India has been subjected to wars in every decade of its Post – Independence existence and increased armed insurgencies, proxy wars and terrorism of the Islamic fundamentalist variety. India has been so subjected to aggression because in the last fifty years, it exhibited the propensity to be pacifist or defensive in nature. It shied away from the use of power despite its size and resources. The resultant effect was that India’s adversaries perceived India as a “Soft State” incapable of strong military responses even when its national security interests were threatened and trampled upon both externally and internally.

The following paragraphs discuss in detail on the need for a strategic vision, non politicization of security issues, the need to be sensitive for India’s national honour and above all the “will” to use power.

**The Need for a Strategic Vision for the Twenty first Century**

India sadly lacks a ‘Strategic Vision’. Vision is defined as ‘imaginative insight, statesman like foresight, political sagacity.’
‘Strategic Vision’ would imply the application of imaginative, statesmanlike foresight and political sagacity by India’s political leadership to the nation’s national security management and long-range strategic planning to counter both external and internal security threats. Hence ‘Strategic Vision’ for India would imply the need for:

- Political statesmanship that can have a penetrative foresight of how India can be led to its aspirational goals of being a leading regional and global power.
- Political leadership that can translate India’s ‘Strategic Vision’ into time-bound implementation plans. These implementation plans should incorporate short term, medium term and long term goals.
- Political leadership which is resolute, forceful and determined to direct an integrated national effort towards achieving strategic goals, cutting through bureaucratic red-tapism and lethargy. National security and strategic implementation should have an over-riding priority over all other national activities.
- Political leadership that is bold and audacious and which will ensure that in the pursuit of India’s ‘strategic vision’, any attempts to thwart it by external or internal threats are met with prompt, decisive and crippling military responses. Power is meant to be used to nip any emerging threats to India’s national security.

India’s ‘Strategic Vision’ for the 21st century should incorporate the following goals and components and which should be reflected in appropriate declaratory policies binding across the entire Indian political spectrum:

- India is to be the predominant power in the Indian sub-continent. It already is in terms of size, natural resources and human resources. It has an unbridgeable lead in the sub-continent in terms of economy, industrial development and infrastructure and hi-technology wherewithal. India however is not the pre-dominant military power, as Pakistan has been built up as the ‘regional spoiler’ state by China in terms of a nuclear weapons and missile arsenal. China has been engaged for the last two decades specifically to arrest India’s emergence as the predominant power in South Asia by its proxy efforts through Pakistan.
- India is one of the major powers of Asia, along with China and Japan. To this end India’s strategic strengths should be built at an accelerated pace and strategic partnerships evolved to ensure that India becomes a determinant in any regional or global power considerations in political, economic and military terms.

To achieve this ‘strategic vision’ for the 21st century India needs to develop strategically and in military terms, the following capabilities:

- Military preponderance in both the nuclear and conventional military fields. In terms of levels, it should have an overwhelming military superiority in South Asia and relative parity with China.
India needs to develop ‘force projection’ capabilities, especially naval and air. Sizeable air-mobile and naval task forces should be available for rapid deployment in India’s area of interest and ‘areas of influence’.

- India’s naval power should be built to levels which would permit sea-denial if not sea-control in the entire Indian Ocean region.
- Nuclear deterrence strong enough to deter even major powers to attempt political or military coercion i.e., development of an ICBM and SLBM arsenal. India after fifty years of being a ‘Soft State’ needs to get into a resurgent mode befitting her size and resources. The time has come not only to have the will to build up her power attributes but also to learn and have the will to use power.

Political leadership of a very high order and calibre is required to lead India towards the achievement of the ‘strategic vision’ thus envisioned.

**India’s Need for Declaratory Strategic Doctrines**

India having formalised its “strategic vision” should then spell out in declaratory terms the strategic doctrines the country would follow henceforth. In the last 50 years, India has shied away from declaratory strategic doctrines. Declaratory strategic doctrines are necessary for the following reasons:

- India’s strategic intentions are made clear in declaratory form. Ambiguity is the weapon of the weak and the passive. India should move away from ambiguous policies.
- Strategic doctrines should define in unambiguous terms the “red lines” whose crossing or attempts to breach by any country will not be tolerated. These “red lines” should flow from the enunciation of India’s national security interests. The use of force and swift retaliation should be declared in these strategic doctrines.
- Strategic doctrines so declared will leave no doubt to potential aggressors or those tempted to stir and generate internal security threats in India as to what India’s responses would be.
- Declaratory strategic doctrines are especially necessary for combating terrorism, hijacking and other disruptive activities resorted to by adversaries. Doctrines should spell out that even the roots of terrorism and insurgency from across Indian borders will not be immune from India’s retaliatory responses.
- On the practical plane, declaratory strategic doctrines would provide the template on which planning for India’s national security apparatus and force-planning and force structures can be configured.
- Declaratory strategic doctrines should therefore essentially reflect India’s will to use power both in terms of pre-emptive military operations and launching of offensive operations.
In the realms of Indian military strategy, the absence of declaratory strategic doctrines has been most keenly felt. India’s military responses to both external and internal threats, so far, perforce, have been defensive and re-active in nature. Our entire national ethos, political and military mind-sets and tactical thinking have been oriented in defensive terms.

Such defensive and reactive policies have had a debilitating impact on India’s military preparedness and also on India’s intelligence machinery. As soon as the crisis blows over, in the absence of strategic doctrines, combat equipment acquisitions and build-up of strategic needs is shelved. It has also led to neglect of our build-up of force-projection capabilities and the development of our offshore island territories into strong military bases for force projection capabilities.

**India’s Political Governance: The Need For a Qualitative Change.**

Good political governance is an imperative requirement of the power attributes of any nation aspiring to be a big power. Power status, decisive political leadership, strategic vision, military preparedness, economic advancement and national cohesion cannot be achieved without good political governance. The indicators of power potential which foreign countries look for pertaining to India all centre around and are focussed on political stability and good governance.

In India’s march towards her future goals of being a major power, the weakest link in that achievement is India’s political governance and the quality of her polity. This is not an individual opinion but the general opinion of one and all, namely, contempt for the politicians and their ethical standards.

Qualitative change in the polity and political governance of India can only be brought about by a conscious and deliberate effort by political leaders of major political parties. It is they who have to set irrefutable high standards personally and also ensure that party tickets are given to intelligent, mature and dedicated men and women of substance. Leaders of major political parties need to discipline their unruly parliamentarians and legislators.

India’s polity should not take it for granted that they are not under scrutiny. Ironically this polity which claims to have a prerogative on national leadership stands paralysed qualitatively. This has a grave effect on India, strategically and militarily.

**India’s Strategic Culture: The Need for Re- Invention**

India’s geographical boundaries stood changed after 1947 and so also the nature and relief of terrain configurations on which present boundaries rest. Historically and culturally, India went through three widely separated stages–Hindu, Muslim and British. Each of these periods had a religious and cultural disconnect and therefore do not provide the consistency of the evolution of a
strategic culture, like China for example.

India today stands faced with the daunting task of re-inventing its strategic culture for two good reasons:

- India today faces strategic threats to its national security both external and internal, which are in marked variance to its earlier geographical, historical or cultural configurations.
- Secularism does not define or arise from any strategic culture. India’s strategic culture needs to be reinvented by drawing on its most ancient and indigenous roots and blending it with India’s contemporary strategic ambitions and the global strategic environment. It is India’s political leadership and its elites who have failed to grasp this critical strategic requirement.

India’s history of the last fifty years indicates that India was unable to re-invent a strategic culture, appropriate and commensurate enough to meet the threats to its security. India was passive, defensive, reactive and soft in her strategic cultures. India needs to re-invent its strategic culture in a more resurgent mode of proactive, directed and aggressive responses to threats to her national security.

**National Security Issues Should Not be Politicised**

India presents a regrettable phenomenon where political opposition parties, in the absence of any other political issue, tend to politicise national security issues. In this process and in their zeal to discomfit the ruling party at any cost, they fail to realise the impact it has on the Armed Forces of India – their morale, their will to fight and their entire confidence in the political structure of the Indian nation state is seriously jeopardised.

The most recent examples of this politicisation of India’s national security issues pertain to the then opposition parties reaction to India’s nuclear weaponisation in 1998, their ill-informed criticisms during the Pakistan aggression in Kargil in 1999 and thereafter and their attitudinal problems to the Indian Army operations against the Pakistan sponsored proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir State.
National security issues have hardly been discussed by political parties during Defence budget debates in Parliament. The parliamentary attendance then presents a sorry spectacle. Yet when grave national crises occur every second politician becomes a master strategist or tactician minus the grasp of the essentials of strategy and the intricacies of military operations and oblivious to the fact that the parliamentarians own strategic incompetence brought about the military aggression in the first place.

India’s political leaders need to get together and work out conventions where during a crisis they can discuss the issues away from the glare of publicity and arrive at a consensus on how the Indian nation state has to meet the security challenges that arise.

National Security and Indian Media

The Indian media both print and electronic has developed imperialistic attitudes towards the coverage, analysis and projection of national security issues. Nothing exemplifies this more than the ‘Tehelka Tapes’ episode. In a bid to make money, national security interests were given a go by this portal. A noble mantle was sought to be worn by depicting it as a crusade against corruption. The media elite including notable editors-in-chief ganged up to support Tehelka not on the grounds of objectivity but for sheer defence of one of their flock.

Some Indian journals, indulged in politicising the issues of military commanders performances on the basis of leaked classified documents. They did not even bother to think that such irresponsible journalism not only affects the national security of the country but also the morale of the Indian Armed Forces. It also affects the confidence of the uniformed personnel in the Indian media, who should really strive to be a pillar of the state rather than a money-spinning enterprise of some industrial house, depending on sensationalism for its wider circulation.

India as a nation state is still in the formative stages and many challenges both external and internal threaten its existence and integrity. The Indian media should refrain from applying western templates of journalism as neither the political & strategic context nor the national cohesion as existent in the West is presently obtainable in India.

India’s Foreign Policy : The Will to Use Power

For over half a century, the Indian nation state has continuously been projected as a ‘Soft State’ by the politicisation of national security issues restraining firm responses. India’s political leadership shied away from the use of national power to safeguard
India’s security or sought soft escape routes. All of them exalted the fig-leaf of non-alignment into a virtue and some of them even justifying it as a well thought out and well deliberated strategy of India’s national security. The foreign policy of India continued to reflect these sentiments of the national elite i.e., soft responses to external aggression and proxy wars.

India’s responses in this field are more akin to those of the United States in earlier years. Robert E Osgood states: “America’s non-political approach to war must also be ascribed to a depreciation of the factor of power in international relations. In order to employ military power as a rational and effective instrument of national policy, a nation must have a foreign policy that is defined in terms appropriate to power.” India to this day, shies away from this precept, despite possessing all the attributes of power.

**India’s National Will: The Need to be Brave**

National will can be described as the collective will of the Indian people to face and withstand a grave crisis, both nationally and individually. In terms of the latter, this came into a grave focus during the painful crisis of the hijacking of Indian Airlines Flight IC 814 by Pakistani terrorists to Kandahar in Afghanistan. By courtesy of the irresponsible Indian media, day in and day out during the period, Indian TV channels projected pathetic images of the near and dear ones of the hijacked passengers. While their agony is well understood but not the wailing and crying and demanding the government to bring back their people at any cost. This put unbearable public pressure on the Indian government to submit to all demands of the hijackers including release of dreaded terrorists of Islamic Jehadi organisations.

India’s national will was on a pitiable display during those days. One could contrast this with the people of Israel or Japan or Germany. Those peoples would have remained dignified, composed and determined that irrespective of the personal cost, their country should not buckle down before hijackers demands. It is also a lesson for the Indian government not to buckle down to public pressure which affect India’s national image, irrespective of the cost.

Asymmetric threats to India’s national security are likely to increase where the Indian public gets more and more targeted. It needs to steel its will, endurance, self-discipline and develop a stoic attitude to bravely face violent attacks, suicide bombings and hijackings. India’s political leadership has to prepare the public. The Indian media has to restrain itself from impulsive sensationalism. India’s parliamentarians have to desist from politicising such national security issues. None of them went on the air to advise the affected people to be brave during the crisis and that the crisis has to be faced even at the cost of personal loss.

India’s rapidly expanding middle class needs to decide whether they want to make themselves fit to continue as a nation. Probably, the best prescription for this shortcoming is to make National Service in the Indian Armed Forces a compulsory
requirement. It cannot be forgotten that “NATIONAL WILL” is one of the major components in the power-estimation that our enemies make of India’s strengths in terms of its national power and military power. India’s substantial power attributes in other fields are of no consequence, if India’s NATIONAL WILL can be so easily subverted.

India’s National Honour : The Need for Sensitivity

India’s “National Honour” and respect and sensitivity to maintain it should be the essence and epitome of its nationhood. Even amplifying it from dictionary meanings “India’s National Honour” would imply “High Respect for India as a Nation”; it would imply “Glory for the Indian Nation” and lastly it would imply “Nobleness of Mind to Uphold India’s Reputation”.

Examples of how India’s ‘National Honour’ gets compromised at the highest levels are listed below:

- India’s national honour is impinged when parliamentarians and legislators reduce the sanctified precincts of parliament and legislatures into street corner squabbles.
- India’s national honour is impinged when India’s parliamentarians and political parties politicise national security issues.
- India’s national honour is impinged when India’s political leaders are projected on Pakistan TV mouthing pronouncements detrimental to India’s national interests prompted by narrow electoral gains to please narrow religion– based constituencies.
- India’s national honour is violated when India displays lack of will to take pre-emptive actions against its enemies who inflict proxy war, terrorism and suicide bombings on the Indian state.
- India’s honour is at stake when India expects others to restrain or pressurise its enemies from onslaughts against India by external or internal aggression.
- India’s national honour is singed when its political and intellectual elites and the Indian media indulge in criticising and condemning the Indian nation state’s policies by imposing western liberalist templates, forgetting that India’s contextual environment is different and calls for different solutions.

India’s “National Honour” is “indivisible”. It cannot be divided by India’s politicians on grounds of secularism and pseudo-secularism. It cannot be divided on grounds of majority versus minority. It cannot be divided on grounds of caste and backwardness. It cannot be argued that the Hindu concept of “National Honour” has to be different from India’s Muslims concept of “National Honour”. It cannot be argued that the Congress, Leftists and Samajwadi Party’s concept of “National Honour” is distinct from the Bharatiya Janata Party’s or Shiv Sena’s concept of “National Honour”.

Conclusion:
It needs to be stressed that India’s national security and defence is not solely, the duty of the Indian Armed Forces

India’s national security and defence is equally the responsibility of all its citizens. They must not only study matters military, but also be alive to dangers to India’s security, both from external and internal threats. As regards India’s parliamentarians and politicians are concerned, their responsibility in this respect is far more.

All citizens of India are charged by Article 51-A Clause (c) of India’s Constitution “to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India. Clause (j) of the Fundamental Duties also states “to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement”.

It is said-: “The true might of a nation is to be sought for not so much in the strength of its Army, which is but the means of materialising this might, but in the health of its spirit, that is its will (NATIONAL WILL) to preserve itself from dangers external and internal. Major General JFC FULLER

If this paper could ignite a strategic mindset in all Indians and make them conscious of matters connected with India’s national security, the end-aim would have been achieved.

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