

A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY FOR INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Most great powers have a public document on the National Security Strategy (NSS), meant to navigate the country in anarchical international relations and secure its survival¹. Invariably, the NSS seeks a conducive strategic environment, identifies the strategic goals and delineates the methodologies for a national response along with resource management. The US, UK, France and Russia come with periodic updates of their NSS². China does not have a declared national security strategy but its Defence White Papers published every two years are alternate documents on national security. India, on the other hand, seems to be an odd member in the club. While the country stands tall on many indices of the power matrix in international relations and is increasingly being recognised as a great power, it does not have an official NSS! This despite the fact that the country had attempted the revamp of defence management on several occasions (Kargil Review

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1. For a preliminary introduction, see Alan G Stoleberg, *How Nation States Craft National Security Strategy Documents* (Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, 2012); www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil
2. The US National Security Strategy was last updated in May 2010; this is besides the Quadrennial Defence Review (January 2010). Both documents are periodically reviewed. In the UK, the David Cameron led coalition government came out with an NSS in October 2010. The French Defence White Paper, 2013, is an updated version of the one published in 2008. Russia came out with an NSS in 2009.

Nehru, the so-called idealist, was a realist and grabbed the opportunity for police action in Hyderabad as well as Goa and got them merged with India. His non-alignment policy was indeed a realist defence strategy for India under the idealist garb.

Committee, 1999; Group of Ministers, 2000; and Naresh Chandra Committee, 2011). There were ample expectations that the Naresh Chandra Committee would take up the issue of an NSS and come out with a draft paper for consideration by the Government of India. The committee, however, failed to live up to the expectations. This paper would, therefore, emphasise on the necessity of an NSS within the contours of national security reforms. It intends to discuss the consequences of the absence of an NSS, the rationale for it and also discuss the problem

areas and the precautions to be taken in drafting the NSS. The paper is built around the hypothesis that while an NSS is the *sine-qua-non* for a rising India, it should be not be merely a military document; rather, it should be perceived and defined in a broader context that will sub-serve India's short-term and long-term national security interests.

NSS: THE MISSING LINK IN SECURITY REFORMS

While a documented NSS has eluded India so far, the country did have a conception of national security since its republican inauguration. Prime Minister Nehru had indeed a grand strategy of putting India as a vital link between the West and the East. Nehru, the so-called idealist, was a realist and grabbed the opportunity for police action in Hyderabad as well as Goa and got them merged with India. His non-alignment policy was indeed a realist defence strategy for India under the idealist garb.³ Indira Gandhi was more assertive. She not only waged and won a war against Pakistan but also diluted its offensive capability for future warfare by carving out Bangladesh. Subsequently, she formulated something

3. K Subrahmanyam, "Far From Being An Ideology, Non-Alignment was a Strategy Devised by Nehru", *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), February 3, 2011. For a discussion on Nehru as a realist, see Srinath Raghavan, *War and Peace in Modern India* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

known as the “Indira doctrine” meant to ward off extra-regional influence in South Asia. Narsimha Rao as prime minister gave an economic and strategic dimension to India’s security and foreign policy through the “Look East” policy. Atal Behari Vajpayee brought the country out of the nuclear morass and shaped a new identity for it in international relations by forging ‘new relationships’ with the US and other great powers. The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government has continued the tradition of pushing India’s economic, political and military profile in international relations and has indeed been successful in cultivating good relations with all the great powers.

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Since 1990, successive Union governments also initiated a series of defence reforms based on recommendations made by different committees. In 1990, the Arun Singh Committee on Defence Expenditure (CDE) had made recommendations touching almost every aspect of India’s defence, though its report was never made public⁴. In 1999, the government formed a Kargil Review Committee (KRC) under noted defence expert (the late) K Subrahmanyam to recommend measures for preventing a Kargil-like armed intrusion. Pursuant to the recommendations of the KRC in February 2000, the government announced the setting up of a Group of Ministers (GoM) in April 2000 to review the national security system in its entirety. Consisting of the home, external affairs, defence and finance ministers, the GoM decided to constitute a task force on defence management, to be headed by none other than Arun Singh. Many of the institutional and policy reforms in the field of defence management and national security apparatus that were ushered in, in the subsequent period, owed their existence to the recommendations of this task force that became part of the GoM report on

4. “Arun Singh Committee on Defence Expenditure: The Report Needs to be Made Public”, <http://pragmatic.nationalinterest.in/2009/07/31/arun-singh-committee-on-defence-expenditure/> Accessed on October 8, 2011.

“reforming the national security system” in 2001⁵. Surprisingly, the issue of an NSS did not form part of these recommendations⁶.

There are several reasons why no NSS was ever identified and officially delineated in any of the reform proposals. First, all the reform committees in independent India had specific and particular mandates and were never asked to work out a draft NSS. Second, the political leadership largely shied away from defence matters as these were considered ‘too sensitive’ though the same leadership was quite eloquent and could wax on foreign policy matters. Little did they realise that the two are rather intertwined. Hitherto, the armed forces have had only a peripheral role in foreign and defence policy making. Third, the lack of expertise on defence matters has also prohibited the political leadership from enunciating an NSS. Surprisingly, India is yet to produce political leadership with a defence background. Very few defence officers have managed to carve a political career for themselves⁷; most of them have only managed some gubernatorial postings or research assignments after retirement. Fourth, institutional support and policy feedback through research institutions and universities were too weak during much of the 20th century and they never focussed on the desirability of a comprehensive NSS for India. Think-tanks on defence and security matters were few during much of the 20th century and it is only now that they are expanding in number. Fifth, while the country has the Cabinet Committee on Security and the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) as the apex institutional arrangements on security matters, there is little to suggest that any input was ever fed to them about the desirability of a public document on an NSS, either by the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) or strategic experts in the country.

5. “Group of Ministers’ Report on ‘Reforming the National Security System’”, PIB Releases, May 23, 2011, <http://pib.nic.in/archieve/lreleng/lyr2001/rmay2001/23052001/r2305200110.html>

6. Apparently, the task force had prepared a draft NSS and forwarded the same to the then NSA. Since nothing has been made public about it, it is presumed that no NSS was ever attempted.

7. Jaswant Singh and Maj Gen B C Khanduri (Retd) are the only outstanding political leaders having a military background. Jaswant Singh also wrote a pioneering book on India’s defence, *Defending India* (New Delhi: McMillan India, 1998).

CONSEQUENCES OF NOT HAVING AN NSS

India has paid the price for not enunciating an official NSS in many ways. First, there have been organisational differences as far as the interpretation of national security is concerned. The relative importance of a particular national security issue becomes the “victim of organisational thinking” that differs from one organisation to another in the government. Instead of “effective decisions”, we have “decisional conflicts” arising from a clash of interests or differential perceptions amongst competing departments. A typical example was India’s decision to send the Indian Peace-Keeping Force (IPKF) to Sri Lanka in 1987 on which there were differences of opinion amongst various stakeholders⁸. The bitter experiences induced a sense of ‘reluctance’ into the Indian foreign policy subsequently that only encouraged the smaller countries in South Asia to play assertive balance of power games. A concurrent example would be the continued impasse amongst various stakeholders over the continuation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). These problems arise because major stakeholders in national security such as the External Affairs, Defence and Home Ministries not only have vastly different objectives and culture, but are staffed by different cadre systems. State bureaucracies have their own cadres, competencies and culture that influence the positions that India takes with respect to domestic security issues and issues concerning any neighbouring country⁹.

Second, there has also been a pervasive lack of clarity amongst the mainstream political parties on dealing with developments in the neighbourhood though they claim to have ‘consensus’ on foreign policy issues. Some regional political outfits go a step further and often take a stand on a national security issue that is diametrically opposed to India’s national interests. Many a times, this is a result of ignorance as these political outfits are not properly educated about vital national interests. In many cases,

8. See, P R Chari, “The IPKF Experience in Sri Lanka”, ACDIS Occasional Paper (February 1994), https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/bitstream/handle/2142/55/Chari_IPKF.pdf?sequence=1

9. Nitin Pai, “The Paradox of Proximity: India’s Approach to Fragility in the Neighbourhood”, Center on International Cooperation (April 2011), http://www.cic.nyu.edu/mgo/docs/nitin_pai_paradox.pdf. Accessed on November 7, 2011.

While Pakistan has an open alliance with China that often works against India, other smaller countries (with the exception of Bhutan) are also reaching out to China for a broader political, economic and military relationship. The end objective for all these countries seems to be balancing a rising India by building upon their apprehensions of *pax Indica* and pulling in an adversary like China.

these pulls and pressures have prevented India from taking any proactive actions or initiatives with regard to political developments in its neighbourhood. Thus, in Nepal, India has been in a helpless situation when Indian political parties have not been able to adopt a common approach. As a result, some Nepalese political parties have used the 'anti-India' stand to support a diplomatic shift towards China. In Sri Lanka, India has found itself in a similar helplessness where the Rajapaksa regime has resorted to flagrant violation of the ethnic rights of Tamil minorities in the post-Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) period and established strategic linkages with

China. In Myanmar, India has been a mute witness to China's strategic consolidation. At the end of the day, while India is increasingly being recognised as a rising power elsewhere, it has not been able to establish its primacy in its own backyard and remains trapped in the subcontinental politics.

Third, there are lingering doubts amongst some of India's own South Asian neighbours about the "consequences of a rising India"¹⁰. Though the 'basket of doubts' is not as big compared to that of China that has been challenged with a 'China threat' theory in international relations for the last two decades, it does impinge on India's quest for a benign rising great power image. While Pakistan has an open alliance with China that often works against India, other smaller countries (with the exception of Bhutan) are also reaching out to China for a broader political, economic and military

10. Teresita C Schaffer, "India Next Door, China Over the Horizon", in *Strategic Asia 2011-12: Asia Responds to Its Rising Powers – China and India*, available on www.nbr.org. Even China is a bit unsure about a rising India as inferred by M Taylor Fravel in his chapter "China's Response to a Rising India", available in the same volume.

relationship. The end objective for all these countries seems to be balancing a rising India by building upon their apprehensions of *pax Indica* and pulling in an adversary like China. Some of these relationships (Sino-Pak, Sino-Nepal and Sino-Myanmar) are threatening to be a drag on India's attempts to get out of regional politics. Further, the South Asian countries are also using the Southeast Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to balance India by hobnobbing with observer countries, a development for which India does not have any strategic response so far.

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Fourth, effective guidance on national security and defence policy is fundamental to the defence planning process. However, the absence of an NSS leads to ambiguities in political direction regarding politico-military objectives, which is the very basis of sound defence planning. It also means that there is inadequate coordination of defence plans and economic development apart from the fact that science and technology policies for defence, general industrialisation and other developmental programmes are not coordinated properly to achieve security goals and objectives.¹¹ What complicates the situation is the treatment of defence as a non-plan expenditure due to which it cannot be brought within the purview of the Planning Commission. Thus, when the 12th Five-Year Plan was approved by the National Development Council, the defence sector missed out being discussed and debated at the nation's highest platform simply because it does not come within the subject purview of the Planning Commission. A side effect is that defence five-year plans are never approved in time, thus, jeopardising balanced and timely resource allocation to the defence plans.

Fifth, the absence of an NSS has been felt in one more area: defence production. Due to lack of policy guidelines, the country has not invested

11. Gen V P Malik (Retd) and Brig Gurmeet Kanwal (Retd), "Defence Planning in India", http://www.observerindia.com/cms/export/orfonline/modules/policybrief/attachments/py050120_1162534133844.pdf. Accessed on November 5, 2012.

prudently in a domestic Military Industrial Complex (MIC) and the armed forces have to depend upon foreign suppliers for as much as 70 percent of their weapons requirements. While India may have emerged as the largest weapons importer in 2011, this also means that a substantial amount of foreign exchange reserves goes into funding the military industry of other countries and makes a complete mockery of its own great power claims, with the country still dependent on other countries for its own security! Despite substantial funding (6 percent of the defence budget), India's defence Research and Development (R&D) establishment is not even able to produce an engine for its indigenous fighter jet programme and reinvents technology already available off the shelf in the global market. Similarly, while Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has made some name for itself, other defence Public Sector Units (PSUs) and the chain of 39 Ordnance Factories (OFs) are laggards in meeting the expectations of the defence forces.

Sixth, in the absence of an official NSS, national security is often perceived as synonymous with foreign policy and defence preparedness against external challenges. Requisite focus is not given to the domestic components of national security, particularly the developmental aspects. While terrorism and Maoism have emerged as consensus components of any debate on national security¹², the same focus is not received for agriculture, industry, climate change or environmental challenge as vital issues jeopardising national security¹³. To give one example, India still figures 67th in the Global Hunger Index among 81 countries, with the worst figures. Even countries like Rwanda figure much higher than India when it comes to basic food security for its citizens¹⁴. More than one-third of the Indian population lives below the poverty line; the figures go much higher if World Bank figures are considered. Similarly, though the Group of

12. According to Shivshankar Menon, NSA, India spends less than one-third of its defence budget on internal security. See, Shivshankar Menon, "India's National Security: Challenges and Issues", *Air Power Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2, Summer 2012, pp. 1-14.

13. Bhartendu Kumar Singh, "Defence, Development and National Security", *The Pioneer* (New Delhi), July 18, 2011.

14. "India Ranks Below China, Pakistan in Global Hunger Index, 2011", *The Economic Times* (New Delhi), October 12, 2011.

Ministers (GoM) on external security decided in 2011 to create a sovereign wealth fund that would enable Indian companies to buy mineral and energy assets abroad, it is unlikely to help the country that is projected to import about 150–200 million tonnes of coal and about 150 million tonnes of crude oil in the next five years¹⁵. In other words, India's power transition would still be subjected to 'energy insecurities' emanating from the international market. India still does not have any strategy to bring down its high level of oil imports—as high as 70 percent of its domestic requirements.

Finally, India has not been able to create a distinct identity for itself in international relations, again courtesy the absence of an NSS. Its championship of non-alignment, for example, did not win it too many friends and was subjected to critical scrutiny as a strategic tool after the 1962 debacle. In the 21st century, India is not able to push its own perception of international relations, despite a relative rise in its 'economic' power. To give one example, India is still shy in promoting 'democracy in other left over countries' despite being prodded by the US and other European countries, perhaps because it does not have the requisite resources or the same does not suit its national interests. Similarly, if India is yet to mobilise the necessary support amongst the fraternity of nations for its claim to permanent membership to the UN Security Council, it is primarily because the country has not been able to establish strong economic and military linkages with other countries that would facilitate and subserve India's national interests. India just happens to be another growth story for many of these Afro-Asian countries that find diplomatic relations with China more attractive and rewarding.

WHY INDIA NEEDS AN NSS?

If India could manage without a formal and official NSS all these years, it was primarily because New Delhi was always boxed in within the subcontinental politics and played a largely symbolic role in global politics. However, two decades of economic reforms have given New Delhi reasonable clout to

15. "GoM Gives Green Signal to Sovereign Wealth Fund", *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), November 05, 2011.

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reach out to new geo-political tracts such as Southeast Asia, Africa and even Latin America. As a rising power and potential aspirant of the great power club and the UN Security Council, it is only logical to have a pre-defined NSS that will identify India's extended geo-political interests, foreign policy priorities and the proposed ways and means to seek intended objectives. On the other hand, India would also be under 'observation' through its period

of transition to great power status, particularly from its apprehensive neighbours in South Asia, not too distant neighbours of Southeast Asia, potential friends from Africa, established powers like the US and China, and declining powers like the UK and France. India's democratic credentials have mitigated any apprehension about its rise that is predicted to be 'quite peaceful'. However, not much is known about India's evolving strategic culture, more so, since India doesn't have a strong military and has not participated in military duties in other countries except for peace-keeping operations. Declaration of an NSS could provide a 'basket of assurances' to other countries about India's strategic intentions.

The NSS would also allow India to be on the right side in international relations during its transition phase and do away with conceptual confusions related to its national security. One example would suffice. In recent times, the international community theorised that India has something called a "cold start doctrine" since 2004 i.e. a new limited war doctrine that would allow the Indian armed forces to mobilise themselves quickly and undertake 'retaliatory attacks' in response to specific challenges posed by Pakistan's 'proxy war' in India's province of Jammu and Kashmir¹⁶. In September 2010, the then Chief of the Army Staff Gen V K Singh clarified on record that there was nothing called a "cold start doctrine". "The Indian armed forces have a number of contingencies and options, depending upon what the aggressor

16. Walter C Ladwig III, "A Cold Start for Hot War? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine", *International Security*, vol. 32, no. 3, Winter 2007/08), pp.158-190.

does", he said, adding that "the basic posture of the military remains defensive"¹⁷. Such clarifications notwithstanding, even established scholars have not hesitated from predicting that India's "strategic restraint" doctrine is soon going to be replaced by a "militarily adventurous" doctrine¹⁸, a proposition that is certainly untrue.

The proposed NSS would also satisfy India's domestic constituency in two ways. First, it will induce greater transparency in the national security apparatus and policies. Despite having a democratic tradition, many defence and security matters in India are not discussed in public since they are perceived to be 'sensitive'. Many agencies and institutions tasked with management of

national security issues do not even prescribe to parliamentary scrutiny of their work. Further, little effort is made to educate and mould public opinion. As a result, people have misperceptions and misgivings on many national security issues. Second, in recent times, there has been a series of demands like a greater role for India in Myanmar (facilitation of democracy), Nepal (institutionalisation of parliamentary democracy) and Sri Lanka (rightful place for the Tamil community in the post-LTTE socio-political set-up). Similarly, some strategic experts would like India to facilitate the 'spread of democracy' in left over portions of Asia and Africa; others would like India to align with the US or adopt certain strategic postures against India's rivals like China and Pakistan. Either India does not have the requisite resources or it is not in its national interest to aggressively pursue these strategic paths. The NSS would go a long way to moderate these competing demands.

The post of National Security Adviser (NSA) has been in place for almost a decade but he does not have a blueprint to coordinate and direct the activities of various stakeholders in the management of national security. The proposed NSS would help the NSA in extracting work from these stakeholders and ensuring a coordinated response to any national security crisis.

17. "No 'Cold Doctrine', India tells US", *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), September 9, 2010.

18. Sunil Dasgupta and Stephen P Cohen, "Is India Ending Its Strategic Restraint Doctrine?" *The Washington Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 2, Spring 2011, pp. 163-177.

In recent times, Maoism has emerged as the largest security threat, affecting over 200 districts in India. The Maoist insurgency is supplemented by India's own brand of Islamic fundamentalism that was hitherto limited to imports from neighbouring countries like Pakistan. Though the response mechanism is largely institutionalised, coordination often becomes a tricky issue due to organisational conflicts about the exact nature, scope and implementation of their mandate in crisis times. The post of National Security Adviser (NSA) has been in place for almost a decade but he does not have a blueprint to coordinate and direct the activities of various stakeholders in the management of national security. The proposed NSS would help the NSA in extracting work from these stakeholders and ensuring a coordinated response to any national security crisis.

An area where the NSS could come in quite handy would be India's plans to defend itself in bilateral conflicts with Pakistan and China. Pakistan remains a headache for India through 'proxy war' i.e. export of terrorist activities. Over two decades of pangs of Pakistan-driven terrorism notwithstanding, India's national strategy is limited to counter-insurgency operations in Jammu and Kashmir, and the off-and-on diplomatic engagement with Islamabad. A comprehensive strategy to defeat Pakistan in its 'proxy war' is either missing or not made public. Similarly, a hypothetical response to the Chinese onslaught, that has emerged as the *numero uno* concern in Indian foreign policy, is yet to emerge. Since relations with China are getting conflictual in almost all areas of engagement and the border solutions are nowhere in sight, India desperately needs an NSS to plan out and coordinate its long-term as well as short-term response to Chinese strategic initiatives.

The NSS would also be useful in two areas where India would like to establish its influence: South Asia and the Indian Oceanic waters near the subcontinent. Both these areas have witnessed a relative decline of India's influence in recent times and a concurrent rise in China's influence. China would also like India to be otherwise boxed in, in the subcontinental politics and has invested heavily in all South Asian countries to thwart India's influence. Concurrently, its maritime presence is on the rise near

Indian waters. India needs to retain the leadership influence in South Asia and the littoral area around it, if not elsewhere, to play a larger role in the regional and continental politics. Similarly, it needs to increase its maritime influence and secure its interests in the Indian Ocean.

Last, India needs a coordinated synchronisation of defence and development needs while delineating a national security approach, rather than treating them as watertight departments. Defence, for example, is treated as non-Plan expenditure and does not come under the purview of the Planning Commission. The defence expenditure has been growing, particularly the pension portion, and has very little role in the national growth story. Dr Manmohan Singh has come out with the slogan of “inclusive growth” that is nothing but defence through development. The approach is akin to what the Chinese did under the “four modernisation” process during much of the Eighties and early Nineties. India intends to aggressively pursue this dream of “inclusive growth” through coordinated investment in defence and development. An area where this approach of “defence through development” is likely to bring dividends is the Maoist movement in the central heartland of the country, criss-crossing many states.

DRAFTING OF AN NSS: A PROBLEMATIC EXERCISE

National security is an evolving term. The contemporary emphasis is on a ‘comprehensive’ notion of security that includes apart from core security, peripheral areas of security analysis such as environmental security, developmental security and even human security. While the new emphasis on “inclusive growth” within the policy circles in the Government of India does assimilate developmental aspects of security, a strong bonding between defence and development in terms of resource distribution is still missing. The awareness about the environmental and human aspects is gradually picking up, but it will take time before national security is understood as a comprehensive and inclusive concept in India.

India also suffers because of its vocal refusal in outlining its strategic environment. This has given critics space to assert that India neither has a

strategic culture at present nor did it have one in the past. The practice of Indian foreign and security policies speaks otherwise. India has been known for following a “pacifist, defensive strategic culture” or simply followed what has also been called the policy of “strategic restraint”. The country has taken proactive steps only where its “core interests” are threatened. Identification of these core interests along with the strategic environment would be a challenge for India when it finalises its NSS.

While the National Security Council is likely to play a lead role for inputs, the Ministries of Defence and External Affairs are also likely to play key roles. As things stand, any discourse on national security in India is dominated by defence experts or foreign policy experts who are often victims of organisational thinking. There is hardly any space for development economists, environmentalists, agricultural experts, industry experts, urban planners, and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Unless these marginalised sectors are considered in the national security discourse, quality inputs would be missing and defence and foreign policy issues will dominate the NSS blueprint.

Identification of the components of the proposed NSS could, therefore, be a tricky thing amongst all the pulls and pressures. Prioritising these components would be a further challenge, say, for example, between defence and development or between rural and urban development. India has several models to choose from: the US National Security Strategy (May 2010) emphasises on retaining American hegemony over an increasingly multipolar world. The Chinese security strategy during much of the Eighties and early Nineties focussed on buying peace with neighbours and the same was sought to be achieved through a peaceful regional environment wherein China could focus on its development. However, in the last one decade, as evident from the official White Papers on Defence, China is seeking “Comprehensive National Power (CNP)” and an extended neighbourhood through oceanic missions in far off waters such as the Gulf of Aden. In designing the Indian model of NSS, it will be prudent for New Delhi to focus on issues like domestic insurgency deriving from economic exclusion

and address them through improved allocation of resources¹⁹.

Perhaps this explains why resource generation could be another challenge area. The NSS has to be 'cost-effective' and not a drag on the national resources. While the government has numerous policy measures to generate revenues and bring down wasteful expenditure, scarcity of resources remains an obstacle in implementing many national projects, particularly in infrastructure. The government also sits upon a huge amount of unexploited assets and other resources that could generate more revenues. In this context, the government's ambitious plan for accounting reforms and gradual introduction of accrual accounting in different departments is likely to give a better picture of assets and liabilities that could help in better financial management and resource utilisation.

The proposed NSS would also be challenged to fine-tune the doctrinal reforms and other ways and means to achieve its objectives. While a cue could be taken from the periodic Quadrennial Defence Review (QDR) and the National Security Strategy (the latest being in May 2010) published by the US or the Chinese White Papers on Defence (published bi-annually), the NSS has to cater to Indian strategic requirements. The war doctrines and strategic objectives must pretend to be non-offensive and charming to India's South Asian neighbours as well as other countries since India cannot afford to waste its energies on mindless power politics. Further, the NSS would have to emphasise on joint doctrines for the defence Services and encourage them to share their resources with the paramilitary forces since the latter need to be supported in counter-insurgency and anti-Maoist operations.

Finally, the differential perceptions on national security promoted by various stakeholders within the government as well those outside it could create problems for the NSS. While key Ministries like External Affairs, Defence, Home and Finance may have a dominant say in the NSS, other Ministries like Environment and Forests, Rural Development, Agriculture and Industries would also compete for their viewpoints to be included in

19. Rohan Mukherjee and David M Mallone, "Indian Foreign Policy and Contemporary Security Challenges", *International Affairs*, vol. 87, no. 1, 2011, pp. 87-104.

The National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) is now quite an active body that oversees and coordinates India's preparedness on at least two counts: policy formulation on key strategic challenges, and intelligence gathering from a plethora of intelligence agencies.

the draft NSS; not to forget non-ministerial agencies like the Planning Commission. Further, the NSS may also get stuck at the draft stage and become a victim of bureaucratic procedures or organisational clashes amongst various stakeholders in the government. Perhaps that was the reason why the draft nuclear doctrine could never get finalised and got mired in controversies. The draft NSS is also likely to face critical appraisal from the political opposition, who may not agree with many aspects of the NSS. The challenge for the government

would be to ensure that the draft NSS does not get choked in the political controversies.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS FOR AN NSS

Several factors could facilitate the drafting of an NSS. First, many official publications by the Government of India or under its auspices could suggest the future contours of the NSS. The annual reports of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD), published some time in the month of April every year, do describe the political and security environment around India and the efforts made by the government to make the same conducive for India's interests. Though the focus of these reports is overtly on the various activities and developments in the preceding year, they do reveal the national approach on major issues challenging the country. Similarly, the Departmentally Related Standing Committee (DRSC) of the Parliament on Defence, in inception since 1993, has been presenting its regular reports to the Parliament on demand for grants for the MoD budget every year. In addition, it has also been presenting special reports on topical issues that it considers relevant. The quality of inputs assimilated in these reports is of the highest level. Mention must also be made of India's *National Security: Annual Review* published every year by

Routledge but supported by the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) and the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), in publication since 2001. As the late Prime Minister I K Gujral said, the publication “made an important contribution to raising the national security consciousness of India’s strategic community”²⁰.

Second, institutional proliferation in recent times has also helped in shaping the national security consciousness. The NSCS is now quite an active body that oversees and coordinates India’s preparedness on at least two counts: policy formulation

on key strategic challenges, and intelligence gathering from a plethora of intelligence agencies. The National Security Adviser (NSA) has emerged as the key person on national security issues and reports directly to the prime minister. There is also a National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) consisting of reputed and established persons that meets from time to time to offer non-official views on national security matters.

Third, the emergence and proliferation of the think-tank network, both within and outside the government, is also a factor that should facilitate the NSS. While the government-controlled Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA) has been there since the late Sixties, it has been doing very well in recent times and is indeed developing a long-term vision of an NSS under its IDSA National Strategy Project (INSP). The United Services Institution of India (USI) is running its own national security project through the involvement of retired armed forces officers. The defence forces have also sponsored specific think-tanks to promote their respective aspects of national security: the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), National Maritime Foundation (NMS) and

India’s relative rise has created a unique situation, where its ideational preferences lag behind its enhanced economic and military capabilities. This is diametrically opposite to the dilemma in the early years of the republic, when India’s aspirations were not commensurate with its underlying power.

20. Compliments printed on the back side of Satish Kumar, ed., *India’s National Security: Annual Review 2009* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2009).

Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS). Private sector think-tanks like the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) have equally done good research on various aspects of national security.

Fourth, India also has the benefit of a whole new generation of strategic thinkers who continue the tradition of 'great strategic thinking' of the late K Subrahmanyam. These thinkers come from different fields like journalism, academics, defence services and bureaucracy, and wield respect both within and outside the government. Together, they have sensitised and educated the public opinion on various aspects of national security apart from occasional lobbying with the government. Most of them have served at least one tenure in the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB). As and when the NSS is drafted, the inputs received from them are bound to influence its final outlines.

PRECAUTIONS IN FORMULATING THE NSS

India's relative rise has created a unique situation, where its ideational preferences lag behind its enhanced economic and military capabilities. This is diametrically opposite to the dilemma in the early years of the republic, when India's aspirations were not commensurate with its underlying power.²¹ A documented NSS would enable India to balance the same since economic reforms have given it the much desired clout in international relations. This clout is only going to be consolidated as India would become a front ranking economic power due to its continued Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. Concurrently, India is also likely to witness its own Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) and would be in a position to allocate more resources for its defence forces modernisation.²²

21. Zorawar Daulat Singh, "Thinking About An Indian Grand Strategy", *Strategic Analyses*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2011, pp. 52-70.

22. According to Kanti Bajpai, India must be more attentive to the challenges of the global commons and more internationalist in its national security stance than ever before. See Kanti Bajpai, "The Global Commons and India's National Security Strategy", <http://www.idsa.in/nationalstrategy/wp/KantiBajpai.pdf>. Accessed on October 12, 2011.

Much will depend, however, on what kind of NSS is drafted! There are various models of power projection in contemporary international relations. While the US national security strategy aims at maintaining the country's leadership role in the political, economic and military fields, the Chinese White Papers on Defence are essentially 'revisionist' and seek to alter the global balance of power and challenge the US leadership in the Asia-Pacific region, if not elsewhere! Britain and France, on the other hand, seek to salvage the power and influence of declining great powers, though without much success. As a rising power, India would have to exercise its options rather carefully. The NSS should enable the country to play a leadership role at the regional if not the global level. Concurrently, it should enable the country to manage relations with a rising China without falling into the traps of balance of power tactics or alliance politics. Most importantly, it should enable India to overcome its defence vs development dilemma and seek comprehensive national power through planned efforts, as the country navigates the transition to great power status.

An area that would demand precaution in the proposed NSS would be the tendency for institutional proliferation in the name of national security. Both as a result of the Kargil Review Committee and the Group of Ministers on national security, a number of new security institutions came into existence. Not many of them have lived up to expectations and indeed some of them have become parking places for retired bureaucrats and Service officers. The NSS must rather streamline to ensure more synergy and coordination among the existing institutions.

Finally, the proposed NSS should correlate itself with certain long-term insecurities that make a mockery of India's attempts to provide a world class life-style for its citizenry. The billion plus population has a considerable section living below the poverty line. A large proportion of the population in both rural and urban India does not have access to clean drinking water. The second generation agricultural revolution is challenged by infrastructural bottlenecks such as the absence of pan-India river water linkages. While a considerable section of the Indian population has shifted from rural to urban areas, the migration has been mostly in tier I cities,

adding to their managerial and administrative insecurities. India is still way behind China and even some South Asian countries in providing better civic facilities to its citizens. The 12th Five-Year Plan does address some of these generic concerns²³ but defining them as 'insecurities' and linking them to the NSS would make it a more relevant document.

CONCLUSION

A documented NSS will be a handy document for India to manage its relations with its small South Asian neighbours, seek peace with China and Pakistan and navigate its way in international relations through the right type of power projection. It will also enable the country to focus on the developmental deficit and buy the essential 'time and peace' in the hitherto problematic Asian security architecture. Most importantly, it will bridge the gap between India and the rest of the world.

The institutional and academic investments in national security projects in recent times only show the emerging consensus on India having an NSS. There were expectations from the Naresh Chandra Committee making a strong recommendations for an NSS, but the same did not come through, thus, prolonging the expectations for the document. Given the spate of defence and security reforms, the demand for an NSS is likely to be the most logical outcome. The time is ripe for India to come out with an NSS that is affordable and sustainable, and to create a new image for the country in the comity of nations.

23. See, Planning Commission, "Faster, Sustainable and More Inclusive Growth: An Approach to the 12th Five-Year Plan", August 2011. Available on www.planningcommission.nic.in