activities.

The Ministry of Defence in India also covers areas such as visits and dialogues, port calls training of personnel, combined exercises and even co-production of defence equipment.

EARLIER USE OF MILITARY DIPLOMACY

Military Diplomacy has always been practised as an instrument of statecraft. In Kautilya's Arthashastra, he says that, "Power is strength and strength changes the minds".⁵ Similar theories abound in the Western philosophy espoused by Machiavelli and Clausewitz as well as Sun Tzu, the Chinese strategist. It is also said that 'failure of Diplomacy is War'. As such both the terms 'diplomacy' and 'war' are considered to be two sides of the same coin. However, their common purpose is to further one's national interests by any means. Paradoxically, if one is to look at the equation in terms of zero sum game, many feel that Military Diplomacy becomes more of a charade till a country is ready for war. It was therefore used as a tool to intimidate an adversary till almost the end of Cold War.

Indian medieval history is replete with another nuance such Military diplomacy took and that was for forming alliances. Taking advantage of infighting amongst numerous princely states, the Mughals and later British had been able to defeat comparative powerful rulers of Mewar or Peshwas to name a few, by forming alliances with their immediate adversaries. Europe has also witnessed similar events right through the history predominantly from '100 years war'⁶ wages from 1337 to 1453 between England and France continuing all the way to the Second World War.

5. *Kautilya's Arthashastra and War*

6. *Hundred Years' War, Wikipedia*

The tradition of exchanging Military Attaches' is another example of military diplomacy and in the modern days used first by the British when General Edward Stopford Claremont was sent to Paris for 25 years from 1856 to 1881 and even took part in the Crimean War. Such tradition was used in different forms to actually give a message to the opponent that their strength and intentions are being kept an eye on. That is why even today a Defence Attaché' in particular is looked upon with a bit of suspicion assuming that his office is gathering Military Intelligence. In earlier times when the relationship between two sovereigns deteriorated, recalling these and the Ambassadors was an indication of situation precipitating into war. Such tradition continues to exist even today, however, not necessarily leading to a war.

NUANCES OF MILITARY DIPLOMACY TODAY

Coincidentally, the term Military diplomacy has gained currency in recent years, especially after the Cold War, when Western powers began to more frequently deploy armed forces for a range of new missions from peace-keeping and peace-building to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The practice of military diplomacy must also be seen in the context of Western countries attempting to reform the security sector in Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Soviet Union and in the developing world after the Cold War.⁷

Does this mean that diplomacy and military intervention will now be divorced of their common purpose? Military diplomacy is no more considered as coercive or threatening in nature. Instead it is an extension of regular diplomacy with emphasis on removing such suspicion. In recent years even the Chinese have started using this as a tool for enlarging their influence backed by robust programmes of aid as well as sale of military hardware. While the US and USSR had used military diplomacy somewhat assertively to include use of bases abroad to station warships, aircraft and troops, today the term has acquired a more benign term. As elaborated by the MoD in Indian context the term is also used by most nations to include areas such as reciprocal visits, exchanges at training establishments and participating in exercises, finally leading to collaborative relationship which reduces flash points and risks of war. This is particularly of great use in relation to countries which have long lasting disputes of border

7. *From Isolation to Partnership* by C. Raja Mohan, ISAS Working Paper, 20 Feb 2012

demarcation, alleged sanctuaries of those wanted by other country or even where there are large ideological differences within nations.

If one is to analyse the happenings in Ukraine today and break-away of Crimea, one can say that diplomacy on part of all stake holders has failed, forcing a near military intervention. The complexity can be seen in many ways almost in the same way it was perceived a few years ago in the Russo-Georgian War of August 2008. Questions arise on whether the US and EU is trying encircle Russia further, which has already been weakened after the breakup of Soviet Union? Or are the aspirations of Ukrainians to chart their own course being denied by the Russians by annexing the territories considered vital for their own interests? The answers are complex but already there are talks of return of the Cold war.

INDIAN EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE

Born out of non-violent freedom struggle and later having accepted the mantle of leadership of non-aligned countries, India has been reluctant in using military diplomacy as a tool for statecraft. India was content in using her troops in multi-lateral environment, however, always under the mandate of United Nations. Even in the UN operations, India was and continues to commit troops for peace keeping and not for peace enforcing operations as empowered by Chapter VII.⁸ Such limited Indian involvements in the Korean conflict or in Congo are examples from earlier times.

It is only after the 1971 war of liberation, which resulted in formation of Bangladesh that the Indian foreign policy establishment started looking at military diplomacy as one of the tangible contributors, although not to its full potential. Since the export of arms was never a priority, this money-spinner, which is normally derived out of exports was never given the attention it deserved by India. In recent times such a policy of arms export has been reversed, though rather late in the day. Instead, if one is to compare the Indian space programme, ISRO has used foreign collaboration astutely and continues to earn sizeable foreign exchange.

MILITARY ENGAGEMENTS IN IRAQ AND EGYPT

Indian engagement in the Middle East for energy requirements in 70s also witnessed large-scale military training programmes in countries such

8. *UN Peacekeeping and India's National Strategy*, Lt Gen Satish Nambiyar, IDSA, 4 Mar 2011

as Iraq and Egypt in particular. Commonality of Soviet origin equipment and the war tested Indian expertise was much sought after by these and many other countries as far as Nigeria in the west and Singapore and Malaysia in the East. Undoubtedly the spin-off was in better bi-lateral trade, though India could not cement such close ties in the later years. As a flying instructor, I was stationed in Iraq for two years from 1977 to 1979. The Indian Army and Navy had also positioned similar training teams and in later years the strength of Indian contingent had gone up sizeably, to be withdrawn during the Iraq-Iran war. In Iraq as in most other countries Indian expertise was valued for their instructional ability. But what was most notable was the Indian contingent's aloofness in Iraq's both internal and external dynamics or religious interference. This one special attribute was valued most by the hosts and is remembered even today. India had sizeable diplomatic gains then in not only being able to import oil at better tariff rates but also for Iraqi refusal to take sides in Kashmir issue, which was considered by them as bi-lateral. Undoubtedly, both the Gulf wars have changed this dynamics considerably.

While serving in Egypt as the Defence Advisor from 1994 to 1997, I had carried out a comparative analysis of relationship between India-Egypt on one hand and Pakistan-Egypt and China-Egypt on the other, for each of the decades since the 50s. What had started as then enduring Nehru-Nasser era of close co-operation had steadily dwindled, though the Egyptians still hold Indians in high esteem. The initial close ties had included not just positioning of Indian instructors in Egypt (former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, an Air Force pilot, was trained by Indian instructors) but also co-production of fighter aircraft HF-24 in 1960. It is unfortunate that while HAL was successful in developing the airframe, Egyptian Helwan factory was not able to produce the desired jet engine.⁹ Later, India had to fit two Orpheus engines but the aircraft continued to be underpowered and although the aircraft took active and laudable part in 1971 war, the Indian Air Force had to phase out its use due to higher rate of accidents.

Such close ties in 50s and 60s with Egypt had got diluted considerably in the later decades. One of the main reasons as expressed by some of the Egyptian military officers was the Indian refusal in providing equipment and support during the Yom Kippur war of 1973. On the other hand

9. *Egyptian Bradner, E-300 Engine, Tayler 1969*

both Pakistan and China had gained substantially almost reminiscent of 'zero sum game'. And such closer ties had been substantially due to cooperation in defence sector. While Pakistan sends officers for Egyptian courses learning Arabic, in turn facilitating developing friends in Egyptian military establishment. Pakistan also supplied small arms and ammunitions to their military widening areas of cooperation. Chinese also took part in training and supplying big ticket defence equipment such as A-5 aircraft at favourable payment terms. It could be analysed that closer defence ties and with their import on other bi-lateral issues, both these countries had gained sizeable ground as compared to their earlier engagements.

The above two illustrations do not necessarily indicate a zero sum game as compared to India. But undoubtedly closer military ties increase mutual trust and in particular if defence equipment is transferred the need for spares and product support forces a somewhat aligned approach with the supplier country. We ourselves experienced this in the aftermath of 1998 Pokhran Test and the embargo forced on us particularly by US and Western countries. It is no wonder then that the former President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam has said, "A Country's strength to protect its security and evolve an independent foreign policy is dependent on degree of self reliance in defense and defense systems."

INDIA'S RECENT BI-LATERAL ENGAGEMENTS

Soon after Kargil War and formation of HQ IDS one of the significant moves by Indian MoD was to increase bi-lateral engagements with foreign militaries. Till then Joint military exercises with other countries were considered a taboo possibly due to apprehension of giving away secret doctrinal information. In the Indian Air Force it started gingerly with the French using similar platform like the Mirage-2000 aircraft. But then came a big leap in 2002 with a joint exercise conducted with Singapore Air Force, which was using F-16 aircraft, hitherto available with India's principal adversary Pakistan. Major General Ng Chee Khern, who was a member of the team for developing bi-lateral exercise model and later the Air Force Chief of the Republic of Singapore, summed it up "In defence diplomacy, we seek to develop mutually beneficial relationships with friendly countries and armed forces to contribute to a stable international and regional environment. In the years to follow there has been sizeable increase in bi-lateral trade between the two countries and significant

investment into India by Singapore. In later years the IAF conducted bi-lateral exercises with many air forces including USAF and the Indian Su-30 aircraft refuelled in mid-air by IAF tankers were sent all the way to USA for taking part in war game cum exercise Red Flag at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

While the Indian Navy had always carried out port calls and taken part in bi-lateral exercises on smaller scale, more meaningful bi-lateral exercises with navies including the US, French, Russian and even the Chinese have been undertaken recently. This bi-lateral and limited multi-lateral exposure has helped the Indian Navy in successfully taking part in anti-piracy operations with other navies including the Chinese. Indian Army too carries out exercises with these countries including commando operations.

While India has been able to successfully engage with most of the neighbours including China to a limited extent, Pakistan has persistently refused offers of even peaceful transit of display aircraft. IAF's 9 aircraft formation aerobatic team, Suryakiran was in great demand for displays abroad. It has not only visited many SE Asian countries but also flew to China, to take part in Zhuhai Air Show in 2008.¹⁰ However, Pakistan refused to permit their transit to Oman and other Gulf countries. It is with lot of persuasion a tiny micro-light aircraft was allowed to refuel at Karachi during the IAF's Platinum Jubilee year celebrations in 2007. This micro-light flew around the world in 80 days with the Chinese having allowed permission for transit eastward to Kamchatka en route US and Canada.

COMMON HERITAGE, ASPIRATIONS AND DEPRIVATION

Most of the countries of South Asia have been under colonial subjugation and have earned their independence only in the middle of last century. The commonality of heritage and historical linkages has facilitated stronger people to people contacts and thereby establishing regional groupings for trade and commerce. However, if one is talk of only the SAARC countries¹¹ as an example, the intra trade is miniscule compared to what the region as a whole trades with outside this geographical confine. This is surprising as despite the shorter distances and commonly consumed commodities, these do not get traded within the block.

10. *Suryakirans display airmanship in Zhuhai, The Hindu, 13 Dec 2008*

11. *International Journal Culture and Business Management, Ratna Vadra, 2012 Vol. 5, No. 1*

If one is look at this region in the macro terms, there is a massive need for poverty alleviation, education and infusion of capital for building much-needed infrastructure. Then there is perennial need for energy resources keeping in mind the environmental issues. The aspirations therefore are not very different from one country to another.

On the other hand the countries in this region spend huge amounts on Defence and that too on import, depriving the use of national budgets on developmental projects and for inclusive growth. It is estimated that almost $\frac{1}{4}$ th of total world defence expenditure is accounted for by these countries. The countries in this region continue to suffer from widespread poverty, malnutrition, energy deficiency and many other problems leading to non-traditional security.

DEFENCE TIES WITHIN THE REGION

India has always had close military relations with neighbouring countries such as Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. While Nepal continues to contribute to Gorkha regiments of Indian Army, the Chinese have made significant inroads into Nepal by supplying arms and ammunition lately. With Bhutan although the treaty of 1949 has been renegotiated in 2007, which does not bind Bhutan from importing arms from other countries, Indo-Bhutanese defence ties continue to remain strong with Indian team of Army officers stationed at Thimpu as IMTRAT. With Sri Lankan armed forces cooperation in training has been one of the main engagements. India has also provided arms for defensive purpose such as surveillance radars and anti aircraft guns to Sri Lanka. However, the Indo-Lankan relationship has always been dictated by the dynamics within the state of Tamil Nadu, making it more complex for New Delhi to exercise overall foreign policy directives.

As regards Bangladesh, I always remember what my teammate from this country in US Air War College would say to me privately. As per him since their country is surrounded by India, if anyone is to ask him pinpoint an adversary, it would have to be none other but India. Indo-Bangla relations therefore swing from close to hostile depending on whether the government in Dacca enjoys support of radical elements or otherwise. Issues such as influx of Bengali illegal entrants into India, sharing of river water and transit rights into ill-defined conclaves dominate the souring of relations. Increasing Chinese influence and arms transfer then have added to this

discomfort. In bi-lateral relations with Bangladesh, the state government of West Bengal also tends to influence the Central policy of MEA.

Relations with Myanmar have started to warm up once again after return of democracy into the country recently in 2011. Till then India looked at Myanmar with apprehension as the Chinese influence was overarching despite India's historical ties with erstwhile Burma. Once again the Indian Armed Forces are engaging with Myanmar's counterparts including training, building of OPV ships for their Navy and transit of aircraft and helicopters.

While Maldives has witnessed active intervention by the Indian armed Forces to rescue the elected President in 1988¹², the relations have not remained as close over the years. While India has gifted some of the defence equipment including surveillance radar, the Chinese have increased their influence considerably seeking ship berthing rights. While the Chinese maintain that their spread of influence in India's neighbourhood is purely for ensuring smooth transit of oil and trade, India perceives this as 'string of pearls' to encircle India.

The whole region is apprehensive of US withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan by December 2014. This is because the Indo-Afghan relations get always hyphenated with those with Indo-Pak and Afghan-Pak relations. The continuing violence and terrorism despite over a decade long Operation Enduring Freedom, makes India in particular apprehensive of return of Taliban regime in Afghanistan, after the withdrawal of US troops. Although India has assisted Afghan armed forces in training, she has avoided direct transfer of arms or stationing of troops in Afghanistan. In any case not much of arms transfer can take place as India does not produce any big ticket weapon systems and is bound by end-use transfer agreement with OEMs.

Lastly is the traditional Indian adversary, Pakistan. While almost every Indian Prime Minister has worked towards bettering the relations, repeated acts of terrorism emanating from Pakistan have never allowed meaningful progress. With Pak Army continuing to be an important element of troika in country's decision making, it will help considerably if both countries take steps towards military diplomacy. However, with increasing radicalisation within Pakistan and lately in the Pak Army itself, it

12. *Indian Troops end coup in Maldives, The New York Times, 5 Nov 1988*

is presumptuous to propose peaceful engagement of military with Pakistan. While reacting to the undue delay in granting MFN status to India, a top official of the Indian Government has said, "The several recent flip-flops made by the Nawaz Sharif government on the issue has greatly reduced its credibility with Indian negotiators who have concluded that in addition to political and security policy, the Pakistan government does not even have the ability to go against the Pakistan military dictates on issues related to economic reforms." Such flip-flop in Pakistan policy was clearly visible in recent months. Having been invited by the newly elected Prime minister of India to start a new leaf in bi-lateral relationship, soon came the uncalled for invitation to Kashmiri separatist leaders to Tea by the Pakistani High Commissioner in India. This uncalled for action on his part has once again put the clock of normalisation back. None other than Pakistan's Foreign Minister Sartaj Aziz has for the first time conceded that 'the timing of the meeting between Kashmiri separatists and Pakistan's High Commissioner could have been different' during his in interview with NDTV on the side lines of the recent UNGA held on 26th-27th September 2014.

WAY FORWARD FOR ACTIVE COLLABORATION

The resurgent India needs to ensure on one hand protection of her ever increasing needs of energy and commerce, on the other India also needs to instil confidence amongst her neighbours that this policy is not hegemonic in nature. With increasing energy demand, India is seeking collaboration with many countries in the Indian Ocean littoral and beyond. Protection of this vital investment and supply routes would need 'turn around' facility for Indian Navy. Till recently a collaborative naval anti-piracy operation both in South East Asian waters and off the coast of Somalia and Yemen are stark reminders of such contingencies.

However, one of the impediments in active military collaboration with our neighbours has been the sheer physical size and strength of the Indian Armed Forces coupled with that of the Indian economy. India can only dispel such misgivings by undertaking more military engagements with her neighbours including bi-lateral exercises. While India has carried out such exercises with many countries outside the region, there have not been any on the scale with Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. It must be borne in mind that exercises offer an opportunity to be an equal participant during such exercise alleviating the feeling of being a lesser partner.

These engagements and mock drills can be in many areas such as disaster relief including search and rescue and supply dropping in confined areas. Then there is the increasing need to combat drugs trafficking, illegal supply of arms and terrorism, being faced by each of these countries in more or less equal measure. Then there are a number of possible areas of regional military engagements as put forth very succinctly by Brig Muthanna in South Asian Military Interaction programme (SAMIP).¹³

Although the Chinese are not part of this grouping India cannot hope to ward off their increasing influence in the region. While the bi-lateral trade is likely to touch US \$50 billion by 2015, the vexed issue of border demarcation continues to affect deeper ties. Hence, increased military interaction with Chinese including co-production of commercially usable passenger and cargo aircraft could go a long way in promoting better ties soured since the war of 1962.

DETERRENCE AND MILITARY PREPAREDNESS

While suggesting an increase in military contacts as a tool for diplomacy, one should not look at this as watering down in military preparedness. On the contrary, increasing military capability by each of these countries would add to deterrence and a feeling of equal partnership. European experience since the formation of EU or even the countries of SE Asia is a pointer in this direction. As stated by Raja Mohan, “The connection between diplomacy and use of force, however, should not be seen as two ends of a spectrum.”¹⁴

It is a known fact that war prevention more than war waging, which brings prosperity to the people. However, such developmental activity can only take place if there is a sense of security. National development and National security therefore also symbolise two sides of the same coin. The development is not only in terms of economic well being but also for art and culture to prosper. On the other hand security comprises of various dimensions of external, internal as well as non-traditional. The non-traditional security is increasingly becoming important due to issues such as shortage of food, water, energy and cyber security. Increased Military

13. Brig KA Muthanna, *Military Diplomacy, Journal of Defence Studies, Jan 2011*

14. *From Isolation to Partnership by C Raja Mohan, ISAS Working Paper, 20 Feb 2012*

collaboration within the region on all such potential flash points would need to be tackled effectively to ensure conflict resolution and regional prosperity.

CONCLUSION

While being in Asian Century we are also in most dangerous neighbourhood with world worried of a nuclear flashpoint. With possible return of Cold War after the recent events in Ukraine and the US renewed attention to this region symbolised by the Asian Pivot', regional stability will have to be handled deftly by all the constituent countries.

It must also be emphasized that there is no single model for regional collaboration or some sort universal approach, which works for all the regions. Even within the region not all situations can have similar approach. However, keeping confidence building at heart, military diplomacy and increased collaboration can help in setting up of crisis solving mechanism. India must play the important role for ensuring regional peace and stability as summed up aptly by a Japanese writer Matsuda Yasuhiro, "India needs to pursue military diplomacy much more aggressively in order to create a strategic space for itself in India's own neighbourhood, before losing out to Beijing and Islamabad that have been cashing on India's lethargic approach in this arena."¹⁵

I am certain that in the years ahead resurgent India will reach out and build partnerships and collaborations for regional stability. Use of Military Diplomacy will enhance the Confidence Building Measures, essential for such closer collaboration in the region.

AIR MARSHAL BN GOKHALE PVS, AVSM, VM (RETD)



He was commissioned into the Indian Air Force in June 1968 in fighter stream and has flown over 3500 hours on a variety of combat and trainer aircraft. The Air Marshal has seen active operations during the 1971 Indo-Pak hostilities on both Eastern and Western fronts. He is a Qualified Flying Instructor and Fighter Combat Leader from the prestigious Tactics and Combat Development Establishment. Air Marshal Gokhale has held a variety of operational command and staff appointments during his career.

The Air Marshal has had assignments abroad as Flying Instructor in Iraq from 1977 to 1979 and as the Defence Adviser at Indian Embassy in Egypt from 1994 to 1998. He has functioned as Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Training Command prior to taking over as the Vice Chief of Air Staff at Air Headquarters. Air Marshal Gokhale retired as the Vice Chief on 31st Dec 2007.

The Air Marshal is a graduate of the Defence Services Staff College and is M Sc, M Phil from Madras University. He is also an alumnus of the Air War College, USA and a Fellow of Aeronautical Society of India. He is a recipient of the Presidential awards, Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and the Vayu Sena Medal.

On retirement, Air Marshal Gokhale has been appointed Consultant to the Principle Scientific Advisor to the Government of India and also to DRDO. For his post retirement contribution in the Indigenous development of Strategic systems and those for Low Intensity Conflict, he has also been awarded the prestigious Agni award on the National Technology Day, 11th May 2013. In May 2010, the Air Marshal was detailed as the Chairman with full judicial powers, to investigate into the tragic Air India Express accident at Mangalore, in which 158 lives were lost.

The Air Marshal is the Chairman of Maharashtra Education Society and also of Maharashtra Mandala Education Society. He is on the Governing Councils of Defence Institute of Advanced Technology, Pune and the Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies. Since May 2011 the Air Marshal has been appointed as a Member of the All India Council for Technical Education, Western Region. He is a Founder Member of the recently established Pune International Center. Since Sep 2012 he has also taken over as the Chairman, Civil Aviation Committee at Maharashtra Chamber of Commerce, Industries and Agriculture (MCCIA) and from 1st September 2013 he has taken over as the Director of Centre for Advanced Strategic Studies, Pune, which was founded in 1992. As of March 2014, he has been appointed as a Central Government nominated member on the Deccan College, a Deemed University.

**BOOK REVIEW “RAMBLINGS OF SEA LIFE”
AUTHORED BY CAPT MILIND PARANJPE**

Mixed Feelings

Capt. Sudhir Subbedar

MR as the author is popularly called in maritime fraternity has penned down non fiction travelogue which many want to do but do not.

I was made curious to read the book I had come across but did not go through it because each of us has unique and similar ‘ramblings of sea life’. When reading this rather simple book it is best to relax in a couch with a drink and enjoy detail, anecdotes, humour in uniform. Vital information is spread all over the book including that for risk assessment of maritime adventure – called voyage. Chapters on Suez, Panama and Kiel Canal are eye opener and not likely to come by to ordinary tourist.

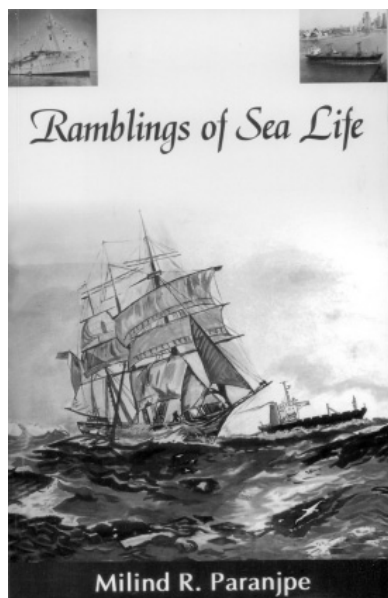
MR has off course put pen to paper to capture over 50 years of merchant marine service capturing time on board the great Indian Mercantile Marine Training Ship established by the British in 1927 in Mumbai post WW I and she boasts of producing great Naval men like Admiral Katari, Samson, Gandhi, Soman and many more. Needless to say that current crop of senior management of world of shipping is dominated by ex Dufferin cadets. MR is ex cadet of 1961-83 batch before joining Scindia Steam Navigation company, India’s first independent shipping company that came about under great resistance of the empire. British wanted more roads and rails and ports but not Indian shipping that was empires forte.

Author has documented almost chronologically several aspects of sea going life. Starting with Dufferin anchored off Mumbai and how cadets new to sea found going tough, unnatural and confusing often seeing Mumbai shore line some times on this side or other side! not knowing anchored ship turns with tide. Both Dufferin anthem

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Ramblings of Sea Life

By - Milind Paranjpe

Is a collection of some of author's experiences at sea.

"Interesting and absorbing..... Style is simple and the reader never falters even ... about the discipline on a ship carrying cargo. ... You have described thrilling incidents and also a traumatic incidence in a matter of fact manner. I liked that you have never attempted to give a romantic picture of your experiences and you have not once exaggerated in your account!"

—Professor G.P. Pradhan



Author

Captain Milind R. Paranjpe is a master mariner who started his sea career on the training ship Dufferin in 1961 and has spent all his life in shipping. He was at sea for twenty years of which eight were in command of merchant ships. A Chartered Shipbroker, he has completed the Fellowship course in arbitration. He is a regular contributor to various maritime journals. Captain Paranjpe was the elected Dy. Master of the Company of Master Mariners of India and was honorary editor of 'Coastman', its journal, for ten years.

Non fiction/ Travelogue
Rs 250/-

and Dufferin song have been given pride of place and mention that actually did more good to then seafarers than anything else albeit in Government environment. Dufferin was under charge of Capt. Digby Best and Harvey laying tradition over more than 50 years of on board training for cadets from India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Burma, Iran, Pakistan, until Dufferin was replaced by Vizag built ship TS Rajendra in 1972. Unfortunately the great tradition of Indian Marine Education and training now only lingers on and the decay needs immediate arresting because demand for Indian seamen is real.

Life at sea is extremely difficult taking elements of weather into account and author gets us peek into life on sailing in dhows then and reforms that have happened since then leading to International Convention on Maritime Labour. MV Jal Usha a coal fired ship is described as first ship of MR traveling from Bombay to Calcutta. That is the most unique experience away from home, away from shore. This phase is broken at least then by adage 'sale and sea the world' – no more true on modern merchant ship. Author got to transit Suez canal quite early in life and many times later through its on off due to the middle east war. Suez canal is described as link between the West and East Asia. The canal joins Red sea via Bitter lake and is a marvel given that ships transit the canal using designated search light!

In good old days merchant ships carried EXIM trade but sailing was more fun

and work. Carrying sugar to America, food and spices to places on the way, return with finished goods and goodies like liquor. Sailing to distant places was fun, shore leave was plenty and there was ships' family all the way for 6-12 months at a time unlike today of multi national crews, short or no port stay and no family to talk of. One even got to see 'Expo' say in NY or Tokyo. One would be lucky to step down the gangway now given the security concerns post 9/11 and Mumbai blast. Author has captured photographs during his shore leave visiting gates of White House, fancy places in New Orleans, Venice etc. Later is fascinating because there is no other place to deserve the saying – see Venice and die. Venice is waterways all the way, romantic gondolas trooping in and out under of historic bridges of Roman days of glory.

Another interesting tales is of then cargo ships built also to carry up to 12 passengers to avoid wrath of passenger ship regulations. There was demand for some passenger transport by sea then. But it was always tricky and of concern for all the wrong reasons including unsocial intercourse. Danger of scams and scandals. Books have been written on such cargo cum passenger ships not to mention the great Titanic – truth will never be known. Sailing to Eastern Europe and Russia has its own problems and charm. Former is mainly due to ice and winds making chill factor on duty unbearable especially without accompanying tot. In the days of cold war it was difficult for ships' company to decipher what to expect next. Some were great moments author tells us but some near to jail going.

Sailing ships to Great Lakes given its changing level of water, system of locks to transit, entering St. Lawrence Seaway is vividly described given hand sketch of the lakes right up to modern Detroit. One always got the opportunity to visit the Niagara falls on the borders of USA and Lake Ontario. Voyage to Great Lakes is followed by another trip to Canada when Sir Winston Churchill died and the ship had to celebrate or observe Indian Republic day as well and in Command was an English man. Delima got eventually better of the wisdom when Indian ships in port in Canada were dressed up while others were in mourning. Religion is another thing that is notoriously fixed at sea. Due to severe hardship against forces of nature very few seamen are 'nastik'; almost all are God fearing and Church going. Traditionally crew joins ship complete with Cross, Rosary, etc notwithstanding ship is launched with bang of Champagne (or Coconut in India).

Anxious moments are described in great detail and cannily such as anchor cable running out off Africa slowing ship's speed, feeling of loneliness on receiving first command, sitting at the head of the table in officers' mess with buck always stopping here. Until one gets command one can rely on advice, suggestion, even instructions from superiors, company, authorities, pilots of ports etc. As a Master day one all

that is gone. All good and bad is attributed to the Master in practice and in law. Be it leaky cargo carrying hatches, sweat, ventilation, air conditioning, or over loading to Panama Canal. Later is a civil engineering marvel connecting Pacific and Atlantic ocean with natural fresh water lake several hundred feet above MSWL. It is quite something to see the two oceans below you when on board transiting ship. The ship in the canal and many a times passes on its other voyages history of marine world such as exile of Napoleon on the Islands of Las Palmas, Malta, Gibraltar, Sicily, Singapore, Okinawa. Boredom gives way to cheer and moments of pride when raising these land marks after a long sea voyage. Sailors taking to reading habit therefore enjoy the most of the given time.

Like in any other regimental service there is some tit tat with and between executive and engineers. No different at sea. Engineers are called grease monkeys by Masters to their detriment later. But on board Master controls the speed and Chief Engineer is obliged to accept both verbal and written orders. Speed is of utmost importance during ship maneuvering and only Master has the overall progress of the ship's voyage. Master's is the last word. Prospect of collision or stranding cannot be appreciated by engineers out of sight in the belly of the ship. Exigency could also include sick person or man overboard when of utmost importance is to throw a life buoy (ring) to victim, shout for help, keep sharp look out and keep propellers from sucking the victim. Author had unfortunate incident to recall on a voyage from Basra to then Chennai. This is not all; a Master has to contend with Over Time Sheets, Company communication, Charterers flak, Customs officials grunt ling arrival departure port, bakshish, speed money, drunk crews, trade unionism, menace of at sea piracy, stowaways, timely disciplinary action et al. There is even the possibility of carrying sensitive cargo like Bofors ammunition and all that entails.

This all comes handy when Master after few years of command comes ashore to ship owners' office. Tasks can now range from ship management of few ships to taking over new / old ship anywhere in the world. All the challenging snippets mentioned in the book come handy to ship superintendent but without the command of the Master. This is a delicate business.

The book concludes with early 1990 sailing again to far away places with little more semblance of modern navigation aids like SATNAV but always first principles drummed into head. Notwithstanding propeller fouling experience calling for good observance of seamanship touristy place of China Straits, Bangkok and Singapore concluding with salute to postal services which before the age of Wi-Fi and IT only thing going for seaman was coming of the mail bag and ships currency request by ships' agency. If these did not come life was indeed even more difficult. The book is

full of simple details of life on board. I recommend land lubbers to get hold of the book to get a peek into life of merchant shipping officer on whom we depend to feed the global population and keep them warm. Time has come to get such books on the book shelves duly supported by wives like Asha Paranjpe so that appropriate policies follow for achieving world class infrastructure. Capt. Milind Paranjpe is expecting solutions bubble up from below rather being thrust from above. There are glimpses of collectivism in the book that distinguishes individual traits to get task done. I like that. Hope another book comes by soon critically examining the 50 years of tales MR has woven.

PROFILE OF CAPT. S. V. SUBHEDAR



- President of ICCSA a nodal body of Indian coastal ship owners operators
- Director Supath Engineering Services P. Ltd.
- Chairman Ramjanki Inter college trust, Kanpur
- ex Director (T) INSA
- ex Director of Ocean Sparkle group of companies Hyderabad, largest port and allied services company in India
- Technical officer of IMO and Dept. of Transport UK
- Superintendent in SCI Mumbai and Anglo Eastern Hong Kong
- Officer and sailing Master of SCI and Anglo Eastern Co.
- Ex Dufferin Cadet 1966-68
- Professional Qualifications Extra Master, B.Sc. marine Tech. London award with commendation 1976
- Member Royal Institute of Naval Architects
- Member International Ship Masters federation
- Member Company of Master Mariners of India
- Chartered Member Institute of Quality Assurance U/K
- Active Rotarian

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