
Enunciating a Grand Strategy for India: The Emerging Global Power

Rakesh Sharma

*When Einstein was asked why he was interested in the future, he answered,
“I intend to spend the rest of my life there.”*

For India, to crystal gaze into the prospective environment and strategise is an imperative. “By 2050, China’s economy will be larger than America’s – perhaps three times larger, according to some projections – and the world could be unipolar one – with China as the global leader. Other scenarios project China and the United States as dual superpowers, and still others predict a tripolar world of China, India and the United States.”¹ Indeed, there is inevitability in the rise of China as a superpower, and also of India as a leading power on the global stage by the mid-21st century – something that cannot be wished away. The greatest challenge of our times is to be able to make correct and timely assessments of the changes taking place and the nature and extent of challenges and opportunities they present.² India, hence, has to prepare itself to be the cynosure of the world and accept the challenges and the opportunities that will emerge.

Lieutenant General **Rakesh Sharma** (Retd) is former Adjutant General of the Indian Army. This paper is the first part of a two-part series articulating a grand strategy for India.

The enunciation of India's short and long-term security strategies will be based on the appraisal of the prevailing, and the perspective geostrategic environment.

The study of the future by itself is problematic, though the strategies and creation of capabilities are based on current assessments. Invariably, a large number of predictions and assessments fail at the altar of history. It may be argued that in addition to domestic politics, bureaucratic politics, an organisational inertia, group-think, psychological barriers and learning the wrong lessons from history, the failure of the security strategies is also due to an inappropriate assessment of the environment.³ As strategic decision-making is influenced by a huge variety of factors – cultural, technological, ethical, etc. – successful statecraft requires that military, economic, diplomatic and other forms of power be used to attain national goals and create international conditions in which the polity can survive over the long term⁴. A state's security does depend on other states, is international, and to shape a better environment, besides its own interest, a state has to take other states' interests into account, and to do otherwise is a bad strategy.⁵ Therefore, in order to formulate a long-term national security strategy, it is imperative to visualise a future global geostrategic environment and correlate it with the apparent implications for India.

The central theme of this paper is that India will be a leading global power in 25 years or so, and will accordingly have a myriad threats and challenges. In the oncoming era of uncertainty, and the increased relevance of the globally intertwined geostrategic environment and the challenges in the Indo-Pacific and South Asian region, India's strategic formulations need to consider the landscape as systemic, and allow the development of national power, capacities and capabilities. It is also imperative that a grand strategy is stated – enunciating a regional and international outreach in the exercise of national power. To undertake this, it is imperative to delve into the methodologies to research the

future, and correlate the importance of geography and strategy to fathom the requirements of national power and comprehensive national security issues.

Researching the Future

Predicting future scenarios is an onerous task. Hans Morgenthau had stated that "...complexities of international affairs make simple solutions and trustworthy prophecies impossible." To consider the futuristic environment on which long-term policy decisions have invariably to be based, a distinct rationality is necessary to systemise the perspective. Indeed, one of the most prevalent methods is scenario-building, with scenarios being a consistent hypothesis of how the future will unfold, a chain of logic that connects 'drivers' to 'outcomes'⁶. Government long-term planning typically focusses on the scenario-building approach, as it provides clear-cut alternatives. This methodology, however, suffers from the weakness of postulating the future on current trends. It is obvious that there are always pockets of the future in the present. A particularly interesting approach is establishing a "baseline" that is referred to as "the basic, long-term multifold trend" or a "standard world", along with a bundle of differences in degree.⁷ Following this course, consideration of a "cluster of events", "surprise-free projections", "canonical variations" and "wild speculations" would be essential.⁸

In recent times, scenario building is being increasingly separated from routine operative strategy and planning activities. This logic legitimises and makes possible an arena for the exchange of ideas and visions that as far as possible is disengaged for the daily political and strategic agenda.⁹ In this methodology, scenario-building supplements forecasts and projections, like the "shaping actors-shaping factors" approach.¹⁰ A clear distinction is sought between active subjects (actors) and framework conditions (factors or structural elements), with actors being more significant being carriers

of present and/or future change. In comparable studies in the US, the methodologies rely on driving forces, which can be likened to the major currents under the sea such as increasing global competition, and current trends. There is no mechanistic way to use these components to assemble scenarios. They are created through a combination of research, analysis, hard thinking and imagination. They involve the skills of the storyteller as well as the strategist. The approach of shaping actors-shaping factors for the future is contemplated in this paper, in a period of volatile uncertainty and to avoid the trap of scenario-building, while looking in the “rear-view mirror”.

Co-relating Geography and Strategy

Geography, in its narrowest sense, is the descriptive science of the earth. The concept of geography is all embracing: physical geography, human geography, economic geography, political geography, cultural geography, military geography, strategic geography, and many more. For analysis, the geographical setting for international political power must embrace all of these. Thus, though geography is conceptually distinct from economics, politics, and strategy, it influences each of these categories, and their relationships with geography can be studied as geoeconomics, geopolitics, and geostrategy. The challenge, therefore, is not to defend geopolitical influence upon international security. The challenge is to identify the forms, structure, and intensity of that influence.¹¹

Geography alone cannot dictate a state’s security environment, as other factors are constantly trying to penetrate the geographical barrier.¹² It is often stated that modern technology has conquered geography to the point where geographical factors can be regarded as mere details. It is true that electronic advances now allow for genuinely global communication in real time, that missiles can reach their targets in minutes and aircraft in hours, and new weapons technologies can offset

distance and terrain. However, the world politics is still based on territorially based and defined states. Geography will define the players (territorial states), frequently define the stakes for which the players contend, and will always define the terms in which they will measure their security relative to others.¹³ India's geographic location in South Asia – a large territorial mass of 3.2 million sq km, borders with China to the north and Pakistan to the

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west, both having territorial and ideological issues with India, and over 7,500 km of coastline in a peninsular nature with the extended seaboard provided by the island groups to the west and east – affects its security concerns. Added to it is the volatility in Pakistan and Afghanistan. India's geography and history of invasions from the west, hence, dictate its strategic thinking.

Strategy broadly implies using national means in ways that achieve desired ends. Therefore, strategy should determine India's long-term objectives, action programmes and resource allocation priorities, and as grand strategy, envisage development and coordination of all national power instruments to achieve national goals in an ever-changing environment. If geopolitics deals with the relationship of international political power within the geographical setting, geostrategy becomes the national (or governmental) strategy formulated on geopolitics. This argument emphasises that not only will the geographical setting of India continue to determine policy and strategy, the implications of the geographical territory will remain constant even as technology evolves. Therefore, for India, the geostrategic question accordingly is acquiring Comprehensive National Power (CNP). Hence, the

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importance of translation of the superiority of our geographical environment to superiority overall – amalgamating all the facets of CNP and creating a concrete strategy to match it. That brings to the fore determinants of national power and the politics and strategies of geographical global players – the great powers – the shaping actors in the global arena.

What Defines National Power?

The debate on what quantifies national power is endless. Historically, what defined national power was a country's ability to exercise its military might, or the ability of a nation to get the outcome it desires. However, the RAND Corporation had included national resources (technology, enterprise, human resources, financial/capital resources, physical resources), national performance (infrastructure capacity) and military capability (strategic resources, conversion capability and combat potential).¹⁴ The Chinese CNP had quantified eight major components: natural resources, domestic economics, foreign economies, science and technology, military affairs, government capability, foreign affairs capability and social development.¹⁵ The “hard power” of CNP mainly consists of economic strength as the precursor.¹⁶ CNP also includes prevalence of national will power and cohesion. The distinguishing feature of this concept is that unlike most Western concepts of political power, Chinese political thinkers believe that CNP can be calculated numerically, combining various quantitative indices to create a single number, to measure the power of a nation-state. These indices take into account both military factors (known as hard power) and economic and cultural factors (known as soft power). Of course, many of these factors are not quantifiable.

“Soft strength” reflects international influence. The Chinese opine that a conclusion can be drawn that such “soft strength” is not soft at all; it is the reflection of “hard strength”, without which there is no such thing as “soft strength” at all. On the contrary, the rise of “soft strength” will promote the development of “hard strength”.¹⁷

Substantive assessments have been made on India’s CNP. According to the Harvard University’s Centre for International Development (CID) growth projections, India will feature on top of the list of the fastest growing economies till 2025, with an average annual growth of 7.7 per cent. “The economic pole of global growth has moved over the past few years from China to neighbouring India, where it is likely to stay over the coming decade,” the CID research reported.¹⁸ A study in 2012 had placed India, eighth in global ranking, as given below¹⁹:

Table 1

Country	Economic Capability	Military Capability	Population	Technology	Energy Security	Foreign affairs	Composite Index
US	1	1	3	1	8	1	1
China	2	3	1	10	14	9	2
Russia	15	2	12	11	4	4	3
France	6	4	7	6	18	2	4
Japan	3	9	4	2	25	6	5
UK	5	5	13	8	16	3	6
Germany	4	8	5	7	21	5	7
India	8	7	2	17	20	11	8

The methodology of creating a matrix has been often critiqued. However, Waltz’s seven matrices—population, territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence – could be a baseline though the importance or weightage that each of these variables is assigned will invariably be a subjective exercise²⁰. Indeed, “...the CNP model can also be used to identify strengths and weaknesses critically in each element of national power by examining sub-components of the same. Such an exercise

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should lead to identifying critical interventions for enhancement of value of each factor to generate a holistic self-enhancement model.”²¹

In the development of CNP, it is emphasised that national commitment is a multiplier for national capabilities. Commitment includes national strategy (the extent to which a state has clear strategic plans for the exercise of power) and national will (the degree of citizens’ resolve that can be mobilised toward foreign and defence policy – influenced by cultural and territorial integration, leadership and relevance of the strategy to the national interest).²² As national security includes the economic and social well-being of the people, the country’s investment in power potential can be an asset. Power is not a natural monopoly, the struggle for mastery is both perennial and universal, and, sooner or later, challengers will emerge.²³ The ultimate aim of all states is, indeed, to gain a position of dominant power over others. Strength ensures safety, and the greatest strength is the greatest insurance of safety.²⁴

It is argued that for a consolidated measure of power, it is imperative to classify a nation as a power. National power is defined as the sum of all resources available to a nation, in the pursuit of national objectives.²⁵ The question herein is not the subjectiveness of the criteria or weightages for making a reliable matrix that provides a current assessment that is relevant to make credible future projections. Invariably, it is a recognised and well appreciated assessment that India is on a serious upward growth path that will ensure that the nation will become a leading power in the comity of nations. Aptly stated, “India’s record in employing or using ‘hard power’

is abysmally low...our leadership seems to think that everything can be achieved by the use of 'soft power' alone. Such thinking is unlikely to achieve national goals or make us a Great Power."²⁶ India needs to examine the shortfalls in established indices of national power, and plan to create them over a period, while simultaneously showing national commitment and will to use national power to pursue national goals and interests.

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Ambit of Comprehensive National Security

There is also the ever-evolving question of what would manifest in India's national security. A traditional understanding, often attributed to Max Weber, implied that the security of a state was related to any change that might threaten the monopoly of the state on violence – whether through external invasion or internal rebellion. Many of the most significant threats to India's security are internal, though with proxies externally. This has profound consequences for the conduct of international relations and assurance of national security. In the past, the security strategy has often been focussed on external threats, and, more specifically, on external military threats (which, therefore, require a military response). The transition in the character of conflict – the diversity and diffusion of threats, the lethality and typology of weapon systems developed or under development – is forcing states to consider new ways of protecting their monopoly on violence.

In recent times, however, national security should encompass more than this. It is argued that human welfare is in, and of itself, a security issue.²⁷ A country needs to have the characteristics as defined in Thirukkural, over 2,000 years ago:

Human security is imperative to express the need of the populace for safety in other arenas of basic needs, such as access to food, clean drinking water, environmental and energy security, freedom from economic exploitation, protection from arbitrary violence by the police, organised crime, etc.

*Pini inmai Selvam Vilaivinbam
Emam, aniyenba Nattirkiv vainthu.*

That is, “The important elements that constitute a nation are: being disease free; wealth; high productivity; harmonious living and strong defence.”²⁸ Hence, the nature of future conflicts may require that those concerned with preserving the state’s monopoly on force look beyond such traditional categories. For example, overpopulation, unemployment or economic disparities will be a source of future conflicts: they are worthy of the

security planner’s attention. K Subrahmanyam had defined comprehensive national security to include avoidance of shortage of the basic requirements of a country’s population: clean air, water, healthy surroundings, environmental security, food, health care, education, employment, old age care and governance. It is apparent that human security has become co-terminus with national security.²⁹ Thus construed, such things as poverty, disease, and environmental degradation are security threats not just because they lead to conflict, but because they are in, and of themselves, violations of “human security.”³⁰

Human security is imperative to express the need of the populace for safety in other arenas of basic needs, such as access to food, clean drinking water, environmental and energy security, freedom from economic exploitation, protection from arbitrary violence by the police, organised crime, etc. This concept is useful and important in indicating the variety of human needs that must be satisfied, and must be an effective overall policy goal. Other scholars have argued that to define security in this way

is to strip the term of all real meaning. The debate is indeed yet inconclusive, though such broad basing of the definition of national security may tantamount to denigrating the importance of management of national security.

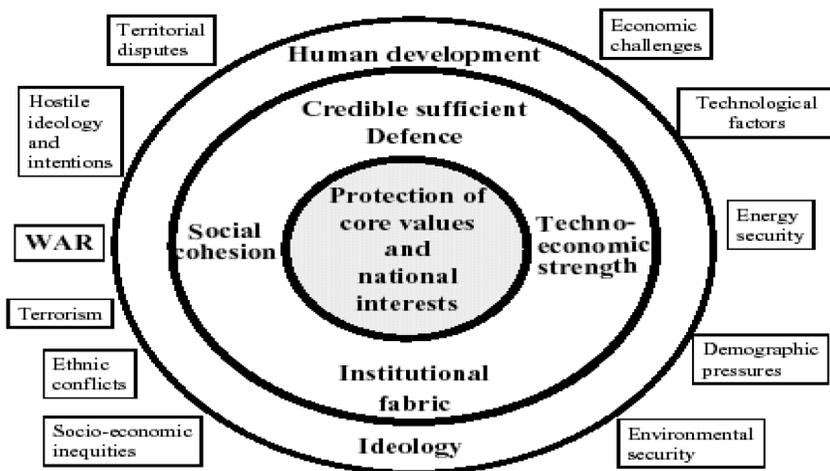
Comprehensive national security can, therefore, be defined to include the avoidance of shortage of the basic requirements of a nation's population, the provision of clean

air, clean water and healthy surroundings as also environmental security. In addition, provisions of adequate food, health care, education, energy, employment, and old age care and good governance. It must also include pandemics, narcotics, organised crime, failing states and use of terrorism as an instrument of foreign policy. Such comprehensive security can be achieved only by the cooperative efforts of the international community.³¹ National security is that ambience in which a nation is able to protect and promote its national values, pursue its national interests and aspirations, in spite of, or, in the absence of, external or internal threats, real or perceived. Threats to national security may impact any aspect of a nation's life, ranging from its territorial integrity and internal cohesion to its economy, political structures and institutions, diplomacy, national leadership, national character and morale. The armed forces of a nation have a vital role to play in meeting these threats. It can be contended that for India, the territorial disputes are unlikely to be resolved in near time – it would suit adversarial nations to keep us mired in the threats. However, our objective should be to ensure stability, peace and tranquillity on the frontiers with adequate insurance measures for a possible reversal.

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A representation of national security, as published in the Planning Commission Report on India 2020 Document is given below (Fig 1). The innermost ring represents the core values and vital interests that a state seeks to protect, preserve and promote. Beyond the outermost ring are the multi-dimensional multifarious challenges and threats that impinge ultimately on this core through more visible components, represented in the figure in terms of the middle ring.³²

Fig 1



The Vision 2020 Document of the Planning Commission of India had also delineated the factors influencing security environment, which are as relevant as they were a dozen years ago, as enumerated below.³³

Factors Influencing Security Environment in 2020

- The twin revolutions of rising expectations and information-communications will continue.
- The fundamental ideological conflict between India and Pakistan is unlikely to be resolved without a major socio-political change in Pakistan.
- Territorial disputes with the neighbours that have defied resolution

for 50 years may not lend themselves for easy resolution.

- Religious extremism and radical politics will continue to have an adverse impact on our core values.
- Rising dependence on energy imports will make us increasingly vulnerable, economically as well as diplomatically.
- Public opinion, both domestic and international, and the media will be increasingly important forces in international affairs.
- The international order is likely to evolve into a polycentric configuration, with its centre of gravity shifting towards Asia, which will include seven out of ten economies, and six out of eight nuclear weapon states.
- The increasing economic and military strength of China may pose a serious challenge to India's security unless adequate measures are taken to fortify our strengths.³⁴

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Conclusion

For India, in the forthcoming quarter of the century, the components of national security itself need to be redefined, and the traditional view that national security is related only to security from external aggression needs to be changed. Internal stability and order, and the comprehensive national strength of the country are equally important factors in protecting and maintaining the security of the nation state. Indeed, the definition of national security, even in India, has acquired clarity and a widened scope, with non-traditional threats forming a significant part. The security predicament of India should not be on

the basis of linear extrapolation of past historical experiences of the 19th and 20th centuries.³⁵ India's security strategy should establish long-term national objectives, action programmes and resource allocation priorities, and as a grand strategy, envisage development and coordination of all national power instruments. Herein, it is imperative to study the prospective global geostrategic environment as it impinges specifically on the Indo-Pacific and South Asian region and in the light of shaping the environment and thereby creating a grand strategy for the nation.

Notes

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