

Changing Global Security Environment with Specific Reference to our Region and its Impact on the Indian Army

*Deepak Kapoor**

INTRODUCTION

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to address such an August gathering of security experts and to share thoughts and perception on the 'Changing Global Security Environment with Specific Reference to Our Region and its Impact on the Indian Army'.

Let me begin by flagging the changing geo strategic environment. The gradual but distinctly discernible shift towards multi-polarity in power equations and the shift in global Centre of Gravity to Asia are the most distinct features of this change. Past experience shows that major shifts in power equations create volatility in the international order, even though the period of instability may be relatively short-lived.

Interestingly, much of the qualitative re-arrangement of power now underway is not attributed to military capabilities or 'hard power', but to a factor unique to the modern world: rapid economic growth and the related quest for growing energy security. The power shifts towards Asia can be linked to its phenomenal economic rise. The rise of China, as also India, in the global economic arena is the most visible manifestation of the forces of globalisation, which are also resulting in a number of related socio-economic and security challenges within the region. On the other side, it is

*General Deepak Kapoor is the Chief of the Army Staff. This is the text of his lecture delivered as a part of IDSA National Security Lectures series at the IDSA on July 3, 2008.

also a fact that the fountainhead of global and regional terrorism also lies in this region.

How does all this impact India? While developments in the field of economy, information technology and overall consolidation of our comprehensive national power have put India on the growth path, our internal security environment is yet to stabilise and is often exploited by external inimical forces, through asymmetrical means. However, these challenges and contradictions notwithstanding, India's inherent strengths and credentials make it an important pillar of stability in the emerging world order. The Armed Forces, being an important constituent of India's Comprehensive National Power, need to keep pace with the emerging trends and challenges and work in concert with other elements of national power to ensure India's rightful place in the emerging regional and global arena.

I shall be covering my talk under the following broad heads: -

- (a) Global and Regional Security Environment.
- (b) Impact on the Indian Army.
- (c) Future Perspectives and Challenges.

Part I - Global and Regional Security Environment

Drivers Shaping the Global Security Environment

Let us take a look at the major trends emerging in the global and regional security environment: -

- (a) Globalisation. The spiralling inflationary trends, soaring oil prices, fear of food shortages and upheavals in the financial markets driven by global cues, reinforce the fact that no Nation

today can remain insulated from events related to economic and security trends - in any corner of the globe. The intertwining of economies, as a consequence of globalisation, has resulted in geo-economics supplanting geo-politics. It would be debatable, however, to believe that greater economic interdependence alone would lead to improved geo-political stability. While the benefits of increased global connectivity and technological advances are enormous, its negativities in terms of increasing social and economic disparities, which can be exploited by inimical elements, need to be taken note of. There is also a fear that the ill effects of globalisation could reinforce tendencies towards competitive 'Protectionism' and regionalism.

- (b) International Terrorism. The rise of international terrorism indeed shows that the information age is both an integrating and a dividing force. Terrorism remains the principal challenge to liberal and democratic societies and now occupies centre stage in the international security matrix. The scourge of terrorism will continue to invite the focus of global attention in the foreseeable future, which will require earnest international cooperation to deal with it effectively.
- (c) Proliferation of WMD. The efforts of various renegade state and non-state actors to gain access to WMD have highlighted the dangers of proliferation of WMD material and their delivery means, especially if it reaches the hands of terrorists. India remains as concerned on this count as the other global powers.
- (d) Energy Security. The quest for control of energy resources of West Asia and search for alternate routes for trans-shipment of oil

and gas from the Caspian Region has brought the West and Central Asian Regions under sharp focus, thereby enhancing the chances of competition and potential conflict. It is no coincidence that most of the ongoing conflicts are centered in and around the regions that are rich in energy resources.

- (e) Undermining of the UN. In the recent past, we have also witnessed increased undermining of the UN in providing the lead role for resolution of conflicts and stabilisation. There is an urgent need to re-structure the UN for it to remain relevant to the emerging realities. The reality is that the five unelected yet permanent members of the Security Council need to share executive authority with new and emerging powers; India being amongst the most prominent.
- (f) Radicalisation in the Islamic World. Wars in Iraq and Afghanistan combined with lack of progress in resolving the Palestinian problem are causing an increasing cross-current of disaffection resulting in radicalisation within the Islamic world and isolation of moderate forces. Relatively, a large yet benign Muslim population has added to India's strengths.
- (g) Changing Nature of Conflicts. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan appear to be at critical crossroads and their outcomes will have a major bearing on future security contours of our region, in particular and the world, in general. These wars, and the one in Lebanon in July - August 2006, have thrown up new political and sectarian equations and emphasised once again that the era of "all out wars" is slowly being replaced by "war by other means" - unconventional, asymmetrical and across a wide range in the spectrum of conflict. We, in the Army, are alive to this transition to Fourth Generation Warfare.

Regional Trends and Security Concerns

I will now touch upon the contours of our regional trends and security concerns.

West Asia. West Asia remains one of the most unstable, conflict prone and volatile regions of the world. The region, being a major source of hydro-carbon energy, will continue to invite engagement by major world powers. Further, till a just and an acceptable solution is found to the problem of Palestine, this region has the potential to remain a source of conflict. Stability and security in the Gulf region is therefore critical to India as it has an impact on India's economy as well as on safety of a large Indian diaspora.

Central Asian Region. The Central Asian Region has witnessed increased engagement by the US, China and Russia owing to the availability of hydro-carbon reserves. Moreover, the countries of this region, all of which broke away from the erstwhile Soviet Union, are fledgling economies and have nascent governing structures, thus making them potential sources of conflict. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which has China, Russia and four of the Central Asian Republics as its members, is reflective of emerging power equations.

South East Asian Region. The enhanced economic strength of ASEAN countries and the importance of the region, especially the Straits of Malacca for transit of global trade and energy, have resulted in India actively pursuing its 'Look East Policy'. We not only share common cultural heritage with the South East Asian nations but also share common concerns on a range of security challenges like terrorism, religious radicalism, gun running, drugs, piracy and illegal immigration.

Afghanistan. The outcome of substantial reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan to bring this country into International mainstream, in the long run, will have a profound effect on the global security matrix. The situation remains critical, as the Taliban continue to strengthen its ranks and step up attempts to disrupt the reconstruction process. India has major security interests in Afghanistan and its stabilisation are in our interest.

China. China, our largest and most powerful neighbor and a rapid rising power, continues on the path of high economic growth, combined with rapid military modernisation. We have differences related to the boundary question, which are being resolved by special representatives of both the governments. Our mutual economic engagements and continued efforts to amicably resolve this boundary issue have ensured peace along the border. Regular visits at the highest level have further added to the dimension of constructive engagement and mutual confidence in our relationship. However, we need to take note of the likely implication of China's military modernisation, improvement of infrastructure in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other related issues, which could impact our security in the long term.

Pakistan. The situation in Pakistan is fluid. The recent elections have restored a democratic polity, which is hard pressed to restore security and stability to the country, in the face of complex challenges. Various contradictions in the Pak social political fabric, power struggles between the polity and the President, and the fragility of institutions like the judiciary and educational infrastructure are likely to occupy centre stage for sometime. The new approach by Gen Kayani, the Pakistan COAS, to reduce the direct role of the Army in governance mechanisms appears to be an endeavour to consolidate and restore the Army's declining image. I feel the biggest challenge faced by the Pakistan government is to moderate the largely radicalised sections.

Our Immediate Neighbours. Almost all the other countries in our immediate neighbourhood are undergoing varying forms of instability. Nepal has transited into a Republic, ending the 240 year old monarchy. Future portents for peace and stability in Nepal depend on the approach of the new dispensation to governance. The radicalisation of the domestic environment in Bangladesh, continuous inflow of illegal immigrants to our North East and escalation of violence in Sri Lanka are issues of concern to us. Keeping Myanmar engaged, due to security and economic reasons, is important to us. The emergent humanitarian effort undertaken during the recent cyclone is reflective of our relationship. Maldives is stable; however, recent incidents indicate a potential for instability. Bhutan is transiting peacefully from hereditary monarchy to democratic governance. However, the unresolved Bhupalese problem could destabilise the region. All this calls for keeping a continuous watch on happenings around our immediate neighborhood, and ensuring that there are no adverse spillover effects.

Threat Perspective

External Threats. The threats and challenges that we face in the emerging environment are multifarious. India shares 3323 kms of land borders with Pakistan and 3488 kms with China. The situation along our borders with China and Pakistan has witnessed periods of calm interspersed with hostilities. While there are other areas of concern that may pose threats to our security, the existing reality of border issues will continue to remain an important factor in our consideration.

Spill- over Effects from Other Neighbouring Countries. We have very strong and traditional ties with all our neighbouring countries. However, some of these are afflicted by internal security problems, which owing to trans-border ethnic affinities have the potential to spill over into our country. The 2007 index of poorly performing states released by the

'US Foreign Policy Magazine' continues to place some of India's neighbours top of the list. Illegal immigration from these countries also remains a serious cause of concern.

Indian Ocean Region. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has assumed greater importance in view of the increased maritime activity. India has approximately 1200 island territories off its Western and Eastern seaboard. Some of these are upto 1300 kms from the mainland. As you are aware, 70 percent of the world's oil, 33 percent of global trade and 50 percent of world's container traffic passes through the IOR. The region, therefore, has importance not only for India but also for the other major economies of the world. In this regard, security of the SLsOC assumes importance, because of our geo-strategic location. Protection of island territories located far away from the main land, and offshore assets, also assumes added significance.

India's Internal Security Dimensions

Internal Security Environment. Indian society is made up of diverse ethnic groups, cultures, languages and religious denominations. These are both strength and a challenge. Although India's national integrity remains fundamentally secure, we do have some challenges emerging from the social and economic disparities amongst the cross section of our society. Religious fundamentalism is also an area of concern.

J & K. The overall situation in J&K is well under control of the security forces and is showing distinct signs of improvement. Our endeavour is to ensure that the 'moral ascendancy' gained by the Army is maintained and the situation in J & K improves further. Our strategy of 'Iron Fist and Velvet Glove' is paying rich dividends. Our focus is on conduct of surgical and professional operations based on hard intelligence, causing minimum inconvenience to the local populace. Upholding Human Rights is one of

the corner stones of our Anti Terrorist operations and our record is worth emulating. The groundswell for peace indicates that the people are fed up with violence and are seeking a peaceful return to normalcy. Violence levels have seen a sharp decline as compared to the corresponding Period of 2007. This can largely be attributed to an effective Counter Terrorism Grid in the hinterland. The surge in tourism and other normalcy indicators are a manifestation of the aspirations of the common Kashmiri people for a peaceful and prosperous life. The elections to the State Assembly scheduled later this year will be an important benchmark in J&K's return to normalcy.

North East. Owing to the relentless efforts of the Security Forces, the security situation in the North Eastern States of the country has shown a significant improvement in the past few months. Most parts of the region today are free of violence and normalcy has been restored. The peaceful conduct of elections in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura, with a very high voter turnout, is indicative of the substantial progress towards normalcy in the region. Popularly elected democratic governments are in power in all States. The pace of development activities and tourism are gathering momentum, which are encouraging signs. Sustained operational pressure and persuasion by the Security Forces has resulted in large number of terrorists surrendering along with their weapons to various agencies. Overall, we see that more and more groups are entering into a 'Suspension of Operations' agreement with the Government, which is a very positive development.

Naxalism. In the larger Internal Security Construct, Naxal violence poses a major challenge. The Army is taking a close and careful look at the various trends and developments. Consequently, we have been instrumental in strengthening Police and Para Military Forces like the CRPF, PAC and Reserve Police Battalions across the States by providing advice and training in Counter Naxal Operations, Counter IED Operations

and “Training of Trainers”. We are rendering assistance in the establishment of Counter Terrorism Schools and in the analysis of violent incidents to help the police and the PMF to formulate an operational framework. The Army, however, maintains that this is a socio economic problem and it needs to be dealt by the states using the Police and Paramilitary Forces.

Part II - Impact on the Indian Army

General. How do these factors impact the future contours of the Indian Army as also our operational philosophy? The array of emerging global and regional complexities enjoin upon India to develop matching military capabilities in keeping with its growing economic and technological status, so as to ensure a continued stable and peaceful environment. Before I dwell upon the future shape, areas of thrust and the challenges we face in attaining the desired vision for the Army, let me touch upon some cardinals of our National Security Policy, the Fundamental Determinants of our Military Structure and the Present Profile of the Indian Army.

Cardinals of our Security Policy. Our national security policy is based on TWO cardinal principles, i.e.: -

- (a) We have no extra territorial ambitions, and
- (b) We have no ambition to transplant our ideology on others.

Fundamental Determinants of Indian Military Structure. Before introspecting on the current perspective, I wish to highlight the fundamental determinants of the Indian Military structure, which are: -

- (a) The Indian Armed Forces have multi front obligations.
- (b) India is not a member of any military alliance or strategic

grouping. Therefore, it needs to maintain an independent deterrence capability.

- (c) Due to external abetment, the Indian Army is involved in internal security functions on a relatively larger scale than normal.

Present Profile of the Indian Army. Though the Indian Army is undergoing steady modernisation, the present profile of over ONE million strong Indian Army can essentially be described as: -

- (a) A large standing army which is structured, equipped and trained primarily for traditional methods of warfare - a combination of a deliberate as well as a manoeuvristic approach across the spectrum of conflict, ranging from sub conventional warfare at the lower end to all out war against a Nuclear backdrop at the higher end. We are in the process of transforming our war fighting doctrines and concepts in keeping with the emerging challenges.
- (b) The Indian Army has been involved in sub conventional operations for the past 50 years, more so, high intensity operations in the last two decades. This has provided the bulk of the Army with rich combat experience in the conduct of such operations.
- (c) Equipping a large standing army with such varied challenges is a difficult and dynamic process. Our equipment profile is a varied mix of vintage, contemporary and futuristic technologies. We normally work on a 30:40:30 concept, though in certain high tech areas, where the pace of change is rapid, these ratios could vary.
- (d) There are some voids in organisation and equipment, which is but natural in a large standing Army, but these are under constant review. It is our endeavour to ensure that 'Minimum Assurance Levels' are always held and maintained.

- (e) The three Services have made a good start towards achieving a merge in various operational, training and administrative facets. The structures are already in place for joint intelligence, planning and conduct of operations at the highest level. Requisite interaction exists to make us confident of undertaking 'joint' operations successfully.
- (f) The Indian Army has contributed in substantial measure to UN peacekeeping missions worldwide, and has acquired an enviable reputation for professionalism mixed with compassion. Presently we have around 8000 peacekeepers from the Army on duty worldwide with the UN and this contribution will only grow in the future.
- (g) The Army remains one of the best organised, structured, equipped and disciplined organisations to react both to natural and man made disasters. Our record in this field has been well appreciated both within and outside the country - our concept being "First Responders - Last Resort".

Based on the aspects that I have outlined, I will now state the vision that we have spelt out for the future contours of the Indian Army.

Part III - Future Perspective and Challenges

Indian Army Vision

My Vision is "To consolidate the Army into a highly motivated, optimally equipped and modernised, operationally ready force, capable of functioning in a synergised joint service environment, across the spectrum of conflict".

Contours of Future Conflict

Future conflicts, against a nuclear backdrop, are likely to take anyone or combination of the following forms, for which we need to shape our Army accordingly: -

- (a) Conflicts across the entire spectrum of military operations, to include Low Intensity Conflict Operations.
- (b) Asymmetric Warfare, to include unrestricted warfare, encompassing a wide arena of networks and systems.
- (c) Dealing with spill-over effects of instability and violence in neighbouring countries, including the Indian Ocean Region, which mandates an 'Out of Area Contingency Capability'.

Capability Generation

The future contours of the Army need to be based on a number of capabilities, given the present security scenario. Broadly, these are: -

- (a) Deterrence Capability. A strong conventional deterrence backed by an appropriate strategic capability, to deter any potential adversary from undertaking inimical activities or initiating hostilities against India.
- (b) War Fighting Capability. To cater for the possibility of failure of deterrence, the Army needs to possess the capability for calibrated response, as also the capability to prosecute decisive conventional operations against a nuclear backdrop.
- (c) LICO Capability. The Army should possess the requisite capability to be able to effectively deal with internal conflict

situations, such as externally abetted 'proxy war', insurgency and militancy, in coordination with civil agencies mandated for this purpose.

- (d) Force Projection Capability. In keeping with our growing regional aspirations, we need to possess capabilities to deploy the land component of a joint task force for out of area operations, when mandated.
- (e) Peacekeeping Capability. As mentioned earlier, the Army needs to possess capabilities to fulfill international peacekeeping obligations, under the UN mandate, preferably in areas of our strategic interest. Keeping in view our growing stature and reputation in UNPKO, demands for enhanced participation are likely to increase.

Areas of Special Focus

Doctrines and Concepts. Up gradation of our operational doctrines has been undertaken to ensure that our war fighting machinery is compatible with the futuristic battlefield scenario. The Indian Army's doctrine for sub conventional operations, which was released in January last year, elucidates the latest security dynamics along with our collective wisdom and experience of over five decades in these types of operations. The doctrine is in the open domain and available on the Internet.

Harnessing Technology. Technology has to be increasingly harnessed and exploited to the optimum so as to have a well balanced weapons and equipment profile. Further, the focus of modernisation has been to absorb emerging technologies, to keep pace with the 'Revolution in Military Affairs'. Phasing out of obsolete equipment and implementing high degree of technological modernisation are achieving the same. We

have acquired and are in the process of acquiring - state of the art surveillance and intelligence equipment, accurate and lethal long range firing systems, up-graded night fighting capabilities, Future Infantry Soldier as a System (F-INSAS) for infantry, Advanced Light Helicopter (including Weapons System Integrated version) and battle field management systems with the aim of achieving 'network - centricity'. Exploitation of space-based capabilities is another priority area.

Dealing with Asymmetric Threats. Over the past decade, various states as well as non-state actors have continued to find ways and means to develop asymmetric warfare capabilities, to be applied against us. Countering asymmetric threats is an area of high priority for our Army, and we are developing a more advanced capacity in this regard. We have to remain one step ahead of this elusive adversary, and that's easier said than done.

Special Operations. For specialised tasks and critical contingencies, we are endeavouring to build desired capabilities in our Special Forces.

Defence Cooperation. Military to military cooperation between India and other friendly countries has helped in not only familiarising with available technologies and best practices, but has also enhanced mutual trust and interoperability with these countries. This is also the basis for addressing shared concerns over threats like terrorism, extremism and militancy. Defence cooperation with countries in the immediate and strategic neighbourhood is an area of priority focus for the Indian Army.

Future Challenges

While we have laid out a pragmatic vision of the shape and size of the Army in the long-term perspective, there are a number of challenges that need to be met to develop and maintain a ready and relevant Army for the 21st century.

Defence Budgetary Needs. Like any other developing nation, there is always a competition for the financial pie. The Nation has to balance its budget for its security and developmental needs - the classical 'guns vs butter' debate. Though the defence budget for 2008-09 is ten percent more than the previous year's allocation, an analysis reveals that for the first time, since the India-China War of 1962, it has fallen below two percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). There has been a persistent decline over the years from 3.38 percent in 1987-88 to 1.98 percent today - much below the global average. In order to develop desired Force Capabilities, the military planner is therefore confronted with the dilemma of improving the Capital vs Revenue ratio. This requires simultaneous rightsizing with induction of State of the Art weapons and equipment. In order to meet these twin objectives and enhance the assurance of the requisite capabilities, we are focused on indigenisation and the collaborative approach but without compromising on our operational capabilities.

Restructuring and Rightsizing. The emerging operational environment and the ongoing process of modernisation in the Army calls for re-structuring and rightsizing of the Army. The challenges that we face in this regard are two fold; firstly, evolving the requisite structures to operate in a joint environment with the other two services, with least possible turbulence; and secondly, attain the optimum size of the Army without impinging on the manpower intensive requirements of manning unresolved borders and operating in Low Intensity Conflicts. I must mention here that recent conflicts - those ongoing in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the 'Israel-Lebanon' War, have reiterated the necessity of 'Boots on the Ground'. Hence, we are going about the aspect of rightsizing in a very deliberate and pragmatic manner.

Modernisation and Development of Human Resource. Rapidly changing technology means that the systems get obsolete faster.

The Indian Army needs to remain 'contemporary' by imbibing 'affordable' technology. While we may get all the technology and resources to attain the desired force goals, we will need to upgrade the threshold level of the soldiers and leaders to handle these systems, and enmesh them to operate with other Services as also armed forces of other countries. We have incorporated appropriate institutional mechanisms to address this aspect and minimise the mismatch between man and machine. Training methods are also being reoriented to ensure better exploitation of modern equipment and technology.

Multi Spectrum Orientation Challenges. The Army has to be prepared to perform multi-operational tasks simultaneously. We have to remain prepared to fight a conventional war, while continuing to deploy large numbers for guarding the borders, counter proxy war operations and providing troops to UN missions, all at the same time. The ability to reorient, operate and switch over from one band of the spectrum of conflict to another, in a quick time frame, is a major challenge that the Army is preparing for.

Joint-ness. Let me take this opportunity to reiterate the Army's commitment to joint ventures. We are fully seized of the critical need to implement joint performance for optimising our war-fighting potential, in keeping with our security needs. As I have mentioned earlier, we have made good progress towards accomplishing joint-ness in various facets. However, new geo-strategic imperatives, technology and the changing nature of conflict, call upon us, to enhance the levels of joint-ness even further. There is ample scope for enhancement of Inter Service cooperation and integration, in related areas of congruence, by optimizing our force capabilities in the technological realm and by synthesizing resources and efforts of the three Services. Overall, the Army stands fully committed to joint-ness and optimum synergy in the future.

Leadership Challenges. In the future, battlefields are likely to be marked by very high degree of volatility, uncertainty and complexity. The Army is consciously working towards sharpening the core professional competencies of its leaders to enable them to operate dynamically against increasingly ingenious and elusive threats. Operational Art is a key focus area for the senior leaders as is the ability to orchestrate change, one step ahead of an emerging challenge.

Conclusion

The 21st Century certainly promises to be momentous for the nation in many ways. Despite the turbulent times and the region that we live in, our democratic credentials remain strong and our economy has shown resilience. The potential rise of India as a major power would require development of all elements of National Power, to secure our interests and enable us to play a more effective role in the regional and global arena. Not only should the country be ever prepared to meet external challenges from its traditional adversaries but also it must continue to retain strategic autonomy in decision-making. The Army, as part of the defence forces, comprises an important component of India's comprehensive national power and has always responded to every challenge successfully. It will be my endeavour to ensure that the Army remains not only ready but also relevant to today's needs and the anticipated challenges of the future. 