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FUTURE READY INDIA: STRUCTURES REQUIRED TO MEET NON TRADITIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES/ THREATS

By

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India needs to be future ready, evolve structures to meet and mitigate the Non Traditional Security Challenges and threats post the COVID-19. The world is witnessing an unusually grave pandemic situation. Nation states have adopted different approaches to face the challenge with varying degrees of success. India has adopted a whole of Government approach and National Disaster Management Act 2005 has been invoked for controlling the situation. India seems to have performed well, not only domestically but has extended a helping hand to the regional as well as

global community which has been recognised and applauded worldwide. India has the potential, will and leadership to emerge from this pandemic as a victor with enhanced international goodwill and as a global leader in the new world order post COVID19, which will witness transition of power. The pandemic has also raised the need to reexamine the multitude of non-traditional security challenges, their mitigation measures and structures needed to proactively face them holistically for achieving the national aim which is to "Transform India to a modern, prosperous and secure Nation; Security being an imperative to accomplish the National aim". While the traditional security challenges can be addressed the non-traditional security challenges remain dormant in many ways and adversely affect the well being of the populace. Left unaddressed even partially these security challenges would be detrimental to achieving the national aim. Therefore, this paper endeavors to identify the non-traditional security challenges, suggest mitigation measures and recommend outline structures to operationalise the suggested measures.

(The SAARC video-conference on 15 March 20220; Photo Credits: PTI)

India's Security Challenges

India's Security Challenges can be broadly classified as: External (Continental, Aerospace and Maritime); Internal (J&K, NE, LWE); Economic; Technological (Cyber, Informational, Space, ICT, and Autonomous Weapons, etc) and Non Traditional Security Challenges (NTSCs).

The warfare domains have been expanding due to new and more complex technological challenges. Indian Security apparatus has been geared up well to address these challenges. Indian Army, Navy and Air Force are among the best in the world with a proven performance record during various wars and conflicts. The less talked about domains such as Cyber and Space have of late been consolidated under the umbrellas of Defence Cyber Agency and Defence Space Agency respectively. All Special Forces have been brought under the Special Forces Division for more synchronised and effective response. The NTSCs also affect the security of India in more than one ways. These challenges have subtle and sinister designs and remain hidden only to appear in a big way harming the national interest at large scale: COVID-19 is one such example.

Non Traditional Security Challenges

Non Traditional Security Challenges may be defined as "challenges to the survival and well-being of people and states that arise primarily out of non-military sources and include all non military conceivable challenges to the short and long term security of India. Non Traditional Security Challenges (NTSCs) can be broadly classified in to three categories; however there will be certain overlaps in time and space. Certain of these threats can also be grouped together when suggesting structures for mitigation.

> **Short Term NTSCs.** These challenges have the potential to affect day today life of the citizen at large scale. Food security, energy security, water security, infectious diseases or pandemics, drug trafficking and above all security of national interest – terrorism in all forms can be classified as short term NTSCs.

> **Near to Mid-Term NTSCs.** Many issues can jeopardise the national interest in a near to mid-term time frame. Bio-terrorism,

irregular/economic migration, prosecution of minorities, health and education, piracy, FICN, religious extremism, virtual societal warfare for changing the values and behavior pattern of society and intervention into the education sector to degrade Indian civilization linkages, culture and beliefs are such challenges. Water security, energy security and infectious diseases or pandemics can also pose a near to mid-term challenge as well.

Mid to Long Term NTSCs. Climate change, demographic dividends/disaster and threat to Indian citizens/ PIOs such as discriminatory policies in Uganda, Kenya, Yemen etc can pose a mid to long term security challenge to India.

Natural Disasters e.g. tsunami, floods, earth quakes, nuclear accidents/ incidents (Chernobyl, Fukushima) etc can pose challenges randomly and pre planned measures are required for the mitigation of such disasters and all other NTSCs. National aim is hard to be achieved without the mitigation of the NTSCs.

Mitigation of NTSCs

As the NTSCs know no boundaries, the mitigation measures would have to be ensured with an integrated response mechanism at all geographical levels; national, regional and global.

National. Each county devises its own strategy to counter the ever evolving NTSCs. India's strategy though fragmented, has initiation of many measures on cards, but much more is required to be done. Advancing energy, water, food security; improved societal security; increased health security; combating terrorism and internal security threats/ challenges; fight against drug trafficking, human trafficking and FICN; countering ideology based threats; synergizing intelligence structures; protection of the nation's scientific and technical potential and employment generation are some of the essential mitigation measures needed at the national level. Space based ISR is needed to detect the ships / boats engaged in illegal activities. There is a need to have an accurate assessment of the non-traditional threats India faces. Even a cursory consideration will show that India is vulnerable to terrorism, organized crime, illegal migrations and to the adverse effects of climate change. India's population is still growing and will

not stabilize until 2050/2060. Thus, India has the daunting task of providing jobs, food, water, education, health facilities and other necessities to the vast population. Any shortcoming in population control will have adverse consequences. National register of citizenship is essentially needed for filtering out illegal immigrants. India needs assured supplies of energy for economic growth. India is an energy deficient country. Thus, energy security will be on top of Indian agenda. Strict legal action against religious extremism is needed. Establishment of a National Medical Response Team is required to handle the COVID-19 type threat at the apex level and lower down at state, district, tehsil, block and village levels with both way vertical channel of communication. India's drug industry is largely depended on Chinese raw materials for production of generic medicines. Relying on one source, increases limitations. There is a need to create own sources and/or diversify the sources so that drug production is not affected. India receives enough rainwater annually during monsoon. So rainwater harvesting should be encouraged in large scale, particularly, in cities where surface runoff of rainwater is very high.

Regional. India is a subcontinent with regional contiguities, linguistic and cultural affinities, shared weather conditions, economic disparities, thick population, and such other common features. Many disasters and other NTSCs affect the region alike and call for a regional mitigation approach. India will remain exposed to the challenges of large-scale migrations. Food, water, illegal migrations, public health etc, are likely to become major issues of concern in India's relations with its neighbours. Bilateral cooperation between neighbouring countries is needed to have documentation of illegal immigrants and to have a mutually agreeable solution. India should work for a lead role in regional forums and should emerge as an Asian power with global reach.

Global. Terrorism including bio-terrorism, Infectious diseases or pandemics, religious extremism, climate change and other such NTSCs affect major parts of the globe without exception. A global approach is needed for mitigation of these challenges. Therefore, India should work towards a multilateral world order, leading initiatives and driving global policies, especially with regard to NTSCs. India should adopt a global approach in managing external crises.

India needs to confront climate change globally. India has already stated that, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the need for international cooperation, including institutional strengthening of the World Health Organisation. India has been working with other member countries of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) to establish a database which can play an important role in dealing with bio-threats and bio-emergencies. India has pitched for strict compliance of a global treaty banning production of entire range of biological weapons of mass destructions, highlighting the need for effective response to the challenges posed by new scientific developments in the area. India has made a fresh call to ban biological weapons on the occasion of 45th anniversary of the BTWC coming into force; India also made a mention of the fast spreading coronavirus and its global impact. India strongly believes that the BTWC must respond effectively to the challenges posed by the new and emerging scientific and technological developments of relevance to the Convention. India needs to strive for strengthening Chemical Weapons Convention (1992) and the Biological Weapons Convention (1975). India should strive for a lead role post COVID-19 in the emerging world Order, and drive the various initiatives. It is for consideration as the world looks up to India, A DELHI CONVENTION of world leaders could be held to get all on a single platform to combat future Pandemics.

(https://councilofcouncils.cfr.org/global-memos/coronavirus-view-italy-china-singapore-india-and-uk)

Structures Required

Structures are required to ensure an effective and organised system to mitigate emerging and existing NTSCs. Existing organisations e.g. NSCS, NDMA and SDMA need to be strengthened, however additional structures will be required to be future ready. As a conceptual framework the NTSCs can be grouped in four to five heads and managed by a task force e.g. task force one, two etc, some falling within the ambit of the existing NDMA and others to be driven by NSCS. Basic framework recommended is in five tiers:-

Apex level - Empowered Group of Ministers under PM.

Executive Level - Empowered Committees of Experts comprising concerned Ministries and Subject Matter Experts, responsible for directions, procurement, positioning and provision of requisite wherewithal, coordinated by NSCS/ Cabinet Sectariate.

Functional/ Specialist Task Forces - Specialist forces with a nucleus capable of mustering manpower and other resources in a time urgent response situation or to defeat an emerging threat. These could be dual tasked and trained comprising of NDRF, CAPF, State Police and Armed Forces, capable of integrating and exploiting Home Guards, Railways, NCC, and veterans of Armed Forces, and identified NGOs.

Working Level - These are State, Districts, Block and Panchayat assets, who will form the working force under guidance and directions of functional forces.

Citizen - In any calamity the neighbors are the first responders. Therefore, NTSCs subjects should be included in education curriculum at school and college levels for a wider understanding and coordinated actions.

Various Intelligence agencies will need to be coordinated possibly at and by NSC. This is an imperative for any effective response to mitigate NTSCs. In addition creating a secure data base with data centres located in India should be ensured.

The need to mitigate serious NTSCs caused by natural disasters was felt on several occasions in the past and NDMA Act came into being in 2005. Supporting structures were created subsequently at national, state and local levels. Disaster Management Act, envisages the creation of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), headed by the Prime Minister, and State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) headed by respective Chief Ministers, to spearhead and implement a holistic and integrated approach to Disaster Management in India. In order to translate this vision into policy and plans, the NDMA has adopted a mission-mode approach involving a number of initiatives with the help of various institutions operating at the national, state and local levels. Central Ministries, States and other stakeholders have been involved in the participatory and consultative process of evolving policies and guidelines. Guidelines for management of biological disasters like COVID-19 were also issued by the NDMA in 2008.

Other NTSCs have traditionally been addressed by the respective Ministries and Departments without a formal supporting legislation or apex level organisations. A number of NTSCs (Food security, Energy security, Health and Education, Water, Climate Change, Demographic Dividends/Disaster) are associated with the inter- ministerial development aspects of the nation policies for which are steered by the NITI Ayog and planned and executed by the respective Ministries. Inter-Ministry NTSC Issues such as Food Security (Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution; Ministry of Food Processing Industries; Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying; Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; Department of Fertilizers) get addressed mainly from commercial angle.

Security Challenge aspect normally get the least consideration for want of formal mitigation structures. Therefore, a central legislation for mitigation of NTSCs, akin to NDMA Act 2005 is considered necessary. National Security Council needs to be assigned the responsibility for operationalisation of the new legislation and an additional wing in NSCS could be created for this purpose. Existing linkages are required to be strengthened and new linkages created among NSCS, NDMA, NITI Ayog and concerned Ministries for ensuring a proactive and prompt response for mitigation of all NTSCs. A unified functional approach between Centre and

States needs to be evolved like the NDMA and SDMAs. Additional budgeting to meet the operating expenditure needs to be provided to the NSCS, NDMA and concerned Ministries.

Training is required to be imparted to all concerned personnel and periodical rehearsals needs to be undertaken to maintain readiness for facing the challenge when it appears. All possible NTSC mitigation measures should be war gamed and actions required to be taken worked out along with capacity enhancements, budgetary support in various scenarios. This should be undertaken by NSCS and NDMA with assistance from various Ministries and experts by creating working groups for various threats. These should be incorporated into a Policy document and local SOPs need to be created thereafter. Dissemination down to the lowest level be done and personnel trained and rehearsed for various contingencies. Integration of Media and information dissemination as also countering fake and malicious narratives will pay rich dividends. Scientific community and academia needs to be fully involved in development of tools needed for the mitigation process. Methodology needs to be created for employment of the veteran community for mitigation of the challenges where required. On account of their pan India foot print, commitment and discipline, they form a ready and cost effective pool of trained manpower to be deployed in emergencies. HQs IDS plays an important role for disaster management along with the NDMA. New structures should provide a major role for HQ IDS for mitigation of the NTSCs. India needs to have multilateral, bilateral and regional linkages of institutions for an effective mitigation of the NTSCs in a lead role. Well oiled structures for mitigation of the NTSCs at domestic, regional and global level are sure to serve India's national interest and also enhance its prestige.

(https://www.narendramodi.in/the-prime-minister-narendra-modi-at-address-the-g20-virtual-summit-548983)

Post COVID-19 will be a different world, with strategic technologies driving the emerging world order along with geopolitics, geo-economy and geo-strategy. The world will face NTSCs in addition to the existing threats. India has done extremely well in combating COVID-19. The need is to draw the correct lessons and be future ready by identifying, defining the new age threats and creating cost effective structures and systems to mitigate and defeat NTSCs.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed are of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS.