

## Emerging Challenges to India's National Security: a Domestic Dimension

Dr. Mohammed Khalid<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor of Political Science, Panjab University, Sector 14, Chandigarh, 160014, India

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\*Corresponding author: Mohammed Khalid

### Abstract

### Review Article

National security is the primary objective of the state to survive and grow. It can be achieved through the use of economic power, diplomacy, military power projection and political power. The concern for national security is post-World War-II phenomena developed mostly in the United States, initially focusing on military might, and later including other non-military dimensions. In order to ensure national security, a state needs to possess economic, energy, and environmental security etc. Most important challenges which a nation may face include, political instability, threats to territorial integrity, economic weakness, ecological imbalance, socio-cultural disunity etc. Main internal challenges to national security also come from violent groups active within the country; organized crime, drug paddling, extortions, underworld mafias' etc. These challenges are met through the use of diplomacy to isolate threats; marshal economic power to facilitate or compel cooperation; maintain effective armed forces, implement civil defense and emergency preparedness measures; use intelligence services to detect and defeat or avoid threats and espionage, and to protect classified information; strengthen cybersecurity; and use counterintelligence services. India faces many domestic challenges to its national security such as rising intolerance between the casts and religious communities, dwindling economic development, right and left-wing militancy, rising scarcity of water resources, increasing unemployment, drug and narcotic smuggling, corruption, riots between religious communities etc. India's poor education and health sectors can pose grave threat to its national security. Other emerging threats include the cyber-crimes such as hacking and online attacks, financial fraud, data theft, espionage etc. This paper focuses on the new emerging domestic challenges to national security and their possible remedy.

**Keywords:** Territorial integrity, classified information, cybersecurity, water-scarcity, counterintelligence, ecological-balance, socio-cultural cohesiveness.

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## INTRODUCTION

National security is the requirement to maintain the survival of the state through the use of economic power, diplomacy, power projection and political power. It is a condition where our most cherished values and beliefs, our democratic way of life, our institutions of governance and our unity, welfare and well-being as a nation and people are permanently protected and continuously enhanced [1]. The concept developed mostly in the United States after World War II, initially focusing on military might, it now encompasses a broad range of facets, all of which impinge on the non-military or economic security of the nation and the values espoused by the national society. In order to possess national security, apart from military security, a nation needs to possess economic security, energy security, environmental security, etc [2]. To ensure national security a country needs to use diplomacy to rally allies and isolate threats; marshal its economic power to facilitate or compel cooperation;

maintain effective armed forces; implement civil defense and emergency preparedness measures (including anti-terrorism legislations); ensure the resilience of critical infrastructure; use intelligence services to detect and defeat or avoid threats and espionage, and to protect classified information; upkeep cyber security; use counterintelligence services to protect the nation from internal threats. Fundamental elements of national security include socio-political stability, territorial integrity, economic solidarity and strength, ecological balance, socio-cultural cohesiveness etc.

### Internal Security

Internal security is about maintaining peace within the borders of a sovereign state by upholding the national law and defending against internal security threats. Threats to internal security may range from low-level civil disorder, large scale violence, or even an armed insurgency, or weak cybersecurity measures.

Threats to internal security may be directed at the people, or the organs and infrastructure of the state, may range from petty to serious organised crime, political or industrial unrest, hacking government and defense sensitive data, or even domestic terrorism. Foreign powers may also play their role by either committing or sponsoring terrorism or rebellion, without actually declaring war. Violent groups active within the country, organized criminals, such as drug paddlers, extortionists, and underworld contract killers pose a serious national security challenge. Grave incidence of poverty, concentration of wealth in the hands of few people, economic sabotage undermining the market economy (such as money laundering, large-scale smuggling, hoarding) have the potential to create unrest in a country [3].

The management of internal security assumes great importance for a country. If a country successfully tackles the internal security issues, it can effectively handle not only the disruptive internal forces but also thwart external security challenges. To meet this challenge, a strong unity among all sections of the society is a prerequisite. If the country is rife with contentious politics based on sectarian, ethnic, linguistic or political divisions in the society internal security challenges will persist endlessly. In most of the countries, threats emanate from internal dissensions which may have strong linkages with the forces threatening from outside. Internal security has many dimensions some are general in nature while others are specific to certain countries. Faulty and biased electronic or print media coverage and misuse of social media are fast emerging as new threats to a country's internal security.

### India's Strategic Environment

Geopolitically embedded in South Asia, India is bordered to the northwest by Pakistan, to its north east and east lie China, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Myanmar and to the south across Palk Straits is Sri Lanka. By area, it is the seventh-largest country, and the second-most populous country in the world. India is often called the largest democracy in the world. Geographically, India is a predominantly continental country. Its Strategic Environment has two dimensions - external and the internal. External dimension includes political instability in its immediate neighborhood and presence of other nuclear powers in the region. While India has a stable parliamentary democratic system the political systems of its neighbors are either in a flux or under severe strain, whether it is Afghanistan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, or Sri Lanka. At its doorsteps India has nuclear powers like China and Pakistan, has fast nuclearizing Iran in its extended neighbourhood and in its surrounding waters of the Indian Ocean foreign nuclear submarines make their forays posing strategic challenges to its external security. Thus, besides the political instability, nuclear arms are a key element of India's strategic environment.

The conflict in Kashmir, Pakistani-backed cross border militancy, un-resolved border problem with China and occasional military stand offs along their un-demarcated borders including latter's creation of a 'string of pearls' at Coco Island (Myanmar), Hambantota port (Sri Lanka) and Gwadar Port (Pakistan) also constitute India's external security environment [4]. However the focus of this paper is the internal challenges to India's national security.

### Nature of Internal Security threats to India

Since its independence in 1947, India has been facing many internal threats whose nature and extent has been changing from time to time. Activities of foreign intelligence agencies, Naxalite-Maoist insurgency, and many separatist movements have traditionally threatened India's internal security. This was further aggravated by terrorism, illegal immigration from neighbouring countries and insurgency in Northeast of the country [5]. Challenging its territorial integrity, India has faced many separatist movements in the past. One of the most long drawn struggles has been the Kashmir separatist movement which has taken thousands of civilian lives and has heavily cost the armed forces. Many self-declared militant groups mostly aided and abetted by Pakistan continue to pose security challenges and do not recognize that Kashmir is an integral part of India. To keep peace, control the law and order situation in Jammu and Kashmir and to curb the internal and external terrorist groups, India carries out armed forces operations. The country has sacrificed thousands of its soldiers and paramilitary personal in the Kashmir valley [6]. The operations not only have weakened the state but also have drained away valuable financial resources of the country. India has faced the Khalistan separatist movement in Punjab during the 1980s and the 1990s, but this movement has largely been stamped out. Separatist movements have been there in the North-East India, in the states of Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Assam and Nagaland. Now they are largely under control. These movements call themselves as revolutionary movements who want to overthrow the government and bring about revolutionary changes in the structure and functioning of the state [7]. They have at times forced the governments to buy temporary peace by compromising with them.

Nexus of police-politicians-criminals, which has been exposed innumerable times in different cases, promotes lawlessness and strengthens the criminal elements. It weakens the justice system in the country. The police forces are an important component of the criminal justice system that has suffered because of this nexus. In fact, the entire criminal justice system comes under strain because of this unholy alliance [8]. The resentment among the law-abiding citizens increases which questions the legitimacy of government's effectiveness. Any such weakness is a serious threat to the national security of the country.

In some states of India, one finds the presence of organised caste-based gangs called '*Senas*' which is a direct consequence of the caste-based polarisation of the society. Activities of these '*Senas*' adversely affect the functioning of police and the administration and cause in loss of public confidence in the capacity of the state to protect their life and property. In the Border States these movements become secessionist because of the support they receive from the hostile neighbours Tribal movements like those of the Santhals and Mundas; movements due to economic deprivation like those of the Gonds in Madhya Pradesh and the Mahars in Andhra Pradesh, and movements due to separatist tendencies like those of the Nagas and Mizos, have posed serious national security threat to the country.

Fundamentalism and intolerance are on the rise in India. The rise of these forces is posing the most serious threat to India's national security. Fired with religious zeal and bigotry these fundamentalists have created a volatile situation. Threat from fundamentalist forces is many sided. Muslim fundamentalism and Hindu extremism, fanaticism on both the sides has weakened India's social fabric over the years. These organisations cause communal tensions and the emotive issues raked up by them do not allow the coming together of communities. It has weakened the state. The campaign like Ayodhya Ram Temple Issue, beef ban, ghar wapsi movement, love jihad rhetoric has posed a serious threat to the social unity of the country. Gau Rakshaks' atrocities on Dalits and Muslims gave birth to lynch mobs and caused mass resentment against the government and law enforcing agencies which either connive or fail in implementing the rule of law. The organisations, like Al Qaida, and Jaish-e-Mohammad, are encouraging the so-called 'Jihadis' to enter India and disturb peace. They indulge in subversive activities and spread the virus of fundamentalism among the Indian citizens [9].

Unemployment and lack of joblessness have always been a severe challenge for the successive governments in India. India's economy is growing at just about 7 percent per year, while jobs are increasing by just 1.1 percent. Unemployed youth drift in life and become susceptible to all types of temptations and make ideal candidates for various types of anti-social activities including militancy. When a country, like India, which is surrounded by inimical forces has unemployment climbing up along with feeling of alienation, it becomes an explosive mixture. With lesser jobs and greater competition they result in more demands for reservation. Such agitations sometimes cause a huge damage to infrastructure, disrupt economic activities such as traffic jams, market closures and factory shut downs, road blockades etc. They harm country's national interest and pose a threat to the national security. The Jat reservation agitation caused a series of violent protests in February 2016 and paralysed the State of Haryana for 10 days. Similar was

the Patidar reservation agitation in Gujrat. These instances show how communities and caste-based groups demand special status and class certificates to ensure their job security. Such agitationists, in their resolve to get media attention and pose a threat to country's national security.

Naxalism, continues to pose a major threat to India's internal security. Despite hard efforts by successive governments, the Naxalite-Maoist insurgency has been continuously evolving its tactics to maintain its previous relevance. Periodic Naxal violence in India's tribal belt –called the "Red Corridor," which is spread across the states of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh – may be compared to the flicker of a flame before it completely dies. Sustained counterinsurgency operations have remarkably brought down the capabilities and space of the Naxal insurgents. The activities of their cadres, both over ground and underground, have also decreased. But this has also resulted in large ambushes, hit and run tactics and IED blasts, which have allowed them to avoid direct and prolonged confrontation with Indian security forces. This remains a serious challenge to our national security. [10]

India is a multiparty system with 1866 registered political parties of whom seven are recognised national political parties. Most national political parties keep on targeting each other. Their conflict is so harsh that their leaders sometimes cross all limits of decency. They do not even spare national security issues. They accuse each other for compromising country's national interests. Politics about the surgical strikes against the enemies either in Myanmar or Pakistan, pointing fingers on Army Chiefs and their appointments, has become a common phenomenon. These things should not be part of public discourse giving handle to the neighbouring enemy countries. So much so, army operations are used by the contending parties to garner votes during the elections. These parties do not realise that the petty politics they are indulging in is a threat to our national security.

#### **Social Media: emerging threat to internal security**

Spread of social media and smart phones has created the phenomenon of 'flash crowds'. Media like Facebook and YouTube are being used to great advantage to carry out fake, and unsubstantiated propaganda. Fake rumors on WhatsApp about 'child lifting' in some places led to mob lynching of innocents. Some anti-national elements successfully use social media to create panic amongst citizens of North Eastern origin due to violence in Myanmar leading to mass exodus of students from places like Pune and Bangalore. Technology has enabled an individual to run his own digital newspaper, radio and even a television station. There are no controls over the individual using these means of mass communications. Attempts to have

some form of control over these sources have been opposed on the grounds of freedom of expression and right to privacy. Use of social media to rapidly spread false information has been identified as an emerging risk by the World Economic Forum in its Global Risks 2013 Report. Social media is used in terrorist recruitment drives, spreading fake news, incite violence, create group animosities, spread communal hatred causing communal riots, which are emerging major internal security challenges for the country.

Challenges of server location pose serious challenge to locate venom emitting miscreants. Each country has different laws to regulate social media which are not in sync with each other and lack of geographical boundaries makes social media regulation an arduous task. Use of phones/WhatsApp to send and receive messages through encrypted applications, concerns the government because the communications sent via such devices and applications hinder its monitoring and consequently efforts to fight terrorists and anti-social elements. Much of infrastructure is in the hands of private companies which makes it difficult to locate the source of origin of spurious and dangerous content. There is rise of propaganda-sponsored trolls using exclusive troll disinformation to repress and monitor any opponents against the governments. In 2019, a European News Watchdog discovered 265 bogus media outlets in 65 countries which are managed by an "Indian influence network". Such fake campaigns are dangerous for internal security of the country.

Cyber security is a set of activities and other measures, technical and non-technical, intended to protect computers, computer networks, related hardware devices, software, and the information they contain and communicate, including software and data, as well as other elements of cyberspace, from all threats, including threats to the national security. To protect data from cyber-attacks Government of India has set up four Sectoral Computer Emergency Response Teams in Power Systems: Transmission, Thermal, Hydro and Distribution. India has witnessed more than 27,000 cyber security threat incidents in the first half of 2017 alone as revealed by the Minister of State for Electronics and IT P P Chaudhary in Rajya Sabha. Threats reported include phishing attacks, website intrusions and defacements or damages to data as well as ransomware attacks, the minister's reply added. In the coming days such threats may intensify and pose more serious challenges to our defense data [11]. Cybersecurity strategies for data protection and guarding against cyber threats has become one of the important parts of country's comprehensive security. Methods such as ransomware, phishing attacks, and hacking can be used to maliciously compromising the data, websites or information. Cyber espionage and attack on computer networks is rising by the day and threatening the national security.

## CONCLUSION

National security of India is threatened from outside as well as inside. The challenges we have faced are multiple and serious. While we look at the external security in our strategic environment more seriously, the internal security is equally important. There are many internal threats to our national security. They include violent, non-violent, psychological, cyber related, religious and caste based as well as related to government's policy and planning. There is need to take a comprehensive view of internal factors which can potentially threaten our national security. Also, we need to think together about the remedies which can take care of these threats. Given to the vastness of our land, diversity of our population, the threats to our security from within keep on emerging now and then. This is our common responsibility to tackle them peacefully and amicably to ensure the growth and development of the country.

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