

# THE INDIAN NATIONAL SECURITY NARRATIVE: THE IDES OF FISSIPAROUS TRENDS

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## **INTRODUCTION**

National Security is a much bandied about discipline when the narrative of the national interest, power, BOP and a nation's geostrategic, geopolitical and geo-economic priorities have to be instituted as a bedrock of the national security and human security discourse. Initially, the American definition posited the economics oriented well-being and entrepreneurial welfare of the United States and the rest of the liberal democracies, as the core percept of the larger idiom of national security.

India too is bedevilled by the scourge of casteism, regionalism, cross-border terrorism, Maoist insurgency and other catastrophes initiated by the Pandemic's scourge and deleterious impact on the national life and well-being. We are not arguing that the economics oriented approach to national security ought to be the order of the day but, in fact, the notions of human security and Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, need to be the order of the day. Thus, in a way, the

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definition initiated by the United Nations and other International Organisations posit the larger component of national security which happens to be the livelihood and the attendant comprehensive security as the defining and delineating component of the stresses to the idiom of national security in the larger nation.

The paper premises itself upon the theme of National Security along with the all-pervading reality of balance of power, crude notion of power and national interest. The paper argues that the idiom of comprehensive security and human security, too, form a well delineated and present scale, in the narrative of national security both in India and the larger comity of states in the international system. The study delves into the American notion of security too while impinging upon the securitisation of the geo-economics regime too. The paper rounds off the threats posed to India's national interest by the scourges of cross-border terrorism, Maoism and internal fissures which mar the domestic stealth and stolidity of the Indian nation.

#### **HOW TO DEFINE NATIONAL SECURITY?**

It's a significant striving in founding the tenet of national security and positing it academically and also for a strategic rendering. The Ministry of Defence informs us that, "The National Security Concept (hereinafter, the Concept) is a document based on the Analysis of Threats to the State that includes the basic strategic principles and priorities for the prevention of threats to the state that have to be considered while developing new documents for policy planning, regulatory enactments, and action plans regarding national security." The portal further informs us that, "The Analysis of Threats to the State and this Concept include information about factors that directly and significantly affect the national security of the Republic of Latvia and are linked to changes in the international security environment, military activities near the Latvian border, tendencies of international terrorism, cybersecurity, as well as attempts of separate countries to influence the unity of Latvian society, the direction of foreign affairs and internal stability by creating political, humanitarian, informative, and economic pressure." Thus, one can safely posit that a larger ambit is what the approach towards National Security portends which

well subsumes both the military and human security aspects and perspectives of human development all being placed under the larger categorisation of national advancement and its attendant interests.

There are several tenets which can be studied and researched upon if one delves into the geopolitical essaying of the theme of national security. Kim R. Holmes contends that, "The first is the concept of power. It can best be defined as a nation's possession of control of its sovereignty and destiny. It implies some degree of control of the extent to which outside forces can harm the country. Hard, or largely military, power is about control, while soft power is mainly about influence—trying to persuade others, using methods short of war, to do something. Instruments of power exist along a spectrum, from using force on one end to diplomatic means of persuasion on the other."<sup>1</sup> The author further asserts that, "Such instruments include the armed forces; law enforcement and intelligence agencies; and various governmental agencies dedicated to bilateral and public diplomacy, foreign aid, and international financial controls."<sup>2</sup> Thus, though the concept of national security carries on with its odyssey in the context of a netherworld of spies, nuclear weapons and clandestine foggy room deals, it's the national interest which is the prerequisite element within the larger ambit of a nation. Law enforcement and public diplomacy too are related aspects within the idiom of law enforcement when one refers to the theme of national security as a well delineated and eked out tenet in the Indian nation.

### **IMMANUEL KANT: THE NATIONAL SECURITY PERSPECTIVE**

Immanuel Kant posited in his much acclaimed classic, "Perpetual Peace", that a collective speak ought to be the order of the day as far as the theme of national security is concerned. He more or less contended about a conjoined and enlightened world order. Kant writes that, "This idea was challenged by the philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), who resurrected the universal principle idea not in the old religious context, but in a secular one inspired by the

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1. Kim R. Holmes, "What is National Security", [heritage.org](https://heritage.org/indexofusmilitarystrength/What%20Is%20National%20Security.pdf), 2015, IndexOfUSMilitaryStrength\_What Is National Security.pdf. Accessed on November 1, 2010.

2. Ibid.

Enlightenment. In his 1795 essay 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch', he outlined his idea that the system of nation-states should be replaced by a new enlightened world order. Nation-states should subordinate their national interests to the common good and be ruled by international law."<sup>3</sup>

### THE POLITICAL CONTEST MODEL

Gadi Wolsfeld writes, while positing his political contest Model in the context of Israel's national security that, "The results of this study hopefully demonstrate the importance of examining the issue of 'who drives the news' by looking at the competition among different political actors. The political contest model sees news as a joint production which, more often than not, is characterized by various actors initiating events or supplying information that journalists then turn into news. An additional goal was to look deeper into the social construction of political waves."<sup>4</sup> The author further contends that, "It has become increasingly clear that political actors, journalists, and the wider public have become increasingly enamored with 'big stories.' Politicians, social movements, and terrorist organizations all depend on such sudden bursts of attention as part of their ongoing struggle for political influence. Modern publics probably also play a part in this process due to their unquenchable thirst for drama. Political waves should be and can be studied empirically."<sup>5</sup> Thus, it all amounts to the quintessential Political Contest Model, wherein the nation-state with its state's resources and accoutrements is pitted against the non-state actor which is comparatively bereft of resources and funding instruments.

The New Media arranges for a gladiatorial contest which is a take-off from the famed and legendary Roman Amphitheatre. The visage pertains to two Roman warriors or gladiators riding atop their horses, and racing off to confront each other from diametrically opposite ends of the Stadium or the Roman amphitheatre and one of them gets hurt as the iron ball being whirled in a chain with protrusions

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3. Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay* (New York: Penguin, 1961), pp. 14-18.
  4. Gadi Wolsfeld and Tamir Sheafer, "Competing Actors and the Construction of Political News: The Contest Over Waves in Israel", *Political Communication*, 23:3, pp. 333-54.
  5. Ibid.

hits the victim and the more lethargic gladiator.<sup>6</sup> Thus, in the same manner, the idiom of national security posits that the nations are challenged by their non-state detractors and arch antagonists in the form of cyberterrorists, cross-border terrorism and the destabilising role play of the neighbouring States.

### **THE GRAND SHUTDOWN AND THE HUMAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE IN THE US**

The United States of America is largely known for a stable and balanced socio-politico and economic discourse and its larger fulcrum of praxis. The three-trillion-dollar infrastructure plan of President Joe Biden happens to be a post pandemic economic and structural-administrative ameliorative which is aimed at firming up the back to the trail, development and growth in the American nation. It's all about bipartisanship in the American nation, wherein the rubric of consonance between the twin political parties of the order of the Republicans and the Democrats, rules the roost. Though the inter-party conflict between the twin political outfits does not militate against the conjoined democratic ethos of the country. In the words of Alexis De Tocqueville, the American political firmament is akin to the construction work's rotary machine which mixes together the concrete and the mortar and spawns a paste. Thus, in a similar fashion, what Tocqueville has written in his tome, *Democracy in America*, happens to be a kind of all-pervading altruism for the political system in the United States, though the larger fracas during President Donald Trump's regime serves as a pointer towards the American Democratic experiment. Thus, the American Congress too is attempting to evade an American Government's shutdown<sup>7</sup> and bridge the political divide to ensure a smooth sailing of the nation's political economy. America is not all about a January 2021 insurrection at the Capitol Hill. This is a fact which needs to be underscored at its earliest in tandem with the workability and efficiency with the grandiloquent American dream and its resounding resilience.

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6. Ibid.

7. Caitlin Emma, Jennifer Scholtes and Sarah Ferris, "Congress Thwarts Shutdown after Vaccine Mandate Case", <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/12/02/short-term-funding-deal-shutdown-523663>. Accessed on December 1, 2021.

President Joe Biden has attempted to evade a partial Governmental shutdown<sup>8</sup> by the passage of a bill in the American Congress which amounts to Government funding. The Bill was passed with perforce till the 3rd of December 2021, and if that had not transpired the Government spending would have had to be shut down in the immediate future. *Hindustan Times* has reported in a piece that, "The measure, however, doesn't include a provision sought by Democrats to suspend the nation's debt limit, after Republicans in the Senate blocked a version of the bill that included the debt provision. Treasury Secretary, Janet Yellen has said that if lawmakers fail to raise the debt limit by about Oct. 18, the government may not be able to pay its bills, posing a dire risk to the US economy."<sup>9</sup> The Republicans were against a debt ceiling which they vociferously strived for and it was this facet which acted as a chief bottleneck to the Democrats and President Joe Biden's strivings in the American Congress of late.

Thus, the linkages which were drawn by the various Congressmen between the myriad and multifaceted nature of reforms in the US have led to the idiom of a complete and comprehensive overhaul. As a related fact, the intertwining of the Climate Change segment of Biden's reform agenda, along with endeavours at social engineering in the light of the race divide in the US, have been the pointed standpoints of the Grand Old Party to derail and bring into question the actual comprehensive and widespread planning zeal of President Joe Biden.

Akin to the TVP, Tennessee Valley Project<sup>10</sup> and the larger New Deal<sup>11</sup> initiated by President Roosevelt in the mired days of the first economic depression, along with the Great Society heft of President Lyndon Baines Johnson, the Infrastructure palliative and Remaking America endeavour happens to be the medicine which the Government Doctor has ordered for the American decline. The talk and the proud but misplaced notion during the Asiatic space

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8. Staff Correspondent, "Shutdown Odds Grow", *Washington Post*. Accessed on December 1, 2021.

9. "Joe Biden Signs Government Funding Bill to Avert a Shutdown", *Hindustan Times*, December 3, 2021.

10. Tennessee Valley Authority, <https://www.usa.gov/federal-agencies/tennessee-valley-authority>. Accessed on December 1, 2021.

11. John F. Henry, "Reflections on the New Deal: The Vested interests, Limits to Reforms, and the Meaning of Liberal Democracy", Working Paper No. 905, Levy Economics Institute, May 2018.

concerning the decline of United States in the larger context has to be countered and what better way do the Americans have but to rely upon the mighty shakedown programming initiated by President Joe Biden. The President had mentioned as a quintessential clarion call in his Presidential inaugural earlier that Unity and bipartisanship are the twin sine qua nons of the great American democracy. Though he contended during the speech that one of the most elusive elements in a liberal democracy happens to be that of diversity and subsequent engineered unity which may be further translated into the nom de plume of stodgy bipartisanship.

We are not arguing about domestic development and politics in the United States but the human security plank which led President Joseph Biden, at the helm of affairs in Washington, need to be delved into with some detail to comprehend the fundamental tenets of human and national security. India too is marching ahead on the same comprehension of human security which has become a novae facet of governance and stolidity in any homeland, be it the Super State, the United States of America, or the neophyte aspirant to the high seat, India. The American President's words echo still in our surroundings and the larger environs as he contended victoriously after vanquishing Donald Trump at the Capitol Hill. "Today, on this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our nation. I ask every American to join me in this cause. Uniting to fight the common foes we face:"<sup>12</sup>

- Anger, resentment, hatred.
- Extremism, lawlessness, violence.
- Disease, joblessness, hopelessness.
- With unity we can do great things. Important things.
- We can right wrongs."<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the American Dream once again becomes the cynosure of all probing and liting eyes wherein the Presidential address of Joe Biden brings to the fore the larger American concern about looking

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12. The White House, "President Joseph Biden's Inaugural Address", Speeches and Remarks, January 20, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/>. Accessed on December 1, 2021.

13. Ibid.

inwards from war zones and conflict hotbeds all around the globe and stress upon the idea of an internal and domestic, “Build Back Better” in tandem with a true blue Democrat and the attendant reformist zeal to assuage the hoi polloi and the Citizen Kanes who were rattled by the ways and means of former President Donald Trump. Road, Transit, Internet, the virtuosity of the reformist zeal pervades the spirit of the President’s reform package which intends to make America escape the industrial smog and the crass and ugly edges of rotund automobiles and development.

Objectively speaking, the historic and stereotypical American bill postulates the building of transcontinental Railroads across the length and breadth of the nation along with strengthening the State Highway grids. Unemployment is also a key and administratively gnawing concern, in a post-pandemic slowdown, so the Biden bill envisages the addition of 2 million jobs by the end of every year. Climate Change in the light of President Joe Biden’s Glasgow, COP speech<sup>14</sup> also finds a crucial place in the infrastructure bill which entails an investment of \$39 billion in structures ranging from bridges, highways, roads, larger transportation with the icing on the cake being an objective of buying zero emission and low emission transport, namely, the buses. The objective being to transform United States into the most resilient and innovate economy in the larger global polity. One can also get the feel-good sentiment that President Biden’s plan is not merely accommodative or merely aims to flatten the frills and the creases but it amounts to a generating and nation changing ameliorative to make the United States embolden its domesticity and prepare the nation for a long overhaul in the light of the Global spin doctors talking ad-nauseam about the term, “The American Decline”.<sup>15</sup>

## THE INDIAN SCENARIO OF NATIONAL SECURITY

In India, too, the concept and subsequent understanding of the term national security is congealed with the idea of insurgency fighting and

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14. The White House, “Remarks by President Biden at the COP 26 Leader’s Statement”, November 1, 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/11/01/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-cop26-leaders-statement/>. Accessed on December 1, 2021.

15. Richard Lachmann, “The Roots of American Decline”, *Contexts*, 10(1), pp. 44-49.



external states getting involved in the domestic peace and stolidity of the nation at large. Amb. Satish Chandra has written on the theme and praxis of national security in the nation, wherein the political studies perspective has been utilised deftly by him. A multifaceted approach to national security in the nation is the order of the day, wherein the hard power context still rules the roost ideationally. Satish Chandra writes in an IDSA report that, "The concept of national security has often been taken to merely connote the preservation of sovereignty, territorial integrity and internal stability with the focus on the coercive power of the state. In today's complex and interdependent world faced with many non-traditional threats like pandemics, climate change, etc., it must, however, be seen in a more holistic manner. Such an all-encompassing view of national security demands that the determinant of security is not just the coercive elements of state power but its comprehensive national power with the latter being a composite of many factors across all facets of national life."<sup>16</sup> He further contends that, "These factors, inclusive of leadership, if quantified, can help develop a national security index which in comparative terms could serve as an indicator of the relative security of a country vis-à-vis its peers."<sup>17</sup>

Karl Hawang commenting on Amb. Naresh Chandra's take on the Indian National Security Index contends that, "It's important to delve inside that how India perceives its own rise to power by undertaking a detailed analysis of the Indian National Security Index (NSI) for the period from 2003 to 2008. Like other power formulas, the NSI includes various indicators of power, though it is uniquely Indian in that it initially emphasized human development and later included ecology based on a holistic human-security paradigm."<sup>18</sup> The author further demonstrates that, "This holistic approach has now been abandoned in favor of a more conventional one, and that the technical formulas and theoretical concepts of the NSI exhibit various inconsistencies and problems. In particular, one can recognize the absolute need for a unified standard for handling variables in the construction of

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16. Satish Chandra, "National Security: Concept, Management and Measurement", *Strategic Analysis*, vol. no. 39, issue 4, July, 2015.

17. Ibid.

18. Karl Hawang, "Measuring Geopolitical Power in India: A review of the National Security Index," May 10, *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2010.

composite indexes in general.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, agreement might not ensue between the myriad schools of thought in India but a deft utilisation of the instrumentalities of statistical tools and method techniques can help serve the objective to better understand and comprehend the tenet of national security in India.

Gurmeet Kanwal and Neha Kohli argue that, “A lot still needs to be done to institutionalise the defence planning process and improve the management of national security in India. The first and foremost requirement is for the government to formulate a comprehensive NSS, inclusive of internal security, so that all the stakeholders are aware of what is expected of them. The NSS should be formulated after carrying out an inter-departmental, inter-agency, multidisciplinary strategic defence review. Such a review must take the public into confidence as opposed to being conducted behind closed doors.”<sup>20</sup> The authors further contend that, “As is the case with most other democracies, the NSS should be signed by the Prime Minister, who is the head of government, and must be tabled in parliament and released as a public document. Only then will various stakeholders be compelled to take ownership of the strategy and work unitedly to achieve its aims and objectives. Such ad-hoc measures will adversely impact India’s ability to sustain conflict over the anticipated duration of future wars. These are serious lacunae that need to be addressed as effective defence planning cannot be undertaken in a policy void.”<sup>21</sup> Thus, it can be observed pithily that structural changes and transformation are the panacea for refurbishing the national security establishment in the nation which have a great deal of change coming their way. The constitution of the National Security Council and the debate concerning the NCTC a few years back are pointers in the same direction.

An eminent observer of strategic affairs contends that, “Most Indian strategic analysts—particularly those with a background in the Defence Services, but not limited to them—trace the suboptimal outcomes of India’s security investments to major problems in civil-

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19. Gurmeet Kanwal and Neha Kohli (eds.), *Defense Reforms: A National Perspective* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2018), pp. 112-28.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

military relations. They refer, particularly to a perceived lack of role of the defence forces in policymaking and in the reported imposition of bureaucratic control instead of political control..."<sup>22</sup> According to Admiral Arun Prakash, a former naval chief, and one of India's pre-eminent soldier-scholars, it would be wrong to say that the security system has worked well. In his words, the system consists of a "deeply flawed approach ... and we are fortunate to have muddled through crisis after crisis".<sup>23</sup> In the same vein, Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta have stated that "the price of extraordinary civilian control of the military in India is military and strategic inefficiency."<sup>24</sup> There happens to be a strategic and palpable gap and an avid hiatus in the context of the capabilities of the Indian national security apparatus's capability and the external perspectives about it. More synergisation and integration of the entire decision making and implementing infrastructure needs to be the order of the day. Certain foundational incongruities exist and more of efficient, professional and coherent chaperoning is required in the context of the nation's national security management. As India settles with the rest of the international system and intends to reside with the nation's on the global high table of Public Diplomacy, then rectifications of the domestic structures is what is the need of the hour. These deductions need not sound pessimistic but with the global strivings to contain China, self-preparedness, strategic dynamism and introspection needs to be the order of the day in the light of engaging strategic and diplomatic challenges ahead.

The task force headed by Naresh Chandra has contended as suggestions to integrate and coordinate the nation's national security establishment:

1. Appointment of a Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC)

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22. Maroof Raza, "Civil Military Relations in India and Pakistan: An Analysis", *The Journal of USI of India*, CXXIV, January-March 1994; V. K. Nayar, "Civil Military Relations", *The Journal of USI of India*, CXLV, July-September 2015; Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Brookings Institution Press, 2010).

23. Arun Prakash, "National Security Reforms: Ten Years after the Kargil Committee Report", *USI National Security Lecture*, 2012.

24. Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, n. 24, pp. 12-24.

2. Integration of Service HQ and Ministry of Defence by allowing more cross-postings
3. Shifting focus of India's national security strategy from Pakistan to China
4. Better Intelligence Coordination between all agencies
5. Creation of dedicated financial Institution for access to energy, rare earths and raw materials from across the world.<sup>25</sup>

Nitin Gokhale writes that, "The new Chief of Staff Committee, the Task Force is hoping, will also bring in synergy in major acquisitions for all the three forces. Often, the three services have worked independently in procuring same set of equipment, duplicating work and creating separate infrastructure when synergy would have saved hundreds of crores of rupees."<sup>26</sup> Reform is difficult to attain and log in. National Security System does not have to depend on seeking Least Common Multiple (LCM)-solutions. It does not have to seek to appease lobbies and turfs."<sup>27</sup> Thus, the themes of structuration or restructuring the national security apparatus in the nation has been congealed with the larger objective of realigning and reframing of the national security apparatus. The idiom of immediacy of establishment's response to crisis and emergencies have raised the bar for the think tanks in the country which has been geared towards systematising and reordering the national security in the nation. Synergising the strivings of the defence forces and their respective establishments has been a pet peeve critiques and have been given their due hearing by the government of the day.

The *Financial Express* writes that, "The National Security Index (NSI), constructed by the staff of the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), has not yet received the attention it deserves. For the first time, a governmental agency has tried to quantify national security and see where India stands in relation to major powers and some Asian economies. The index has been published in this year's

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25. Nitin Gokhale, "Naresh Chandra's National Task Force Report on National Security: An Appraisal," Vivekananda International Foundation, <https://www.vifindia.org/article/2012/july/16/naresh-chandra-task-force-s-report-on-national-security-an-appraisal>. Accessed on December 1, 2021.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

National Security Annual Review, an independent publication of scholarly essays on the subject.”<sup>28</sup> The national daily further asserts that, “Out of 30 countries, India’s rank is 10, coming after the United States, Japan, China, South Korea, Germany, France, Russia, Britain and Israel. Pakistan’s rank is 28!”<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The rationale of national security concerns in the nation might have been aggregated and coalesced with the western and larger ideal of human security, but it might not be forgotten that human security and general welfare have always been part of the tenets of India’s ancient history and scriptures too. Still, however much the definition and comprehension of national security might be broadened, the hard power and military aspects and perspectives cannot be relegated to the backburner. Statistical tools and instruments such as the National Security Index have been spawned in order to systematise the study and comprehension of the concept in practice. The structure of the national security establishment too needs to be a consistent and an ongoing preoccupation of the establishment keeping in view the new morphed genres of threats in the neo insurgencies of the order of cyberattacks and quantum computing with international actors getting involved in the frays of national institutions and governmental efforts at securitisation.

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28. “National Security Index”, *Financial Express*, February 17, 2003, <https://www.financialexpress.com/archive/national-security-index/73254/>. Accessed on December 1, 2021.

29. Ibid.