

Reconstruction of National Security Architecture

A Task Force, comprising retired seniors and heads of all government departments having national security responsibilities, with the convener of the National Security Advisory Board as its Chairman, has been holding sessions to review the existing systems and suggest improvements, changes and modifications of the processes, procedures and practices, to bring about a qualitative change in the internal and external national security posture of the country. The Task Force is also expected to examine what remains to be done with respect to the recommendations of the Task Force set up after the Kargil war. It is likely to submit its report by end of March, 2012.

The Task Force faces a daunting task. Ensuring comprehensive security is getting more and more complex every day. The external environment has become vitiated by new perspectives of political permissiveness, which have brought in their wake questionable doctrines of unilateralism, pre-emptive strike and regime change. Globalization has made economic penetration a much simpler activity. Technological advances render territorial frontiers insignificant. Emergence of a single

super power after the Soviet Union's disintegration has not resolved the equation of balance of power. Three emergent powers in Asia, China, Japan and India, are engaged in aggressive competition for status, markets and resources. China, in addition, is involved in a hectic pursuit of military power, to equal that of the US, in the coming decades. The world security architecture remains, therefore, in a constant flux, with new alignments, realignments and conflicts surfacing in dramatic ways.

This growing complexity is compounded by issues of water and land, resulting in migration, refugees and demands for more dam constructions, potentially creating new areas of conflict.

Threats are arising also from the appearance of newer forces, operating world wide. The concept of absolute sovereignty is no longer sacrosanct. Nations are willingly surrendering a part of their sovereignty to a larger grouping, as in the European Union, in search of greater national security. Some nations are now claiming a right to interfere in a country's affairs on the ground events within the country is affecting their interests. Libya is an example of how its internal human rights scenario paved the way for external intervention, forcing a regime change.

Free movements of unstoppable ideas are another area of deep concern to many nations though democracies need not fear such intrusions. Closed societies are, however at risk. The demise of the Soviet Union owed much to the dissemination of concepts relating to democracy, human rights and freedom of conscience by the west through Radio Liberty and Radio Free Europe. The advent of Arab spring is also attributable to this phenomenon.

In this context the influence of social Medias like Internet, Face book and Twitter has to be recognized. The Arab spring owes a lot to the facilities provided by their instantaneous communication abilities. The same methodologies come in handy for cybercrimes and cyber wars and even the most technologically advanced nations cannot ensure total immunity for themselves.

The competition for resources and markets, already mentioned, if it becomes cutthroat, can be another source of destabilization. The Soviet Union had finally lost out because its economy could not keep pace with the demands of its military, which wanted to match the West.

The rise and rise and rise of political Islam is perhaps potentially the most troublesome phenomenon of today's world. Political Islam accepts no

compromise and is successfully encroaching on new ground all the while. In Europe as well as in Australia multiculturalism has all but been declared to be a failed exercise. The line dividing political Islam from Islamism is a very thin one. In all countries, experiencing an Arab spring, Islamists and non secularists are coming to the fore. Even in Turkey, the almost century of Ataturkian model of secular governance, is doddering. Nobody can say today with certainty what will be the shape of its future development. Some, of course, are keeping their fingers crossed, wondering if Samuel Huntington's dire predictions about civilisational clashes will come about.

Keeping a watch over such a vast spectrum of forces, developments and possible threats has now become a national security imperative. Will the Task Force be taking an objective view on steps that must be taken or be constrained by the narrow compulsions of the Executive to retain absolute executive powers in its hands over intelligence and investigative agencies?

The present national security support systems have proved quite inadequate as several episodes repeatedly have demonstrated. There have been instances of zero intelligence, inadequate intelligence, inaccurate intelligence, miserable coordination and poor analysis. To set the systems right and to upgrade the quality of products and performance,

a set of minimum reforms are necessary. In this context the following need to be considered.

The intelligence and investigative agencies in the West have been armed with legislative backing. This blocks unwarranted executive control and interference from outside sources and ensures administrative and operational autonomy to the agencies to pursue their own line of thought in investigation and intelligence work.

Covert operations are important operational but optional tools for intelligence work which are available to agencies in many democracies but not in ours. Covert action covers a range of activities such as destabilization or a coup in another country, training of rebels and guerillas, financing of foreign political groups, subversion of foreign media, black propaganda and even kidnapping or assassination. It is self evident that all such activities cannot be legally carried out merely on the strength of an executive directive from the highest in the land. In the US, the National Security Act of 1947 vests the President of the US with discretion to order any such measure for the security of the nation, including assassination, and the CIA as the executing agency, is duty bound to carry out the orders. No legal action can be taken in the US against CIA's operatives for such activity.

The option for covert action should be available to Indian agencies also. But such an option has to come with a legal immunity. This reinforces the argument for giving the Indian agencies a legal basis for their existence.

The laws should provide the freedom to the agencies to devise their own systems and methodology for recruitment of their personnel, Collection of Humint (intelligence through human sources) is not a child's play. It tests the resourcefulness, skills and dedication of an intelligence officer. Humint penetration is a difficult task anytime. It becomes all the more difficult when the target is a non state adversary, like resistance or terrorist groups such as the Indian Mujahedeen operating in India. Recruitment to intelligence services requires the scales of enrolment be set up very high, much above the standards of ordinary recruitment. It will be evident that to recruit a higher caliber of individuals, the compensation packages to be offered will have to be matching.

Unfortunately, in our country there is a basic reluctance to accept this reality. The result is that no recruitment has taken place for the junior most direct entry into the Research and Analysis Service of the R&AW for the last several years. No wonder there are complaints that R&AW is not pulling its weight. In the Intelligence Bureau, an earmarking scheme had

been in operation for several years from 1955. Under this scheme the top four or five selected for IPS each year by the UPSC used to get earmarked for the IB for their entire careers. The scheme had enabled the IB to develop a very strong cadre of deeply motivated young officers but the scheme was given up when others protested that they did not have a corresponding benefit. The IB had lost out to service jealousies.

Such jealousies do arise among agencies also, leading to turf battles, poor coordination and even non-cooperation. It would be advisable for the Task Force to look closely into this phenomenon, to delineate respective jurisdictions in very clear terms and to prevent one from straying into the field of another.

The role of NTRO, National Technical Research Organization, created on the recommendations of the Kargil Task Force, also needs to be clearly set out. Many turf disagreements have prevented this organization from reaching its potential. Whether NTRO should remain totally independent or be brought under another overreaching entity is a question worthy of a deep scrutiny. The need to avoid duplication requires to be kept in mind.

Two other major issues confronting the Task Force would be the reluctance of the States to carry out police reforms as mandated by the Supreme Court and the conflicting postures on the creation of the post of a Chief of Defense Staff.

Police reforms are not seeing the light of the day simply because the States are unwilling to let police administration go out of their clutches. Pliant and subordinate police machinery becomes an effective tool for management of diverse political and party interests whereas an independent police will be inclined to place duty above favor. The roots of the problem go back to the Police Act of 1861 which made police subservient to the Raj and its officers. Unless this subordination is removed by another law, the situation is hardly likely to be improved.

The issue of CDS is shrouded in mutual reservations of the civil and the military and fears about loss of turf within the military itself. The issue has defied resolution over the past several years. This question in all probability may, therefore, be left to linger in limbo some more time.

On all other major matters the Task Force has an admirable opportunity to create history by recommending the establishment of

autonomous independent national security architecture. It owes it to the nation to do so.