INDIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES: AN EVALUATION FROM INTERNAL ASPECT

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ABSTRACT

India is not only among the fastest growing economies of the world but also the fifth largest one. It is the largest consumer market and among the largest producer of food grains, milk, fish, vegetables etc. India has made significant progress and development in all spheres including Science and Technology to defence, nuclear energy to space research. India is the largest country in Indian peninsula in its military power, area and population. National Security is a dynamic and multi-pronged issue. National security challenges are both internal and external. Pakistan and China are India's main external challenges to its peace and security by developing anti-India alliances, by creating problems on international borders, cross border terrorism etc. India is a heterogeneous society and unity in diversity is its unique feature and strength. It is the largest democracy in the world with maximum youth population which can be a boon or a bane for its national security and development depending upon its (population) aptitude, skill quality and commitment to the national interest.

Equally important is the quality of political leadership, its policies and programmes for governance which are determinants of political culture, political socialization and national security. The demography and political leadership constitute the internal aspect of national security. In Indian context, the internal challenges to security seem to be more serious than the external one. Unemployment, rising socio-economic inequalities, declining ethics and values in public life, lack of statesmanship and politicized bureaucracy, media as

mouth piece of the ruling regime, rising tendency of authoritarianism etc. are among the major internal challenges to India's national security at present. As the topic is very relevant, hencee an attempt has been made in this paper to define national security, highlight its component and challenges.

KEYWORDS: Authoritarianism, Crisis of Legitimacy, Disharmony, National Security, Over- Politicization.

I. INTRODUCTION

"Security is the sum total of vital interest of estate for which state is willing to go to war either immediately or ultimately. It is really the core values and interest which are vitally important to the security of a state."

The above stated definition of *security* was mentioned in the *Annual Report* of Ministry of Defence, Government of India of 1972. The formation and maintenance of peace are often confused with security. Security is a much broader and multidimensional concept that refers to a condition in which there is no perceived threat to one's survival, incorporating many aspects of national and international interests. The security of any nation is also influenced by the geopolitical status, demography, national resources, defence &foreign policy, perceptions of external threats, internal security as a result of internal dissensions, externally induced acts, ethical integrity to defend its national interests (Singh, 2015). States across Asia are facing growing challenges to their security. The gradual shift in the balance of power from the West to the East has introduced security competition among the major states.

As India's economic and military profile grows in the wider Indo-Pacific, it too faces a range of intra-state and Inter-state security challenges (Pant & Bommakanti, 2019). The Indian economy registered a GDP growth rate of 8.7%, in the Financial Year 2020-21 and as per Trading Economics global macro models and analysts expectations, India's GDP is expected to be 3.60 trillion dollar by the end of 2023 (Mallik, 2023). It is the largest consumer market and among the largest producer of food grains, milk, fish, vegetables etc. India has made remarkable progress and development in all walks of life varying from Science and Technology to defence, nuclear and space research. Indian Army is the 4th largest one in the world. India is the largest country in Indian peninsula both from area and population perspectives. Being a secular democratic republic, India is a natural home and way of attraction to the people from this peninsula. That's why all its neighbours have a natural tendency to depend on it as well as an apprehension against its rising

power. National Security is a dynamic, complex and multipronged problem or issue; accordingly, its strategy should be. National security challenges are both internal and external. Pakistan and China are India's main competitors and rivals which generally poke peace and security threat to India through different ways including developing anti-India alliances, by creating disturbance and aggression at international borders, cross border terrorism, funding to ultra sand naxalites etc.

Simultaneously, India is a heterogeneous country having multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious features. Unity in diversity is not only its unique feature but also its strength if adequate space is given for the identity, autonomy, development and peaceful co-existence otherwise it can pose a serious challenge to its unity, integrity and national security. India is the largest democracy in the world having maximum youth population. However, this population and particularly the young one can be a boon or a bane for its national security, peace and development depending upon its population aptitude, skill, quality and commitment to the national cause, spectre of internal and external threats is haunting the nation which can halt its entire growth process, if the national security concerns are not timely and adequately addressed. Manifestations of such threats range from communal/sectarian violence to jihadi terrorism, separatist insurgencies in northeast and Naxalite extremist militancy (Bahl, 2007). While internally, the nation has been continuously facing and trying to resolve multiple fault lines, some of these continue to fester even after decades of proactive socio-economic, political and security initiatives. Successive governments have tried their own unique models or approaches for maintaining peace and harmony with India's hostile neighbours and resolving conflict within the hinterland, with varying degrees of success (Katoch & Chaturvedi, 2021).

Internal Security in India has been marred by feelings of all pervasive deep 'Insecurity' amongst the citizens. An overview of the internal security in India reveals many challenges before the Nation, which include: "*terrorism across the country and in J&K and North-East in particular; Naxalism with its growing spatial spread and consolidation; communal violence; casteism; dilatory and ineffective criminal justice system; politicization of the police; politico-criminal nexus; white collar crimes; crimes against women*" to name a few. Crisis of governance marked by "*growing corruption*" and "*poor Centre-State coordination*" has further compounded the problems (Mehta, 2009). The policy responses to these challenges have failed to instil sense of security amongst the citizens and led to the crisis all legitimacy of the rulers and their decisions.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

As the topic is very much relevant and of concurrent interest, therefore a modest attempt has been made in this paper to achieve the below mentioned objectives:

A. To discussion the concept of national security.

B. To discuss components of national security.

C. To study how internal security challenges are more serious than the external one along with suitable remedies.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

A. Concept of National Security

Some theorists equated national security with national defence, but security encompasses a considerably broader range of issues, dangers and responses. In reality, while security is comprised of various components, strong military readiness is a basic necessity in gradient the cutting edge, without which any discussion of security would be meaningless. Defence is a small but important part of a country's overall security. Military security is the most visible aspect of National Defence, but it is far from the only one. The procedures established to deal with national security immediately after independence in 1947 were based on a framework recommended by *Lord Ismay* (Lord Mountbatten's Chief of Staff) to the government of newly independent India. The main pillar of this system was the *Joint Intelligence Committee* (JIC) under the *Chiefs of Staff Committee* (COSC) of the armed forces, which was to provide integrated intelligence assessments on defence-related matters to the COSC and the Union Cabinet. The JIC was progressively strengthened and upgraded over the years and its mandate widened to include both internal and external threats to national security.

However, its limitations as an effective source of integrated national security advice to the leadership were repeatedly exposed (Pradhan, 2010). The *Kargil War* of 1999 focussed the nation's attention on shortcomings in India's national security management system, which was largely inherited from the British in 1947. A comprehensive review resulted into an overhaul, ensuring tighter coordination between the various security structures, reforming the higher defence organisation and bringing in a holistic approach, recognising the political, economic, technological, ecological and sociological factors impacting on national security. A set of reviews in 2017-18 resulted into further structural reform, taking cognizance of the global geopolitical flux, a revolution in the nature of military conflict, the transformative role of

technology in every aspect of security -internal and external, and the challenges arising from India's strategic ambitions. The reformed and new structures emerging from these reviews are still a work in progress. Their functioning as smooth, well-oiled national security machinery would require a coordinated, all governmental model approach (Raghavan, 2019). Internal and external security are in-built and interlinked, hence cannot be viewed in isolation, especially considering the digital psycho-extremism emerging from a source which is hard to identify. Such people threaten internal security even by sitting in any part of the world, are capable to provide training and guidance to anti social and anti national elements in the remotest areas in the country today, through digital medium to destroy the efforts of Indians for nation building.

They are destroying the valuable human resource of the country, hence needs to be checked immediately by taking effective measures, not only at the level of securities but by the effective participation of leadership and society. To sustain as a developing nation, preventing erosion of human resource, staying unaffected by negativity of those who are threatening internal security and participation of the society, are essential (Singh, 2019). Thus National Security is a wider term and Security Challenges refer to the real and virtual or probable threats poked or to be poked to the security of a nation. These threats may be from internal factors or external or both.

B. Components of National Security

The national security can be defined and classified into its Internal and external aspects which are undoubtedly inter-linked and inter-dependent terms and aspects. Their details are as under:

- **External Security: Aggression from other countries**

  India has to fight five wars, four with Pakistan in 1948, 1965, 1971 and 1999, and one with China in 1962, since Independence. India's land frontiers still remain vulnerable to external threats, primarily due to its historical legacies. Besides protecting its vast land borders, it has to protect its long coast line and Island territories (Pathak, 2022).The era before Kargil saw decisions on national security being taken by the Cabinet and relevant committees. These bodies tended to focus on immediate law and order, defence, terrorism and insurgency threats. They had neither the information inputs nor the time to recognise broader trends, or to evaluate medium- or long-term policy options. This often prevented a holistic approach towards security, including an assessment of the impact of economic, social or environmental factors on country (Chandra, 2005). There were a few attempts to address this lacuna, with indifferent results. Ad hoc advisory bodies set up, during the

tenure of Prime Minister *Rajiv Gandhi*, for multidisciplinary inputs on security-related issues did not last long (Subrahmanyam, 2005). Again, in August 1990, the government set up a *National Security Council* (NSC) to evolve an integrated approach to national security policymaking. A *Strategic Core Group* (SCG), headed by the Cabinet Secretary, was to assist it.

The difficult security environment leading up to, and following, the nuclear tests of 1998, once again, provided the impetus to efforts for a holistic approach to India's national security challenges. A task force, headed by then Deputy Chairman of the *Planning Commission*, *K.C. Pant*, was requested to recommend an appropriate national security management system, drawing on the experience of other countries. Based on the recommendations of this task force, the government constituted an NSC in April 1999, with the "*Prime Minister, Home Minister, Defence Minister, External Affairs Minister, Finance Minister and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission*" as its members (Gupta, 2018). No doubt, the external threats are serious one in the present era of complete war when the enemies are equipped with nuclear warheads and weapons of mass distribution, yet India is capable enough to retaliate and deal with such threats.

- **Internal Security**

  Internal security is an act of ascertaining and maintaining law and order, and peace within the national borders and defending its people from internal security threats. Responsibility to maintain it primarily lies with ruling political regime along with agencies ranging from civil administration and police to paramilitary forces and in demanding circumstances, the military itself. There are two apparent and simultaneous challenges in recent times before the country and society. *First*, to tackle the deviation of the youth being psychologically controlled and overpowered by the people who put at stake internal security and *second*, to re-instate the deviated human resources in the mainstream of society. This task would not be possible only by the defence forces but also need the vital participation of the society in prevention of such threats and healing the nation (Singh, 2019).

C. **Challenges to Internal Security**

There are a lot of challenges to the internal security in India and as a nation it has been making sustained efforts to contain and overcome them. An overview of the internal security in India reflects a positive trend as far as overcoming the earlier challenges are concerned. Nevertheless, the rising incidents of terrorism across the country, particularly in "*Jammu &*

Kashmir, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland" continue to pose a serious threat to the internal security of the Nation. In addition, there have been some major serial blasts in the recent past, resulting into colossal loss of lives and property. *Naxalism* has been growing both in quantum and number, and has grown spatially, spreading its tentacles to as many as thirteen States and close to 200 districts. Its consolidation remains the most potent threat to peace and order in the country (Madhavan, 2008). The social fault-lines of caste, religion, regions etc. have always been a cause of concern for the internal security in India and continue to be the serious challenge to it. The dilatory and ineffective judicial system as about 5 crore cases are pending in different courts in the country at present, with inefficient, politicized and unprofessional police system and administration have made the situation worst.

It put the freedom and rights of the layman at stake on one hand and abuse of power by the Government machinery on the other. Repeated human rights violations is taking place in the country, either on account of the social fault-lines mentioned above or most unfortunately by the appratus of State itself have gravely impinged upon the internal security in India. In addition, there has been a crisis of governance in the nation caused by other factors such as "*administrative inefficiency, politico-criminal nexus, nepotism and favouritism*". The political leadership used to make false and frevilous promises to the voters and hardly take care of public welfare and interests which led to the crisis of legitimacy and unrest in the country. The menace of "*corruption*" has compounded the problems of governance even further as India slipped to 86th rank in 2022 as compared to 81st in 2021 as per Transparency International Index Report, 2022. The ever-rising gap between the 'haves' and the 'have nots' would have grave implications on internal security. Crimes in today's world have acquired huge proportions. The new challenges in the form of "*cybercrime*", "*counterfeit currency*" and "*white-collar crimes*" have added new dimensions to the concept of internal security and necessitated the need to evolve new strategies and set up new acts and machinery to deal with them. Certain facets to be acted upon for strengthening internal security are as follows:

- **Left Wing Extremism (LWE) & North East Quadrant**

  The origin of naxalism, now also known as Maoism or LWE has tracesin the Naxalbari uprising in 1967. Since then, it has grown to a movement impacting many districts in the country and operative from Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh to Pashupati in Nepal. In 2010, Dr Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister, called it as the "*biggest threat to internal security of India*" ("Naxalism biggest threat to internal security: Manmohan", 2016). Since 2011

there has been a 41% reduction in violent incidents involving the Naxals and 49% reduction in deaths due to these incidents since 2013. In 2019 alone, the violent incidents reduced by 19% and deaths by 15%. Whereas by March 2020, out of the 58 districts declared as Naxal-affected, violence is now restricted to 30 districts (Annual Report, 2019-20). However, in reality some areas under the domain of LWE have been declared as liberated zones and these ultra outfits have huge financial aid manpower resources. The major factors behind rising LWE activities are unemployment, glaring socio-economic inequalities and poor grievances redressal mechanism in the country.

India's eight north eastern states comprise 4% of the national population and 8% of India's land mass. 96% of the borders of these eight states are international borders with *China, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan*. The creation of a conductive environment that fosters peace and security in the region should be the topmost priorities of the Government of the day. The stability and security of North-East India is paramount for the economic development of the region. Inputs reveal that insurgent groups are facing acute administration and financial crunch due to relentless operations conducted by Indian Security Forces and are forced to form an umbrella organisation to maintain and enhance their capability for orchestrating violent activities. A significant factor which has played an important role in the reduction of the insurgency in the North-East region is the difficulty faced by the *Indian Insurgent Groups* (IIGs) to set up their camps in the neighbouring countries. This can be achieved through better understanding and coordination with Bangladesh and Myanmar and advancement in the foreign policy ("Union Home Minister stresses for overall socio-economic development of Meghalaya", 2014).

- **Communalization and Exploiting Social Fissures**

A major internal fault-line is the ability of certain vested interests to whip-up national hysteria on certain issues, with the prime objective of derailing the social integrity and harmony of the country. The role of privileged media and political parties committed to attain power at any cost and settle their political score has remained the significant one. This was witnessed in the first tenure of the Modi-led NDA government, where a motivated hate agenda was created. During Modi Regime 2.0, this tactic was amplified with the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in 2019-2020. To counter these anti- Modi currents, an effective perception management narrative was developed and propagated to put the truth of Acts passed by Parliament, so that gullible people can be

saved from being used by unscrupulous elements for their vested interests (Katoch & Chaturvedi). The Hon'ble Supreme Court has time and again warned against the rising tendency of hate speech in the country but hardly any one bothered of it, may be the opposition leaders or from the ruling side both at the Union and the States levels. The appeasement policy, vote bank politics and violence cannot be justified whether may be in favour of minority or majority.

Massive socio-religious reforms are needed to exterminate caste distinctions and to bring about peace and harmony. Different communities fiercely assert their caste identities leading to caste wars, thanks to vote bank politics of quota reservation. Even after 60 years of independence, Indian establishment has failed to exorcise the ghost of communalism. Communal riots are a common phenomenon fuelled by religious fundamentalist organizations under political patronage. It is a hard fact that inter- religious and intra-religious conflicts are sharpening rapidly. Shia-Sunni riots are no less violent than Hindu-Muslim riots. But the most dangerous phenomenon emerging in 21st century is that of Islamist jihadi terrorism that has engulfed the entire world and broken the secular fabrics of many neighbouring states like Pakistan and Afghanistan (Iyer & Mirchandani, 2020). Fundamentalism is a serious challenge to India's national security and integrity irrespective of this fact that it is of Islamic or Hindu or Sikh community.

- **Corruption, Unemployment and Economic Challenges**

The current digital revolution and the changing circumstances relating to the same can neither be handled carelessly nor can they be ignored in the premise of internal security threat. *Poor criminal justice system* and *large-scale corruption* leads to nexus between criminals, police and politicians with the result that organised crime goes on unabated (Hazra, 2004). The prevention of *money laundering* is also essential for safeguarding internal security. Given the close nexus between *drug trafficking*, *organised crime and terrorism*, it is also necessary to improve the effectiveness of *Narcotics Control Bureau* (NCB) (Kulkarni, 2004). The unemployment rate in India, amidst lockdown and restrictions on mobility, is 12.81% as of June 8th 2021 based on the data provided by the *Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy*. Earlier, the unemployment rate in India shot up from 6.5% in March 2021 to 8% in April 2021, to 14.7% by May end, while the employment rate fell from 37.6% in March to 36.8% in April, says the report of CMIE. In 2020, the unemployment rate in India fell to 7% in September 2020 from the record high

of 29% since the country went into lockdown from March 2020; however, it later increased to 9.1% in December 2020. The unemployment rate again declined to 6.5% in January 2021 from 9.1 per cent in December 2020, while the employment rate surged to 37.9% as compared to 36.9% based on the data provided by the *Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy*. The lockdown to contain the corona virus outbreak has forced many industries to shut down thus increasing unemployment across the country.

Growing unemployment and glaring economic inequalities exacerbate social tensions and conflicts. This phenomenon is accentuated by the liberalization, privatization and globalization process, where the rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer day by day. A number of socio-economic and religious conflicts exist within Indian society and fostering unity in a diverse society, especially where conflicts generate violence, is no mean task (Phukan, 2019). The Government replied in Parliament in 2023 that more than 25 lakh youths migrated to other countries for education and employment during the last 5 years (2017-22) which reflects the sorry state of affairs pervading in India.

- **Rising Political Opportunism and Petty Politics**

India is capable enough to retaliate any external aggression and threat to its national security. Its internal threats are more serious than the external one. Today there is extreme level of political opportunism in Indian politics and petty politics prevails all around what to speak of state or regional politics and political leadership, even the national politics and leadership including the ruling regime are not its exception. There seems to be no place for ethics, values and norms in present politics and settling the personal and immediate political score has become the hard reality of the politics of day. The Parliament and State Legislatures are becoming the dens of criminals and billionaires, and their working environment is more seditious and gloomier.

It can be seen from the various decisions of the present Modi regime, may be policy decisions, legislation or otherwise. In some cases, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has to make serious and strict observations varying from change of guards in Maharashtra in April, 2023 to ethnic violence in Manipur in March- April, 2023. The issues of appointment of Sh. Arun Kumar Goel, an IAS officer, as an Election Commissioner overnight in November, 2022 to bringing Ordinance over the decision of constitutional bench of Supreme Court regarding the powers and position of Lt. Governor viz a viz elected government of NCT of Delhi in July, 2023, followed by the Contributional Amendment on

this issue in August, 2023. The Central government agencies particularly the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the CBI have been grossly misused to target the opposition and accomplice the political goals of ruling regime. The direct conflict and confrontation between the Union and the States particularly ruled by opposition can be seen in a number of cases which has adversely affected the working and disposal level of cases by the judiciary particularly the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

The rising number of these high-profile cases has faded the hope and expectations of layman for justice. The constitutional and democratic institutions in the country seemed to be surrendered to the ruling regime many times which is a serious internal challenge to India's national security and its democracy. It's not sufficient for national security that the ruling regime is enjoying the required majority in the popular house for sustaining its government; equally important is to address the issues and grievances of the minorities and people who are represented by the opposition, otherwise serious law and order problems can arise to pose threats to the national security.

IV. CONCLUSION

The global commons in oceans and in space are being increasingly contested. Technology has transformed the character of war, terrorism, crime and internal security challenges. In military conflict, conventional and nuclear forces are reinforced by actions in the cyber, space and information domains. Patterns of terrorism are changing, with innovative use of social media and new technologies. Cybercrime, sub-national movements, demographic disruptions, water conflicts, agrarian distress and various social issues pose new domestic challenges. Energy security, ecological balance and secure access to critical raw materials need to be factored into a national security strategy. With the advent of 5G, technology will be even more intimately intertwined with politics, economics, defence and security.

It is imperative that the national security structures need to be suitably upgraded to effectively tackle these challenges. This includes their staffing, skill sets and systemic capacity to develop strategies and harmonise approaches across ministries, agencies and non-state actors. It is important to disseminate a broader understanding of the country's national security perspectives to think tanks and the general public, so that the country's national security strategy has a broader public support base. Among the issues that had not been satisfactorily addressed are the rational allocation of resources between the three services, alignment of defence capability with strategic

objectives and dovetailing procurement procedures with defence manufacturing and export goals. The extraordinary churn in international politics over the past decade has impacted on India's strategic and security interests. Its relations with the US, Russia and China have been complicated by the course of the bilateral relations among them. Therefore, the present national security management needs an appreciation of the complexity, multidisciplinary nature and international reach of the challenges with a coordinated approach to tackling them. The economic concept of the Big Push Theory needs to be implemented in the present scenario and conceptualised for strengthening the forces to eradicate all known sources of threat to internal security.

As a nation and society, India should not hesitate in following successful nations having vide geographical and demographic variety. The combination of society and forces, collectively challenging internal threat are being appreciated by the world and the implementation is still a work in progress. The political leadership particularly the ruling regime and its work and conduct has a direct impact on masses and their perception and attitude towards the national interests and national security, therefore, the leadership must have ethics, norms and probity in their public life and commitment to the national cause. Dissent, deliberation, debate etc. are the essence of any healthy and vibrant democracy which must prevail. Constitutional and statutory institutions must perform their respective duties fairly and freely or without political biasedness. Issues of employment, equity, social justice and harmony should be taken up and addressed without delay.

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