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# Political Science Review

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**Editor's Desk**

July 31, 2023

We have great pleasure in introducing 62<sup>nd</sup> Volume of *Political Science Review*, which covers five original research articles ranging from local governance and politics to international relations. Urvashi Pareek and Nagendra Ambedkar Sole analyses impact of elections of the Municipal Corporation (MCD) on national politics. Pareek and Sole reviews existing literature to explore complexities in context of last MCD election in Delhi. Saptak Mondal and Subhranil Ghosh investigates the phenomenon of identity formation in the Indian elites. They argue that transcending the class-caste nexus is a way forward to evolve egalitarian elite identity. However, because of various political pressure groups this transition is complex and polarizing various sections of the Indian society against the aspired constitutional goals. Next, Subra Kalo and Nongmaithem Mohandas Singh examines role of intelligence apparatus to tackle Maoist insurgency in India. Kalo and Singh's article suggests that building a robust network of local informers is key to break backbone of left-wing extremists in affected areas.

Devendra Kumar's article conceptualizes Chinese strategy to engage her neighbors. Kumar illustrates that China is advocating the centrality of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to consolidate its influence in the neighbourhood. He establishes that the American withdrawal from Afghanistan provides favorable conditions to China for pursuing it further. The last essay of this volume, brings out a novel perspective to rationalize India's need for national security strategy document. Priyanka Patel and Arun Vishwanathan accounts views of key military leaders to understand the need and challenges to it. Patel and Vishwanathan's interview-based study generates much scope for future research in this direction. In sum, articles in this volume bring diverse perspectives on political aspects of various issues of local, national and international importance.

As the nation celebrates the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav (AAM), we would like to note that *Political Science Review* (PSR) had made immense contribution in shaping the discipline of Political Science in India; however, it remains unsung hero in the disciplinary history. To mark its 61<sup>st</sup> anniversary, we would like to note that despite many ups and downs, we have been able to maintain not only the existence but also academic worth of the journal. We are committed to maintain the PSR's academic excellence and vision laid out by the founding fathers of the journal – Professor S. P. Varma and Professor Iqbal Narain. We take this opportunity to record our deep sense of gratitude for their visionary step to commission this journal, untiring efforts to make its global recognition and reach and performing herculean task of as editors for a very long time. Because of their commitment the journal has been indexed in International Political Science Abstracts (Paris), indexed and abstracted in Documentation in Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA, New Delhi) and ICSSR Journal of Abstracts and Reviews: Political Science also with many international indexing systems such as WorldCat and Advance Bibliography of Contents (USA).

Since last three years, we have been working to regularize the publication and circulation through speeding up the peer-review process, developing online manuscript submission system and indexing it in Google books. We are in the process of digitizing all the old volumes and editing an index of the PSR (1962-2023) for wider circulation and accessibility of the journal.

We are extremely thankful our contributors for making this journal possible. We are also thankful to our editorial team, advisors, reviewers and colleagues for their ungrudging help and cooperation. We are thankful to the Manager, staff and computer and printing operators of Rajasthan University Press, Jaipur for their constant support and technical help.

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## Elections of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi: Its Impact on National Politics

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Urvashi Pareek\*  
Nagendra Ambedkar Sole\*\*

### Abstract

*The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is one of the world's largest municipal corporations catering to 20 million people in the city. To handle this large population and its complex problems, the MCD is divided into three civic bodies and 12 zones. The MCD is as old as the history of India and was constituted in 1873, however, post-independence of India, MCD was constituted by an Act of Parliament in 1958, and since then, it is continuously operational. The 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act provided constitutional status to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The contemporary political scenario and mood of the people have helped in shaping the changed nature, functioning, and organisation of MCD. This paper highlights the journey of MCD, its need, issues confronted by MCD, recent elections, and the changing trends in the governance of MCD. The paper concludes with an observation of changing trends in municipal administration in Delhi and a prediction of what lies ahead in this journey. This is a review paper based on the existing literature available on the topic. The paper adopts a qualitative methodology where the content analysis method has been used to analyse the results and draw conclusions. Secondary sources like articles in journals, newspapers and government reports, etc. have been used for data collection.*

**Keywords:** Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Election Issues, Delimitation Commission, 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act.

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**Urban Governance and Municipal Corporation of Delhi: A Historical Overview**

Local governance is not something very new to India, there were many phases of decentralisation and had its presence during ancient and medieval times also. However, it was only during the modern period of history that decentralisation got wider attention and recognition for managing local problems locally and involving citizens at the grassroots in the decision-making process, making the governance more participative and democratic and gaining legitimacy to local governance. The journey of decentralisation in India began with the establishment of the Municipal Corporation in Madras in 1687. Thereafter, municipal corporations were also established in Bombay and Calcutta in 1726. Another landmark was Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1872, which provided for financial decentralization and authorised the provincial governments to local taxation for financial independence. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi was set up in 1873 post-Resolution of 1872. Another milestone in this regard was Lord Rippon's resolution that provided the right to local self-government to Indians (Chakrabarty & Pandey, 2019).

After the independence, local governments were placed in the Entry five under the State List. Given the large population in the national capital Delhi, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi was created by an Act of Parliament in 1958 (MCD). Other two bodies are working apart from MCD to provide civic amenities, the Delhi Cantonment Board and the New Delhi Municipal Council. However, the MCD covers the largest body in terms of area covered and population served. With the enactment of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts in 1993, the path for democratic decentralisation in India became clear. The Acts formalised the institutions of local self-governance in India with the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions for rural areas and Municipal bodies in urban areas. It enabled the resolution of people's problems locally, ensured their greater participation in politics, strengthened the governance structure, and most importantly, brought about a uniformity in local governance institutions in India. Even before the enactment of the 73<sup>rd</sup> and the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, the government constituted various committees, commissions and study teams to understand the how decentralisation could be implemented in India.

The 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, of 1993 formalised urban local bodies, that is, the types of municipal bodies based on population, fixed their duration, enlisted their eighteen functions under the Twelfth Schedule, and provided them with separate tax resources for financial independence and autonomous functioning. It also laid down the provisions for the constitution of the State Election Commission for conducting regular and free, fair elections to the

local governments and the constitution of a State Finance Commission after every five years to recommend financial resources to be allocated to the local bodies by the state government for their unhindered functioning (Constitution of India, 1950). The urban local bodies were institutionalised in all urban areas based on the population size. The objective is to ensure people's participation in administration of local affairs, effective delivery of public services, provide a mechanism for political training to the people at the grassroots and strengthen overall governance.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi is one of the largest municipal bodies in the world and the country. It caters to the civic needs of around 20 million people in the capital and covers a large area of around 1397.3 sq.km. Three civic bodies are functioning under MCD, the North Delhi Municipal Corporation, the East Delhi Municipal Corporation, and the South Delhi Municipal Corporation. These bodies were trifurcated in 2012 and re-unified in May 2022. The MCD also has 12 zonal offices for smoother functioning of municipal affairs including the Centre, South, West, Najafgarh, Rohini, Civil Lines, Karol Bagh, SP-city, Keshavpuram, Narela, Shahdara North, and Shahdara South. The Municipal Corporation undertakes all eighteen functions entrusted under the Twelfth Schedule and performs functions for day-to-day service delivery to the citizens. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi is also known for various innovations and governance reforms like the use of Information and Communication Technology tools for better service delivery, door-step service delivery and time-bound public service delivery.

Delhi, being the national capital is also the focal point for all attention in matters relating to politics, economy, society, administration and so. Being one of the two Union Territories with a Legislative Assembly gives it more importance over other Union Territories. For any political party to win over the MCD ensures direct control over the affairs in Delhi and getting access to all sorts of power. This creates a power play among the political parties and a quest to become central to all political and non-political matters in the nation. However, the last two decades have been very sensitive as people's choices have determined that who is going to rule, how and to what extent. It has also changed the trends in political system and the governance patterns. A victory over capital ensures stronghold in other political spheres is perceived. This paper attempts to capture the recent election to MCD and the changing trends in politics and governance.

### **Need for Municipal Corporation of Delhi**

Delhi, the national capital city of India is home to more than 20 million people and is the city with the second-highest number of inter-state migrants in the nation. A large population has to be served with very limited resources and also has

many complex problems like population concentration, availability of drinking water, maintaining sanitation, hygiene, healthcare, education, basic living amenities for all, development, slum management etc. It also has the role to ensure that the migrants moving in the city for many purposes like family, occupation, education, marriage and others are accommodated well. It also needs to secure some place for international migrants and in sustainable and inclusive manner. Further, the citizens are dependent on the state to obtain public goods and services has necessitated the creation of a specialised institutions to address local demands and aspirations.

The rapid urbanisation and development have complemented the need to establish a municipal body in Delhi. The population size of the capital mandated the creation of a municipal corporation based on the criteria laid down in the 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act. There were pressing needs to have a specialised body that could deal with day-to-day civic affairs realising the local factors like geography, and culture and utilising available resources judiciously. Moreover, the 18 functions enlisted under the 12<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Constitution also mandated the tasks to be performed by the municipal bodies. This required specialised arrangement in existing institutions and led to the creation of Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The daily immigrant coming in the city is around 1000 people every day and approximately 3.5 lacs every year. A huge man and material resources with appropriate planning is required to manage such large variable population and also address their civic needs.

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi is holds even more importance for the reason it being capital of the nation, central to all political power, union territory with a legislative assembly and providing maximum possible intervention into national politics. The MCD also provides a scope for empowerment of the people and provide them opportunity to resolve their problems locally. It also provides scope for local participation into politics and preparing a next level of politicians, training them at grassroots for taking higher responsibilities. Besides, furthering civic services it provides all eighteen services listed in the twelfth schedule to the Constitution of India. It may create sub-units for provision of services, the organisation of MCD has been discussed below.

#### **Organisation of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (3 MCDs)**

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi is one of the largest municipal bodies in the world covering largest area of around 1397.3 sq.km. and, serves one of the largest populations of around 20 million people in the capital. In view of the large population to be served, the MCD was divided in three municipal bodies namely, North Delhi Municipal Corporation, South Delhi Municipal Corporation and East

Delhi Municipal Corporation in 2012 (MCD). Growing population and growing demands were the main reason behind trifurcation of MCD. This helped in easing the service delivery to the citizens and looking after day-to-day functioning of the Municipal Corporation. The trifurcation was done mainly to divide the work among three office and reducing the burden over the MCD and for better allocation and optimum utilisation of resources along with maintain a regional balance in administering public services and providing public goods, addressing more problems effectively. However, newer problems of personnel, finance, people's representation, confusion in clear-cut demarcation of geographies in the three offices hampered its smooth and undisturbed functioning. Also, the three offices lacked co-ordination in its operation and added to the blurring of its functioning. As there are already three urban local bodies functional in Delhi, any creation of sub-units contributed further in vagueness in municipal functions.

Later, in May 2022 the trifurcation was reunited and comprised of a single Municipal Corporation in Delhi merging the three offices in North, South and East Delhi. This was done for two apparent reasons. First, to ensure effective co-ordination in the function of the three offices of MCD. Second, for concentration of authority in one body which could influence national politics, control the political power play at the centre, influence public opinion, portraying a wholesome image of the nation on the global platform etc. There was also delimitation of the wards that led to change in the exercise of political power.

The MCD also has nine zonal offices to bring about timeliness in delivery of public services. These offices are located at various places in the city to ensure there is no gap in service provision and local problems are resolved locally. Besides, there is a body of administrative staff appointed by the MCD who help in carrying out the day-to-day functioning of the MCD and locally elected ward members representing the needs and demands of each ward. Politically, the MCD is headed by a mayor and administratively headed by a commissioner or Special in-charge. These people together navigate the MCD to achieve excellence in delivery of municipal services.

### **Delimitation Commission and Election to Municipal Corporation of Delhi**

The elections are considered as a test of confidence and trust that the leader or a political party enjoys. Free and fair elections, being the hallmark of democracy, the elections in a local body as large as of Delhi gives an actual picture of the mood, tone and temper of the citizens. Delhi municipal body provides a scope for direct interference into national politics by the party in power and modulate the opinion of the citizens. It provides the first-hand legitimacy to any political party.

The election in MCD had to be conducted in April 2022 but due to the merger process of the three municipal bodies in North, South and East Delhi. The Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022 suggested a reduction in the number of wards to a ceiling of no more than 250 seats. A three-member delimitation commission was constituted that recommended the size of one ward to be around 65,000 citizens and each legislative assembly seat to have three to four wards. There were various pleas by the AAP to conduct election on previously decided dates and through voting machine with a paper trail. The elections were announced on 4 November 2022, notification date on 7 November 2022. The elections were held on 4 December 2022 and the results were declared on 7 December 2022.

Previously, there were 272 wards under the three MCDs of North, South and East Delhi where a party required 136 seats to be voted in majority. This time the Delimitation Commission has reunified the three municipal bodies under single MCD and with 250 newly delimited wards. A total of 42 counting centres were included with 68 election observers. Model polling booth were also designed to aware the voters about the manner of elections and encouraging them to vote. This an innovative idea to motivate all segments of the population, however the polling percentage was also less than when compared with the 2017 elections. This year 50.48% voters turned out for voting whereas, this was 54% in 2017. This discouraging trend of voter turnout points towards the decreasing interest of citizens in municipal elections (Delhi, 2022).

In this civic election in Delhi, a total number of 1349 candidates contested the elections and seven parties contested the elections. However, the number of candidates that contested this year elections were less than that compared to the 2017 civic elections in Delhi (Urban Affairs Kerala, 2022). Additionally, paramilitary forces were also stationed near the polling booth to ensure smooth, free and fair election process and eliminating ruckus during elections. Election manifestoes were prepared by each party keeping in view the issues faced by MCD and suggesting appropriate solutions for it. The parties were given appropriate time for campaigning and form public opinion.

### **Issues Confronted by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi**

Like any other municipal body, MCD also confronts with several problems that may be general in nature, which is common to all municipal bodies and some specific problems that are related only to MCD. However, both the general and specific problems are posing greater challenge to the MCD and requires an urgent, long-term and sustainable solution (Sachdeva, 2011). These perennial problems also

the areas prioritised by various political parties as their agenda in the manifesto. Some of these problems are discussed below (Hindustan Times, 2017).

- a) **Sanitation:** The MCD highly confronts this problem of sanitation. Many residents frequently fall ill due to poor sanitation and the risk of developing diseases associated sanitation. There is very limited scope for treatment of sewage and waste. Most waste is disposed-off in the river Yamuna and its implication of the water turning in to clouds of lather is evident. Some places also have an improper line or sanitation or always leaking ones. The problem aggravates during rainy season so the preparation of regular cleaning has to be ensured before the rainy season begin.
- b) **Access to primary Health-care:** Extending access to primary health-care is one of the important problem areas confronted by MCD. Though, there have been few innovation by the Government of U.T. of NCT Delhi, but the majority of poor people in the urban metropolis have been left out and have no access to primary health care. The conditions became even worse during the COVID-19 pandemic and raised the concerns over access to health-care facilities in the national capital.
- c) **Increased Corruption:** The level of corruption in municipal bodies has increased manifolds. There are frequent cases of corruption and bribery for getting any civic work done. Though there have been reforms like introduction of time-bounded service delivery, e-service delivery, door-step service delivery etc. but the measures have not been able to keep out the gate-keepers. Many illegal projects are sanctioned by the MCD keeping aside the laws, and exemplify the deep-entrenched corruption.
- d) **Lack of financial resources:** The MCD has very large tax sources and non-tax sources like grants to meet its financial requirements. But these financial resources fall short in addressing the needs of 20 million people and maintain the public offices. Finances are the lifeblood of an organisation and necessary for its continuous functioning. Limited funds act as an impediment in regular and effective functioning of MCD and carrying out its plans.
- e) **Demands for regularisation of contractual positions:** The contractual staff employed under MCD is continuously demanding for their regularisation. This has led to continuous strikes, calling off duties, protests which hampers the day-to-day functioning of MCD. The MCD already has a large number of regular employees and still requires personnel in large number but the limited resources has made their

regularisation a bit difficult as it would create an additional financial burden on the Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

- f) **Increased pollution:** The increase in pollution in air, water and land has compelled the MCD to think beyond ordinary solutions to mitigate its impact and take a hold of the situation. Besides, the U.T. administration and the national government trying their efforts, the MCD is also confronted with the problem to regulate number of vehicles, adopt policy for waste disposal and treatment or recycling, addressing the problem of landfills, deforestation, waste discharge in water bodies etc.
- g) **Public Amenities:** Facilities like the water pipeline, public spaces like parks, community centres, management of stray animals, fire-fighting, crematorium etc. have to be maintained and managed by the MCD.
- h) **Managing immigrants:** There are 1000 people coming to Delhi every day and almost its 30% are staying there as migrants (Hindustan Times, 2019). There are also some international migrants who seek the support from the government to provide them a space to safely reside. There are also international migrants like from Tibet and Rohingyas from Myanmar for whom the MCD has to find an appropriate place for their residence due to international obligations. To manage such a large population, meeting their civic needs, exploring the opportunity for their settlement, education, healthcare etc. are prioritised by the government without disturbing or compromising on the needs of the residents.
- i) **Regular interference of the Central Government:** The most important issue central to MCD is the regular intervention of the central government for it, being the national capital and the concentration of all public offices at national-level. This interrupts the regular functioning of MCD and makes it prone to various stages of questioning and direct, controlled influence by the state government.
- j) **Political pressures:** Due to the reason being a national capital the local leaders are not able to sustain the political pressure. Hence, they tend to become a puppet of big political parties and their leaders. They do not evade the instructions of the leaders and hence, the objectives of local governance fails. They also try to influence of public opinion and shape them according to their benefits.
- k) **Slum improvement and development:** The MCD has twin task of slum improvement and development. This is a concern for every municipal

body, for MCD this is a major challenge to ensure civic services in slums, improve the living conditions of the people and address the problem of sanitation and hygiene in these places. Also mentioned in the Twelfth Schedule to the Constitution of India, slum improvement has been set as a priority task for the MCD.

- 1) Housing:** The MCD has the problem to manage large number of people with limited resources like land, water supply etc. along with proper housing as a standard of minimum basic requirement for living. The challenge is the population density that increases tremendous pressure on existing resources.

### **Results and the Changing Trends in the governance of Municipal Corporation of Delhi**

The recent results have come as a shock to almost all the leading political parties in India. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) ruled Delhi won a majority 132 seats out of 250-member civic body. The Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) which ruled MCD for last 15 years was dislodged as the party could secure 104 seats and fall short of 22 seats required for a majority. The Congress party could manage to secure only nine seats with a decrease of 11 percent in its share of votes polled since 2017. Only six seats were won by the independent candidates.

Some reasons that can be noted for the big win for AAP are: Re-unifying the north, South and East Delhi municipal bodies under the MCD and the anti-incumbency issue faced by the BJP. Also, the AAP has gained popularity over time among the residents of Delhi since its inception in 2012 that has declined the popularity of the ruling BJP in the capital (NDTV, NDTV, 2022). However, there is only a difference of three percent in the votes gained by AAP and the BJP but has shaken the ruling BJP. There has been an overall increase in the votes polled for these parties when compared with 2017. The AAP secured 17% hike in its share of votes whereas the BJP retained its voter base and increased the number of votes polled by only three percent. The issue of corruption had been central to both the parties where the AAP made it a campaign topic and BJP alleged money laundering cases against Delhi ministers Satyendra Jain and Manish Sisodiya. Following these allegations by the BJP, led to the arrest Delhi minister Satyendra Jain by Enforcement Directorate under Prevention of Money Laundering Act after a leaked video of him in the liquor scam case.

Though, BJP has managed to win all three wards in the Satyendra Jain's electoral constituency and three out of four wards in Manish Sisodiya's assembly constituency but the overall voting percent did not increase much. The political



mnemonics have completely changed since the past 15 years and the people willing to go about a change led to dethroning BJP and inducting AAP in the civic body MCD (Mishra, 2022). The candidates contesting the election on BJP's ticket were found to be quite elitist than other contenders, they were educationally qualified and had a higher social-economic status than others. The disclosure of property showed that they possessed more property than candidates contesting on other party tickets. A visibly reverse trend evident was that the AAP after winning thanked the citizens of Delhi for showing their trust in the party. They also thanked Prime Minister of India and the Central Government (NDTV, NDTV Web site, 2022). Despite sour relations among the two political parties, the AAP and the BJP, the former has been continuously asking the Centre for financial assistance to the Government of Delhi and taking the nation by surprise.

### **Conclusion**

Municipal Corporation of Delhi recently underwent elections. Since past 15 years, the municipal body was dominated and ruled by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). However, this year the results came as a shock to the ruling BJP when the Aam Aadmi Party got overwhelming majority and support of the people. The election got delayed due to the reason of reunification of the formerly trifurcated Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The election stands true test of the people's choice and the associated legitimacy. Election process in MCD began on 4 November 2022 and ended with the declaration of election result on 7 December 2022. The Election of MCD Mayor still continues to be a matter of contestation. There are various issues confronted by the MCD and based on which manifestoes were prepared, campaigns were done for appeasing the citizens. The results show the changing trends in election and politics of MCD. The paper will contribute in understanding the changing trends in municipal elections at other places in the country and help in predictions.

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## Transcending the Caste-Class Nexus: A Study of the Formation of Identity Elites

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### Abstract

*The functioning of the Indian Democratic System and the operation of the Indian State have brought forth a number of important questions regarding the point of authority and/or power which enables and facilitates the continued working of the Indian Democratic setup. In this context, the position and role of the Indian elite becomes a significant topic for exploration and investigation, a topic which this paper has specifically concerned itself with. The following sections of the paper condense the question of elite formation and the multiplicity of factors structurally contributing towards elite consolidation. The aspects of class, caste, religion have been re-examined in concordance with spatial location whereby the paper attempts to construct a multi-dimension explanation of the phenomenon of 'identity elites' in India, taking into consideration both the intransigent and the incumbent ones and also exploring their mutual relationship. This intellectual exercise would necessarily entail a sharp divergence from traditional western theories of 'elite circulation', and involves an analysis of the process of interconnection between the conceptual categories of caste, class, religion with locational dialectics.*

*While the paper has built upon the framework of Paul Brass with regards to the ideas of India and Bharat, Sanjay Baru's work on the Indian power elite has also been referred to and a theoretical framework suited to the study of elite and elite formation in the Indian context has been advanced. The paper proposes the creation of a temporal demarcation which distinguishes the traditional postcolonial elite from the emerging neoliberal one. To that end, it treats the Mandal Agitation and the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement as watershed moments in*

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*the saga of elite formation and consolidation in India. The paper concludes by postulating about the possible future of the elite in India.*

**Keywords:** Identity Elite, Post-colonial, Neo-liberal, *Mandal Commission*.

### **Elite Formation and Structure of Elite Control in India**

An in-depth study and interpretation of the Indian elite can never be unabridged and replete without referring to the nineteen eighty-nine seminal works of Suren Navlakha; *Elite and Social Change: A Study of Elite Formation in India* (Navlakha, 1989). His ideation and conception of the structure, formation and structural transcendence have remained one of the heavily referred to works, about this contention. Therefore, as we begin with the paper, we can invoke his work for a preliminary understanding of Indian society and the socio-political gesticulations affecting and shaping the phenomenon of and processes involved with the formation of elites. The author, as put by Jock Anderson (1992), envisages Indian society as, 'statistically and culturally dominated by Hindus', therefore giving it a bipolar fervour (Anderson, 1992). This structure has always been determined by the characteristic hegemony of the 'dominants' over the 'labouring group' of under-castes and classes. In this socio-temporal framework, the dominance of the old elites has gone through a trajectory of transformations, maintaining the imminent assertion over the socio-political structures and formations. The post-independence ascendancy has its foundation based on Westernized education and professions. The emergence of the modern state has been a key issue in studying the dynamic relations of power and domination.

In this regard the 'state' is that which has served as an important historical pre-condition, for the development of the modern capitalist manoeuvres in India. With the formation of nation-states and new political institutions, new centres of power emerged, with the community changing caste relations, and vice versa. With the devolution of the British period, new social and political processes began straddling the national leadership trying to give a new socio-economic and political direction to the country. As the process of modernization was initiated, the Indian polity underwent several shifts in epochs and paradigms. The bureaucratic state machinery was established. Therefore, these were the times when the new 'power elites' came into existence, therefore, adding new dimensions and dynamics to the history of the 'development of elites' in India (Navlakha, 1989). The base of the political critique of elite dominance as propounded by Navlakha has been on the social ideology of distributive justice of the Independence Movement, which promised in both oratory and literary rhetoric that India would abolish sectarian identities like caste so that every citizen would be able to develop her or himself to the highest potential according to ability. Just

distribution of resources and access to them within the society has been one of the contending goals of the century-long independence movement, as well as the source of assertive legitimacy of the socio-political clout of the elites.

As stated, power does emerge as an important factor in the organizational formulation among the several groups, structures and organizations existing and functioning in India, and specifically, in the discussion of elite formation in India. Therefore, as André Béteille had propounded that the distributive hierarchy which is created by power, appears to be distinct from that of caste or class. Each of these functional orderings has a 'discreteness', with each having a distinct boundary which separates the parametric phenomena from each other (Béteille, 2012). And in an ulterior way, this gives rise to more probabilities. Taking from Béteille's work, what we would like to establish is that, the relationship among the three orderings has re-morphosized, and the distance in-between them even might have diminished to some extent. This has served as an essential precondition for allowing a fourth and, arguably, the most significant factor of the recent times, religion to enter into the discourses of the elites in India.

As MacIver had emphasized on, there had always remained a pre-determinative aspect attached to the organization and distributive dispensation of the Indian society. This is what brought in the closed structure of the Indian society, especially pertaining to the caste factor. But the conceptions of endogamy and the close-knit features have added to the variegations of the Indian social and political contexts. This has created several differentiations and probabilities in the organizational configuration of the India. And thereby, as we try tracking the trajectory of elite formulation and organization within the Indian context, the plethora of probabilities are to be taken into consideration, and analysed accordingly.

### **Amalgamation of Religion and Evolutionary Dialogism towards Elite Reformulation in India**

Therefore, it has been deduced that the operating functionality of the Indian socio-political structures proceed within a plethora of complexities thereby generating a whirlpool of possibilities. And as it has been enunciated, religion can be seen to emerge as a determinative factor; the trajectory of its emergence to prominence has been wrought with several convolutions and complexities. This has been augmented by the conception of secularism in India, and the difficulties in maintaining commensurate distance by the state from all relevant, active and practiced ethnicities and religions in India. Religion does share a multidimensional relationship with different sections of society and the different branches of political and state machinery in India. Religion not only plays a pivotal role in the individualistic purpose-induction within masses, but also in associative

organizational manoeuvres. But the idea of secularism that is simultaneously promoted and impaired by the state, and the pluralistic dispensation, which has been upheld and enshrined in the Constitution, combined with the historical approach maintained by the state towards any ethnicity within the Indian diaspora has given rise to several significant contentions and possibilities.

The complex strand of Indian secularism has given rise to a form of socio-political malapropism, and this gives rise to a form of social disjunction and a form of oblivious understanding of the socio-political flux. Pradeep Chhibber has effectively demonstrated and substantiated the magnanimity of the impact of religion in his book *Religious Practice and Democracy in India*. He goes on to verify his findings with data and exhibits that, which essentially portrays that a significant section of the Indian mass, shares an essentially positive approach and a qualitative relationship with religion both in the private and the public spheres.

Thereby, this imparts the foundation of the understanding of the impact of religion in the elite. Gilles Verniers and Christophe Jaffrelot have expounded in their works, after a careful data –based description of the five significant parameters which comprise the socio-economic dynamicity and demographic variables. They confirm with conviction that, the political representation in India, has always pandered to a considerable section of the elites in India, but the aspect which remains is that the nature of the elite remains in a constant flux. As they opine that, the historic rise of the BJP as a single majority party in the elections of 2014, has enhanced and fore boarded ‘a particular form of elite – those rooted in local and regional business networks’ (Verniers and Jaffrelot, 2013).

The political and cultural aspects are the two significant factors in delineating and etching out the various conceptions of nationalism which have written the history of India through several regimes and phenomena. The overarching significance of a large democracy with an equally magnanimous electoral structuralism, adds to the complexities and intricacies of the issue. There have been several recent instances of upsurge in religion-based nationalism, especially in the global south, and to some extent, in the global north as well. Turkey, Indonesia, Brazil, and even in Germany, religion based populist measures, have been greeted with considerable electoral success. India has also rallied behind the long list of countries going through a socio-cultural remodeling, especially, the intermingling of religion and politics in India has been there since the classical era. But the repatriation of religion as an important determinant did not come alone, but brought forth a plethora of factors conterminously along with the phenomenon.

The relation of an ideology with a particular social stratum, and its relevance in the pertinent stratified structure of the society, determines the impact of the ideology on the social structure. This also circumscribes the intellectuals and their pertinent positioning within the hierarchical structure, and their proximity to the economic and political power elites. Emerging as an important factor in determining the extent of influence and hegemony which the ideology might have on the social structure, the same suit remains applicable for the aspect of culture and ethnicity. With an overwhelming number of policy makers and influential intellectuals remaining concomitant to the economic and political elites, insularity in thinking, ethnocentrism in approach and parochialism in behavior ultimately trickle down and get manifested in the larger social structure.

India is one of the countries which have been witness to a socio-political reorganization, and an elite re-structuralisation, essentially buoyed by religion and ethnicity. This has essentially and compulsively affected the elites. The fact that the Hindu population constitutes a large majority in most of the provinces and electoral constituencies gives rise to the conditions of 'democratic dividend' with pivotal centrality in the narratives and discourses. The challenges which have been faced by the Hindu organizations were largely comprised by the fragmentative dispensations caused by the contending factors of caste-based, linguistic or regional divides. The engendering of the competition and the power struggle among all the identities within a particular community or sect which would be able to entail an objective reification of identity along the fault lines, would require the holistic perception of Hinduism. Another factor which emerges from this is the emergence of 'census elections', which comes conterminously with the alteration in the electoral language as well (Ferree, 2010). This would be reformulated to circumscribe the conception of a larger Hindu polity and demography, transcending the narrow margins and barriers of the intra-ethnic fault lines. Though this cohesion is a formidable task, the gene rhetoric and narrative have been formed accordingly, with the increasing electoral acceptability of the NDA.

### **The Historical Trajectory of Ethnic Radicalism and the Formation of New Elite**

The Indian state was held up and portrayed by the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal as a 'soft state' in his book "Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations". This was due to the soft approach and formidable flexibility which the state structure exhibited against communalism, and sometimes even promoted it. Secularism, as mentioned previously, had been subject to contradictions in state policy when the latter was confronted with religion-backed politics. With the revival of pro-Hindu politics during the Indira Gandhi regime,

accompanied with systemic polarization, the de-radicalization process which had been initiated within the organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh or the Jana Sangh, got halted and even, reversed. After a decade of stifling obstacles and gradual secularization, whereby, through the late seventies', the Sangh Parivar tried pandering to the middle class with a form of ideological acclimatization.

The electoral and social re-morphosization which BJP brought into the diaspora gave rise to further contentions. Most of the prior incidents manifest incidences of mass mobilisation across the ethnic fault-lines like that of caste or language, defining ethnicity in terms of Chandra, where it is based on ascription and descent (Chandra, 2006). It was explicitly witnessed in the decade of the 90's, especially in the post-Mandal Commission epoch. But imparting salience to religion as a holistic unit of organization, dominating over the units of language or caste, was indeed a tough periphery to permeate. Therefore, the pursuit of RSS-BJP-VHP and their conscientious endeavours towards an integrated intersectional mobilisation, by rendering caste as a compatible category along with religion was an unconventional and a remarkable one.

As Ashutosh Varshney propounds, there have been three distinct forms of competing strands of nationalism which had emerged from the nationalist movement. The first one comprised the territorial sovereignty and the spatial integrity of India as a nation-state. This was followed by the aspect of culture, which defines the idea of Hindusthan, and finally the factor of religion. This is where the 'Secular Nationalists' and the 'Hindu Nationalists' emerged distinct and different (Vaishnav, 2019). Along with this factor, the one which integrates in is the prominent unapologetic commitment of the present Hindu nationalist endeavours towards winning elections. Electoral success is the most significant objective which remains embedded within the words 'domination' or 'mobilization' as we use them in this particular paper. It has remained so, historically as well as spatially. As Sircar suggests, arithmetic does emerge as an important factor, especially pertaining to space. Thus, as electoral success determines the evolution of the nature of elites, the factors of pivotality and demography do affect the entire phenomenon, as aforementioned in the paper. The pivot demotes the centrality and significance of the ethnic denominator in determining the electoral results or the social morphology. This seemingly 'soft' factor, generally circumscribe the culture, adaptability as well as acceptability of a particular unit, belief or organisation. This is generally succeeded by the factor of population and the way it is dispersed across different provinces and parts of territory. This comprises the demographic factor, which has a distinct but paramount significance in this entire phenomenon.



The Hindu form of nationalism was a counter narrative and a challenge against the older elites of the Congress, sighting it to be the perverted intrusions of the offshoots of foreign cultures. The presence of a contending Hindu majority within India, led to the political appeasement of Hindus as an ethnicity, giving rise to the idea of 'census elections' (Ferree, 2010). Therefore, the precarious balancing among the different ethnic and communities get shoved aside, leading to the preferential treatment of the Hindus, and to be perpetrated by the state. As Vaishnav promulgates, the Hindu identity is important for striking a form of social unity and cultural cohesion as well as global recognition. The promulgations of Savarkar and his idea of *Pitribhoomi* and *Punyabhoomi* propounded that the idea of *Bharat* would be essentially Hindu-centric, where, the other minority communities would have to subscribe to the dominant narratives and compromise with the scheme of things, according a form of cultural superiority. Hinduism is not a monolithic unit, with several strands branching out from it. Political Scientist Kanchan Chandra iterates that there are at least four strands subletting from the principal core ethos, each and every one it associates the cultural roots of the notion of modern to that of the ancient Hindu principles and its lineage. The collective conception of India as an essentially Hindu-nation, with inextricable links to the cultural lineage emerges from the promulgations of each of the strands. This demands acknowledgment and primacy, not only from the state structure, but also from the civil society. This gives rise to the conflated conception of religion and culture, which had remained distinct but in concomitance, during the regime of secular nationalism.

As has been witnessed, religious sloganeering and religious activism have heavily impacted the political diasporas across the world, ranging from Brazil to America or Africa. This has, largely impacted the developing areas, the global south. The cleavage conceptions have been reversed by this virtue, and the promulgations of the constructivist theories have been negated. The idea of accruing political dividend based on the conflict over resources between two opposing communities has been reversed. The relation with the Hindu-Muslim violence and the narrative of Hindus being 'against' the Hindus, in the scramble for resources or state recognition exists no more (Brass, 2011; Wilkinson, 2006).

This gives rise to the condition of a 'state-driven' form of Hindu nationalism, which can be distinctively addressed and disparately dealt from that of 'issue-driven' strand of Hindu nationalism (Sircar, 2022). The standing demands which have historically been bothering the political and electoral discourses come into purview here. The issues concerning Hinduism and its pervasion into the discourse as a political factor, is one of the novel aspects, which has changed the trajectory of elite formation among the majority populist parties. Thereby, the means of policymaking

and communication have seen more democratization and decentralization, which articulate politics in terms of the 'Hindu issues' (Sircar, 2022).

### **Major Contours of the Process of Elite Formation in India**

The complex and often interlocking nodes of caste, class and religion that constitute the matrix of hegemonic power in India nourish and replenish the networks which have proven indispensable to the formation, sustenance and domination of elites throughout the Post-Independent history of the country. Elite power, as interpreted in the context of this paper to be the power of supreme decision-making for charting a course for the country and to influence the choices of large numbers of people, has involved the agglomeration and consolidation of traditionally dominant groups tied to agriculture and emerging business groups incubated and/or insulated by the state. This point needs to be elaborated upon in order to fully appreciate and appraise of the changes and continuities in the process concerning the origination of elites in Post-Colonial India. Contrary to the path of capitalist development pursued by European nation-states, the Indian state while facilitating the growth and accumulation of capital, itself drew legitimacy for its existence from a fragile network of rural and urban groups, groups whose cumulative interest lay in arresting agricultural productivity to a certain quantum and appropriating resources for maintaining disproportionate privileges vis-à-vis other less powerful sections of society (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987; Bardhan, 1984).

Drawing from the observations of eminent political scientists like Rudolph and Rudolph and the noted political economist Pranab Bardhan, the state in India has had to walk a tightrope between upholding the interests of the landed peasantry on one hand and the emerging bourgeoisie class on the other. Unlike a complete overhaul of the power structure and creation of a concentrated bourgeoisie coterie in Europe, India witnessed the interests of the bourgeoisie being reconciled and mediated in relation to the interests of an intransigent rural power elite which had come into existence with the execution of the first installment of land reforms in the 1960s, which abolished the Zamindari system. These reforms did not actually open up land for redistribution to the marginal farmers. Instead the middle farmers hailing from the middle castes gradually gained more power and control over the rural hinterlands of India with the gains of the Green Revolution accruing within this specific stratum of Indian society (Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987; Bardhan, 1984).

The middle castes by virtue of their ability to provide political patronage were able to cultivate extensive political networks and transmogrify into a kind of Intermediated Pressure group which inhabits the boundary between the urban and the rural spaces. Their intermediated position enabled them to assume a position whereby

the Indian state is compelled to contend and/or compromise with them when the latter formulates a policy framework in attempting to uplift the status of the marginal and landless laborers. The failure of the Indian state in co-opting the intermediated elite has only exacerbated the issues of divergence between the middle farmers and landless peasantry. The additional inability of the Indian state to develop a broad developmental plan of action which would have raised the standard of living of all the different segments of society has in turn deepened the schisms between different groups and created conditions conducive for elite stranglehold upon the sphere of the society and the economy. With the status quo in the rural hinterlands remaining unhampered and the Green Revolution only reifying the control exercised by the middle farmers upon the other sectors of the agricultural economy, the creation of a dominant bourgeoisie class or to put it very simply, a capitalist class which exercised complete control over the means of production was beset by various challenges. Referring to the work of Alice Thorner, the economic mode of production in India cannot be separated from the socio-political structure of the country (Thorner, 1982) where divergent developmental patterns have simultaneously created a distinction between, as Sanjay Baru points out, India and Bharat (Brass, 1990), a dualism (Baru, 2021) that has come to shape much of India's present, and quite possibly its future as well.

As Pranab Bardhan argues the elite in India is representative of a dominant propriety class (Bardhan, 1984), which straddles the two realms of India and Bharat at the same time. Hence, this paper proposes a two-fold understanding of the Indian elite whereby a theoretical framework oriented towards a study of the Indian Elite would necessarily have to analyze and understand the caste-class dynamic that underpins and underlines the process of elite formation in India.

### **Elites in India and the Phenomenon of Space Control**

It is also important to cognize that the site of elite power production is a space where, at least the rural elite have dominated by virtue of their positional intermediation, that is to say their control proliferated not only over land and agricultural labour, but also of influence over the networks that conjoin the Indian state with the marginalized people of the rural hinterlands. This paper would argue that geographical space has been a key axis along and with the use of which elite power has been transmuted across the many dimensions of Indian society. The Post Independent history of this country has seen the creation of these in-between spaces which are a product of the constant dialectic and movement to and fro between the metropolitan centers of urban existence and the rural margins. In essence, the concept of space formation is deeply associated with the concept of

elite formation in India, and this locus of spatial control has defined the major contours of Indian politics throughout the latter half of twentieth century.

It can be argued that the spatial axis of elite power is not top-down, but in fact spread out in to every domain of India's economy and society, permeating into even the most intimate spheres of life. This diffused network can also be considered as the partial explanation to the question of how the elites in India have managed to maintain their power and privilege. The disseminated nature of elite power manifesting in and throughout the intermediated spaces tethering the urban stretches and rural expanse of India has also prevented a complete transformation of the semi-feudal economic system and the onset of industrialization. The inexorable consequences of this elite power diffusion have been huge socio-economic distortions and uneven patterns of development among various regions of the country leading to exacerbated inequities among groups.

### **The Study of the Indian Elite – A Theoretical Approach**

This paper also argues for the need to appreciate and acknowledge the multiconstitutive nature of the Indian elite whereby, the caste-class dynamic underpinning the Indian elite class has been alternately accompanied by and, increasingly being substituted by a religion-caste dynamic. This has been especially true after the Mandal Agitation and the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement that reflected the enormous social and political churn and unrest of the 1980s and 1990s in India. The social forces unleashed as a result of the aforementioned movements have remarkably altered the structures and patterns of elite power and domination in the country, in the sense that the diffused network of elite control spanning across India and over the divide into Bharat is dismantled. In this context, this paper takes recourse to Sanjay Baru's arguments regarding how the elite based in New Delhi, whom he denotes by using the term 'lutyen's elite', has seen its privileges shrink as a result of the policies and actions of the Modi government (Baru, 2021).

What could be argued here is that the social energies emanating from the Ram Janmabhoomi Movement and Mandal Agitation have altered the positional intermediacy maintained by the elite till the 1970s. The two movements cumulatively constitute a break in the trajectory that underlines the process of elite formation in India, and indeed marks a watershed moment in Indian politics. As the full fructification of the contestations concerning India and the *Bharat*, the new realities coming into existence saw the middle caste elite of *Bharat* being subsumed into the larger politically conscious and essentially Hindu middle class. The most interesting point to note here would be that the rise of this middle class was a result of the economic transition the country was going through, first in the

1980s with the implementation of Operation Forward, and then with the Economic Liberalization of 1990 (Denoon, 1998). But this class exhibited a far stronger cultural consciousness than a class consciousness which they also explicitly interpreted in culturally Hindu terms. It is in this context that the religion-caste dynamic underpinning and underlining Indian politics and society is exhibited; religion appears to absorb the differences brought about by caste while caste proves its tendency to resist this all-encompassing affect of religion.

The factor of religion assumed a relegated position in the elite nexus throughout the first three decades following Independence, but its contemporary importance cannot be overstated. It is also because of religion the elite in India faces challenges. As the urban semi-rural elite nexus has been dissociated from each other, following Mandal, Ramjanmabhoomi and Liberalization, the urban elite has been overwhelmed by the Hindu middle class (Baru, 2021), and Narendra Modi has assiduously cultivated this class as a very strong and reliable vote base for sustaining his and the Bharatiya Janata Party's political program. The 'Hinduness' of this assertion has not been reciprocated by a Hindu response. The urban elite have gradually lost space, favour and privileges, which this paper argues is a substantiated prognostication of Sanjay Baru in his book. However, this Hindu assertion has had to contend with the caste networks of Bharat. Thus, while the urban elite have lost power, the semi-rural elite continue to hold sway over much of the hinterlands and the overall agricultural mode of production, as well as influence and/or thwart policy concerning agricultural and rural development.

Therefore, the struggle between the rising Hindu middle class and the old rural elite has characterized the social discourse and the political processes in India in the present times. It can be stated that this struggle will shape the future of this country to a large extent.

### **The Future of the Elite Formation in India – A Concluding Retrospect**

To conclude this paper, a set of postulations are advanced in this section. Firstly, it is argued that the state in India shares a very complex relationship with the elite. The elite in this country have been intellectually and materially invested in restraining the Indian state and restricting its powers. To that end, state capacity in this country has always remained limited. Contrary to several other states, the elite class in India has not exercised its control over the state, by embedding themselves into the state apparatus. Rather, the elite in this country appears to form bulwarks against state interfering and penetrating into their domain of influence and privilege. Referring to Gunnar Myrdal, India's failure to develop into a strong state (Myrdal, 1968) has much to do with the elite class working from within to limit the powers of the state.

Secondly, any theoretical framework oriented towards the process of elite formation in India has to necessarily adopt a multiconstitutive approach, whereby the different facets and factors of the Indian elite must be assigned adequate attention. Additionally, the intersections and equations between the conceptual categories of class, caste, religion, geographical position (social intermediation) form the foundation of the interlocking matrix of elite power in India. Most importantly, this paper argues for the creation of a theoretical lens to study the phenomenon of positional intermediation that drives elite power in India.

Thirdly, the elite in India display a recalcitrant tendency of resisting change. The elite in India have straddled two different spaces of the urban and the semi-rural, and are concerned with maintaining the status quo even at the cost of entropy and gradual debilitation of their condition. This can be validated by how the lutyen's elite of New Delhi has been undermined and undercut by the collective expression of a consciously Hindu middle class. This phenomenon has been explored in detail by Sanjay Baru in his book. This paper augments, expands and expounds upon this argument, arguing how the pan-Indian Hindu middle class is now challenging the semi-rural elite, and the Indian is now being a site of this contestation. Fourthly, the class-caste contention that provided an explanatory framework for understanding the elite India must be modified with the addition of social mediation manifesting as a result of geographical position. This triad is fundamental to the understanding of the dialectically diffused nature of elite power in India. This triad however, in contemporary times has been replaced in large part by a religion-caste dyad.

Finally, this paper states that the new middle class interprets and articulates its position and privilege in explicitly Hindu terms and challenges the caste elite of the semirural spaces. This paper argues for acknowledging Mandal and Ramjanmabhoomi as a kind of breakeven moment, and that the study of elite in India must look at appreciate the temporal-spatial shifts in the process of elite formation before and after these changes. It is also this transformation which has largely influenced the decisions, actions and policies of political parties in the present times. It finally remains to be seen whether the new middle class will produce a new elite and how and whether the relations with the old semirural elite evolves, and what will be the position of the state vis-à-vis this contentious dialectic.

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# **Intelligence and Counterinsurgency: Role, Issues, and Challenges in Combating Maoist Insurgency in India**

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## **Abstract**

*It is generally believed that there has been a decline in the number of Maoist-related violence incidents and the fatality rate since 2011. Furthermore, the Maoist insurgency has limited or confined itself only to Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and some parts of Maharashtra. However, the recent Maoist ambushes on the central paramilitary force in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand have put a question mark on the optimistic narrative of winning the war on Left Wing Extremism (LWE). These attacks indicate the flaws in counterinsurgency strategies by showing that the Maoists are still able to inflict casualties on security personnel and civilians and destroy public properties. It further evoked the idea of good intelligence as a necessary condition for successful counterinsurgency operations. This article examines the vital role of intelligence in counterinsurgency operations and the issues and challenges they face in combating the Maoist insurgency.*

**Keywords:** Counterinsurgency, Intelligence, Counterintelligence, Insurgency, Maoist,

## **Introduction**

The idea that good intelligence is a prerequisite for successful counterinsurgency operations has recently been promoted in India's fight against the Maoist insurgency. It has the ability to alter the nature of the insurgency and greatly lessen the threat to national security. For this, the counterinsurgency forces must understand the areas of their operations, such as the terrain, society, and socio-economic conditions, among other things. These were the necessary

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guidelines of India's counterinsurgency operations in Punjab, the Northeast region, and Jammu and Kashmir since independence. It used multi-pronged approaches such as military, political, and developmental (socio-economic) approaches and has successfully managed to control (except in the case of Punjab and Mizoram), if not resolve. Most of these insurgent organisations have had a common goal, which is the creation of separate sovereign states, while the Maoist insurgency aims to accomplish a new democratic revolution through a protracted people's war. Since the 1970s, the states' governments, with the support of the central government, have deployed military and developmental approaches.

The recent Maoist attacks on the counterinsurgency forces in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, however, have evoked the idea of good intelligence as a necessary condition for successful counterinsurgency operations. In Chhattisgarh, the Maoists launched an ambush on the Central Reserved Police Force in Sukama in March 2020 (Chandran, 2020), and in Bijapur district (2021), and a total of 47 counterinsurgency forces lost their lives, and many arms and ammunition were looted. In another incident in Jharkhand in 2021, Maoists detonated an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) targeting the state police special unit – the Jharkhand Jaguars, a special police unit established and trained in guerrilla strategy to combat the Maoist insurgency in the state (*The Economics Times*, 2021). Many argue that the intelligence networks have failed to detect or prevent these incidents.

This article studies the key role of counterinsurgency intelligence in tackling the Maoist insurgency in India. The article begins by defining the terms 'intelligence' and 'counterintelligence' and their roles in counterinsurgency operations. It also seeks to explain why the state struggled to defeat the Maoist insurgency despite its superiority in terms of forces and wealth. The paper argued that the states' efforts to understand the Maoist insurgency may be countered by the insurgents' understanding of them, thereby undermining their efforts. The lack of coordination between intelligence agencies and security forces deployed in the field remains a major concern and a challenge. This article is primarily based on secondary literature. However, the analysis is supported and strengthened by the use of primary sources such as the annual reports of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).

### **Understanding Intelligence and Counterintelligence**

It is generally agreed that intelligence is the end result of gathering, processing, analysing, and interpreting information (of military or political significance) about other countries, hostile or possibly hostile troops, or operational areas. Information about threats to a nation's interests (such as social, political, economic, and military ones) and any other issue affecting national

security, whether it was acquired inside or outside the country (Andrew et al. (eds.), 2019). According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, 'intelligence is defined as information concerning an enemy or possible enemy or an area' (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary- Online*). Its objective is to 'eliminate or reduce uncertainty for government decision-makers' (Clapper, 1995: 3). According to Johnson, the information that intelligence agencies gather and communicate to policymakers is limited, either in the form of oral briefings, memoranda, and more formal reports, either short or long. But all of it focused on bringing people up-to-date on current events or 'a more in-depth understanding of a topic based on exhaustive research' (Johnson, 2010).

Then again, according to the Cambridge English dictionary, 'counterintelligence' is 'a secret action taken by a country to prevent another country from discovering its military, industrial, or political secrets' (*Cambridge English dictionary- Online*). While counterintelligence is defined in the Merriam Webster dictionary as an 'organized activity of an intelligence service designed to block an enemy's sources of information, to deceive the enemy, to prevent sabotage, and to gather political and military information' (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary- Online*), it can be said that counterintelligence is an intelligence organisation's 'concerted endeavour to prevent their adversaries from obtaining information against them, and its methods are rooted in people and human activity'.

### **Counterinsurgency Intelligence**

Intelligence plays a significant role both in conventional (traditional warfare) and unconventional warfare (insurgency, proxy war, and irregular war). Although the procedures and techniques employed in both warfare are similar, only the nature of conflict differentiates the information gathering process. On one hand, security troops in conventional warfare have clear objectives and are conversant with the adversary. They also endeavour to gather information about adversary nations' capabilities, intentions, and operations. In conventional warfare, commanders choose which goals they will pursue, and intelligence tends to back up army activities. Intelligence supports both the decision-making process and the gathering of new information to support the chosen course of action or areas of operations.

On the other hand, intelligence gathering in unconventional warfare, particularly counterinsurgency, is a challenging task for counterinsurgency forces because the adversary (insurgent groups) is unclear, opaque, and cannot be distinguished from the general public. In such a situation, insurgents enjoy greater advantages and also benefit from geographic sanctuary (Clark, 2006). They exploit not only the advantages of the terrain but also the people's support and sympathy. If they face overwhelming suppression from the counterinsurgent forces,

“insurgents will go wherever a sympathetic local population can be found” (Milstein, 2008: 4). As a matter of fact, in general, insurgents' strategic objective is to change the political order, not defeat state forces. Therefore, governments' counterinsurgency operations need not only the discipline and vigour of force (deployed security personnel) but also reliable and actionable intelligence. Certainly, reliable counterinsurgency intelligence is identical to law enforcement intelligence (Perry and John, 2008: 15).

In counterinsurgency operations, intelligence preparation of the areas of actual or potential operations must be taken into account. It is a systematic process of information collection, evaluating, and analysis of terrain, climate, and insurgent groups, identifying rebel members and whereabouts, strength, weapons they use, and their areas of domination. This allows the counterinsurgency force to better understand the operational environment and maximize operational effectiveness. Intelligence should also be gathered, analyzed, and integrated into social, historical, political, and cultural factors that shape the perceptions, motives, and behaviours of the population of the operational environment (*Field Manual 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5*, 2014: (8)2). This will enable us to understand the people and their relations with the insurgent group. According to Perry and Gordon, an extensive analysis must be done to understand the relationships between members of the various insurgent groups and the general population (Perry and John, 2008: 15). Because most of the intelligence will come from the population. Furthermore, the counterinsurgency operation must address people's grievances, which will not only allow us to keep insurgents out of specific areas in the long run but also win the people's support. This kind of development strengthened the gathering of intelligence from people who were reluctant to come forward for fear of insurgents. Undeniably, this kind of accurate intelligence gathered from the ground through people enables us to isolate insurgents from people and deny them the advantage of geographical sanctuary. According to David Galula, this includes quickly isolating the insurgency from the populace, increasing the mobility of counterinsurgency forces, and reinforcing areas that require greater physical security (Galula, 1964: 50-51).

Another aspect that needs to be taken into consideration throughout the decision-making process is the data gathered on the actions, personalities, funding, and potential connections between the rebels and outside forces. Political decision-makers and security professionals are ultimately better equipped to make meaningful choices about their counterinsurgency operations and other action plans thanks to all of these intelligence inputs, even if it takes some time. However, collecting accurate information from the right source has been a great challenge in counterinsurgency operations. According to Reamer, collecting accurate intel is difficult because, in order

to impede operations, insurgent groups spread 'false information about their activities' (Reamer, 2009: 73-90). Moreover, insurgents used propaganda against the counterinsurgency force, assuming that this would enable them to separate the people from the incumbents. Therefore, counterintelligence in counterinsurgency is also equally important, and its core mission is to sabotage such a network as well. In other words, the core counterintelligence elements that are carried out during counterinsurgency operations are detecting, identifying, exploiting, and neutralising insurgent intelligence activities. Otherwise, this kind of false information could also have an impact on obtaining accurate tactical intelligence. So, it is safe to say that, in any intelligence-based counterinsurgency operation, a high familiarity with the local context (in terms of geographical terrain, social demographics, economic situation, and others) is essential. Without any of these, a precise and comprehensive intelligence network in a counterinsurgency operation is impossible. Consequently, precise intelligence (information) is more important than any other aspect of a successful counterinsurgency operation. Lack of accurate information or inaccurate intelligence preparation may have a greater impact on counterinsurgency operations.

### **Types and Sources of Intelligence**

Intelligence comes from various places and in different forms, though. It can be classified into several categories based on its method and source of intelligence. Gentry (2019), classifies intelligence into three categories: battlefield (information related to a particular local area or engagement); tactical (information related to a particular campaign, units, strengths, and location of enemy supply lines and depots); and strategic (intentions and capabilities) (Gentry, 2019: 833-850). On the basis of the source of intelligence, he further classified it into Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Photographic and Satellite Intelligence (PHOINT and SATINT), and Electronic and Signals Intelligence (ELINT and SIGINT) (Ibid). In conventional warfare, human intelligence is considered the oldest method or source of intelligence. This is gathered by informants and agents—traditional spies. As a matter of fact, in pre-modern times, kings and rulers across the world formed their own secret organisations, or spies, and planted them in enemy kingdoms. Similarly, in the modern nation-state system, the government deploys its spies or agents on the other side of the boundaries for tactical, strategic, and other intelligence gathering. This helps them understand their adversary or enemy better, and it provides a huge advantage in times of war. However, the risk associated with this type of intelligence is very high, as is the possibility of being apprehended and tortured.

Human intelligence is a subset of intelligence that derives from information collected and provided by human sources and is used in

counterinsurgency operations (*Field Manual 3-34/MCWP 3-33.5*, 2014: (8)4-5). The police are arguably the best human intelligence gatherers. According to Charters, police are the ones who have familiarity with the area's demographics, topography, and culture where counterinsurgency is conducted (Charters, 2009: 55-74). They employ a number of techniques, including interrogation, to get information. In some instances, human intelligence has also been obtained by questioning detained rebels or utilising surrendered militants who have turned themselves in as a cover for clandestine operations to apprehend them. Police or counterinsurgency (informant) agents positioned among the populace also gather a significant amount of human intelligence. They gather data (intel information) on the insurgency and its activities (operations) and report them back to the counterinsurgents or intelligence division.

Communications Intelligence (COMINT) is another type of intelligence practice in counterinsurgency (also known as ELINT and SIGINT in conventional warfare). The information was gathered from the communications of the individuals by intercepting radio transmissions, tapping telephone conversations, text messages, and other online interactions. COMINT activities provide strategic advantages in counterinsurgency as they enable us to determine details about communicating parties, their location, organisational function of the transmitter, time and duration of communication, etc. In modern counterinsurgency, counterinsurgents also use unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to collect information on the movements of insurgents and their hideouts. These types or sources of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance provide the counterinsurgent forces with the required information on areas of actual or potential operation in a detailed and timely manner. It not only helped the counterinsurgents to understand the operational environment but also maximised counterinsurgency effectiveness.

### **India's Counterinsurgency Approach against Maoist Insurgency**

India has more than six decades of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations experience. Through this period, India managed to control the insurgency violence, if not completely. It has also successfully resolved the insurgency problems in Punjab and Mizoram. Moreover, many insurgent groups are in the process of negotiation, while others have already surrendered and merged into mainstream society. In all these cases, India used a multi-pronged counterinsurgency strategy, including military, political, and developmental approaches.

India's counterinsurgency approach against the Maoist insurgency has 'evolved over the years, influenced by both the intensity of the threat and the nature of the political dispensation at the Centre and the affected states' (Sahoo,

Niranjan (2019: 1-50). Since the law-and-order issues are under the state purview, the counterinsurgency efforts are in the hands of the state, yet supported by the federal government in terms of resources, intelligence, and coordination (also, Lalwani, 2011: 5-9). Lt Gen. (Rtd) H. S. Pang states that ‘the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), the sanction of Indian Reserved (IR) battalions, the establishment of Counter Insurgency and Anti-Terrorism (CIAT) schools, and the modernization and upgradation of state police and intelligence apparatus are all provided by the central government’ (Panag, 2012). According to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the government’s counterinsurgency approach against the Maoist insurgency or Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) is holistic in nature with a multi-prong strategy. It lays out the government’s strategy in the areas of security, development, and ensuring the rights and entitlements of local communities (Press Information Bureau, 2020). However, a thorough examination of these approaches reveals two competing counterinsurgency strategies, one centered on security and the other on development. One is more enemy-centric, and the other is a population-centric approach.

Each Naxal-affected state responded differently but used the same strategy – security-centric and population-centric approaches. The state police and central paramilitary forces were the main counterinsurgency forces in all these operations. The population-centric approach, or developmental approach, focuses on accelerating development policies and other infrastructural development in Maoist affected regions. The core of this strategy is extensively focused on winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the tribal populaces. In 2010, then UPA government initiated key development policies in 82 districts (Sahni, 2019: 4 as cited in Sahoo), focusing largely on rebuilding roads and strengthening the network infrastructure (installation of mobile towers) and the construction of fortified police stations, which the current NDA government plans to expand (Mishra, 2017; Sahoo, 2019: 5).

In a security-centric approach, intelligence gathering is one such vital area. It has witnessed the effectiveness of intelligence-based counterinsurgency operations and their successes in Punjab and other insurgency-affected (Indian) states in the past. Subsequently, the significance of intelligence is well incorporated as it is illustrated in the Indian Army Sub-Conventional War Doctrine of 2006. The doctrine reinforces that the counterinsurgency approach should be based on intelligence rather than being conducted on a preventive basis (*Ministry of Defence (Army)*, 2006: 40-43). The following section analyses the role of intelligence in combating or controlling the Maoist insurgency.

### **Role of Intelligence in COIN Operations against Maoist Insurgency**

Intelligence plays a vital role in counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. There are several intelligence domains, beginning with terrain, climate, culture, and socioeconomic conditions in areas of actual or potential operation. It is also critical to locate insurgents, identify rebel members, and determine their whereabouts, strength, weapons of choice, and dominance areas for an effective counterinsurgency operation. Without this kind of intelligence, conducting any counterinsurgency operation will be ineffective.

The information was collected, verified, and processed in all these domains through various sources. In counterinsurgency operations, one such primary source of intelligence is HUMINT. It collected or gathered intelligence through informers (police or paramilitary informer), shopkeepers, sarpanches, and forest guards of that area. The police made contact with their informant either in the village weekly market or through a phone call (Routray, 2017: 6), and collected information and verified it before forwarding it to the higher command. They regularly reported orally about Maoist movements, when they entered into villages and other activities. Then intelligence is further integrated, evaluated, and analysed by the State Intelligence Bureaus (SIB). The other source of information is from surrendered or arrested Naxals or Maoists through interrogation. Andhra Pradesh counterinsurgency campaigns in 2004 and 2007 are examples of how 'the SIB gathered effective human intelligence from informants as well as some of the surrendered and arrested Naxals. Sometimes, they provided the police with crucial information about insurgents and their supporters' (Boyini, 2010: 1-159).

Where there is a lack of informants at ground level, some states use the people's militias or surrender insurgents to gather intelligence. Such methods include the development and reinforcement of vigilante groups, such as SalwaJudum in Chhattisgarh and Sendra in Jharkhand. Under this strategy, the police forces formed special police officers (SPOs) among the surrendered Maoist and tribal youths, who knew the locality and stayed in the villages to collect information for the security forces (Miklian, 2009: 441-459). South Asia Terrorism portal is an important monitor to follow the trends. The SPO collects information about the insurgents' organisations, their hideouts, use of weapons, and the kind of propaganda they use to win the support of the people. However, there were several negative effects of the use of militias in gathering intelligence. It is believed that surrendered Maoists may occasionally leak intelligence to insurgent groups. Also, they are the softest targets of the Maoists on the ground. Therefore, information should be verified with all-source intelligence before using it to support COIN operations.

To enhance HUMINT, the federal government also provides assistance to states' governments by using modern technology in information collection, such as the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). The National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO) flies these UAVs and provides intelligence to the SIBs. The state police and paramilitary forces have also begun to use mini drones for the aerial surveillance of Naxal movements. However, there were several challenges in using UAVs in Naxal-affected areas. Other sources or types of intelligence were also collected by the central paramilitary forces and state police intelligence units. However, the central paramilitary intelligence unit still depends on the state police for intelligence (Tiwari, 2009). The state police intelligence network is led by the Sub-Inspector of each police station and collects information from the general public by maintaining regular contact with them. Undeniably, the local police forces know the population, terrain, and culture of the locality of the area of operation better than anyone (Charters, 2009). But the State Intelligence Bureau, or Special Intelligence Bureau in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Counter Intelligence Forces in West Bengal are responsible for integrating and processing the information collected from the different sources and coordinating with counterinsurgency forces.

#### **New development in enhancing intelligence network**

In the last few years, people have been slowly isolating themselves from the Maoists because of their extortion and the amount of violence they commit. Therefore, the government was now providing them reasons to trust them (Kleinfeld and Rushda, 2016: 1-34). Many argued that, as a result, the government was able to recruit informers and "people were more willing to help the state against Maoists and provide human intelligence" (ibid.). Hence, police and intelligence services were able to infiltrate Maoist organisations and weaken their grip. Moreover, the state governments have begun to use a development approach to strengthen their intelligence networks. For instance, in Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, the governments started to deploy development and good-government measures to alleviate the complaints of civilians sympathetic to the rebel cause. The West Bengal government has also changed its strategy and implemented comprehensive confidence-building measures with residents of the Maoist-infested Jangalmahal region (Bhattacharya, 2017).

In Chhattisgarh, recently, police launched a campaign called '*Bastarthamatta*' and '*Bastarchoawaaz*' in Gondi and Halbi dialects, respectively, to counter Maoist propaganda. It uses posters, short films, audio clips, and other popular methods to highlight Maoist atrocities (Outlook, 2020; see also Drolia, 2020). This strategy enables the police to build strong relationships with people and expose the true face of



the Maoists. However, despite these positive developments, both in terms of human intelligence and strengthening intelligence infrastructure, the Maoist insurgency is still active and able to inflict heavy casualties on the counterinsurgency forces, except in Andhra Pradesh. Another significant development is the formation of the Unified Command for better coordination among police, paramilitary forces, and intelligence agencies by the Left-Wing Extremist (LWE) affected states of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, and West Bengal (*DNA*, 2013). Consequently, on January 10, 2007, the counterinsurgency forces were able to capture the Maoist arms production and research and development unit in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, and the arms-making unit in Rourkela, Odisha (Ramana, 2011: 29-45). On December 29, 2007, the coordination team of the CRPF, Provincial Armed Constabulary of Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar police, successfully seized 11 kg of RDX, 176 gelatin sticks, 10 bundles of fuse wire, dry cells, and 10 container bombs from the Lekherula forests in Uttar Pradesh (Boyini, 2010: 71).

An intelligence-sharing Multi-Agency Centre (MAC) at the Central and State Multi-Agency levels was also established. This enables to strengthen and upgrade the capabilities of intelligence agencies at the central and state levels as well. MAC worked under the Intelligence Bureau (IB), where states and central agencies and police forces coordinate to share, store, collate, and analyse input intelligence on insurgency (Chauhan, 2021). Other notable steps include the establishment of the Joint Command and Control Centre (CCC), which is expected to strengthen technical and human intelligence in Maoist-dominated areas (Sahoo, 2019: 22). The goal of CCC is to ensure cooperation among paramilitary forces, state police, and intelligence agencies, with a focus on real-time intelligence generation and the strengthening of SIBs in LWE-affected states. As a matter of fact, these mechanisms and agencies were already deployed in the Maoist-infected area. These positive steps improved the coordination and intelligence collection to some extent. Yet, in terms of inter-state cooperation and intelligence capabilities at the grass-root level, gaps still exist. Because of this, incidents happen like at Balimela reserve in Odisha on July 14, 2008, where Grey Hounds Commando was attacked (Menon, 2008), and Maoist ambushes on the CRPF in Sukama (2017) and in Bijapur district (2021).

### **Issues and Challenges of Intelligence in Combating Maoist insurgency**

As mentioned earlier, the recent attacks on counterinsurgent forces have ignited a debate on the shortcomings of intelligence and counterinsurgency operations against the Maoist insurgency, or LWE. This section examines those issues and challenges in intelligence and counterintelligence in countering the Maoist insurgency.

**Lack of Coordination**

Counterinsurgency operations, in general, involve complex coordination at different levels, starting from information sharing to execution of decisions. However, in combating Maoist insurgency in India, it is alleged that there has been very little coordination and cooperation among LWE-affected states in terms of intelligence sharing (Boyini, 2010: 69). Therefore, a unified command structure has been established in each Maoist-affected state to tackle the insurgency problem effectively. In each of these states, the unified command structure is led by the respective Chief Ministers, and members include the paramilitary forces Chief Secretaries, DGPs, and IGPs. It has created a framework for coordinated action and intelligence sharing. It requires a regular meeting (every six months) to review the situation and monitor the problem effectively. But the available data shows that it failed to meet the requirement. Moreover, unified command still has a flaw as it has yet to be implemented at a national level (the Unified Command function is still limited to the most affected states (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Benagal, etc.).

Furthermore, the paramilitary forces, who always rely on local police for intelligence about the area, 'have anticipated that the intelligence sharing by the state police forces has remained qualitatively and quantitatively unreliable for counterinsurgency operations' (Routray, 2017: 2). The CRPF blamed the state police for not sharing accurate intelligence, which resulted in the fatality of 25 CRPF personnel in a Maoist ambush in Chhattisgarh in 2017 (Datta, 2017). This lack of coordination in sharing intelligence among counterinsurgent forces has still remained acritical issue for successful counterinsurgency operations (Sahoo and Anshuman, 2021). This coordination gap between the state police and paramilitary forces still needs to be resolved. Another area where the lack of coordination is also between ground force and air reconnaissance missions in Naxal-affected areas. The Indian Air Force (IAF) has been actively participating in anti-Maoist operations. Their main role is to conduct reconnaissance missions to identify the whereabouts of insurgent camps and provide logistical support to counter insurgency operations. For example, in January 2013, an IAF chopper was forced to crash-land in Chhattisgarh's Sukma district after it came under heavy fire from Maoist insurgents while trying to evacuate injured counterinsurgent forces (*The Times of India*, 2013; Srivastava, 2013). The IAF alleged that the counterinsurgent force (CRPF and state police) on the ground failed to sanitise the surrounding areas of the helipad. It is said that a radius of 1.5 km area around the helipad must be sanitised since helicopters are the most vulnerable while taking off and landing (*The Times of India*, 2013). But the counterinsurgency force countered it and further accused the IAF of leaving behind the injured soldiers at the crash site. As

a matter of fact, the lack of cooperation and coordination among these forces has impacted on information sharing about Maoists and on combined operations.

### **Logistical and others Flaws**

Since the beginning, the counterinsurgency operations against the Maoist insurgency, or LWE, have relied on local police information. The state police not only manage the flow of information and intelligence but also operate as the main counterinsurgent force. There is a special branch of the state police unit whose main responsibility is intelligence gathering. But there are a number of logistical and other flaws in the department. According to Routray, the state police unit has already been overburdened with work, while a large number of vacancies in police departments in all naxal-affected states remained unfilled. This has directly impaired ground operations and information collection. Some of these state governments have attempted to close these disparities by fast-tracking recruitment processes (Routray, 2017). By enlisting local tribes in the forces, the governments of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand have both started the process of filling this vacancy. Subsequently, Chhattisgarh's police-population ratio (234.94) increased dramatically in a short period of time, which is higher than the other LWE-affected states. However, the current police population ratio in the state is still lower than the sanctioned strength of 281.74 officers. Similarly, in Jharkhand, the police to population ratio is much lower than that of Chhattisgarh.

According to the BPR&D report, the current police-population ratio in Jharkhand is 172, which is less than the actual sanction strength of 21.9 per million population (*Bureau of Police Research and Development, 2020*). As a matter of fact, the police-population ratio in both the states was comparatively higher than in other states since 2000, but they were unable to manage to control Naxalite violence in their respective states (D'Souza, 2009:125-132). In addition, it is also argued that the process of this fast-tracking recruitment has compromised the quality of police personnel and may affect intelligence collection. Moreover, police intelligence collection in operational environments or rural areas is heavily reliant on their mobility (patrolling) and relationships with the local communities. But their mobility has been restricted for security reasons, and they built their station inside the fortified CAPFs' camps (Routray, 2017: 2).

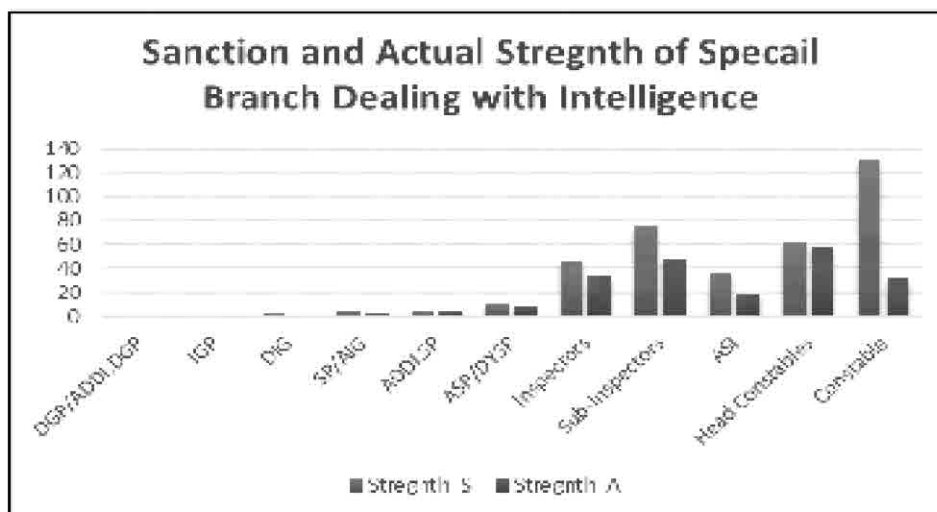
The primary objective of such police stations is to prevent the possibility of Naxals storming in or carrying out a direct attack from the outside. But it restricted the police's mobility and hampered their rural patrolling. In addition, this has also impacted the social relations between the police and the community. As a result, the police unit, on the one hand, is unable to maintain frequent contact with the villages, which makes it difficult to gather useful intelligence. On the other

hand, people were found reluctant to go to these camps, either to deliver the information or to complain. It should be remembered that the local population is the best source of human intelligence. According to Lakhtakia and Aloka, ‘police should not be seen as taking cover inside an armed fortified camp; it must be brought out, guarded well, and yet be accessible to people in need’ (Aloka and Lakhtakia, 2021). Above all, the local population (the tribals or indigenous peoples) is under-represented in the state police. Consequently, this has created a communication breach between security forces and local people, resulting in a gap in ground-level intelligence generation (Routray, 2017: 3).

**Limited Manpower of Counterinsurgent Intelligence Unit**

Another concern in combating the Maoist insurgency is the lack of manpower for special intelligence units. There are several vacancies in IB and SIB, and ‘the former has limited capabilities for gathering preventive intelligence in rural regions’ (Raman, 2013), as it is primarily a city-based organisation. But it is reported that the IB has a serious shortage of field-level officers. Such shortages are expected to be substantially worse, mostly in the LWE-affected areas (Swami, 2013). Similarly, the state police intelligence unit also has a limited amount of manpower. The BPR&D reports published in 2020 (as on January 1, 2020) also confirm that a large number of posts for ground staff or lower-rank officers were lying vacant. Chhattisgarh, one of the most volatile or hot-bets of the Maoist insurgency, has the most vacancies (see Figure 1).

**Figure-1: Sanction (S) and Actual (A) Strength in Special Unit Dealing with Intelligence in Chhattisgarh (as on 1 January 2020)**



Source: “Data on Police Organisation”, *Bureau of Police Research, & Development (BPR&D)*, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 2020, pp: 113-115.

**Technological constraint**

Technological constraints are another major challenge that needs to be overcome for effective operation. In the recent past, to supplement HUMINT, the security forces used UAVs to collect intelligence from the Maoist or Naxalite affected areas. But a challenge is to verify or confirm the drone images before the task forces are launched. And it is not easy to differentiate in the image whether it is a Naxal hideout or a village's normal settlement (Yadav, 2012). As a matter of fact, the Maoist hotbed areas like the Bastar region in Chhattisgarh are tribal inhabited areas scattered across 40,000 square kilometres. This region is one of the most remote and backward areas with limited communication or transport facilities. Furthermore, it is argued that the infra-reds emitted by 'the Heron drones' synthetic aperture radar couldn't penetrate the jungle's foliage, therefore the photographs were deemed 'not actionable' by the force' (ibid). Therefore, it can be argued that if the drone images were not verified, then it might have led the forces into a trap.

Besides, countering the increasing use of drone technology by the Maoist insurgents in enhancing their surveillance is another challenge. In the very recent past, it has been found that the Maoists have also started using mini drones for their intelligence gathering. In 2019, a mini drone was seen hovering over a strategically important CRPF camp in the Sukma district of Chhattisgarh (*The Mint*, 2019; see also *India Today*, 2020). Two years later, a similar incident was reported by the Maharashtra police department of shitting a mini drone that was hovering over near armed outposts and sub-police stations in Gadchiroli district (*Press Trust of India*, 2021). The challenge is to identify how they procured it and from where. This possession and operation of drones by Maoists is a new issue and has been predicted for a long time. Here, the question is how the security forces will deal with this new challenge as there is no legal framework on the use of drones in India (as of now).

**Lack of informant at ground level**

Lack of informants frequently prevented intelligence information from reaching the security forces in a timely manner and made it difficult to take action. Sometimes a weak phone network prevented the informant from communicating and delivering the information. The majority of information exchanges between police and informants take place over mobile phones or face-to-face meetings during the village's weekly market. However, the flow of information for counterinsurgency operations is disrupted by the insurgents and their countermeasures, such as banning the use of mobile phones in villages or blowing up mobile towers.

The growing killings of police informers by insurgents in recent years is another factor contributing to the recent shortage of informants. For instance, there were roughly 813 police informers assassinated in the Naxalite region between April 2011 and April 2017. Surprisingly, from 2015 to 2016, there was an increase in the proportion of police informants slain by Naxalites compared to civilians. According to Routray, of the 469 people slain in Naxalite violence in 2011, 218 were police informants (Routray, 2017).

### **Countering Maoist Intelligence Network**

Over the years, the Maoist intelligence network seems to be getting a bit stronger in the scheduled area. They carried out their intelligence network by conducting ‘social profiling’ and ‘class analysis’ of villagers (Ranjan, 2017). Ranjan argued that the insurgents acquire their human intelligence through teachers, social activists, ground-level workers, and petty shopkeepers. However, the generalisation of such claims without proper verification could lead to human rights violations. Moreover, verifying such claims are not as simple as it is made out to be. Additionally, care should also be taken to ensure that such generalisation does not lead to excessive use of power by the state or its security agencies. Furthermore, as a part of their tactics, the Maoists often spread false information to trap the security forces. The final reports of both the incidents indicate that the attacks on security forces in Sukma in 2020 (*The Hindu*, 2020), and the Bijapur-Sukma border in April 2021 (*Scroll*, 2021) were evidence of such tactics. Hence, the counter-intelligence mechanisms such as verifying the information received from the ground need to be strengthened.

### **Conclusion**

Over the years, security forces have gained the upper hand against the Maoists in counterinsurgency operations and achieved the greatest success. Yet throughout operations, security troops continued to be ambushed due to some flaws. One such shortcoming is the lack of information from ground level due to the deficiency of local people in the police department. Although the affected states have tried to fill the vacancies among lower-ranking officers by speeding up the recruiting process, this has resulted in a significant reduction in the quality of personnel recruited. Besides, there is a clear shortage of cooperation and coordination when it comes to exchanging intelligence and databases with federal authorities as well as with neighbouring states. The majority of Maoist casualties will continue to be suffered by troops engaged in counterinsurgency operations unless these coordination problems are resolved. A proper mechanism is still required to counter the Maoists' human intelligence network, which often prevented the security forces from conducting successful counterinsurgency

operations. It is critical to establish a robust network of informers made up of locals who can be counted on to provide accurate and timely intelligence.

Winning the public's trust would allow for an effortless flow of first-hand information. For that, there is a need to develop better intelligence relationships with the local population through community policing and problem-oriented policing, which would allow the security forces early detection of insurgent movements. For the purpose of winning the trust of the local people, the security forces should organise different Civic Action Programs with the larger interest of all local communities.

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## Conceptualising China's Regional Strategy in Its Neighborhood: A Case of China's Afghanistan Policy

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### Abstract

*This paper conceptualizes China's regional strategy in its neighborhood along three dimensions- economic integration, the use of multilateral institutions, and normative narratives, and through three objectives- domestic security and economic stability, regional economic dominance, and preventing major powers from having military alliances with neighboring countries. It does so by analyzing the regional dynamics of China's policy towards Afghanistan. The paper then also analyses whether China's policy towards Afghanistan in the Post-NATO withdrawal in 2021 reflects any radical changes in its regional strategy. The paper proposes three arguments. One, China's Afghanistan policy in the last decade, especially in the Post-NATO withdrawal period, can be contextualized within its long-term regional strategy in its neighborhood along three dimensions discussed here; Two, the regional character of Afghanistan problem poses serious challenges to China's objectives; Three, China's Afghanistan policy in the Post-NATO period reflect a proactive regional policy.*

**Keywords:** *Afghanistan, China, India, Regional Implications, Geopolitics.*

### Introduction

China has emerged as a major player in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of the NATO forces in August 2021. Prior to that, China has been a 'hesitant actor' in Afghanistan; its policies were primarily concerned with the security and internal stability of the westernmost province of Xinjiang (Zhao, 2016), and the fears about US presence in its neighborhood. While it has attempted to expand its economic influence in the country in the last decade, Afghanistan has been a missing link in China's Central Asian strategy (Clarke, 2017). Instability and the lack of influence

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in Afghanistan have posed challenges to its geo-economic and geopolitical ambitions at the regional level in Asia (Zhao, 2013). With China's rise as a major factor in its neighborhood, therefore, China's Afghanistan policy cannot be understood independent of its regional strategy in its neighbourhood and surrounding regions.

There is a rich repertoire of existing studies on China's regional strategy, which have focused on various aspects. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and grand strategy at regional level from geo-economic perspective (Leverett and Wu, 2016; Zhang, 2018), China's efforts in East Asia to counter China threat perception (Cheng, 2013; Sutter, 2006), regional diplomatic initiatives to tame the fallout of South China Sea dispute (Fravel, 2015), deepening economic integration of neighbourhood (Zhang and Tang, 2006) have caught the attention of scholars. In addition, there are studies that discuss China's policies in its neighbourhood region focusing on different aspects namely, diplomatic, economic, security and trans-national crime (Beeson & Li, 2014; Li & Yang, 2019; Godehardt, 2014). Since the BRI was launched in 2013, grand strategy has become an important lens to understand China's regional strategy within the larger framework of China's rise in Asia and beyond (Zhang, 2016; Garlick, 2020; Zhao, 2020). Scholars have also focused on China's participation in regional multilateral institutions and geopolitics (Sun, 2010; Beeson, 2015; Kumar, 2021). Many commentators and analysts have talked about China's regional ambitions in Afghanistan in the wake of NATO-withdrawal in 2021 (Zhao, 2016; Clarke, 2013; Sharan & Watkins, 2021; Cheng, 2015). However, very few studies have analyzed China's Afghanistan policy in its regional context. Above all, there is a gap in understanding China regional ambitions in Afghanistan by interlinking economic, diplomatic, security, and normative narratives.

In this context, this paper aims to conceptualise China's regional strategy along three dimensions- economic integration of its neighbourhood, the use of multilateral institutions and normative narratives. The conceptualisation of China's regional strategy along three dimensions helps us contextualize China's Afghanistan policy in China's regional strategy in its neighbourhood. China's regional strategy provides certain common patterns in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia and Northeast Asia. First, the economic integration of neighbourhood provides a greater economic inter-dependence among each other, but most particularly on China since China is more economically powerful. Second, while China does pursue bilateral relations with the countries in the region, China has put an emphasis on multilateralism. China has attempted to create alternative multilateral institutions such as the AIIB, and BRICS, and participated in regional multilateral institutions (Beeson, 2019; Kumar, 2021). It has also expressed

willingness to be part of other regional organizations namely, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) (Madan, 2014).

In addition, China rhetorically claims to a believer of multilateralism (Yang, 2020). Third, Chinese foreign policy, at large, relies on normative narratives, which include 'the Community of Shared Interests', 'peaceful rise', and 'developmental peace', to justify its policies in terms of a larger good and interests of all (Zheng, 2005; Zhang, 2018; Fung, 2019; Zhang, 2016). This paper aims to make conceptual and empirical intern-connections among these three dimensions of China's regional strategy through an analysis of its Afghanistan policy.

China's regional strategy is aimed at achieving three main objectives-domestic security and economic stability, regional economic dominance, and preventing major powers from having military alliances with neighbouring countries. However, the paper emphasises that the roots of China's regional strategy could be traced backed to Chinese foreign policy since 1949. China's early involvement with neighboring countries was focused on the recognition of China's territorial sovereignty and One-China policy, as well as a desire to prevent US military partnerships with countries in its neighbourhood (Dai, 1966). In the 1970s, China's policies towards Vietnam and Indochina were premised on preventing the Soviet Union to have military presence in its eastern and southern neighbourhood (Zhang, 2006). The most significant distinction between the Cold War and Post-Cold War regional strategy, however, is the economic factor, and new normative narratives. China's economic rise requires a peaceful neighborhood; as well as its expanding economic might has helped it expand its influence to integrate the region (Zhang & Tang, 2006), and new narratives to legitimize changing geopolitical realities and power dynamics and counter the narratives of threats from China's rise (Zheng, 2005).

However, the success of China's regional strategy in Afghanistan is not pre-destined for several reasons, which include, inter-alia, the regionalization of terrorism, inherent tensions and competing regional interests among Iran, Russia and China, and likely pushback from US and its European partners, and Taliban's inability to control non-Taliban terrorist organizations namely, the Islamic State-Khorasan. In this context, the paper explores the question whether China's recent policy in Afghanistan reflect any changes within the context of China's approach towards regional conflicts. China's proactive yet implicit indications of the support for the international recognition of the Taliban regime (Xinhua, 2022), geo-economic and geo-political blueprints, discussed in this paper through inter-

linkages among three dimensions, points towards a renewed confidence in achieving in its regional strategic goals.

The paper uses a case study to analyse main contours of China's regional strategy and inter-linkages among them. The case of China's Afghanistan policy since 2010 is analysed in-depth to analyse the conceptual mapping of China's regional strategy along above-mentioned three dimensions. It uses discourse analysis method to analyse existing studies, official reports, and statements.

The remainder of the paper is organized into five sections. The first section provides a conceptual framework to understand China's regional strategy along above-mentioned three dimensions, and three objectives. The second section then examines three dimensions in detail with reference to China's policy towards Afghanistan in the last two decades. The third section provides a detailed discussion of why China's regional strategy faces challenges. The fourth section then takes up the question whether and how China's Afghanistan policy in the post-NATO phase since August 2021 reflect any changes in its policies towards regional conflicts. The final section provides a summary of arguments and a brief discussion about the implications of inter-linkages between diplomatic, economic, security, and normative dimensions for understanding China's foreign policy.

### **China's Regional Strategy in the Neighbourhood**

#### *Rationale for Regional Strategy*

In order to understand China's regional strategy, the question why China pursues a regional strategy becomes important. In other words, why China pursues a regional approach rather than bilateral approach? To answer this question, it is useful to provide a brief discussion about China's objectives in the neighborhood, which helps understanding the rationale of a regional approach emphasizing inter-linkages between economic, security, diplomatic, and normative means in China's foreign policy.

There are three broad objectives and their inter-connections, which define China's regional strategy in its neighborhood, and its evolution over a period. These three objectives include domestic security and economic stability, regional economic dominance, and preventing major powers from having military alliances with neighbouring countries. The emphasis on these objectives has varied since 1949, reflecting underlying the fact that China's capabilities have evolved over a period. For example, economic integration of neighbourhood to achieve regional dominance become prominent only after China adopted economic reforms in 1980s onwards.



First, China's security and stability concerns in Xinjiang are foremost objective since the Cold War period (Segal, 1981; Zhao, 2016). The presence of hostile Soviet Union, after its split in the early 1960s, provided a rationale for China to pursue cooperative policies with US. In addition, US presence in Afghanistan in the Post-Cold War period has accentuated that problem due to fears of interference in its domestic affairs (Jimin, 2010; CASS, 2013; CISS, 2019). In addition, China's post-reforms foreign policy has aimed at ensuring that its neighborhood is peaceful with no major military conflict and political stability in the countries (Zhang, 2016; Swaine, 2014; Zhang, 2015).

Second, China has attempted, since 1949, to prevent major powers namely, the Soviet Union, and US, from military presence and alliances with countries in its neighbourhood (Zhou, 2014). The Soviet and US presence in Vietnam during the Cold War, and US presence in terms of alliances and military presence in its neighbourhood in the Post-Cold War period have been a major challenge for China. With increasing Sino-US cooperation, China has adopted a range of means to achieve the goal despite its limited success in Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia (Stromesth, 2019; Connely, Liow, Lassman, and Heydarian, 2018).

Third, China's regional strategy in neighbourhood is aimed to creating China-centric economic architecture, and supply chains with China being at the higher end of value chains. Economic integration and dominance at the regional level, thus, is crucial part of China's strategy. Economic exchanges also allow China to push forward normative narratives with emphasis on shared benefits and win-win cooperation. However, the inter-linked nature of these three objectives makes regional strategy a necessary and rational approach in China's foreign policy. Military dimension of China's regional strategy is important. However, the paper does not focus on military strategy because<sup>1</sup> China does not have active military presence beyond its border, and hence, it is unlikely to put foots on the ground in Afghanistan.

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<sup>1</sup> The military component of China's regional strategy is salient in Southeast Asia, maritime domain, and possible security interests in countries along the Belt and Road Initiative. Ghiselli (2021) provides a useful argument about how the securitization of economic assets in China's foreign policy takes place. Additionally, military strategy component in regional strategy is also significant in bilateral relations when China uses military threats to dissuade countries from getting close to extra-regional powers namely, US. For example, one of the drivers of China's actions on borders with India is to dissuade India from deepening relations with the USA. However, given the lack of China's military presence in Afghanistan, we leave out military dimension of China's regional strategy from detailed discussion in the paper.

*Economic Integration of Neighborhood*

Economic interdependence is widely believed to benefit all parties and hence, regional integration, and interconnectivity are arguably better for peace (Barbieri, 1996). However, the power dynamics and strategic dynamics of economic interdependence are as important as the benefits accrued by the parties involved. While economic interdependence reduces the role of military hard power due to increased economic costs of military conflicts (Copeland, 2014), it does not rule out strategic use of asymmetry in economic interdependence. In an economically interdependent relationship, power dynamics comes into play due to asymmetry in relationship. In the classic work on economic interdependence, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye conceptualized the way asymmetry in economic interdependence can have strategic and geopolitical implications due to what they call 'sensitivity and vulnerability'. Sensitivity refers to the capacity of a state to respond to the use of economic means for geopolitical ends (Keohane and Nye, 1977). Vulnerability refers to the weakness of an economy that may be exploited by a stronger economy in an interdependent relationship (Keohane and Nye, 1977). Thus, the level of asymmetry and consequent vulnerability and sensitivity shape bargaining power of parties involved (Wagner, 1988). It is safe to assume, therefore, that asymmetric interdependence is amenable to geopolitical bargaining and misuse by the stronger economy. The pervasive rhetoric of regional integration, globalization, and win-win situation for all in a condition of economic interdependence in China's official narratives needs to be investigated in light of China's geopolitical objectives and emerging pattern of use of economic means for geopolitical ends. Without discounting the mutual benefits, it is emphasised here, economic interdependence in the condition of asymmetry helps China bargaining its geopolitical interests. In addition, asymmetric economic interdependence can deter smaller powers from making sharp choices even if China does not threaten economic coercion. For example, Southeast Asian states are an example of such a condition (Wang, 2021; He, 2008).

Economic integration and peaceful neighbourhood have been essential for China's economic development. It has also influenced how China approached neighbourhood in its foreign policy and diplomacy in the post reforms period (Zhang, 2016; Zhang, 2006; Zeng, Xiao and Breslin, 2015; Zhang, 2015; Zhou, 2014). For neighboring countries, the access to the Chinese market provides incentives to have friendly relations with China. But as China steadily moves up the ladder of value chain and gains upper hand in supply chains, its leverage over these countries have increased. Such dynamics reflects in how the threat of economic costs as a result of hostility with China prevents countries in Southeast to lean towards US for security interests (Stromesth, 2019; Connely, 2018).

China's use of economic coercion with South Korea over THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile deployment, Japan over Senkaku Islands, Australia over the investigation of Covid19 origins controversy show China has increasingly weaponised asymmetry and economic relations for its geopolitics ends (Macikenaite, 2020). Economic relations can also be used as incentives to mould other states' geopolitical choices. Besides, the prominent role of state-owned corporations in China's economic model particularly aligns its economic relations with geopolitical ends (Norris, 2016).

While strategic choices of these countries cannot be explained solely in terms of economic backlash from China, it is an important factor in the way smaller states in the neighbourhood make choices. For China, it helps, even if in the short-term and with limited success, to prevent alliances or active military presence. Additionally, the success depends upon how far its policies stoke security fears. But by and large, it works better for China and a similar strategy is being implemented in Central and South Asia with varying degrees of success. In this context, we argue that its mega-project, the BRI, gains significance in further integrating the neighbourhood economically and logistically.

China's multilateral diplomacy in East Asia, from 1990s onwards, has been aimed at shutting out US and its alliances to achieve prominent role in the region (Sutter 2005; Kurlantzick, 2007). Thus, the Free Trade Agreement with ASEAN (ASEAN-China FTA) and the Asia-only group (ASEAN plus Three), for example, attempted to marginalise the US. The idea of New Security Concept popularised after Xi Jinping's address in May 2014 at the CICA conference, was primarily an Asian centric concept (Shen, 2014; Jiang, 2014; Han, 2015) to bind together neighboring countries and to exclude US. Looking at China's regional strategy in the long-term, a similar strategy in Afghanistan and Central Asia is in the making since the 1990s.

#### *Regional Multilateral Institutions*

Multilateral institutions and regimes reflect, as liberal institutionalist arguments go, the convergence of interests and willingness of states to cooperate on different issues (Stein, 1993). While multilateral institutions reflect cooperative behavior between states, whether they can avoid geopolitical interests of powerful states and conflict is a major question (Grieco, 1988). We conceptualise China's participation and initiation of multilateral institutions from the point of view of how powerful states can achieve their geopolitical interests by participating in multilateral institutions and how these institutions are an important pillar of China's regional strategy. In this respect, we highlight three aspects of how multilateral institutions can help states achieve their geopolitical aims. First, the

participation in multilateral institutions allows China to align its interests with other states. It is particularly so in case of institutions namely the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), BRICS Bank or New Development Bank where is in the dominant position.

Second, even if its participation in regional multilateral institutions does not achieve its desired goals, it can prevent anything that goes against its interests through institutions (Beeson, 2019; Sun, 2010). It particularly applies to the institutions namely, the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), East Asia Forum, and ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) wherein China is not a dominant player. Third, participation in and strategising through regional institutions provide it with a normative legitimacy for China's claim as a major and responsible player in regional geopolitics (Yang, 2020; Samson, 2012). It particularly applies to China's strategy to the role of SCO in Afghanistan and surrounding regions in post-NATO period. We explore the role of SCO in China's Afghan policy, in this context, in the next section.

#### *Normative Narratives*

China's normative narratives namely, 'peaceful rise', 'the community of shared interests', and 'developmental peace', have been part of its neighbourhood diplomacy and regional strategy (Chung, 2009; Zhang, 2018); Zhang, 2016). The efficacy of normative narratives can be questioned in terms of how far they can help China achieve its geopolitical interests. Yet, these narratives are part of China's efforts to project its power and create a favourable discursive space at a time when disruptions in power relations caused by its rise create insecurities among small and big powers. In the wake of 'China Threat theory' in the 1990s, China came up with an official narrative of 'peaceful rise' (Zheng, 2005). Later in the early period of 2000s, the good neighbourly policy in response to insecurities among its Southeast neighbours (Chung, 2009). In more recent times, the Communist of Shared Interests and 'developmental peace' have been projected with emphasis that China's rise is beneficial for all or even necessary for the global peace and stability. Through these narratives, China has attempted to project its rise as peaceful to allay fears among neighbouring countries, especially in Southeast Asia where its aggressive military and territorial sovereignty claims in South China Sea, tensions in Taiwan straits, and emerging geopolitical contest with US have stoked serious security fears. After Xi Jinping came to power, the narratives of the Community of Shared Futures gained significant as China focused on a more coherent neighbourhood or peripheral diplomacy (Zhang, 2018). The idea of 'developmental peace' has been projected by China as an alternative solution to unstable societies throughout the world (Fung, 2019). China's policy towards South Sudan, Syria, Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan has

broadly emphasised the respect for territorial sovereignty and non-interference, economic development as a pre-condition for stability and ensuring human rights, and humanitarian assistance (Liu & Zhang, 2014; Yin, 2021; Fung, 2019). The basic premise is that development rather than military intervention is a right solution for conflict-ridden societies (Liu & Zhang, 2014). The idea itself has broader context within China's foreign policy with respect to the debates on Responsibility to Protect (R2P), increasing humanitarian interventions by US-led alliances in the post-cold war period in the name of human rights, and China's own insecurities of possible interference in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong (Foot, 2011).

Despite their limited efficacy for generating geopolitical outcomes and doublespeak, these narratives allow China to project its own interests as shared and desirable interests. For example, China has projected providing regional economic goods and shared opportunity for economic development in its neighbourhood as part of its narratives of peaceful rise and peripheral diplomacy (Lu & Xu, 2014); Lams, 2018). The role of narratives cannot be ignored as they are essential part of geopolitical competition.

### **China's Regional Strategy in Afghanistan: The Centrality of SCO**

China's Afghanistan policy has emphasised regional solutions since the early 2000s. The SCO has become the natural regional platform for China to bring together countries in and around Afghanistan together. We argue that China's engagement with SCO is necessitated by three imperatives. The regional nature of terrorism necessarily requires regional response and hence all countries must be brought together. China, Pakistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and India are eight full members of the SCO. Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, and Mongolia are among the four observer countries interested in full membership. Apart from that, the SCO has six dialogue partners, which include Turkey, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Armenia. Beijing assisted in the establishment of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure in 2002, whose mandate includes coordinating the operations of SCO member nations in combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism. It is one of the SCO's two permanent bodies and its Secretariat is in Beijing. The SCO charter serves essentially as a regional framework for dealing with non-traditional security issues in the region. Hence, China sees SCO as a suitable platform to integrate regional players to address potential threats to its domestic security and to expand its regional geo-economic and geopolitical footprints. At the same time, an unstable Central Asia and Afghanistan is detrimental to China's economic and security interests in the region. SCO emerged from dialogue among China, and newly created Central Asian republics and Russia in the 1990s to address their border disputes and

transnational security threats (Chung, 2002). China has managed to resolve disputes between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan on border issues with substantial security guarantees, economic incentives in terms of economic investment, energy access, and the recognition of China's sovereignty in Xinjiang (Grieger, 2015). Although SCO is yet to emerge as a security organisation with capabilities and acceptance to intervene in situations of domestic instability in Central Asia, it provides a multilateral platform to influence security and economic policies of these states. Russia, China's closest partner in recent times, has filled this gap by deploying the security forces from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in Kazakhstan in 2021, for example.

The SCO-led solutions for regional security issues figure as 'a new concept of security, based on mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation' in Chinese narratives lending greater weight to Beijing's goals of 'peaceful development' and 'responsible great power' (Lanteigne, 2018). China has repeatedly argued to find a solution to the Afghan problem through the SCO (CGTN, 2021). The SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group was established in Beijing as early as in 2005. Afghanistan gained observer status at the SCO's Beijing Summit in June 2012. China hosted a ministerial conference for the Istanbul peace process in 2014, with Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, and Turkey in attendance (Ghiassy, 2004). These multilateral regional summits often exclude other regional players namely, India and US, and help China project a different model other than direct military intervention as an alternative model (Zhang, 2019; Yin, 2021). Recent two foreign ministers' meetings held in China on March 31, 2022, similarly, excluded India altogether. The focus of these meetings with attendance from Afghanistan's neighbours from Central Asia and Middle East also reflect China's attempt to integrate Afghanistan in its Central Asian strategy, weaning it away from India, through SCO, geo-economic and transnational energy plans.

Except India, most of the SCO member countries lack strong democratic credential and are worried about the security of their regimes from internal forces as well as foreign intervention (Aris, 2009). Thus, it is easier for Central Asian leadership and Chinese leadership to come together in SCO searching for regional solution, a combined attempt to thwart color revolutions. China's emphasis on 'an Afghan lead Afghan peace' is well appreciated by SCO members, which China sees as an opportunity to bring these countries together on the issue (Duan, 2019). In addition, Russia's influence in Central Asia and its anti-US stance helps SCO to emerge as a viable platform. China's dominant status in SCO and strategic leverage over Central Asian countries, Pakistan, and Russia allow it to shape the agenda. China has played an important role in putting the ideas of the SCO charter

into action, for example anti-terror discourses and efforts aligning its domestic security concerns with regional security issues (Liu, 2022). In the SCO charter mandates that, 'no SCO member would authorize the organization's territory to be used for any activity infringing on the Sovereignty of any of its members' as per the SCO charter. This enables China to demand that the Central Asian SCO members decline to participate in cooperative activities with foreign countries and international organizations that could be interpreted as infringing on any of the SCO members' sovereignty.

Other SCO activities such as joint military exercises also helped China to gain its influence in Central Asia (Yuan, 2010). It helped China to extend its defense line by establishing a military outpost in Central Asia, which is also designed to project China's power. The People's Armed Police has operated an outpost in Tajikistan near that country's borders with China and Afghanistan since 2016 (Janik, 2020). However, SCO's role as a collective security organization, which could play role in stabilizing regional issues such as Afghanistan, is unlikely to emerge due to disagreements among Chinese policymakers as well as lack of consensus among member states. Since Afghanistan's problems involve non-traditional security aspects, SCO can be useful, according to many Chinese analysts, to deal with them. For example, it is believed that SCO is useful to tackle drug trafficking, economic reconstruction, anti-terrorism efforts (He Ming, 2012). Since SCO is not a military organization unlike NATO, its role is limited. However, it can become platform for non-traditional security threats and economic reconstruction (Wang, 2021; Li, 2010; Zhang Li; Wang, 2012). Some prominent scholars of Central Asia have argued for proactive role for SCO in Central Asian strategy yet are dismissive of SCO role in Afghanistan despite the implications of Afghanistan issue for Central Asia (Zhao, 2009).

These assessments about the efficacy of SCO in Afghanistan also emerge from the inherent complexity of Afghanistan problem as well as China's dilemma of shedding its principled positions to intervene to solve regional conflicts such as Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>The dilemma also stems from China's lack of confidence in solving regional problems. Hence, China is unlikely to change its policy radically in terms of direct military presence. However, regional efforts through SCO legitimize China as a regional player. Chinese discourses on Afghanistan have constantly

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<sup>1</sup> China's positions on resolving domestic instability in Central Asian countries are instructive in this context. For example, despite China's worries about external interference, spillover effects to other states in Central Asia, and Xinjiang, China has formally adhered to the principles of territorial sovereignty and non-interference in Kazakhstan twice in 2010 and 2021 when the country experienced domestic turmoil.

claimed China's status as a regional player in the post-NATO period in Afghanistan (Wang, 2022). These claims rest upon China's supposed unique approach based on the principles of territorial sovereignty and non-interference, humanitarian assistance, and development peace (Wong and Li, 2021). Working through the SCO is more effective for China than working through bilateral connections with individual countries (Cheng, 2015). By engaging other SCO member countries in resolving issues in Afghan could legitimise China as regional team player rather a threat to the region. China has been instrumental in initiating multilateral dialogues, such as China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Trilateral strategic dialogue (Ministry of Foreign Affairs PRC, 2015), Quadrilateral Coordination Group of China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the US (U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, 2016). China hinted, in two meetings held on Afghanistan in March 2022, at its willingness to support international recognition for Taliban regime emphasizing economic development, humanitarian issues, and regional stability in transition period (Xinhua, 2022). These efforts hint at China's growing closer relationship with Taliban regime, and an opportunity to realise its regional strategic objectives. For all these reasons, thus, the SCO has become more prominent in China's regional strategy in Afghanistan with the US final withdrawal of forces.

### **Geo-economic Significance of Afghanistan in China's Regional Strategy**

Due to its geographical location at the junction of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, Afghanistan is strategically vital to China's geo-economic plans. Lack of stability and influence in Afghanistan has been a necessary missing link in its regional geo-economic plans through the BRI (Zhao, 2013). Afghanistan provides China with the shortest route to the Middle East and subsequently to Africa. Since 2007, China has gradually increased its economic profile in Afghanistan. In 2007, through an agreement signed between the Afghan government, the state-owned China Metallurgica Group consortium and the private company Jiangxi Copper Company Limited, China won the exclusive right to extract copper from the MesAynak mine in Logar province for USD 3.14 billion, more than all its competitors. As part of the agreement, China Metallurgica Group and Jiangxi Copper Company Limited have also allocated funds for the construction of schools, clinics, markets, mosques and a 400-megawatt power plant. However, the project was stalled for years due to security concerns (Global Times, 2021; Byrd, 2017). After Taliban takeover in August 2021, the two companies as recent as in September 2021 announced that they would start the project soon. Afghan government has signed a 30-year contract with CMGC and Jinagxi copper company and now the Taliban led interim government is ready to welcome China (Reuters, 2021). Also, in 2011, the China National Petroleum



Corporation (CNPC) announced its USD 700 million investment project in the Amu Darya oilfield, but the project was unsuccessful.

China has been attempting to get foothold in economic terms. Afghanistan became member of AIIB in 2017. The trilateral cooperation on the CPEC project, but also by the Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2016 between Beijing and Kabul. On that occasion, China allocated the first USD100 million in loans for infrastructure projects. In 2014 alone, it provided Afghanistan with USD 80 million in aid and, in September 2017, allocated around USD 90 million to development projects in the Afghan province of Badakhshan alone to create a military mountain brigade to protect its borders from the Daesh (ISIS) is emblematic. So far, Chinese military presence in Afghanistan is geographically limited to Badakhshan province on the Afghan side of the border. As of 2020, Chinese enterprises had contracts for projects worth \$110 million in Afghanistan, a year-on-year increase of 158.7 percent (The Global Times, 2021b).

China has already planned and committed to invest in the Five Nations Railway as a part of BRI, which will connect Iran with the Middle East via Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan (RECCA, 2017). As a part of Five Nation Railway Cooperation (FNRC), the first cross-border railway between Iran and Afghanistan was inaugurated in 2020 (Ramachandran, 2021). In recent years, China's geo-economic plans are aligned with its objective to overcome 'the Malacca Dilemma' through overland transport and energy routes through Central Asia, Myanmar and Pakistan. Beijing is reorienting access to Middle Eastern energy resources by connecting Eurasia thoroughly via a network of trains and highways, and Afghanistan is a focal point for Beijing's connectivity with Middle East. Beijing's dependency over Middle Eastern oil has made Beijing desperate to create connectivity through other means that would not bypass Indo-Pacific (Myers, 2020). Afghanistan can also provide data connectivity between Europe and Asia. Data connectivity is included in the BRI plans as part of the Digital Silk Road (Safi and Alizada, 2018). By 2017, 25 provinces in Afghanistan had already been connected by optic fiber (Lai, 2020). China has already invested heavily in the fiber optics sector in Afghanistan (RECCA, 2017). China can capitalise on its central position in those countries by connecting markets through infrastructure investment which ultimately lead to domestic development and economic growth of the country.

However, China is afraid of other regional players, mainly India taking benefit of Afghanistan. China is uncomfortable with the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas pipeline, as it leaves China in the sidelines (Reuters, 2018). Thus, through BRI it is attempting to connect Afghanistan with Central Asia, in order to reduce India's influence in Afghanistan. Other pathways

connect China with Afghanistan via Peshawar (Pakistan) to Kabul and Dushanbe, in addition to the Five-Nation Railway (China-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran). Another corridor connects Peshawar to Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Turkmenistan. Nonetheless, the fragile stability and security situation, the infrastructure deficit, and the lack of bilateral and multilateral agreements to allow cross-border trade and transit are all impediments and challenges for China to capitalise on the benefits offered by Afghanistan's strategic location. For instance, Afghanistan faced a significant trade and transit challenge with Uzbekistan due to the lack of bilateral and multilateral agreements facilitating the transportation of Afghan resources through Uzbekistan to China (Safi and Alizada, 2018).

Afghanistan signed an MOU with China in 2016 to co-operate on BRI (RECCA, 2016). As part of this, China engaged in infrastructure development, such as the construction of a railway line from China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region to Hairat in northern Afghanistan via Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (China Daily, 2021). Due to the instability in the region, Beijing integrated Afghanistan in BRI plans only in May 2017. Later that year, at a meeting of the foreign ministers of China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan in Beijing, the potentiality of expanding CPEC to Afghanistan and later connecting Kabul to the China–Central Asia–West Asia Economic Corridor was brought up. The project was halted due to a lack of agreement between the then-Afghan government and the Taliban (Attanayake & Zheng, 2021). Now as the Taliban considers China as a 'friendly country', China will leverage its 'good relations' with the Taliban and could resume investing in Afghanistan. In fact, Chinese foreign ministry already has stated that the state-owned, and private enterprises can restart investing in Afghanistan (Wang, 2021). Through early recognition of Taliban, which China has hinted at implicitly more than once, China also could minimise Taliban's ties with the US and India to gain greater influence. Towards these efforts, China has hosted a series of meetings with Afghanistan's neighbours, as discussed above, and courted Taliban leadership. In addition, China has also pledged emergency humanitarian aid (worth 200 million yuan) to Afghanistan and called for de-listing Taliban leaders from UN-terror list and lifting of sanctions.

### **China's Normative Narratives on Afghanistan and Regional Strategy**

As discussed above, normative narratives are essential part of China's regional strategy despite their limited efficacy. Keeping up with these narratives, China has portrayed 'developmental peace' and multilateral solutions through the SCO as better solutions opposite to US-led military solutions in Afghanistan. Through 'developmental peace' narrative, China justifies its investment in Afghanistan as a part of peace building process, which could also link to China as

a benevolent power and its idea of peaceful development. The 'developmental peace' is also portrayed as an alternative to US intervention in Afghanistan and legitimises its policies as desirable with focus on economics and based on non-intervention (Yin, 2021).

Chinese style of mediation in Afghanistan, as is the case with other conflict-prone countries, is often characterized as 'creative involvement', 'constructive engagement', and 'creative mediation' (Zhang, 2019). It is often based supposed 'neutrality' which allows China to able to maintain good relationship with both the parties in conflict (Sun, 2020). Chinese media and official statements, in the post-NATO period, have criticised US for holding back Afghan assets in US banks as a 'theft' and as attempt to hinder the economic development of Afghanistan (CGTN, 2022).

China remained closed on voicing strong opinion on Afghanistan. Rather it attempted mediating style diplomacy where China has invited both Taliban leaders and Afghan government representative to China for discussing peace in Afghanistan. Since 2014, Chinese officials received Taliban officials for bilateral discussions on the Afghan peace process for five times: in November 2014, May 2015, July 2016, and June and September 2019 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs PRC, 2021). China started mediating between Afghanistan and Pakistan through China-Pakistan-Afghanistan Trilateral strategic dialogue since 2015. In 2017, China initiated 'shuttle diplomacy' between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs PRC, 2017).

The above diplomatic maneuvers have made China closer to Taliban. The position of 'neutrality' worked in China's favor, and it also try to justify China's recognition of Taliban's interim government in Kabul as a benevolent move. It also provides a 'win-win situation' for Taliban as well since China claims to have a neutral outlook and encourage 'Afghan solution for Afghan problem,' Taliban can be a willing partner in China's regional axis. It also aligns with China's regional strategy to show China as a neutral partner for economic development regardless of the country's governing style.

### **Challenges to China's Regional Strategy Afghanistan: Rationale & Assessment**

After discussing the objectives and means of China's regional strategy as well as its approach to Afghanistan, this part highlights the obstacles China confronts despite having a coherent strategy. The challenges to its policies in Afghanistan also emanate from inter-linked nature of problems that characterise Afghanistan. Given the fluid situation within Afghanistan, and evolving geopolitics of Afghanistan, the discussion in this section is analytical rather than explanatory. Radicalisation, which in China's perception drives Uighur separatism

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in Xinjiang, is a regional phenomenon and spread over regions surrounding Afghanistan. Hence, a regional strategy to bring in countries together makes strategic sense for China after US-withdrawal. China's regional strategy defined along these dimensions worked for it with relative success because with economic incentives and the resolution of territorial disputes in 1990s and the early 2000s, China could persuade Central Asian republics not to allow Uighur nationalist activities (Azizian, 2006).

As a result, the number of Uighur groups and activists operating in Central Asia has decreased over time, with many of them transferring their operations to Turkey and other developed nations. (Bovingdon, 2010; Godehardt, 2014). These countries even deported many Uighur activists. Even though, few organizations are still active, and many Uighurs flee to Central Asia, they do not pose significant threat due to enhanced cooperation between these countries and China through bilateral mechanisms as well as the SCO anti-terror mechanism. SCO's main agenda was to fight 'terrorism, separatism, and extremism' at its establishment. SCO has also established RATS mechanism for coordination and with expansion of SCO membership, SCO's role in anti-terrorism has increased (Wang and Kong, 2019). Strong bilateral ties with Afghanistan under the Taliban and Pakistan can aid in the repatriation of Uighurs and the crackdown on the Uighur population in Pakistan, especially targeting removing teaching of Uighur language and culture. In recent years, in the wake of CPEC, Pakistan has increasingly accepted China's version of the Uighur problem and cracked down on Uighur activity in Pakistan. According to estimates, there is approximately 3000 Uighurs living in different cities and provinces in Pakistan namely, Gilgit, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, among others (Vice News, 2021).

The regional nature of terrorism and radicalization requires a regional approach. The presence of various terrorist organizations in Central Asia with ideological and financial links with organizations in Af-Pak region and Middle East, therefore, necessitates a regional response. The relationships between radical organizations in Af-Pak region and other regions are based on illicit trade in drugs, radical Islamic ideology, and support in terror financing (Omelicheva & Lawrence, 2019). How far it can succeed is an open question, but it also allows China to legitimize Xinjiang problem as a transnational and foreign-funded. China has used 'war on terror' to legitimise its own repressive policies from the early 2000s (Wayne, 2009). China's regional strategy is not easy to maintain in Afghanistan unlike in Central Asia, and Chinese analysts have highlighted these fears in recent months. The nature of terrorist organizations, their support base and funding spread over Central Asia, Middle, Af-Pak region and even North Africa. For example, Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has repeatedly highlighted inter-

connections between Al-Qaeda, ISIL, Boko-Haram and other organizations operating in Middle East, North and Central Africa, and Af-Pak regions (FATF-GIABA-GABAC, 2016). Therefore, despite having greater influence over Taliban, China is not destined to achieve strategic and geopolitical influence in Afghanistan. China's regional approach through SCO, in fact, reveals its anxieties over radicalisation in the post-US withdrawal phase than a confident power shaping regional order.

The problem of taming terrorist organizations is complicated by factional rivalries and multiplicity of organizations working in and outside Afghanistan, since Taliban is not a monolith entity, and it does not also have control over other organisations. The questions of tribal and ethnic divisions among Taliban factions remain salient to how Taliban functions (Rutting, 2012). The provisional government reflects factional rivalries. Additionally, non-Taliban organizations not only within Af-Pak region but also in Central Asia complicate the situation for China to achieve its aims to neutralize terrorist threats (Lemon, 2018).

While China is concerned about the prospective migration of radical Uighurs trained in Afghanistan and adjacent regions, cross-border flow of Uighurs and material support to separatist activities in Xinjiang is at a minimal concentration due to geography and China's recent securitization of border crossings (Hastings, 2011). China's anxiety emerges from deep-seated resentment in Xinjiang, and the involvement of Uighurs trained in Afghanistan-Pakistan in recent terror attacks. Radicalization poses greater threat to China's economic investment (Basit and Pantucci, 2021). China has invested in the CPEC and now plans to extend the project under the BRI to Afghanistan with good rationale to exploit extensive reserves of mineral resources in Afghanistan.

This leads to challenges that emerge out of corruption, drug economy and the role of local leaders and factions for economic projects (Omeliicheva & Lawrence, 2019). Additionally, the deep-rooted connections, both financial and ideological, with Pakistani state and society of non-Taliban organizations and their support for radical Islam is a greater threat. But the inability of Pakistan state, and Taliban regime to tame these organizations, and insurgent organizations in Baluchistan, and tribal areas in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in northwest Pakistan, the challenges of taming radicalization will remain.

### **China's Regional Strategy and Afghanistan in Post-NATO Period: Changes and Continuities**

Despite seemingly having a coherent regional strategy in terms of the clarity about means and objectives, China's Afghanistan policy in the post-NATO period raises a question whether it deviates from its formal positions on regional

issues. China's cautious regional strategy emerge from China's conflicting identities as an emerging power, which is also rooted in its lack of confidence in handling regional crises, its principled positions on territorial sovereignty and non-interference in its foreign policy, and the domestic impact of regional crises (Pu, 2005). Chinese international relations scholars generally believe that China is a regional power (Zhu, 2010) while some scholars have characterized China as a 'partial power', which is risk averse (Shambaugh, 2013). In addition, domestic stability and economic interests precede regional foreign policy goals (Wishnick, 2014). In this context, it is pertinent to ask whether China's approach to Afghanistan shifted radically from these positions. It should be noted that China's engagement with the Taliban has also been flexible with its links to the Taliban going back to the late 1990s. While it relied on US' global war on terror to legitimize its harsh policies in Xinjiang after the 9/11, it has never been comfortable with US presence in its neighbourhood. Thus, it has pursued a cautious policy with a mix of economic investment, regional multilateral diplomatic efforts, and contacts with the Taliban leadership for more than a decade. This paper contends that it would be mistaken to think that China have renounced its 'risk-averse behavior' and will put foot in Afghanistan. Chinese approach in Afghanistan, as outlined above along three dimensions, relies neither on direct military involvement nor on blind economic investment (Sun, 2022). However, it would also not to be correct to argue that China will leave Afghanistan situation to evolve and let others take advantage. In this situation, it is argued here that it is a regional strategy rather than bilateral strategy will be prudent for China. China's efforts through gradual economic engagement, regional multilateral diplomacy, and normative narratives of humanitarian assistance, criticism of military intervention, and engagement with Taliban are aimed at averting risks and gaining influence over a period of time.

For China, the security of its economic assets, especially in the developing world, has gradually become a major security issue, and a major reason for its increasing security and diplomatic profile beyond its borders (Ghiselli, 2021). The Center for International Security (CIS), Tsinghua University lists instability in the countries along the BRI as a major external security risk for China (CISS, 2022). Afghanistan's stability, due to its location at the junction of other regions, is crucial for its geo-economic plans, energy security, and regional security in the long run. China's worries stem from, as previous section show, from the inability of Taliban's control over other terrorist organizations. For example, after Taliban seized power, the number of terror incidents involving non-Taliban groups namely, the IS-Khorasan and its affiliated groups (South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2022). In fact, Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-Khorasan) has claimed several terror

attacks in Afghanistan (Gardner, 2021). In addition, the rivalry between IS-Khorasan and Taliban goes back to last few years when the former attempted to gain foothold in Nangarhar province in Eastern Afghanistan and surrounding areas, from where they have launched terror attacks within Pakistan and Afghanistan (CSIS, 2018). Therefore, it is not difficult to argue that Taliban will find it difficult, if not impossible, to bring control over these groups, which also has negative implications for the security of China's economic projects, and internal security concerns in Xinjiang.

In addition, China cannot afford to let US be at China's door as it came closer, after the 9/11, to China's borders since the Soviet Union's influence in Vietnam in 1970s (Zhao, 2012). Some Chinese scholars have also interpreted US presence in Afghanistan as part of US strategy of rebalancing (Wang, 2012). Hence, the primary reason why China prefers SCO is to make sure that Central Asian countries have stability and do not get closer to US. In Chinese debates, this is a major challenge for China at the regional level (Godement, 2021; Fu, 2021).

In short, therefore, Taliban's inability to control non-Taliban terrorist organizations, regional character of terrorism, competing regional interests among other players namely, US, India, Iran, and Russia, and China's risk-averse approach to regional conflicts ensures broader continuity in China's foreign policy. This approach involves a more hands-on role in the Afghan peace process through material incentives and mediation for peace talks, implicit support for recognition of Taliban regime as well as clear political demands that the Afghan government should pursue a 'moderate' Islamism and a 'neutral' foreign policy – meaning no support for groups like ETIM. Some Chinese analysts claim that China's more engagement is considered as shifting from traditional non-interference to 'constructive involvement' (Global Times, 2021a). Yet, given China's worry about spillover effects in Xinjiang, China has maintained partnership with previous governments and even Taliban.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has conceptualised China's regional strategy in its neighbourhood along three dimensions namely, the use of multilateral institutions, the economic integration of neighbourhood with China's economy, and normative narratives that portray China's role as beneficial to other states. By emphasising that there are continuities in China's regional strategy from the Cold War period in terms of three means and three objectives, we have shown that as China's economic capabilities rise, its geopolitical ambitions for great power status starts from its dominance in its neighbourhood.

China's rising economic capabilities have allowed it a greater leverage in the Post-Cold War period, and hence there is a qualitative difference from the previous period. In the Post-1980s period, China has become members of regional institutions in Southeast Asia, and has helped built new institutions Central Asia, namely the SCO, and new developmental institutions namely, the AIIB, BRICS bank (also called New Development Bank), sponsored multilateral informal forums in China to engage with neighbouring countries such as the Bo'ao forum, BRI forum, World Peace Forum at Tsinghua University, and Conference on the Dialogue on Asian Civilizations among others. Additionally, its economic leverage has increased manifold, which is reflected in its status as the largest trade partner of the majority of the countries in its neighbourhood. As a result, it can push forward new narratives namely, developmental peace, the Communist of Shared Future, and peaceful rise. We argue that whether and how far these narratives produce tangible geopolitical results is uncertain. Nevertheless, the fact that these narratives are part of its strategy, they reveal China's aims in the longer term.

Looking at how China has pursued its policy in Afghanistan in recent few years, we can see interplay between domestic security concerns in Xinjiang, and regional aims namely, containing terrorism in and around Afghanistan, preventing US from having foothold in neighbourhood, and regional economic integration. China has bandwagoned with the US war on terror which allowed it to ideologically legitimise its policies in Xinjiang in international affairs as well as to benefit from anti-terror efforts without being part of the same. Yet, China has also been uncomfortable with the way US-withdrawal took place, but it also about portraying US as an irresponsible power.

China has been wary of US military presence in its neighbourhood. In addition, China's diplomatic efforts through regional efforts prominently through the SCO reflect the regional nature of terrorism with its funding and ideological links spreading across regions namely, Central Asia, Middle East, Af-Pak region and even North Africa. Thus, China's engagement through SCO allows it to leverage its influence over Central Asian countries, Pakistan, and partnerships with Russia and Iran. It also provides legitimacy to its status as a responsible emerging power which it has attempted to build in its narratives of peaceful rise and shared opportunity in the last few decades. Therefore, China's dominance provides it with a leverage to set agendas that are suitable for it, especially when its ability to shape regional geopolitics remains low as of now.

Despite instability in Afghanistan and challenges for China to stabilize it, Afghanistan provides an opportunity in the post-NATO period to expand its geo-economic plans such as the BRI. Provided Afghanistan stabilizes over a period, it



will be a crucial junction for China's connectivity projects to expand and achieve its geo-political aims of accessing energy and 'the Malacca Dilemma'. However, seeming congruence between China, Iran, and Russia on Afghanistan may prove short-term. Iran has been uneasy relationship with Taliban and the latter's anti-Shia approach may make it anti-Taliban. Russia's geopolitical competition with China for influence in Central Asia may come up as China expands its influence. Thus, their common enemy US leaves with much weaker position to shape geopolitics of Afghanistan, their differences may emerge wide open. Finally, although there is no radical shift in China's approaches to Afghanistan, when looked at within larger context, Afghanistan's geopolitical location in its neighbourhood ensures a proactive interplay between economic, institutional, and normative dimensions of its regional strategy.

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# India's National Security Strategy Document: Rationales and Challenges

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## Abstract

A national security strategy is the guiding document that assists a nation and its government in power to tackle diplomatic priorities and challenges, outline its security strategy, foreign policy, economic and technological priorities among other issues. It defines national objectives and national interests in the light of limited resources available to a nation and the best possible manner in which to achieve them. A country like India which is situated in a very complex and dynamic geopolitical landscape, even after 75 years of independence does not have a document outlining its national security strategy. This paper tries to assess the importance of a document outlining India's national security strategy. India has witnessed a debate regarding the existence of a national security strategy despite the absence of a written document and the need for such a written document. The essay has made use of parliamentary debates and other official documents in addition to personal interviews with experts and officials. It analyses the various debates in India surrounding a document outlining its national security strategy and argues that India requires such a document especially given the complex regional and international geopolitical landscape that India finds itself in.

**Keywords:** India's National Security Policy, India's National Security Strategy, National Security Doctrine.

## Introduction

Majority of nation states in the international system have a document outlining their National Security Policy or National Security Strategy (NSS) in some form or the other. The prime purpose of such a document is to serve as a roadmap for the state to navigate through a maze of challenges that they face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and how to deal with such challenges. The form that such a document takes may differ from state to state. For example, it may exist as a grand strategy

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outlining the country's overall strategy to deal with myriad security and other challenges. In other cases, such a document may take the form of a national security-related strategy for a specific issue like force structure development for the armed forces; economic policy; put forth a technology roadmap for the country; or for specific military service. One can surmise that there cannot be a concerted and coordinated approach toward achieving the country's long term goals in a time-bound manner, unless such goals are clearly articulated and enunciated and subjected to periodic review based on experience. A robustly articulated national security strategy offers a guide to all the state organs that they should adhere to. It is a clear vision of the path that a nation should follow to achieve its national goals (Hooda, 2019).

The International Relations and Security Network (ISN), ETH Zurich has compiled a list of National Security Strategy or related documents of more than 90 countries. The existence of NSS or similar documents in the case of such a large number of countries shows the importance it carries for any nation. Such documents are also important because they are whole of government and authoritative documents, statements of governments' defense and security policies as well as threat assessments (*Defense White Papers and National Security Strategies*, 2023). Many countries like the United States, China, Japan, France, Russia, among others also periodically review and update their strategies depending on the overall geopolitical situation and incorporate changes as required.

India is the only democracy of its size and economic stature which does not have a document outlining its National Security Strategy (NSS). This assumes more significance given the fact that India is today the fifth largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$3.5 trillion (Press Trust of India, 2023), with the world's largest population of 1.41 billion (The World Bank, 2023) and seventh largest by area with 3.29 million square km (Government of India, n.d.).

The absence of a national security strategy for India is perplexing given that India is situated in a very complex geographical region with myriad geopolitical, geo-economical and geo-strategic challenges. Also given, India's aspiration to emerge as a regional/global power and having witnessed four major wars<sup>i</sup> with a number of proxy wars<sup>ii</sup> since independence, it is quite puzzling how India has managed without a public document that outlines the country's National Security Strategy (NSS) and could guide the nation for the steps to be taken on political and strategic front for achieving its long term objectives in various areas.

#### **Understanding National Security Strategy**

National security is a 'multifaceted' and comprehensive concept of building a unified national power (Delhi Policy Group, 2016). Two most important factors that shape the national security of a country are its external environment and internal situation, along with their intersection (*Report of the Group of Ministers on National Security*, 2000). A 'symbiotic' relationship is foreseen between internal security and external security, confirming the hypothesis that the country's position in relation to external security is organically linked to its internal strength (Delhi Policy Group, 2016, p. 10).

For ensuring the security of the nation, several policy guidelines are made by the governments. They may be in documented form or as guidelines or in the form of statements of leaders. These documents may take the form of Foreign Policy, Security Policy, National Security Strategy, Defence Strategy, White Papers etc. However, a documented strategy or policy has many advantages which Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal has described as:

“First, a comprehensively formulated National Security Strategy reflects the national will to protect and promote national interests pertaining to security and dissuades adversaries from attempting to play mischief. Second, it provides guidance to all stakeholders on policies related to national security. Finally, it offers reassurance to the citizens that the government has initiated appropriate protective measures to safeguard national security(Kanwal, 2017).”

Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009 describes National Security Policy as being “formulated by viewing the national security objectives and the components of national power in the domestic and global environment, both prevailing and predicted” while National Strategy is “the plan for employment of various tools of national power in accordance with the national security policy, to achieve the national security objectives in support of national interests(Indian Navy, 2009, pp. 4–5).” Devesh Kapur and Rohan Mukherjee writing in *India Review* have described a state’s strategy as “a framework or plan that seeks to achieve certain longer-term objectives using available resources in an environment where other states or non-state actors may have conflicting objective(Kapur & Mukherjee, 2018).” Malia DuMont writing in the *Strategy Consortium of the Atlantic Council* has stated that the basic purpose of such strategy is “to provide guidance on managing the risks associated with future challenges, thereby assuring the enduring security of the nation over the long term in the face of both general uncertainty and well-defined threats(DuMont, 2019).” Professor Shrikant Paranjpe writing in *India’s Strategic Culture*, has described National Security Strategy as an approach to safeguard the national security of the nation- state and consequently protecting its national interest. This draws from the understanding of core values (of national interest) and capabilities (in terms of national power)(Paranjpe, 2020).

In addition to outlining the core values and capabilities, such a strategy is necessary as it acts as a ‘guide’ to all the stakeholders comprising of government departments, civil society, other institutions in the national security architecture in addition to citizens at large. It is well known that no single authority or agency or institution can ensure the security of a country in a wide variety of threats and challenges. The national security strategy document should therefore outline the major responsibilities of each element of the national power- political, economic, diplomatic, military, social, technological, psychological, and cultural- in a coordinated manner to address the security concerns. All of these elements have in some way or the other a connection to national security, and therefore the overall national security strategy should highlight the short and long term priorities in each of these areas. Speaking at the Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw Memorial Lecture in 2018, Lt. Gen.V.K. Ahluwalia, Director, Centre for Land Warfare

Studies (CLAWS), referred to the National Security Strategy as perhaps the “first step” to get everyone on the same page (Ahluwalia, 2019, p. 39). A senior New Delhi based military officer during an interview with the author has highlighted how the NSS would give direction to the military strategy and therefore, the force structure required for a country in the following words:

“NSS provides objectives. Essentially it will be the articulation of the threat which we have. It specifies our challenges and approach which needs to be taken to address those challenges. From there, the integrated HQ IDS would translate those directives in terms of what kind of force they will need in terms of number, in terms of kind of equipments, which will be required in future.” (Interviewee F, personal communication, 29 September 2022)

The Estimates Committee Report on *Defence Force Levels, Manpower, Management and Policy* for the tenth Lok Sabha during 1992-93 also commented that it is deeply disturbed by the absence of such a national security doctrine.<sup>iii</sup> Further, it strongly advocated the need of a national security doctrine which should be comprehensive enough to include the sensitive matters related to internal security along with the consideration of “long term view” of national security affairs (*Defence Force Levels, Manpower, Management and Policy: Estimates Committee Report 1992-93*, 1992, p. 27).

Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal has argued that the objectives defined by a country in the form of national interests would provide broad signposts and will be enduring in nature and has to be adhered to by all stakeholders.<sup>iv</sup> This would provide a certain path to attain those objectives which would be outlined in the strategy. Thus, such a strategy document should be well-defined and clear while maintaining confidentiality of national security related data and information. After such a broad objectives and national interests are outlined, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) would put together the national military strategy which would determine force levels that are considered necessary for achieving the national security objectives which are in turn communicated to the three Services through the Operational Directive of the Raksha Mantri. In the same way, other government departments, ministries would also develop plans for meeting the goals outlined in the national security strategy (Kanwal, 2017).

In an interview with the authors, a former senior naval officer, stated that the well-defined articulation is important because the nature of threats may keep changing from time to time but the objectives of a country remains the same. He stated that such a strategy would:

“It would define many things concretely. Doctrine provides a platform/ it’s a standard regarding the terms and the objectives any nation uses. It takes all the stakeholders on the same page, so that there remains no confusion regarding the interpretation of terms. Threats can change, not mission (Interviewee J, personal communication, 10 October 2022).”

### **Debate in India surrounding National Security Strategy (NSS)**

The long term India’s National Security perspective from 1970s, 1980s to mid 1990s can be traced in interventionist “Indira Doctrine” and conciliatory “Gujaral Doctrine” (Kanwal, 2017). The “Indira Doctrine” is based on the idea of

using India's military forces as a deterrent and as an interventionist foreign-policy tool. This was to counter the influence of external powers within South Asia that had implicit or explicit agendas which were inimical to India's interests (Ogden, 2019). Herein, India emphasised that the issues in the region must be settled bilaterally and resisted presence or interference of external powers in the region. For instance, in the 1987 agreement entered into by late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi with Sri Lankan President Jayawardane, Colombo was required to refrain from offering bases to any other country (Mohan, 2003).

Subsequently, as part of the "Gujral Doctrine" New Delhi significantly altered how the conduct of its bilateral relations with its immediate neighbours, especially with the smaller countries (Murthy, 1999, p. 639). A set of five guiding principles outlined India's approach to engaging its immediate neighbours. Among other things, these five principles were the result of the conviction that India's size and strength are inextricably linked to the quality of its relations with its neighbours and thus India acknowledged the significance of cordial, friendly relations with its neighbours (Murthy, 1999, p. 639). Former Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral speaking at the Bandaranaike Center for International Studies in Colombo, Sri Lanka on January 20, 1997 said:

"Within the South Asian region, which is our common home, I would like to say that, for my government, the development of close and friendly relations with our immediate neighbours commands the highest priority. The Gujral Doctrine, if I may call it so, states that, first, with its neighbours like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka, India does not ask for reciprocity, but gives and accommodates what it can in good faith and trust. Second, we believe that no South Asian country should allow its territory to be used against the interests of another country of the region. Third, that none should interfere in the internal affairs of another. Fourth, all South Asian countries must respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. And finally, they should settle all their disputes through peaceful bilateral negotiations ('The Gujral Doctrine', 1997)."

Debate around the need for an Indian National Security Strategy has been going on for several years. This has broadly been divided into schools of thought. Scholars and experts like Arvind Gupta, Gurmeet Kanwal, Jaswant Singh among others are of the opinion that India must have such a strategy and it is an urgent need for the country. Lt. Gen Balraj Singh Nagal, former Director Center for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), New Delhi has also highlighted the need for such a strategy given that "India has been subjected to five wars or conflicts, not of its own choosing, and now is countering a terror proxy war. In spite of these inflictions, there has been no declared national security strategy or defence policy/strategy (Sen, 2018, p. Preface)."

Former Indian Foreign and Defence Minister Jaswant Singh<sup>v</sup> during the Parliamentary debate on September 5, 1991 said:

"I think time has come when we need a White Paper from the Ministry of Defence. This is an oft-repeated request, but I do not make it lightly, make it in all earnestness and in all seriousness. We need from the Ministry of Defence a White



Paper giving, in detail, all aspects: what consequences will all these international, internal logistic etc. cause to our security because of these changes.”

**On Another occasion, in 1990-91 he Remarked:**

“According to historians, wars are decided by three factors: the terrain; the difference of the levels of armament technology; and the character, attitude, and approach of the contending sides. The terrain is given, and the technology can be improved, but the last cannot be easily remedied. And this last has been India’s main deficiency and principle reason for the lack of any intelligible national strategic thought (Sen, 2018, p. 134).”

Similarly, former Indian Foreign Secretary and currently fellow at the New Delhi based Center for Policy Research, Ambassador Shyam Saran has suggested the need for a ‘comprehensive national security strategy’ for India. He said, “in the absence of an overall strategy, the state relies on ad hoc responses of questionable utility (Saran, 2019).” Saran further stated that, “A holistic discussion of India’s national security rarely occurs in the public space or even within the government. The Indian state does not possess an overarching national security strategy (NSS) that comprehensively assesses the challenges to the country’s security and spells out policies to deal effectively with them (Saran, 2019).”

The Estimates Committee had recommended for a formal National Security Doctrine in its Nineteenth Report. Later during the Tenth Lok Sabha, the Standing Committee on Defence (1995-96) when asked about the measures taken for accomplishing this task, the Defence Secretary replied:

“... there is a policy; the only thing is that it is not written down as a separate document and published as such... As a matter of policy we have not published such a document and the Government has not been in favour of publishing a separate document. It is only the United States in my knowledge which annually publishes a document called National Security Doctrine. Non-publication of the document does not mean in any way non-existence of policy (Kanwal, 2017).”

In an interview with the authors, a former Chief of Naval Staff argues for a Indian national security strategy in the following words:

“You do need a formal written detail document to tell the country and especially the armed forces what are the nation’s overall aim and objectives, and how do we achieve them and how do we protect our national interest. It articulates the governments and the state’s national aims and objectives, which are the key and core interests which need to be safeguarded and how do we do that.... Then it gives further guidelines to various parts of the governments including the armed forces. From there we can derive further information, regarding the kind of armed forces do we need, what should be the equipments etc (deciding the type of equipment will further derive how much budget is required), so all this is the logical sequence. So, if you leave it unstated, then armed forces would not know where to go and how to equip themselves.... Other impact- between the three forces there is always a competition for budget as it is limited. So, if you don’t state your aims and objectives, the three armed forces will fight amongst themselves for the bigger share of the budget. Whereas if the national aims and

objectives are clearly laid out, then you know which is the priority area- whether it is land borders, Himalayas, Air Defence of India, Maritime Defence of India, or any other. And therefore accordingly the budget will be allocated. Today there is no such priority so all three services fight with each other. So that is the importance of a government articulating clearly a national security strategy.”(Interviewee D, personal communication, 10 October 2022)

However, as mentioned above, there is a contending viewpoint with regard to India’s national security strategy which posits that although India does not have such a document called National Security Strategy (NSS), yet it has managed its security interests well. This thinking is based on the view that “a document without matching capabilities, will serve no purpose(Delhi Policy Group, 2016, p. 4).” Scholars supporting this view point argue that there is an advantage in being ambiguous about the country’s defence policy and national security strategies. This makes it hard for the country’s adversaries to be sure about the country’s objectives and plans.

In May 1995, Prime Minister P. V. Narsimha Rao, who was also India’s then Defence Minister, responded to the Lok Sabha’s discussion of the Demands for Grants of the Ministry of Defence follows:

“We do not have a document called India’s National Defence Policy. But we have got several guidelines which are followed, strictly followed and observed, and ‘those can be summed up as follows:(a)To defend our national integrity over land, sea and air; (b) To secure an internal environment; (c) To be able to exercise a degree of influence over the nations in our immediate neighborhood; (d) To be able to effectively contribute towards regional and international stability(Sen, 2018, p. 137).’This policy is not merely rigid in the sense that it has been written down, but these are the guidelines, these are the objectives, these are the matters which are always kept in view while conducting our defence policy...(Kanwal, 2017)”.

Responding to a question from the Standing Committee on Defence (Sixth Report, Standing Committee on Defence (1995-96), Tenth Lok Sabha, March 1996), the MoD stated:

“... although there has been no specifically written document called India’s National Defence Policy, yet it has been articulated clearly and unambiguously through various policy statements over the years. The policy articulated since independence is as follows: That our military capability is to be so directed to ensuring the defence of national territory over land, sea and air encompassing among others the inviolability of our land borders, island territories, offshore assets and our maritime trade routes. Government have repeatedly made it clear that it is not our objective to influence/interfere/dominate (the) region on the basis of military strength(Kanwal, 2017).”

In the Annual Report for 1998-99, Ministry of External Affairs also described:

“We view foreign policy as an integral part of the larger effort of building the nation’s capabilities: through economic development, strengthening social well-being and the quality of life and of protecting India’s sovereignty, territorial

integrity and security, not only in its defence and economic aspects, but in the widest strategic sense of the term” (Kanwal, 2017).

It went on to say that India’s external relations are guided by “well-established principles” which have formed the “basis of our foreign policy for decades” and “enjoy a broad national consensus, thus providing a strong foundation of stability and continuity.”(Kanwal, 2017) The report did not, however, define these principles concretely and practically how they will be used to advance national interests and objectives(Kanwal, 2017).

Also, in the 1990s, the Defence Secretary informed the Parliamentary Committee on Defence on the issue of national security strategy by stating that:

“... all the elements of the doctrine are well known and have been incorporated from our constitution downwards. There have been several publications. There have been policy pronouncements by Ministers in Parliament. So, our national security doctrine is well known and the absence of a written document...does not create any confusion or lack of clarity in this matter. I however accept that we do not publish it as a document as such(Sinha, 2015).”

However, this point of view as Sinha (2015) argues has its risks given that statements made by political leaders at various times have several generalisations which do not produce effective policy(Sinha, 2015). Thus in the absence of such a well-thought out and whole-of-government document with attendant operational plans, policy-making, as Gurmeet Kanwal has argued, will remain reactive and largely driven by knee-jerk responses to changing situations(Kanwal, 2017). A similar point was made by a serving New Delhi-based Indian Army officer in an interview with the author:

“If India can have strategies in other domains, why not a National Security Strategy? It gives out the vision of the government. It defines the priorities- actual and desirable requirements, defines the challenges, threats, net assessment of threats (current and future). So, strategy is a statement of the government- that gives the overview of the comprehensive development of the capability. Thus, helps to lower the inter-Service rivalry(Interviewee H, personal communication, 28 September 2022).”

Professor Gautam Sen in his article in the *CLAWS Journal* argues that even after 70 years after independence, the defence policy that India is following has not emerged out of any policy document but through a set of guidelines based on bureaucratic inputs. He also highlights the fact that such an ad-hoc policy has not emerged out of any broader discussion and is bereft of benefits of inputs from those having requisite intellectual or expertise in the area(Sen, 2016, p. 9). Although, there have been a number of discussions<sup>vi</sup> to articulate a national security strategy for India, as of yet these have remained the mere statements without any visible results(Sen, 2016, p. 9). This has resulted in a situation where India does not have any official defence policy or national security strategy/ white paper. This is in stark comparison to more than 90 countries which have released such a document in one form or the other.

**Recent Developments in India**

An academic attempt to calculate a national security index was seen in the *India's National Security Annual Review 2010* edited by Prof Satish Kumar. Professor Kumar had attempted to prepare a National Security Index 2010 of fifty countries (selected on the basis of their GDP) based on an assessment of their population, defence/economic/technological capability, and energy security (Kumar, 2010, p. 455). The five indicators which are used for this index are "Defence Index, Index on Economic Strength, Effective Population Index, Technological Capability Index and Energy Security Index". Among these five indices, defence index is accorded the highest weight. India was ranked on fifth position according to this National Security Index with United States, China, Japan and the Russian Federation occupying the top four positions.

In recent years, there has been some movement by the Narendra Modi government on formulating India's national security strategy. The issue came up again into the limelight with the establishment of the Defence Planning Committee (DPC) headed by National Security Advisor in April 2018 which is believed to be tasked with drafting a new national security strategy for India ('Doval Chairs DPC's First Meet', 2018). News reports also indicated that the team led by National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has prepared a draft document outlining national security strategy and the same would see the light of day as soon as the government provides its approval (Gupta, 2019).

In March 2019, leading up to the 2019 General Elections, the Indian National Congress had also released a document as part of its election manifesto titled *India's National Security Strategy* which was prepared under the leadership of General D.S. Hooda who was earlier the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Indian Army's Northern Command (Press Trust of India, New Delhi, 2019). The document sets out India's national security objectives out of which the country's National Security Strategy emerges. General Hooda has divided the document into four main sub-sections namely, "Assuming our Rightful Place in Global Affairs", "Achieving a Secure Neighbourhood", "Peaceful Resolution of Internal Conflicts", "Protecting our People, and Strengthening our Capabilities" (Hooda, 2019). These sub-sections answer four fundamental questions as to the country's geopolitical situation; the country's regional, global aspirations; the country's priorities and lastly how to develop the capabilities to attain the defined objectives.

These formative steps suggest that there is a growing realization in the country that a well-defined National Security Strategy is the need of the hour. The appointment of the Chief of Defence Staff on December 30, 2019 is also an important step towards the creation of a system for the articulation and execution of a future national security strategy. The CDS who is envisaged as the "first among equals" and heads the Department of Military Affairs is important as s(he) also acts as a military advisor to the government and handles important organizational issues such as jointness, integration, and budgetary prioritization (Raghavan, 2020). In addition, the CDS will also be the part of the chain of nuclear command and will have authority over the tri-service organisations as he will be

serving as the permanent Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (Raghavan, 2020).

### Conclusion

The national security strategy is an umbrella document that has an intrinsic relationship at policy levels across various departments of the government. It paves the way to Strategic and Defence Review of a country from time to time. This review helps in determining the force structure as per the need and thus helps in optimizing defence budget. It provides the outline for the development and review of Army, Navy and Air force's service specific doctrine. Given the fact that the national security strategy is a whole of the government viewpoint, it lays down the framework for the country's defence policy, military strategy, defence industrial policy, innovation and technology policy, planning and procurement priorities among other such issues. In other words, the country's other policies will be formulated, coordinated, reviewed, revisited and updated in the light of the NSS. Therefore, a strong argument can be made for a document outlining India's national security strategy given its geographical and economic heft, and its ambitions in the regional and global stage. Such a document is also important because it gives political direction to the armed forces which helps them in making the requisite preparations for meeting the nation's security challenges. In the absence of such a strategy or formal political directions, the armed forces often find themselves second guessing the priorities of the political leadership. A national security strategy given that it will be a whole-of-government document, will provide clarity to the various arms of the state and government thereby ensuring that they work in tandem towards achieving the desired national objectives.

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## Notes

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- i India-Pakistan 1947, India-China War 1962, India- Pakistan War (Bangladesh Liberation War) 1971, Kargil War 1999
  - ii In general, proxy wars are the wars in which the armed forces are not at full scale declared wars, however a number of smaller conflicts are taking place continuously. In India, for instance, low intensity conflicts at the Line of Control, insurgency in Northeast India, Naxalite-Maoist insurgency, insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir can be put under such category
  - iii In this report of the Estimates Committee, the words 'doctrine' and 'strategy' are used loosely and quite interchangeably. However, as Professor Shrikant Paranjpe writes in *India's Strategic Culture*, Strategy is the executive action that flows from policy. It seeks the implementation of policy in real terms while doctrine targets specific sectors like nuclear, space, internal security, etc. In short, it is the nuts and bolts of strategy.

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- iv It is interesting to note that the Annual Report for 1997-98 issued by the Indian Ministry of Defence for the first time outlined India's national security objectives (Kanwal, 2017).
- v Jaswant Singh was an officer in the Indian Army in the 1950s and 60s. He resigned his Commission to pursue a political career and during a long and distinguished tenure in Parliament he headed six core Ministries of the Government of India, chaired many important Committees of Parliament like Public Accounts, Estimates, Energy, and Environment and Forests and served as Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. He is the only person to have served as India's finance minister(1996, 2002-2004), foreign minister(1998-2002) and defense minister(2001).
- vi Need for a documented National Security Strategy was discussed at various Parliamentary sessions, for instance Estimates Committee recommendation for a NSS in 1995-96, parliamentary debate 05 September 1991, committees on national security architecture; Kargil Review Committee 1999, Group of Ministers Report 2001, Naresh Chandra Committee 2012 also recommended the need for such a document in one way or the other.