CHAPTER IV: HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH IN INDIA’S NATIONAL SECURITY CALCULUS AND POLICY MAKING

The chapter attempts to assess the need and importance of human security approach in India’s security calculations and policy making. Further it enables both analysts and policy makers to make more accurate judgments to formulate adequate policy measures to help shape human security initiatives for the country. In nutshell this chapter suggests the need to adopt a comprehensive national security policy in view of the clear changing conceptualization of the referents and scope of human security.
CHAPTER - IV

HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH IN INDIA’S NATIONAL SECURITY CALCULUS AND POLICY MAKING

In a rapidly integrating and globalising world and an increasingly interdependent and multi-polar international system, the predominantly military-strategic orientation of the security discourse came to be viewed as overly narrow and inadequate. Hence individuals became the primary referent of security. Freedom from want and fear became the most effective shields against insecurity.

Analysing threats in an integrated and interdisciplinary manner should help identify critical threats to formulate right course of action. The threats confronting India underscore the incapacity of the traditional security concept to a solution to them. In this, the effective means of dealing with the multifarious threats is not force; rather the preferred instruments of security are human development and humane governance. A comprehensive human security approach in India’s national security calculus and policy making requires proper attention. In other words there is a need to pursue a comprehensive security policy that incorporates the human security paradigm. The inadequacy of India’s traditional security approach suggests the adoption of the human security concept.

Need for Adopting Human Security in India

A predominant interpretation of national security in developing countries like India suggests physical security from external threats relying mostly on military elements. But in the recent past, the evolving nature of threats to humanity demands a new approach to the concept of security. The concept of human security provides an alternative to the traditional state-centric security systems. An array of threats has challenged the state and society that have proven to be beyond the scope of traditional security.

Analysis of current state of affairs highlights the need for adopting the more inclusive approach of human security concept in India. Human security did not remain confined to theoretical debate but has been successfully adopted by various states in their domestic agendas and some others have employed it in their foreign
policies agendas too. Analysis of current state of affairs highlights the need for adopting the more inclusive approach of human security concept in India. Therefore, the objective is to adopt an integrated approach towards threats affecting the nationals of the state.

**Transition towards Human Security**

Human security provides a holistic solution. It broadens the concept of security and incorporates the physical security of the individuals as well as security against various threats. Security cannot be achieved only by military means. The social, economic, cultural, military and political subsystems are all part of a larger system that is closely interconnected. Human security is an integrative agenda that tackles various facets of threats and strengthens traditional security as well. It is seen that militancy and extremism cannot be eliminated through hard power alone as it thrives among people with grievances who have been denied their basic rights and needs. A large reservoir of dis-satisfied people is a potential pool of militancy. By addressing the root causes and grievances, militancy or terrorism can be eliminated. Hence, human security complements traditional security, not contradicts it.

The interactive agenda of human security helps fix problems and at the same time deals with security in its entirety. For instance, no progress in economic security can be made unless there is huge investment in education that will develop the workforce or human resources critical for transforming the economy into higher productivity sectors. Apart from developing a workforce, education will produce an informed and vigilant citizenry that can promote political security, promote tolerance that is so critical for dealing with intolerance, extremism and violence\(^1\).

**UNDP’s Agenda Setting Role**

The 1994 Human Development Report focussed primarily on human security. This Report is considered a landmark in the field of human security for it provided further conceptual clarity to the concept of human security. Freedom from want and the freedom from fear, said the report, are the two pillars of human security. In the immediate aftermath of this report, these two pillars became the clarion calls for all those who demanded an overhaul of the existing world order.
The UNDP visualised threats to human security in seven areas: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, communal security and political security.

India’s Approach to Human Security

The Constitution of India has sufficient safeguard mechanisms to address some of the core issues concerned with human rights and human security. For example some of the important aspects pertaining to human rights and human security are highlighted below.

Article 37

The provisions contained in this Part shall not be enforced by any court, but the principles therein laid down are nevertheless fundamental in the governance of the country and it shall be the duty of the State to apply these principles in making laws.

Article 38 {State to secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people}

1. The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life.

2. The State shall, in particular, strive to minimise the inequalities in income, and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations.

Article 39 {Certain principles of policy to be followed by the State}

The State shall, in particular, direct its policy towards securing -

a. that the citizen, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood;

b. that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good;
c. that the operation of the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth and means of production to the common detriment;
d. that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women;
e. that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children are not abused and that citizens are not forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their age or strength;
f. that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and that childhood and youth are protected against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment.

**Article 39A** {Equal justice and free legal aid}

The State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.

**Article 40** {Organisation of village panchayats}

The State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.

**Article 41** {Right to work, to education and to public assistance in certain cases}

The State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, and in other cases of undeserved want.

It was Mahatma Gandhi who placed the individual at the centre of human progress. He talked of the “village republics”. Every village, Gandhi said, “will be a republic with full powers. Life will not be a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom. But it will be an oceanic circle whose centre will be the individual always ready to perish for the circle of villages” Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore had
this to say: “We have for over a century been dragged by the prosperous West behind its chariot, choked by the dust, deafened by the noise, humbled by our own helplessness and overwhelmed by the speed. We agreed to acknowledge that this chariot-drive was progress, and the progress was civilisation. If we ever ventured to ask, ‘progress towards what and progress for whom’, it was considered to be peculiarly and ridiculously oriental to entertain such ideas about the absoluteness of progress.”

In recent years, the Indian economy has made impressive strides. Today India and China are the two fastest growing economies in the world. The growth figures released by the Central Statistical Organisation in early June 2006 show that the GDP growth rate for the last fiscal (2005-06) was 8.4 %, up from the 8.1% projected by the government in February 2006. This is the fourth highest growth ever since independence. The previous highs were in 1988-89 (10.5%), followed by 1975-76 (9%) and 2003-04 (8.5%). It is argued that the GDP growth is a good 0.3% higher than even the revised estimate of 8.1% for the year released as late as February 2006. This significant change of gears is thanks to a huge upsurge in agricultural output. Agricultural growth spurted to 3.9% in 2005-06, from 0.7 % a year ago. Manufacturing too accelerated to 9% sustaining one of the largest stretches of growth recorded. Services, which now accounts for over half of India’s GDP, grew at an impressive 11.5%. But the push factor undoubtedly came from agriculture.

India’s growth performance is by all means impressive. But is it sustainable? Whether it is a shining star or a passing comet will depend on what India does to its two-thirds population who appear to be still untouched by economic strides. State governments that had created a hype on their IT successes, with their chief ministers making regular appearances at World Economic Forum’s annual extravaganza at Davos, while farmers committed suicide, met a similar fate. India’s gains in the IT sector are impressive. Indian firms have two-thirds of the global market in offshore IT services and nearly half that in BPO. Now there is a manufacturing boom as well. But can India depend on the trickle-down effects to spread prosperity? After all, isn’t the trickle down what John Galbraith says, “like feeding horses oats, so that sparrows can eat the dung”?
Amartya Sen’s ‘Development as Freedom’ Model

Amartya Sen, a leading Indian economist and Nobel Laureate, talks of three ‘unfreedoms’ - the fear of illiteracy, the fear of early death and the fear of starvation. “Development requires”, says Sen, “the removal of major sources of unfreedoms: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or over activity of repressive states”\(^5\). Lack of substantive freedoms is inextricably linked to economic poverty, which deprives people of the freedom to satisfy hunger and meet requirements of adequate clothing and shelter. Sen sees poverty as ‘capability deprivation’\(^6\).

In conceptualising development as freedom, Amartya Sen has carried the capability approach to somewhat higher dimensions. Expansion of freedom is viewed as “the primary end and the principal means of development”\(^7\). The former has a constitutive role in enriching human life whereas the latter includes elementary capabilities such as the ability to avoid such deprivations as starvation, under-nourishment, as well as the freedom to be literate and enjoy political participation. Sen mentions five types of instrumental freedoms:

- Political freedoms;
- Economic facilities;
- Social opportunities;
- Transparency guarantees; and
- Protective security\(^8\).

Sen’s formulation is particularly relevant for evaluating human security, as it considers whether the freedoms that people have are enhanced or not. As Sen says, “these instrumental freedoms directly enhance the capabilities of people, but they also supplement one another, and can furthermore reinforce one another”\(^9\). Economic empowerment of the poor can be a great engine of economic growth. Creation of social opportunities can contribute both to economic development and to significant reductions in mortality rates. And reduction of mortality rates, in turn, can help to reduce birth rates.
The Kerala Model

Amartya Sen has immortalised the Kerala model globally. The Kerala experience shows that even with low income, higher life expectancy, lower fertility and high literacy can be achieved. A variety of social opportunities - like health care and educational facilities - that have been enabled through governmental intervention have contributed to Kerala’s phenomenal performance.

Kerala has an impressive record of overcoming poverty despite not so impressive economic growth. In many ways it is a unique case whose success is not easy to replicate. It had a long tradition of high value for education. Whereas kings and feudal lords in other parts of India consciously followed a policy of keeping the populace illiterate, princely rulers in Kerala took pains to spread literacy. Kerala, with a substantial Christian population, also benefited from missionaries’ work in the field of education. Implementation of land reforms, comprehensive social and food security coverage, people-centred policies of successive Marxist governments, successful implementation of the Panchayati Raj (village self-rule institutions) and credible democratic decentralisation have contributed significantly to Kerala’s advance in social development.

What is particularly significant is that despite “a moderate level of economic development, Kerala could make a significant dent on poverty during the last three decades”\(^1\). The successful implementations of the Panchayati Raj and innovative People’s campaign and Kutambashree (State Poverty Eradication Mission) programmes have helped in distributing the fruits of development to the grassroots level. While the Kerala model of development is impressive, the State has had limited success in building on its success in human development to raise its income levels. There are States like Punjab and Maharashtra that have reduced income poverty through high economic growth. In contrast, Kerala has used its high level of human development - such as better education, good and functioning health care and equitable land distribution - to wage a war on poverty. And it has had a faster rate of reduction in income poverty than other States. India is presently combining the two models - getting rich first and hoping for the trickledown effect to do the rest and the human development model of Kerala.
Humane Governance

Gandhi said that “independence must begin at the bottom”. This has now become a reality after the establishment of the Panchayati Raj. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendments have created a third tier of government at the village level. Instruments are now in place for ushering in a new era with greater public participation in governance. India is growing into the world’s most intense democracy.

Good governance is the key to equitable growth. Participatory development, freedom of choice and improvement of service delivery are prerequisites of growth with equity. India’s experiment in democratic decentralisation is equally instructive. Decentralisation is the essence of democratic governance. But we must remember what Gandhi said: good government is no substitute for self-government. The introduction of the Panchayati raj system has sought to transform India.

Today governance is more structured, more broken-down. There is also greater transparency and accountability. As many as 3.4 million people (of which one million are women) are elected to the three-tiered local government institutions every five years. Not less than one-third of seats are reserved for women. A quota has also been provided to the so-called “lower” castes and tribes. Not all governments have implemented the Panchayati raj system in letter and spirit, but it has changed the very grammar of Indian politics.

Other Sources of Insecurity

Internal insecurity has several dimensions. While India is looked upon as a model of democratic governance, many of its pressing problems have nothing to do with conventional external threats. Several parts of the country are afflicted with ethnic insurgency while others are plagued by communal and caste wars. Environmental degradation threatens the livelihood of vast sections of the people; and globalisation processes are eroding the traditional notion of national community and fuelling fears of exploitation and cultural homogenisation.
These internal, non-military and newer sources of insecurity pose as much, if not more, of a challenge than the traditional threats to national security. The problems of human insecurity get manifested in three interrelated dimensions:

- First, there is a deepening of polarisation along ethnic, linguistic and religious lines and the undermining of social values which bind together diverse communities in a pluralistic society;

- Second, there is reluctance on the part of centralised structures to share political power and give adequate representation to all strata of society. This, in turn, breeds militarisation and encourages the use of coercive state power to quell resurgent nationalism; and

- Third, a development model that aggravates endemic poverty, interpersonal and interregional disparities, erosion of the natural resource base and dependence on foreign aid is favoured. This results in tensions and violent movements representing the poor and marginalized, threatening the security of the people.

The strong link between mis-governance and insecurity points to the imperative of greater democratisation of the polity and the empowerment of citizens. In the plural, stratified and fractious countries of South Asia, the test of good governance must be premised on how the state and civil society democratically negotiate differences via constitutional guarantees and political institutions.

It is only through the institutionalisation of pluralism and diversity as sources of strength, rather than being viewed as threats to the state and polity, that there can be humane governance. Here India’s record is quite impressive. Discontent among vulnerable sections of the population is often fuelled by the denial of access to basic human security such as water, nutrition, housing, health and education services.

Human lives are at risk from guerrilla wars, separatist movements, and political and ethnic violence. These revolve around highly contentious issues such as ethnic status, caste and tribe, religion and language; inequitable distribution of assets, lack of employment, and imbalances in regional growth. India’s experience
suggests that ethnic and sectarian resentments are fed by a sense of deprivation and discrimination on the part of minority groups against the perceived appropriation of the state’s political and economic capital by the majority community or dominant ethnic group. A major part of India is currently under the sweep of communist insurgency where the writ of the state hardly runs. The reform has done precious little to ameliorate their conditions.

India’s Democratic Record

There is the need to create an economic and political framework to accommodate the aspirations of people who are on the margins. The saving grace of India has been its functioning democracy. Democracy invents and reinvents itself in the wake of such challenges. To many people outside, India may appear to be a land of a million mutinies, but Indians have learnt to live with its “functioning chaos”. Six decades of democratic life has helped to put in place mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests and aspirations exercise their legal rights and mediate their differences.

Contemporary challenges to governance also arise from the need to respect diversity. Few countries have succeeded in this respect as India has. India is host to all conceivable religious faiths. Its linguistic diversity is mind-boggling. It is India’s tradition of tolerance and respect for diversity that has made it a mosaic and not a melting pot. Unity in diversity is slowly giving way to diversity as unity. The Indian model underlines the fact that democracy and development can go together. Indeed, the democratic form of governance and its right implementation enables better, sustainable growth. There are mistakes no doubt, for Gandhi said, “freedom is not worth having if it doesn’t include the freedom to make mistakes.”

Major Human Security Challenges in India

While India is home to the world’s richest people, it is also home to the world’s poorest. This huge economic disparity will determine the status of human and national security in India in 2025. Advances in mass communication have
contributed to a more integrated, interdependent, and informed polity that is unlikely to continue passively accepting such stark economic disparities.

Many policies in India continue to be driven by state-centric frameworks. While reforms are under way to make the government more accountable, transparent, and responsive to the needs of the people, the implementation of these reforms is undermined by high levels of corruption, the criminalization of politics, and weak institutions.

There is a lack of clear understanding about the elements of human insecurity that are manifest in India. When communities in India revolt as a result of their loss of dignity or access to land, the government views this only as a law-and-order problem that requires police action, rather than implementing responses that are as multidimensional as the causes themselves.

Chronic mis-governance and total administrative apathy for the developmental needs of marginalized communities have resulted in pockets of acute human security deficit. The rise in regional radicalization and the growing influence of left extremism, such as the Naxalites movement, are only symptoms of emerging disaffection with the government.

Policy Implications

If India wishes to reap the future benefits of a vibrant economy, it must address the growing economic disparity in its population. The state of human security in India fifteen years from now will largely depend on its ability to close this gap. Many of India’s human security concerns continue to be located within its institutions and structures, which are not easily or equally accessible to all its citizens. Unless India is able to develop social and political delivery systems that distribute the benefits of economic growth beyond the privileged few, the country’s potential to be a regional or global power will be limited.

Left extremism is likely to be one of the most serious challenges to Indian security in the forthcoming decade if the government does not address basic issues of governance and accountability.
Many of India’s human security concerns continue to be focused on the country’s social and political institutions and structures, which are not easily or equally accessible to all citizens. What then are the indicators of a truant national security policy? Firstly, is it there at all? If so, where is it? Who makes it? Who disseminates it? Who is calling the shots on security policy? What inputs are required to make one, and who provides them? Secondly, if there is one, does Parliament, and through it the common man need to know? If not, why not?

Let us, for a moment, assume there is one. The question that then begs answering is, as to why so many reports written by successive committees under different governments are lying in cold storage? These reports deal with urgent national issues of water sharing, defence, defence production, health, labour, environment, innovation, research and development etc.

Governance is performance—the delivery of high quality political goods to citizens by governments of all kinds. In India, as everywhere else, those political goods are: security and safety, rule of law, participation and human rights, sustainable economic opportunity and human development.

**Governance in India**

Governance is improving, but still miles to go in several areas. Fortunately, those days are seemingly gone. Ostensibly everywhere in India today there is a recognition that governance matters—that governments are responsible for uplifting, not oppressing, their peoples. The road to prosperity and social improvement and security is through strengthened governance. In this connection one needs to know the importance of national security decision-making structures.

**The Need for National Security Decision-Making Structures (NSDMS)**

One solution to this challenge is the creation of overarching (or centralised) structures that consolidate and co-ordinate various aspects of national security decision-making; effective security sector reform demands co-ordinated action and the integration of a wide range of security-related policy, legislative, structural and oversight issues. These centralised structures may be called upon to co-ordinate
policy, to implement policy, or simply to assess and advise – high-level political commitment and awareness are crucial to this process – but their role is always to bring the disparate parts of the security agenda together. They are, thus, a crucial component of security sector transformations, both as the target of change (or creation) and the drivers of change.

Moreover, given the interdependence and interconnectedness of human security and national security factors, the way in which a country structures its national decision-making can have a direct impact not only on what are traditionally thought of as security concerns, but also on the broader, but no less crucial, socio-economic development of a country.

Roles of National Security Decision-Making Structures

National security decision-making structures can perform a variety of roles.

Joint Assessment on which to base policy and decision-making

Resource Allocation to deal with national security threats

Oversight responsible for managing national security is an important function within all democratic systems

Security Priorities reflecting the varying national security needs of individual countries

Emergency Co-ordination among bodies responsible for responding to emergencies, natural or otherwise

Basis for the National Security Decision-Making Structure

Increasingly, developed countries such as the UK or the US view the most immediate threats to their national security in terms centred around the national well-being and stability of society – against both externally-originating threats such as international terrorism and the proliferation of WMD, and internally-originating ones such as natural disasters or radical violence against society (including domestic terrorism). Developing and – in particular – post-conflict countries are typically far more concerned with socio-economic issues such as poverty and food scarcity, and the potential these have to lead to social tensions and widespread instability.
Given this link between security and development, in many developing countries, therefore, the role of the NSC is superseded by other institutions, which focus on development, security, and security sector reform, but not on overall co-ordination of security policy at the head-of-government level.

Legitimacy of the National Security Decision-Making Structure

For an NSC to have legitimacy, it should have a legislative basis and high-level support. It should also be both transparent and accountable.

Function of the National Security Decision-Making Structure

National Security Council (NSC) can function in either an advisory or executive role. They will also likely play a co-ordinating role within government. It is worth noting that effective co-ordination mechanisms can often exist despite the absence of an effective NSC structure. In some cases, countries may find that structures of this sort meet their needs better than a more centralised approach.

Organisation of the National Security Decision-Making Structure

In many countries, national security decisions are handled through networks of committees before reaching higher-level decision-making fora such as the NSC or the Cabinet. This hierarchical structure helps to focus resources, ensuring that more minor issues are dealt with at a lower level, without detracting from more significant issues requiring higher-level decisions. The same efforts at integration of intelligence and assessments are also underway. In general, centralising national security decision-making can contribute to more effective response to threats. However, this centralising process can be undermined by a lack of trust in the central structures established for this purpose. This is particularly apparent in developing countries, and is linked to the issues of building public confidence, trust and accountability in authority structures.

Composition of the National Security Decision-Making Structure

It is critical for NSCs to have a balance between military and civilian influence. Intelligence and security services must also be integrated effectively to support effective decision-making. Predictably, there is no ‘one size fits all’
approach. However, there are generic aspects of the different models that may provide useful examples or lessons for other countries in the process of developing or reforming an NSC-type system.

National Security Decision-Making Structures and Security Sector Reform (NSSR)

Reform and restructuring of the security sector is of increasing interest in all parts of the world. This is both as part of wider processes of development, and as result of rethinking national security threats – for example, in response to changed perceptions of the terrorist threat after the September 11, 2001, attacks in New York and Washington DC.

Security sector reform (SSR) is a complex process. Depending on a country’s specific needs and requirements, it may address any or all of the following:

- Enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the security sector to meet the needs of national security or policing policies
- State-building
- Enhancing civilian control or capacity to control in the security sector architecture
- Enhancing democratic control and oversight – especially in transition from military or one-party rule to participatory forms of government
- Enhancing state or security sector legitimacy
- Enhancing transparency and accountability in public affairs
- Right-sizing the security sector to enable resources to be allocated according to societal priorities
- Conflict prevention and / or post-conflict reconstruction, perhaps including implementation of peace agreements

Security sector reform, narrowly defined, can encompass institutions and organisations established to deal with external or internal threats to the security of the State and its citizens. At a minimum, therefore, the security sector includes military and paramilitary forces, the intelligence services, national and local police
services, border, customs and coast guards. However, it is increasingly understood that SSR is broader than these institutions.

Security sector reform more broadly defined has political, military, economic, policing, juridical, communications, financial, foreign policy, and intelligence components, all of which are interrelated. Developing countries need sufficient stability to foster growth – and they need effective and sustainable economic growth to support continued security and stability. Moreover, in developing countries particularly, NGOs, human rights organisations and international bodies may also play significant roles in the development of the security sector.

In many countries, problems arise because of stove-piping among the various organisations and bodies with responsibility for these sectors. Organisations may not be aware of each other’s policies and behaviour, and senior decision-makers may find themselves in the dark about the activities of other branches and agencies of their own government. This can have significant negative repercussions.

Thus, different countries have evolved a variety of mechanisms for dealing with the process of high-level national security decision-making; it is imperative that countries now undergoing reform consider the various options available to them for undertaking this function – in order to ensure that they make informed choices regarding the structure and shape of government decision-making on these most crucial of issues.

Many governments have established institutions that serve as a central point for national security issues – such as the National Security Council in some countries, the Cabinet Office in the UK, or the Advisory Council on National Security in Canada – which can serve a variety of specific functions, while sharing a general effort to centralise senior-level government thinking about national security issues. Below we explore some of the roles that a national security decision-making structure can fill. Later, we will compare how different nations use their decision-making structures to fulfil these roles. NSCs can be a crucial player in defining the direction and scope of reform. However, the actual role of the NSC in decision-
making of this sort varies greatly from country to country. In short the above clearly describes as to how various countries have chosen to structure their national security decision-making, and how these choices reflect their national security needs.

Drawing on that analysis, this study then presents some conclusions about the options available for structuring national security decision-making. These nations were chosen because they represent a mix of developed and developing countries, with a variety of political systems and variety of security structures – which show how nations will use their national decision-making structures for a variety of purposes.

Developing countries find it difficult to fully empower NSC structures – and the roles of such organisations, even if they exist, tend to be minimal. Developing-country national security decision-making generally focuses on near-term security and development needs, and, as relevant, post-conflict reconstruction. Security sector reform efforts focus on establishing oversight and accountability mechanisms.

In developed countries, attention focuses upon the effectiveness of the decision-making architecture, improving co-ordination, ensuring transparency of the security community, and adapting security architectures to new threats. This is particularly the case after 9/11, which fundamentally changed the perception of threat in many developed countries. Vulnerability assessments were performed, and efforts were made to better integrate the structures of the governing machinery. Examples of such centralised leadership today include the NSC in the US, the Cabinet Office in the UK, and the National Security Advisor’s Office and Cabinet Committee on Security, Public Health and Emergency Preparedness in Canada, which play key roles in national security decision-making.

Other examples of new thinking can be found in developed countries. In Canada, the Advisory Council on National Security now provides formal advice to the government which originates with players from outside of government. In the UK, the creation of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat was one of the first moves towards centralising an all-risk/all-threats assessments and planning capability within central government. Even the creation of the Department of Homeland
Security in the US, problematic as it has been, was a major step towards attempting to ensure better co-ordination and – crucially – information-sharing across those government players central to protecting national security.

**Developing v. Developed Countries**

In developing countries, the link between security and development is the key in understanding issues of national security. Poverty, food scarcity, health pandemics, conflict in neighbouring countries or regions, and broader socio-economic problems are often the most significant security threats—and they exacerbate other dangers, external and internal. In many developing countries, therefore, the role of the NSC is superseded by other institutions, which focus on development, security, and security sector reform, but not on overall co-ordination of security policy at the head-of-government level. In more developed countries, there is more focus on developing a focal point within the security architecture to respond to the complexity of threats facing any one country. The emphasis is on improving mechanisms for co-ordination, information-sharing, and decision-making, particularly in relation to countering today’s terrorism. Whether developing countries feel less of a need for such structures, or face more difficulty creating and institutionalising them, is a question worthy of further consideration. For an NSC to have legitimacy, it should have a legislative basis and high-level support. It should also be both transparent and accountable.

**Function of the National Security Decision-Making Structure**

National Security Councils can function in either an advisory or executive role. They will also likely play a co-ordinating role within government.

**Advisory Role versus Executive Role**

The advisory, co-ordination, decision-making, and implementation functions of an NSC-type structure are found in various combinations in different countries. The US NSC is arguably among the most powerful models for an NSC. It is a forum in which new policies can be initiated and shaped, and the President, advisers and Cabinet officials discuss domestic, foreign and defence policies relating to national security. The NSC staff’s role is to co-ordinate the executive departments and
agencies in policy development and implementation, although the NSC staffs itself does not engage in implementation – this is the role of the organisations whose leaders sit on the Council. The NSC staffs also provide advice to the President on national security issues.

In Canada, the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness and the Cabinet Committee on Security, Public Health, and Emergency Preparedness – supported by the National Security Advisor and the Advisory Council on National Security – ensure the development and implementation of policy. In South Africa, the National Intelligence Co-ordinating Committee works in close co-operation with the National Security Council and the Cabinet Committee on Security and Intelligence to ensure national and local co-ordination of and information-sharing on threats to national security and stability. In the UK, this role is largely filled by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat acting in co-operation with various Cabinet Committees and bodies to meet national security concerns. In virtually every case, these bodies are ultimately responsible to the head of government.

Although there is an argument that NSCs lacking an implementation role may be weaker institutionally than those that have such a function, this is not always the case. The US NSC is an example of a strong NSC without an implementation role, for example. In contrast, the Cabinet Office in the UK is a strong example of a national security decision-making forum that is constantly gaining power in relation to seeing that decisions are carried out, a place where advice and implementation functions are combined.

Co-ordination

In many countries, security issues cut across a number of bodies and departments. This can lead to confusion, stove-piping and poor information exchange among government officials, who may be unaware of the actions and policies of their colleagues. Thus, countries often establish centralised structures in large part to help support and ensure policy co-ordination takes place.
In the US, such co-ordination is clearly centralised in the NSC, and overseeing that co-ordination is a crucial and primary function of the NSC staff. The various governmental departments remain responsible for formulating and carrying out policy, but the NSC helps make sure that this policy is not developed and implemented in a vacuum.

In Canada, the advice of the Advisory Council is channelled through the National Security Advisor to the Cabinet Committee on Security, Public Health and Emergencies and the Prime Minister. The new role of the Advisor since April 2004 is presented as a pivotal co-ordination one between the main bodies responsible for national security, albeit without decision-making or implementation authority – it remains to be seen how effective this role is in the long term.

In the UK, the Joint Intelligence Committee is designed to take into account the assessments provided by a range of intelligence bodies, and then to provide these assessments and warnings to government. The Cabinet and its Committee-structure provide a forum in which to co-ordinate policy and decision-making. This structure allows policy-relevant actors to have input at all levels, and ensures that policy differences are often ironed out before they reach the Cabinet.

In most countries, co-ordination of security and intelligence organs is a priority for the government, although responsibility for this may lie with different bodies. Much of the co-ordination occurs – or is designed to occur – both formally and informally, at lower levels. This ensures that many issues get resolved before they ever reach the NSC. However, in countries where the NSC does have a co-ordinating role, issues involving these agencies can often be resolved at that level. It is worth noting that effective co-ordination mechanisms can often exist despite the absence of an effective NSC structure. In some cases, countries may find that structures of this sort meet their needs better than a more centralised approach.

Organisation of the National Security Decision-Making Structure

Integration

In Canada, the US and the UK, national security decisions are handled through networks of committees before reaching higher-level decision-making fora
such as the NSC or the Cabinet. This hierarchical structure helps to focus resources, ensuring that more minor issues are dealt with at a lower level, without detracting from more significant issues requiring higher-level decisions.

Many countries, including Canada and the UK, are seeking to improve their integration of intelligence and assessments. Implementation of policy, however, is decentralised and the responsibility of various departments. While decision-making at high levels on issues affecting multiple agencies is integrated – and there may be centrally-led implementation in issue areas where there is overlap – there is also considerable independent action.

In yet another example, post-apartheid South Africa – as part of its overall security sector transformation – had to integrate former adversaries into the new military, police and intelligence structures. However, South Africa is also a useful example of macro-level integration. While the Presidency established an integrated system of governance over the last decade to oversee not only the national security architecture but also – perhaps most importantly – the linkages between development and security across the country, the outcome of both of the above processes has not been as successful as would have been hoped. Corruption and factionalism remain rife across the security forces, while central decisions are taken inside the Office of the President rather than through more consultative and transparent bodies within the government. It remains to be seen how South Africa’s efforts towards multiparty, transparent and effective governance will play out over the coming years – and the impact that all of this will have on security and development in that country, as well as on South Africa’s wider hemispheric role.

Centralised National Security Decision-Making

The UK and the US are good examples of the effective centralisation of decision-making. In the UK, the Cabinet represents the main centralised authority with responsibility in relation to national security. The committee system ensures not only that many actors have had the opportunity to present their views on national security along the way, but also that many policy debates are resolved at a lower level, and only really important issues go to the higher level, arguably contributing to increased efficiency in the decision-making process.
This is also the case in the US, where a multitude of actors are involved in national security-related committees and working-groups, but the number of individuals is continually reduced as issues approach the level of the President. The different levels of committees that are managed in part by the NSC ensure that national security issues have been thoroughly prepared before being introduced at a higher level.

In general, centralising national security decision-making can contribute to more effective response to threats. However, this centralising process can be undermined by a lack of trust in the central structures established for this purpose. This is particularly apparent in developing countries, and is linked to the issues of building public confidence, trust and accountability in authority structures.

**The Role of Individual Actors**

In most countries, it is the head of government whose decision on national security issues is final. However, the importance of having a full-time advisor on national security issues seems to have been recognised by most governments. The role of the national security advisor is a critical element of the decision-making system of many Western and, increasingly, developing countries like India.

The role that national security advisors play, and the level of their involvement in bodies such as NSCs, can have a vital impact on co-ordination and effectiveness within the security structure as a whole. Depending on the context and country, they may play a key role in centralising decision-making, the development of threat assessments, giving advice on national security issues, implementation of policy decisions and oversight.

In the US, the National Security Advisor acts as a policy co-ordinator and not (in theory, at least) as a policy advocate. As a formal member of the NSC, supported by the NSC staff, he plays two roles: as both the President’s advisor on national security matters and as a mediator of discussions relating to national security. Ultimately, he plays a critical role co-ordinating the results of the work of the NSC staff, and ensuring that this gets to the President and other relevant bodies in a timely and effective manner.
In Canada, the National Security Advisor also plays a pivotal role, coordinating the main bodies responsible for national security and supporting the development of integrated threat assessments. Positioned between the political leadership and the country’s security architecture, he briefs the PM on national security from a government-wide perspective, centralising advice that had previously been distributed across different departments. Despite the centrality of his role, he remains without actual decision-making or implementation authority.

It should be noted that structures where the national security advisor plays a critical role have the potential to invest significant power in that office. This highlights the need for effective oversight and transparency over national security structures, as well as the importance of ensuring that the national security advisor has access to as wide and varied a set of sources of information and analysis as possible. The national security advisor needs to have a comprehensive perspective of critical human security threats.

Need to have a Civil-Military Balance

The balance between military and civilian elements in national decision-making structures is critical, particularly for developing countries like India that are in the process of rebuilding their security sector. Striking this balance is crucial, since history shows that a predominantly-internal security role – often involving repression or countering popular dissent against the political leadership of the day – for the military apparatus can increase the danger of military intervention in domestic affairs.

Effective civilian control over security forces and structures is one critical component. Civilian control not only helps ensure transparency and policy oversight, it can help restore the legitimacy of security institutions among the public. However, it is also important that military viewpoints be effectively represented in decision-making structures. The mechanisms by which the US NSC incorporates senior military (and intelligence) advisors is one model for how this can be carried out while maintaining effective civilian control.
Intelligence Services

Effective integration of information-sharing and intelligence is critical to supporting national security tasks. So are measures to develop fora in which to bring together all threat-related information from different departments and agencies, so that it can be jointly assessed and effectively distributed. In developing countries, there has been increasing emphasis placed on the co-ordination of the intelligence function. Ultimately, the challenge of providing mechanisms appropriate to support information-sharing amongst secretive agencies and structures, while ensuring the centrality and co-ordination of assessments across government, must be met in all countries in order to support the provision of effective intelligence to the government, crucial to the security of every state\textsuperscript{16}.

India’s Approach to National Security Structures

National Security Council of India

The National Security Council (NSC) of India is a three-tiered organization that oversees political, economic, energy and security issues of strategic concern. It operates within the executive office of the prime minister of India, liaising between the government’s executive branch and the intelligence services, advising leadership on intelligence and security issues.

The National Security Council comprises the Strategic Policy Group, the National Security Advisory Board and a Secretariat from the Joint Intelligence Committee. The National Security Advisor presides over the NSC, and is also the primary advisor to the Prime Minister. Unlike its American counterpart, the National Security Council of India’s details remain opaque to the public. This has been the case since its formation in 1998, when a broad outline of the structure was provided.

Historical Evolution

Discussions about developing a National Security Council began in earnest in 1988, in line with the development of India’s nuclear and missile programs. The armed forces did not plan any long-term budgets back then, thus discarding their
structures for the defense budget. Military officers and the Minister for Defense, K.C Pant, recognized the need for a national security planning institution. A proposal was drafted outlining the architecture of such a council. This was strongly resisted and contested by the army chief of staff, V.N. Sharma.

In 1990, another proposal for a national security council came forth amidst nuclear discussions with Pakistan. This was a bid to strengthen policymaking between the two countries. A body was formed with additions to an existing Cabinet Committee of Political Affairs. Once again, this was dropped due to the ministers and ministries’ apparent reluctance to cede authority and power. A decade-long power struggle between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Indian National Congress, international concerns over India’s nuclear development programs, and an apparent bureaucratic ego-clash caused further delay in setting up the National Security Council.

India’s nuclear policy has always been a source of friction between India’s political and military leaders. Military leaders were long excluded from making nuclear policy due to many bureaucrats fear of shifting too much power to the military. The Vajpayee administration (BJP) in 1998 finally created the NSC. Since then, however, the prime minister has retained final authority over nuclear policy. Two years after the NSC’s establishment, military interests were integrated with political and scientific interests.

The historic Lahore Summit of 1999 was held in response to nuclear tests conducted by both India and Pakistan, which raised international concerns about the possibility of a nuclear crisis on the subcontinent. During this summit, power remained with then Indian PM A.B.Vajpayee and the National Security Council were sidelined, affirming that India’s nuclear policy was still controlled by its prime minister. The formation of the council was initially disputed when proposed in 1995. NSC and the National Security Advisor position, which was first filled by Brijesh Mishra, were created in tandem.

National Security Council was established to constantly analyze military, political social and economic threats and render continuous advice to the Government. This
council undertook India’s first-ever Strategic Defence Review to study and analyze the security environment and make appropriate recommendations to cover all aspects of defense requirements and organization.”

At the apex of the National Security Council sit six decision-making members, the Prime Minister, a Strategic Policy Group, a National Advisory Board, and a Secretariat representing the Joint Intelligence Committee, and the National Security Advisor. The NSC’s agenda includes issues of external and internal security, military affairs, conventional and nonconventional defense, space and high technology, counter insurgency, counter terrorism, economy and environment. The military has no representation in this tier.

The Strategic Policy Group is the first level of the NSC structure. It is headed by the Cabinet Secretary and includes the chiefs of staff from the Army, Navy and Air Force, the governor of Reserve Bank of India, Secretaries of the ministries of Home, Defense, External Affairs, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Revenue, Research and Analysis Wing of Cabinet Secretariat, Dept. of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Department of Defense Production and Supplies, Scientific Advisor to the Defense Minister, and several other secretaries of union ministries and the Director of the Intelligence Bureau. Other invitees can be added as required. The SPG publishes the Strategic Defense Review – a draft of short term and long term security threats and defense matters for the consideration of the apex body.

At the second level of the NSC structure, lies the National Security Advisory Board (NSAB). The constituting members are “persons of eminence” outside the Government with expertise in external security, strategic analysis, foreign affairs, defense, the armed forces, internal security, science and technology and economics. The NSAB is the council’s think-tank. It holds monthly meetings to recommend solutions and policy issues to the policy makers upon referral from the NSC.

The third level is the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC). Modelled on its British counterpart, the JIC is responsible for directing the national intelligence organizations and analyzing intelligence data. The JIC operates with its own Secretariat that works under the Cabinet Secretariat.
Suggested Reforms

More Transparency and Oversight

The National Security Council is seen as necessary for a nuclear-enabled country and it was initially established to oversee nuclear policies. The composition of the NSC, though, has long been an ideological power struggle between politicians and high-ranking military officials. The result has been an organizational structure that exposes the country’s many shortcomings. This, along with structural faults and promoting ‘integrated thinking,’ in national security affairs suggest the ineffectiveness of the body. Yet the presence of an ineffective NSC is apparently better than an “independent and overarching body” that may demonstrate too much power over other institutions concerned with national security.

The NSC, as it is today, was born through an executive order. However, its existence and continuity needs to be sanctioned by an Act of Parliament, as in the United States. The structure of the NSC is borrowed from counterpart organizations from democracies like the United States of America, the United Kingdom and France. But in the case of India, the centralization of all national security decision-making seems to hinder the process.

Perhaps the biggest problem facing the body to is the complete dearth of detailed information available about discussions in the NSC today. More transparency would enable more effective oversight. The NSC is often believed to be an inscrutable body that needs to operate more efficiently. A widely suggested reform is that the NSC and its different levels must modify its management system in a coordinated manner and work toward a more action-oriented analysis and follow-up action plans rather than concealed discussions. The Joint Intelligence Council frequently morphing structure is often cited as an example of this dysfunction. It has been bifurcated, merged, renamed, restored, and subordinated since its inception17.

India’s National Security Decision-Making Process

India’s national security decision-making processes have stood neglected for the last 65 years or so. No effective and institutionalised structures or mechanisms
catering to India’s unique security needs were designed despite India having been subjected to four aggressive wars by China and Pakistan besides a host of insurgencies and proxy wars sponsored by them. The reasons for this strange neglect in the vital area of national security were mainly political and bureaucratic.

The evolution of an Indian National Security Council (NSC) should have been a natural corollary, which should have been nurtured by India’s political leadership in the first few years of Independence, as military conflict and civil strife emerged simultaneously with the partition of India into two separate nations. Politically India’s first Prime Minister deliberately prevented this evolution. Nehru had a misperceived distrust of the Indian Armed Forces arising from the then contemporary developments where military dictatorships emerged in countries, which had recently won freedom from colonial rule. Nehru completely sidelined the Indian Armed Forces from any effective participation in national security decision making. Here the civil bureaucracy, too, had a convergence of interest with the political leadership, in that they did not want the emergence of rival elite with direct access to the political leadership.

Subsequent political leaderships for similar reasons continued this policy. Even the 1962 debacle, which brought into focus, India’s lack of effective national security decision making, could not prompt the Government to evolve a National Security Council, while many changes were made in the structure of the Armed Forces. If India achieved some measure of success in the 1965 and 1971 wars it was despite the absence of an institutionalised national security decision making.

Later on, attempts by the V. P. Singh, Narasimha Rao governments to bring into existence a National Security Council, (which all advanced democratic countries have in their systems), were effectively scuttled by opposition from the civil bureaucracy. When the BJP Government announced on 19 November, 1998 the creation of India’s first structured National Security Council in fulfillment of its electoral manifesto National Agenda, the decision was mercifully welcomed and it also raised high expectations. However, a year and a half of its setting up, expectations stand belied and it seems that the creation of the NSC has been an exercise in futility.
Nuclear weaponization of South Asia, the proxy war in J & K, the turbulent regional security environment and the rising internal security threats dictate India’s NSC to be an effective instrument of national security decision making. The issues and problems attendant therefore, need to be reviewed once again in their entirety.

India’s National Security Decision making – Existent Shortcomings

The most glaring shortcoming in this field is the lack of strategic culture in India’s polity and civil bureaucracy. This has run through right from 1947 to 1999 i.e. the Kargil War. The lack of strategic culture in India stands commented upon by independent observers from abroad, namely the more commonly read views of George Tanham in the RAND study for the US Department of Defence. Further to borrow Henry Kissinger’s views in another context, it can be said that neither education nor exposure nor incentives existed for the Indian political leadership and civil bureaucracies to think in strategic terms or appreciate matters military or non-military.

The correction could have been applied at the formative stage of independent India, but it was not. India’s national security decision-making processes so far have been archaic and anarchic. The military high command stands divorced from national security decision making and the structure of the newly created NSC reflects this deficiency. The defenders of the existing system would quote existence of various Cabinet and MOD Committees to support that effective mechanisms exist, but the lessons learnt from the 1965, 1971 and Kargil wars expose their limitations.

In all advanced democracies like USA and Britain the appointment of Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff and Chief of Defence Staff exists at the apex of the military hierarchy. He provides an institutionalised link between the political leadership and the Armed Forces in terms of higher direction of war and also as an agency for institutionalised contingency planning on behalf of the nation. Successive Governments in India have refused to consider this imperative due to opposition from the civil bureaucracy, who fear that this would marginalise their roles.
India has no strategic think tanks worth the name and independence of thought to make effective contribution to the NSC process. India’s strategic community comprises arm-chair strategists from the academic and media who attempt to apply borrowed strategic concepts templates on India’s peculiar strategic requirements and a sprinkling of retired diplomats and generals, who during their service never contributed to original thinking on national security matters. So creation of independent think tanks would require independent funding from sources other than the Government.

A Review of India’s National Security Council Structure

The Government announcing the formation of the NSC on 19 November 1998 did not release full details other than giving a broad outline of the structure. Besides the apex six member NSC headed by the Prime Minister, the NSC comprises of a Strategic Policy Group (SPG), a National Security Advisory Board (NSAB) and a Secretariat whose nucleus would be provided by the existing Joint Intelligence Committee. In addition there would be the National Security Advisor (NSA).

The SPG stated to be responsible for inter-ministerial coordination is a bureaucratic body comprising the Cabinet Secretary, three Service Chiefs and secretaries of core ministries like foreign affairs, defence, interior, finance, atomic energy and space beside the heads of the Intelligence agencies and the Governor of Reserve Bank. The NSAB announced comprises basically of retired officials – four foreign secretaries, three Service Chiefs, one retired major general, former heads of Atomic and space agency, besides three heads of central police organisations connected with internal security. Four strategic analysts and two economic analysts also find place in the 32 members NSAB. The NSA would be the present Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister.

A review of this structure would indicate the following shortcomings;

1. The Armed Forces have no direct access to the political leadership at the apex level and continue to be deprived of participation in the decision making process of NSC.
2. The NSC should have had a separate secretariat and the JIC retained as a separate intelligence component. Mixing the two functions was not advisable.

3. The NSA should have been an independent appointment with no doubling up of functions, as national security requires single-minded focus and attention. The present NSA does these duties in addition to being PS to PM. Again an ex-bureaucrat occupies this appointment.

4. The NSAB is packed with retired government officials. Out of 32 appointees only six were from outside this orbit. This deprives the NSAB of more independent strategic thinking.

**NSC Functions – High Functional Expectations Justified.**

The country’s high expectations of the NSC are legitimate and justified and the Government should have borne this in mind while structuring and constituting the NSC as the NSC is expected to discharge the following vital functions:

1. NSC is a decision facilitating body to assist and advise the Prime Minister. In a country, which lacks strategic culture the Armed Forces have a more vital role to play as compared to civil bureaucrats.

2. The above proposition gets further reinforced by the absence of a Chief of Defence Staff in India’s NSC structures. The Political leadership should have taken this into account.

3. The NSC has a vital function in the formulation of National Security Strategies, which provide the basis for formulation of National Military Strategies by the military hierarchy. The present NSC is not structured to carry out this function.

4. The NSC has another vital task – to Evaluate, Coordinate and Integrate strategic information, advice, expertise and suggestions from the Armed Forces, Govt. agencies and think tanks/institutions. The existing NSC is inadequate for this task.
The weaknesses that emerged from the conduct of Kargil War in terms of politico-strategic shortcomings and the escalation of proxy war in J & K thereafter indicate that the existing NSC structures and functions need to be reviewed in light of the shortcomings analysed. Further, the pivotal role of NSA needs to be recognised and a fresh appointee required. There is also a requirement to inherit experiences of other nations to evolve India’s NSC into a more effective instrument of national security decision making.

**Pivotal Role of National Security Advisor (NSA)**

The NSA has a pivotal role to play in the effectiveness of the NSC. He should be an eminent individual enjoying the full TRUST and CONFIDENCE of the PM. The PM should be statutory free to select the NSA of his choice from any field – political, bureaucracy, armed forces or strategic think tanks.

Besides the conventional tasks of the NSA, some salient ones that need to be emphasised in the Indian context are:

- Bring in new advisers to argue for unpopular decisions.
- Setting up new channels of information so that PM is not dependent on a single channel for strategic decision making.
- Arranging for independent evaluation of decisional premises and options where necessary.

**National Security Council and the Need to Inherit Experience of Other Nations**

While no other country can serve as a full model for NSC apparatus, it cannot be denied that putting distinguishing characteristics aside, all western democracies (whether Presidential or Parliamentary) share some common features like public debates, some dominant national values, free press and the need for a wide consensus on national security. National security decisions can therefore be said to be made against a common background in democracies and India can therefore in the future evolution of its NSC inherit experience of other nations in this respect.
After a comparative study of national security decision making processes of countries like USA, UK, France, Germany and Israel, what strikes one is that keeping in mind our own requirements and experience, India needs to inherit experiences from USA and France. The United States has the most highly developed, formal NSC system and also one on which extensive and well-researched material is available. In particular what India needs to note is the imperative to bring about a legislated existence of NSC, NSA. Legislation should like USA, stipulate that the NSC is a statutory body. Our past experiences indicate the personalised conduct of foreign policy and national security planning. India like Israel could also learn extensively from USA about the "Crisis Management" structures and functioning of the NSC.

France has two or three unique mechanisms not found in any other country and which we need to consider like the Estate-Major particular (EMP) and the Institute des Hautes Etudes de Defense National (IHEDN). The former is an elite group of high-ranking military officers located in the President’s office to advise him. The latter is a prestigious think tank whose findings are not publicised but available to the French NSC equivalent.

**Legislative Safeguards required to institutionalise the NSC**

The NSC has presently come into existence by an executive order. Its existence and continuity needs to be sanctioned by an Act of Parliament like USA. Some of the legislative safeguards that must be incorporated in light of our past sorry experiences of national security decision making are – (1) PM is bound to consult and be advised by the NSC (2) Preparation of NSC Directives be mandatory once PM has made final decisions (3) NSC Directives be personally signed by the PMs so that they are held responsible and accountable for national security decisions – to prevent a repeat of 1962.

India’s NSC needs to be constituted and structured in a manner which facilitates serious deliberation of strategic threats and problems (both military and non-military) in an independent and objective manner on a whole time basis. Civil bureaucrats doubling up in NSC without strategic culture, exposure or thought
cannot provide the sinews of the NSC. This shouldn’t be left to the military hierarchy alone since threats to security are multidimensional. And therefore the composition of NSC should comprise of experts from all sectors of security who are part of the core strategic think tanks. Hence NSC Secretariat should be composed of professionals, whole time strategic and intelligence analysts.

Lastly, the historical background of our national security processes in the last 65 years mandate that NSC should be legislatively institutionalised as a constitutional body so that there is a continuum in national security decisions. National Security Directives should bear the signature of the incumbent Prime Minister so that accountability is assured.

**Strengthening India's National Security Architecture**

Despite past efforts at reform, India’s national security structure continues to be plagued by absence of coordination, turf battles and paucity of human resources. Many of these problems are symptomatic of systemic ills which therefore require a holistic relook. In order for India to achieve its national interests it should be able to work in a coordinated fashion. This necessitates a holistic revamping of the existing national security apparatus and its workings.

Putting in place a mechanism that develops long-term strategies and coordinates their execution is imperative as is and strengthening the National Security Advisor’s (NSA’s) support structure. In addition, such a revamp should also include reforms to the existing higher defence organisation and intelligence setup. The important area which is in need for urgent attention from Narendra Modi government is India’s National Security Structure. There are some key issues the present government needs to focus on in order to strengthen India’s National Security architecture.

**Strengthen the NSA’s Support Structure**

The National Security Advisor (NSA) is the fulcrum around which the NSC system operates. The NSA’s role in the national security setup has expanded over time. The NSA's role in the national security setup has expanded over time.
Currently, the NSA wears several important hats. Apart from being the PM's Advisor on important security and diplomatic issues, he has also become an important coordinator of intelligence. The latter role has emerged out of the fact that he is the bridge between the intelligence chiefs and the Prime Minster.

In addition, he heads the National Intelligence Board (NIB), the Technical Coordination Group (TCG) and the Intelligence Coordination Group (ICG). Furthermore, the NSA is also the Special Representative on Border Talks with China and the Chairman of the Executive Council of the Nuclear Command Authority (NCA). Each of these positions are important responsibilities in their own right. There is definitely a degree of overlap between the various avatars of the NSA. However, some thought has to be given as to how to ensure that each of these responsibilities receive in-depth attention while ensuring that any division of these responsibilities does not lead to an absence of a coordinated, integrated strategy at the apex of the national security system.

One way to ensure this could be by expanding the NSA’s core support structure. Also, in order to ensure that the NSA and NSC system is able to function most effectively, it must be able to draw upon knowledge from multiple sources. Thus, one of the major challenges of the NSA would be to be able to cogently assimilate knowledge. An expanded and well coordinated team would help in gathering these disparate pieces of information to formulate a cogent national strategy.

The Indian national security architecture needs urgent overhaul if the government seeks to tackle the myriad security challenges faced by the country. It is imperative that national strategies on internal security, economic and foreign policy, defence modernisation and resource planning be drawn up based on national capabilities, needs and the challenges faced. Many of India’s problems emanate from poor implementation of policies in a coordinated fashion rather than lack of financial, technological or human resources. A national think-tank and coordinating mechanism at the apex of the decision-making structure could go a long way in overcoming this drawback. Turf battles and lack of coordination are widespread among intelligence agencies and in the Services. All this has resulted in the government responding to crises rather than seizing the initiative.
In the past, there have been piecemeal attempts at ridding the ills plaguing the national security structure including the higher defence organisation. However, the problems are symptomatic of systemic ills which therefore require a holistic revamp rather than piecemeal reforms. A beginning could be made from taking cognisance of the 2001 GoM report that called for a comprehensive review of India’s national security mechanisms every five years.\textsuperscript{21} Given the mandate enjoyed by the Narendra Modi government, it finds itself in an outstanding position to breathe new life into India’s national security structure. The time for action is now, not later.

**India and a National Security Doctrine**

When we speak of a national security doctrine for India, we do mean a set of basic principles, based on the core interests of the State that will shape the way in which different elements of national power will protect and further the interests of the Indian Republic. In particular, there is need to focus on the elements of a strategic doctrine which will identify the general missions and basic principles through which our armed forces, diplomatic and intelligence communities will seek to attain the national goals. Ideally, they ought to be publicly articulated so as to reassure the citizens and warn adversaries, actual and potential. In more practical terms, in the famously diverse country like India, a doctrine can provide clarity within the vast and disparate political, societal and governmental structure where, more often than not, people work at cross-purposes, often not intentionally but because they lack a clear understanding of policy and its imperatives. In the process, doctrine can help weld them together towards achieving a common purpose.

**The Need for a Formal Doctrine**

We need a clearer picture as to what our goals are as a nation State and what our core interests are; these goals and interests need to be understood not only by the armed forces and our adversaries, but also by the people of the country. This is all the more imperative because India is a poor country that cannot afford to waste vast sums on acquiring military capability without thinking through its needs and priorities. Scholars have attributed this lack of direction to a variety of causes. A doctrine helps to evolve patterns of thinking and structures to adjudicate competing claims for resources.
A doctrine enables the vast government system which, in India, still functions in silos to be on the same page in relation to a national security issue. In other words, all parts of the government, state and central will have a clear idea as to what the country's response must be to a particular national security problem.

Sources of a Doctrine

A doctrine cannot emerge out of a vacuum. It is vitally rooted to the history, geography and culture of a nation. In the case of India that can be extremely complicated as its civilisational history goes back thousands of years, but the history of its nationhood is just a little over 68 years old. That brief time, however, encapsulates enormous changes in which the country's geography was first truncated but its population has burgeoned. Within the compact of its foundational document, its Constitution, the nation has encouraged diversity, enabled previously marginalised sections of its population to emerge in their own right. At the same time, there are times when this very diversity has acted as a hindrance and occasionally, a factor in distorting national policy. Then, there is the political and governmental history of the young nation which has seen great achievements as well as persistent failures.

The country's political development and governmental achievements and non-achievements are elements that will have to be factored into any doctrine. The doctrine must give us clarity about the things we should fight for, the resources we should employ and the degree of force we need to use or abjure. A doctrine requires us to have faith in the victory of ourselves and our goals since a society which is convinced of its future has a better chance against one that is status quoist. Any doctrine must be clear about the nature of our strategic interests.

The most fundamental of core interests of the country is the protection of the country's sovereignty and the concepts of justice and rights that it enshrines. The essence of the 1950 Constitution that welded together a bunch of disparate states with different languages and cultures into a nation is that it is a “sovereign, secular, democratic republic”. 

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While it was argued that the creation of a complex interdisciplinary National Security Strategy, and a comprehensive National Security Doctrine that flows from and provides directions to the State's security apparatus was an imperative for academic interest, this view was not shared. But more importantly, it also lays down a long-term arc under which medium-and short-term policy can be welded.

There was an argument that for a variety of reasons significant structural, institutional, operational and intellectual changes were required before India was ready to formulate, create, absorb and implement a national security strategy and a doctrine. Till such changes were made, the formulation of a National Security Strategy and Doctrine would remain an exercise on paper. Good policy therefore is fundamentally dependant on the understanding of and working with structural limitations.

Leaving aside these structural and operational issues, however, some points of agreement emerged. First, there was agreement that the National Security Strategy would be the broad interdisciplinary macro strategy for the purposes of the higher leadership of the country, while the actual National Security Doctrine, while still strategic, should provide specific guidance to the security apparatus of the state. This took off from an understanding of what a doctrine should be. The British believe that it is a set of beliefs and customs and traditions and concepts, whereas the American understanding of doctrine is that it includes some ingredients of strategy, ways and means.

Second, there was consensus that while the economic development of India was paramount, it was necessary to see security at a critical component of economics because of its industrial function, because of its knowledge function and, most importantly, because of its function of protecting economic gains. It was emphasised that this could not be made a bread or guns issue, rather it had to be emphasised that guns and bread are interlinked and one cannot exist without the other.

For example, energy, food and water security were clearly identified as important priorities in any national security strategy. However, what if tomorrow the Chinese pursuing their water, food and energy strategy were to start diverting the
Brahmaputra? This has a clear impact not just on India’s non-traditional security but an immediate and catastrophic spill over into traditional security. To put all these together, you would need strategies in each one of these separate fields with clearly defined objectives for each of these separate fields. It becomes a complex issue when it comes to integrating these separate strategies into a macro whole.

This requires compromises and bridge building, which becomes a problem for a pluralistic country like India. Consequently finding a consensus definition of National Security becomes problematic. The first strategic defence review that NSAB came up with, in fact, went into all these issues and clearly categorised them and prioritised them. The problem therefore is not one of a lack of thinking or feedback on the subject, but rather one of absorbing, disseminating and operationalizing a doctrine.22

National Security Decision-Making in India

National security decision-making process in India is a complex phenomenon, which over the years has become even more complex, both by the wide scale transformations in systemic and domestic conditions and the addition of new actors into the apparatus. The busy and competing turf that the apparatus now resembles is ill prepared to synthesise and harmonise the interests of the multiplicity of actors. In the absence of a national doctrine of national security and supporting structures to assimilate contending views, national security decisions have been mostly reactive and ad hoc. This has led to the evolution of a curious scenario which strengthens personalities and benefits particular actors when decisions produce success, but weakens the decision-making apparatus when they fail. The argument is that since little attempt has been made to address the flaws, the future will provide no respite to the already hackneyed decision-making apparatus, with serious ramifications for India’s national security.23

The Policy Community’s Use of the Concept

India needs to invest considerable resources to use human security as a framework for analysis. Human security needs to be incorporated and adapted to
policy, in both a coherent and an inclusive manner, touching a range of areas. These include:

- the establishment of desk officers responsible for promoting and advocating human security initiatives;
- the creation of a human security programme with a mandate for advancing and funding programmes both inside and outside government for the exploration and promotion of the ideal;

Human security provides an effective framework that tells policymakers both where to look (at people inside of the state) to understand sources of conflict and what to look for in broad terms (things that threaten, risk or impoverish people). What the policymakers in turn take from this is that these things – previously seen as more general ‘development’ or ‘quality of life’ issues – are matters of security.

The national security decision-making process can be examined in two parts: (a) how does it work? (b) Do we get the quality of decisions? If not, why not? This process can also be placed into two distinct situations: peace-time, and in time of war or war-like situations. At the outset, however, it must be emphasised that the process is heavily impacted by inter-personal relations and rapport amongst civilian and military executives and the political leadership.

This institution needed to be restructured to discharge its responsibilities efficiently, including the facilitation of ‘jointness’ and synergy. Some of the observations made in this connection were:

- It suffered from lack of a holistic approach.
- There was no synergy between academic research and the government’s security policy requirements. Both functioned without any linkages.

**Managing National Security**

There are many needs to be done to improve the management of national security in India. The first and foremost requirement is for the government to formulate a comprehensive National Security Strategy (NSS), including 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 and not be conducted behind closed doors. Like in most other democracies, the NSS should be signed by Prime Minister, who is the head of government, and must be placed on the table of 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.

There is an urgent need to revamp India’s national security structure. In the past, there have been piecemeal attempts at ridding the ills plaguing the national security structure including the higher defence organisation. Given the ‘systemic’ nature of the problems, a holistic revamp is in order as opposed to piecemeal reforms.

**Need for a National Strategy:** A national strategy is important for planning India’s economic trajectory, shaping the country’s foreign relations, planning its defence modernisation, improving its science and technology capabilities, resource planning, internal security and other such critical areas. Such a strategy would chalk out Indian priorities as a function of India’s aspirations, security challenges and available resources.

**Strategic Think-Tank and Coordinating Mechanism:** The National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) could be tasked with drawing up holistic medium to long-term strategies in various areas. The NSCS could also act as a coordinating mechanism which implements these strategies by bringing together various departments and ministries of the government.

**Strengthen the NSA’s Support Structure:** The National Security Advisor (NSA) is the fulcrum around which the NSC system operates. The NSA’s role has expanded over time.

Thus it is important to expand the NSA’s core support structure. Also, for the NSA and the NSC system to be able to function effectively it must be able to draw upon and assimilate knowledge from multiple sources into a cogent national strategy.
Reforming the Higher Defence Organisation: A decision on the position of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) is long overdue. The Chief of Defence Staff – regardless of what we choose to call the office – will foster inter-Service coordination in planning, execution of operations and in the force planning process. The system will ensure faster decision making during crises and provide a platform for inter-Service dispute resolution. Implementation of the system must address the drawbacks of the current system and evolve a purely ‘Indian’ solution keeping in mind the Indian situation and requirements.

Where to Begin? The 2001 GoM Report on “Reforming the National Security System in pursuance of Kargil Review Committee Report” had recommended a comprehensive review of India’s national security mechanisms every five years. The exercise of revamping the existing National Security structure could be initiated with such a review.

Need for a National Security Strategy Document for India

The Indian National Security Council (NSC) has been in existence since 1999. Yet, the government has not put out an official document outlining a National Security Strategy for India. This is despite the fact that India faces numerous formidable challenges to its national security. The earlier attempts to set up the NSC, notably in 1990, proved short-lived. Why it is that India could not set up a NSC earlier and why is it that India does not have a well articulated National Security Strategy document? There is after all an active debate on national security issues in the media, think-tanks and numerous fora. The leaders make statements on national security inside and outside the Parliament quite regularly, but the government hesitates from spelling out a national security strategy.

First, there is no political consensus in the country on national security issues. Secondly, the government has not been able to address the crucial issue of coordination required to formulate and address the issues of national security—whether it be military or non-military. The NSC has been a useful invention but it is anaemic in terms of resources. More important, it lacks powers to enforce anything. The departmental interests are very strong and it becomes difficult to synchronise them. There is no common understanding among various segments of the government of what national security constitutes.
Yet, India needs a National Security Strategy urgently. The world is changing very fast. New security challenges have arisen. In the absence of a coherent strategy, the government’s responses will remain ad hoc and partial. This may prove costly. There is urgent need to build a broad political consensus on national security issues. An official National Security Strategy document, for the next 10 years, is urgently needed. This will help clarify confusion over national security matters and consolidate government’s responses. More important, it will generate informed debate which may help build consensus.

**Suggested outline of a National Security Strategy document**

A National Security Strategy document should have, at the minimum, the following elements:

- A working definition of national security, human security and national security objectives;
- An appreciation of the emerging security environment taking into account the geopolitical changes in the world;
- An assessment of the national strengths and weaknesses of the country in dealing with the challenges;
- Identification of the military, economic, diplomatic resources needed to meet the challenges.
- Analysis, Mapping and planning for critical human security threats.

The National Security Strategy should also pay serious attention to coordination among different segments of the government from a human security perspective. Such a strategy should clearly define national security, human security and political security objectives. The document must define national security in broad terms including military as well as non-military dimensions of security. It must clearly **state the objectives** of National Security Strategy. These might be: protecting and defending the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the country; protecting the core values of the nation as enshrined in the Indian Constitution; ensuring socio-economic development of the country must also be an objective of National Security Strategy because human security is an important
component of comprehensive national security. India’s goal should be to play a positive and effective role in global and regional affairs. In order to achieve political security objectives the resources and capabilities of a country needs to be strengthened.

**Resources and Capabilities**

Making India secure will require building **diverse capabilities** – economic, diplomatic, military, human resources, governance reforms - and creating synergy between them. A **strong economy** and **inclusive growth** should form the basis of the National Security Strategy, maintaining strong economic growth will give India huge strategic advantage as it will strengthen its hard and soft power and increase governments’ policy options. Without sustained and sustainable economic growth, Indian National Security Strategy will come to a naught. And therefore, our diplomatic resources need to be expanded and strengthened.

The county should create high quality **analytical skills** for understanding and interpreting the ongoing changes and their implications for India. Universities and think tanks should be strengthened. Historical research and methodologies to build scenarios for the future should be encouraged. For an effective implementation of National Security Strategy, a wide range of **governance reforms** will be needed. And those reforms could be chosen from a wide range of national security decision-making models available.

Developing and developed countries face some similar, some dissimilar challenges – but in every individual state, national security decision-making systems are established to correspond to that specific country’s threat perception and domestic governance arrangements. Most countries have, to varying degrees, implemented centralised decision-making in this area, supported by systems that have input at various levels from different areas of expertise.

National security decision-making process in India is a complex phenomenon, which over the years has become even more complex, both by the wide scale transformations in systemic and domestic conditions and the addition of new actors into the apparatus. The busy and competing turf that the apparatus now resembles is ill prepared to synthesise and harmonise the interests of the multiplicity
of actors. In the absence of a national doctrine of national security and supporting structures to assimilate contending views, national security decisions have been mostly reactive and ad hoc. This has led to the evolution of a curious scenario which strengthens personalities and benefits particular actors when decisions produce success, but weakens the decision-making apparatus when they fail. The argument is that since little attempt has been made to address the flaws, the future will provide no respite to the already hackneyed decision-making apparatus, with serious ramifications for India’s national security.

There is a marked emphasis on integrating the bodies and processes involved in national security decision-making. In some countries, this level of integration is apparent at the highest level, in fora such as an NSC; in others, the process of integration is less advanced, leading to disarray and confusion. This is more likely in developing countries, where governments are focusing heavily on rebuilding confidence in, transparency of and accountability for decision-making. Whether this is a necessary first step before integration can be undertaken effectively, or whether this is an inefficiency that could be ameliorated with better integration, is a subject for further discussion (and may, indeed, vary from country to country).

One crucial area of integration, however, is intelligence co-ordination. Almost invariably, both in the case-studies examined here and in other countries around the world, tremendous efforts have been undertaken to create or reinforce agencies responsible for preparing intelligence assessments to address threats to national security, and for bringing together the intelligence efforts of various branches and structures of government to do so.

Thus National Security structure outlines the roles a NSC body may play in these processes of integration, co-ordination and responding to national security threats in specific contexts. Predictably, there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach. However, there are generic aspects of the different models that may provide useful examples or lessons for other countries in the process of developing or reforming an NSC-type system.
Conclusion

No concept of security can be as broad and as inclusive as human security. Human security is required as a comprehensive approach that utilizes the wide range of new opportunities to tackle such threats in an integrated manner. Human security threats cannot be tackled through conventional mechanisms alone. Instead, they require a new consensus that acknowledges the linkages and the interdependencies between development, human rights and national security.

The number of items on the human security agenda seems a little too large at times though wholesome. Human security can provide the much needed direction to the country that is currently in short supply. It can address the woes of governance in a far-reaching manner. Human security will not only fix the fundamentals of governance but will also set national goals and priorities that focus on the well-being of the common people.

Human security is about recognizing the importance of the people’s security needs side by side with those of States, minimizing risks, adopting preventive measures to reduce human vulnerabilities and taking remedial action when preventive measures fail. This chapter aims at building up a case for adoption and diligent implementation of human security concept in India.

End Notes

4 Ibid
6 For an excellent analysis of poverty as capability deprivation, see Ibid, chapter 4, pp.87-110
7 Ibid, p. 36
8 Ibid, p.38
9 Ibid, p.40
10 India Development Report, 2004-05, Oxford University Press, p.43
11 Mallika Joseph November 2011. Human Security Challenges in India, the national bureau of asian research nbr special report #34,
13 For the purposes of this report, we shall use the generic term National Security Council (NSC) as a short-hand to refer to national security decision-making structures. This does not imply any preference for the NSC structure over other forms of national security decision-making body.


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