

OPINION

National Security Management: Some Reflections

Saumitra Mohan*

*[*Saumitra Mohan is an Indian Administrative Service Probationer of West Bengal cadre at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie, Uttarakhand, India].*

National security is a term, which is used very loosely today in common parlance. It is often associated with safeguards either against an enemy country's hostile incursions or manoeuvres or against armed non-state actors out to challenge the authority of the state and cause irreparable damages to the unity and integrity of the state. However, 'national security' subsumes these aspects and goes much beyond them and is much more inclusive and broader than commonly understood.

The theme of this paper as mentioned at the outset includes three terms namely 'national', 'security' and 'management'. Before we go on to discuss the theme in detail, it would be better if we seek to understand what these terms stand for. The first of these, i.e., 'national' means something that is related to 'nation' which is regarded as being co-terminus with the 'state'. In case of India, it has often been said that it is more of a 'state-nation' than a 'nation state'. This is an allusion to the plurality of Indian society and to the fact that Indian state has not evolved as a nation like the European ones. Being a multi-cultural and multinational State, some sections of Indian society are yet to come to terms with the 'imagined' Indian nation.

The common thread that arguably joins different ethno-cultural-linguistic groups within the Indian state (the idea of an essentially Hindu cultural unity— interpreted in cultural, geographical and religious sense) tends to have a sectional flavour and leaves out a sizable chunk and often alienates them. The historical reality of partition of British India on the principle of 'Two Nation theory' has its own corrupting influence on the making of the 'state nation'. The disaffection or dissatisfaction of ethno-cultural groups— who define themselves in national terms— often poses security threats when it matures into separatist or secessionist movements and it has to be properly factored into national security management.

The second and most important of the three terms is 'security'. Security is much more than the mere defense of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country. Security of the nation means her security in every aspect of the national life including political, economic, cultural, environmental, and social.

The last of these three terms, i.e., 'management' means the process of managing and relates to the administration and regulation of available resource to achieve the organizational goals. So, taken together, 'national security management' means the proper administration and regulation

of a country's entire available resources to provide effective security to the nation and its nationals in every sense of the term.

Threats

Today, India is facing threats to her security from various quarters. The threats are both from within and from without. The threats are in the forms of outright enemy incursions as reflected in such instances as Kargil, low-intensity proxy war as in Kashmir, threats like nuclear strikes from unidentified sources or non-state actors, refugee influxes from across the border threatening the country politically, culturally and economically, religious fundamentalism, narco-terrorism, proliferation of small arms, many environmental hazards flowing in as a result of indiscriminate use of earth's resources by developed and developing countries, cultural invasion through media and economic insecurity of the country induced both by instability in the world market and inability at the domestic level to cope with changes induced by the forces of globalisation.

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

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

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

Countering Threats

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

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

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

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

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

Need of a clear perspective

India’s national security management continues to be ad hocish and reactive. The Kargil Committee Report pointed out many chinks in our security armour and then, there was a Group of Ministers' Report, which visualized many changes in our national security management but we are yet to see some positive changes on the security front. The National Security Council, formed to effectively manage country’s security has proved to be still-born with the government hardly using it as a tool towards security management.

All one means to say here is that the government needs to be more serious and systematic about the national security management. It should not only have a crystal clear perspective and policy on national security but it should also put in place the required institutional structures. National Security is a full time job and requires a full time National Security Advisor rather than the one

who also works as the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister. The long-felt need to have a Chief of Defense Staff for proper coordination among the different wings of our armed forces also needs to be seriously considered.

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

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

Then for any country to manage its national security well, it is important that she is self-sufficient in her defense procurements. For a very long time, India has been dependent for her defense procurements on Russia or erstwhile USSR. But for an effective national security management, a country should diversify her defense procurements, which India has already been doing as reflected in her procurements from Germany, France, Israel, United States of America, United Kingdom and Netherlands. But as far as possible, it is always advisable that a country should be self-reliant in production of its vital defense equipment otherwise this may expose her weaknesses in times of crisis. And thankfully, India has come out with a 'Vision 2020', which aims at meeting, at least, 70 percent of her defense requirements through domestic production by the year 2020.

But as mentioned above, today threats to national security come not only from enemy states, but also from myriad sources and they all need to be attended to for a better national security management. And this is an era of 'complex interdependence' as described by security experts Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane. Today, it is difficult to define security in terms of 'mine and thine'. Today, security means mutuality of approaches while dealing with security threats from various corners.

So, for tackling security problems like proliferation of small arms, environmental catastrophe, refugee influxes, international energy crisis, food crisis, religious fundamentalism, narco-terrorism, international terrorism and multiple threats from sinister non-state actors, we need to enter into global alliances. There is already a talk of 'Concert of Democracies' but we

should also cooperate and collaborate with other countries (which do not carry the democratic labels) with a stake in international peace and security.

Problems of global nature require global cooperation to tackle them and here the high and mighty in the Comity of Nations should realize that they can not continue to be islands of prosperity amid all round deprivation and at a time when a 'revolution of rising aspirations' is taking place all over the world. After all, instability and insecurity elsewhere does not stop at one's borders. In fact, such phenomena do not recognize borders at all and easily cross over into others' territory, jeopardizing latter's national interests and national security in the process. So, if the affluent countries want to secure their national interests effectively, they have to make compromises so that others, at least, can live a dignified life.

Only through international cooperation, a nation can manage these aspects of threats to its security, and not by riding roughshod over such endeavours as the United States of America is trying to do by jettisoning the Kyoto Protocol and thereby inviting environmental insecurity for all. One can say that today security of one means security of all. In today's world, Alexander Dumas' famous motto (in his novel, *The Three Musketeers*), 'all for one and one for all' should be the motto of all the countries if they are really serious about their national security management.

Even though there are always chances of one or other country working against such principle of international cooperation, as far as possible, a nation should try to build defenses against war by investing more and more in peace. As the preamble to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization says, "It is in mind that war starts and it is there that the defenses of peace should be built". So, while a country needs to guard against the unwarranted invasion of its national culture, it should also see to it that an international culture of peace and prosperity develops through mutual cooperation and collaboration.

A country not only needs to manage her bilateral and multilateral relations well through effective confidence building measures but should also try to promote international treaties in disarmament and arms regulation aiming at the larger goal of international peace and security. For this, we also need to have strong international organizations in place and need to provide more teeth to organizations like the United Nations. Besides, potential of such established forums as Non-aligned Movement, G-77, G-24, G-15, G-8, ASEAN, SAARC and APEC need to be properly harnessed towards national and international security management as both the issues are intertwined.

Also, as far as possible a nation should try to use its diplomatic resources to the best. It should not only try to presume and neutralize possible enemy moves and manoueverings through confidence building measures and through proper preparations but should also try to expand her area of cooperation by either co-opting neutral and friendly countries to its side or by trying to get a toe-hold in their area of influence. As about India, one can say that India should strive to be a part of influential regional and international groupings like APEC, Asia-Europe Meetings and United Nations Security Council.

Diplomatic resources should be properly harnessed and deployed for wooing the powerful members of international community to a country's own point of view, for promoting its values, for cooperation in such fields as technological exchange and economic cooperation.

Also, India should utilize Indian diaspora and its resources abroad in such diplomatic exercises. India also has to realise that she cannot make much headway in national security management as long as South Asia remains hostage to the continuous confrontations between India and Pakistan. So, national security for any member country of South Asia should also mean rapprochement between India and Pakistan and only then can the vast resources of the region be properly channeled towards development. Hence, India, as the most powerful country in the region has to see to it that Cold War, which has ended elsewhere, ends in South Asia as well.

Apart from all the above, it is always advisable to have an inner circle of close allies and in India's case, such allies could be Russia, Israel, China and France and at the same time India can improve its strategic relationship with the USA. There is already a talk of a 'strategic triangle' among India, Russia and China. India should seriously explore the feasibility of such a concept.

To conclude, one can say that an effective national security management requires strong institutions, a responsible government, an effective national security policy, a participative and vibrant civil society, a just social structure, a well-oiled economic and political system with a sense of 'distributive justice', a healthy culture of peace, a better war-preparedness, a good diplomatic machinery and cascading international cooperation in different spheres through continuous confidence building measures.