

CENTRE FOR SECURITY ANALYSIS, CHENNAI

A BRIEF ON THE SEMINAR ON

“SECURITY DIMENSIONS OF PENINSULAR INDIA”

Introduction

A two-day seminar on “Security Dimensions of Peninsular India” was organised by the Centre for Security Analysis on 22 and 23 March 2004. The Seminar reinforced the importance of a southern Indian perspective to security issues confronting India. It also brought into focus the need for a comprehensive approach to security. The major themes of the seminar were traditional threats to security, non-traditional threats, technological threats, ecology, water security and media perspectives. Lt. Gen. V.R. Raghavan (Retd.), President of CSA, while welcoming the Chief Guest and others said that the concept of security was changing and goes beyond traditional military dimensions. Non-traditional forms of security such as societal, political and environmental security were equally important.

Keynote Address

His Excellency, the Governor of Tamil Nadu, Shri. P.S. Ramamohan Rao delivered the keynote address at the inaugural session on 22 March. In his address, the Governor emphasised the need for a comprehensive and holistic view of security. Threats to Indian security generally arise from both the external and internal factors. He also stressed on the importance of the sources of these threats and the tools they employ to destabilise and create trouble in the country. From the point of view of external dimensions of security, the emergence of Peninsular India as a source of hydrocarbons has great security implications. Of related importance is the inland pipelines needed to transport the oil and gas produced in the Peninsular region. With India's increasing share in world trade, the location of sea-lanes that connect the west and the east just south of India are also of strategic concern. Further, most of the space and nuclear installations are located in Peninsular India. Apart from the traditional hostility with Pakistan and to a lesser degree with Bangladesh, relations with Sri Lanka are also of concern because of the hazy maritime boundary and the occurrence of at least a couple of incidents almost routinely every month. The Sri Lankan minorities problem is also of concern.

On the internal dimensions of security, he said that all internal threats arise out of impact of internal dissonance on security. Among these he mentioned Naxalism, river water disputes, social and caste alienations, religious conversions, poverty, uneven regional development, and corruption. He said that Naxalism is an ideology that believes in ‘waging war’ to replace the existing state with a state of its ideological moorings. Many tend to misunderstand it and assume that the problem arises because of socio-economic problems. Socio-economic problems are only issues that Naxalism exploits. He said that all these internal problems have the potential to create tensions in society and affect national security.

As regards the sources of insecurity, he listed some of the major sources of insecurity. A major source is the ISI that has links with various organisations in the country as also with the LTTE. The expatriate Indians working in the Middle East and the Indian mafia that has taken shelter there are also a source of insecurity. Some of the other important sources are refugees, internal sabotage through ideological subversion and indoctrination, nuclear missile attacks on the

nuclear and space installations in Peninsular India, and cyber terrorism against India's critical establishments.

Special Address

The Vice Chancellor of the University of Madras, Prof. S.P. Thyagarajan, gave a special address on Bio terrorism. He said that bio terrorism was not new phenomenon and had been practised from ancient times. The modern bio weapons programme was initiated by the United States in 1942 and the USSR soon followed suit. They developed smallpox virus, ebola virus and toxins of bacteria – botulinum and tetanus, etc. These could be delivered through aerosol sprays, aircraft and missiles. Terming bio weapons as the poor man's atom bomb, he said that the significance of bio weapons lies in the fact that they are highly infectious and highly resistant to antibiotics. To tackle this threat it is essential to create awareness among the people and develop knowledge of reliable diagnostics. He also said that environmental monitoring by agencies would be a step in the right direction.

Internal Security Threats

One of the major points that emerged with respect to internal security was that in recent years violence had been steadily rising. Mr. M.K. Narayanan, Vice President of CSA, observed that Naxals in Andhra Pradesh and adjoining areas of Chattisgarh, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh were displaying high levels of sophistication. They displayed military precision, familiarity with explosives and triggering devices, and transnational linkages. There was also evidence of subversion on a significant scale, and the presence of ISI modules had been detected in the region. Between twenty to thirty percent – of the more than 200 ISI modules detected and incapacitated – were in the south. Mr. S. Subramaniam, Chairman of the Association for Advancement of Police and Security Sciences, Hyderabad, felt that there is need for a special force to tackle internal threats, as the police are not adequately trained to deal with such threats.

Maritime Security

The Seminar also focussed on the emerging importance of the Indian Ocean both from the economic as well as from the strategic point of view. Dr. Sanjay Chaturvedi of the Punjab University, in a lucid presentation argued that Peninsular India would remain closely tied to both continuity and change in the triangular interplay among geo political, economic and strategic forces in the Indian Ocean. The importance of the region stems from the importance of securing energy supplies and sea lanes of communication. Andaman and Nicobar Islands, located close to the straits of Malacca, are strategically important. Cmde. R.S. Vasan who chaired the session stressed on the importance of ports and the need for our ports to be capable of screening containers.

Dr. Adluri Subramanyam Raju addressed the issue of India's maritime security in the Palk Bay straits. He dwelt on the fishermen problem between India and Sri Lanka. Tracing the historical roots of the problem, he analysed the details of the 1974 and 1976 agreements between India and Sri Lanka by which India recognised the sovereignty of Sri Lanka over the contentious island of Katchathivu, the area around which is the main catchment area of fishes. He concluded by saying that one of the ways by which the problem could be resolved was by leasing the island of Katchathivu in perpetuity, on the lines of the Tin Bigha arrangement with Bangladesh.

Technological Threats

With increasing technological threats to security and little understanding of its intricacies, the seminar was a revelation on how to deal with such threats. It was both informative and educative. Mr. S. Ram Mohan said that for information war the battleground is information infrastructure, financial systems, strategic systems, etc. The interconnectivity between them makes it more vulnerable. A major aspect of technological terrorism that was dealt with was cyber terrorism. The paper by Dr. Rama Subramaniam, Co-chairman of the Forum for Global Standards of Information Security, drew attention to the challenges that security professionals face today, given today's technology and cost structure in creating and implementing an infraction-proof security architecture. According to Dr. Aniruddha Joshi of the Pune University, major initiatives in the Indian context are capacity building for handling information and network security, use of indigenous tools, risk analysis and regular audits, policies to handle cyber attacks and international cooperation. It also emerged from the seminar that by and large nuclear installations in our country are safe. The technical and security safeguards against radiological emissions effectively take care of today's concerns of physical attack on nuclear installations. They are less vulnerable to 9/11 types of attacks. The point was underlined by Dr. S. Rajagopal of the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore.

Non Traditional Security

Regarding framework for non-traditional security, Prof. T.K. Oomen laid down five units for analysis, viz., economic disparity, patriarchy, heterogeneity, externality and hierarchy. In the context of secessionism, Dr. Swarna Rajagopal, an independent analyst based in Chennai, highlighted the Dravida Nadu experience. Dr. M.J. Vinod from Bangalore University, analysed the problem of internally displaced people in the context of armed conflicts.

Another issue addressed by the seminar was environmental and water security. The importance and significance of national water grid was underscored in the seminar. Mr. S. Kalyanaraman, who chaired the session, gave a detailed exposition of the importance of glacial source of water and how it could be tapped and utilised through a national water grid. Dr. Amit Dholakia from MS University, Baroda, brought out the problems and conflicts that arise while planning the construction of dams, and in water management. He also suggested ways of tackling such conflicts. The extent of pollution due to industrialisation and the inefficiency of the system was graphically portrayed by Dr. M.B. Pavithra and Dr. Thilak Raj of the University of Madras, through the case of tanneries' pollution in Tamil Nadu.

A significant theme of importance that came up in the seminar was media perspective and the issue of security. Dr. B.P. Sanjay, Director of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC), said that the relationship of media to security issues and concerns are manifold and not necessarily restricted to or limited to conventional security dimensions as is often understood.

The seminar brought into focus many issues which had not hitherto been given due importance. The significance of the seminar lies in its success in projecting the comprehensive nature of security and the need for a Peninsular perspective, which has its own unique dimensions and import.
