

India's Security Perception and Defence Policy: A Historical Perspective

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ABSTRACT

India's defence policy has changed over time according to the security threat perception. From passive policy after independence, the defence policy changed to active policy making specially from 1980s under the prime ministership of Rajiv Gandhi and from the 2014 under the premiership of Narendra Modi. The strong defence policy has strengthened India's position in the world. India did not shy away from demonstrating its defence capability. For example, missile programme under Rajiv Gandhi to surgical strike after the Pulwama attack. Recently, India's position has been strengthened in the world and its voice counts in international issues.

Key Words : Defence policy, India's position, Pulwama attack, National security

INTRODUCTION

A country's defence policy is formulated based on its security perceptions. Security is broader than merely discussing military dimensions involving one's immediate neighborhood. It has to consider ecological, international, strategic, doctrinal, and developmental considerations¹. Although internal and external security issues are substantially different, they often interact and are interrelated. The problem of domestic insecurity may stem from external, political, economic, and military pressures.

However, security in its classical sense of preparedness against external threats remains essential. After independence, India's chief concern was to preserve hard-won freedom and enlarge its security content. India had to exist and operate in a global environment over which she had little control. The atmosphere was surcharged with Cold War rivalry and bipolarity. The manifestation of their confrontation posed severe threats to her security. Therefore, under Nehru's dynamic stewardship, India adopted the non-alignment policy. However, the problem of providing internal and external security required, at times, foreign assistance,

notwithstanding its inconsistency with national policy.

Enlarging national security by promoting helpful international linkages and improving access to capital technology and markets to accelerate economic development have been twin goals of foreign policy that have always remained valid.

This article deals with the changes in security perceptions that have manifested over time. There were subtle variations from Nehru to the present time under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Defence Policy Under Nehru :

The nationalist leaders of Independent India Adopted the policy of the Britishers, *i.e.*, the defence policy, as separate from foreign policy². It was a policy shaped by the nature of the predominantly non-violent struggle and the British colonial attitude to security.

Several factors influenced defence policy in the early period. These were: (1) the Cold War and Nehru's vision; (2) Gandhian Philosophy; (3) Geo-political factors- Pakistan and China; (4) Defence versus Development debate.

The cold war and Nehru's vision:

Nehru's vision of the world predominantly shaped India's defence policy. In his presidential address to the Kerala Provincial Conference of the Indian National Congress at Payyanur on 25 May 1928, Nehru declared that India was protected by the "Balance of Power." In his more comprehensive statement of Indian Policy, contained in two articles published in *Young India* in 1931, Nehru explained his balance of power as it related to India.

"... It may be that some will covet her, but the master desire will be to prevent any other nation from possessing India. No country will tolerate the idea of another acquiring the commanding position that England occupied for so long. If any power were covetous enough to make any attempt, all the others would combine to stop the invader. The mutual rivalry would be the surest guarantee against an attack on India³."

Nehru's image of India's unique position in the world was further strengthened by his belief that India was not to worry about unduly external threats to its security. This was a perception that governed his security thinking even before independence. Apart from this relatively benign threat perception, Nehru believed that bipolar rivalry would effectively guarantee India's security⁴.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru argued that peace and security were obtained through military buildups and alliance systems, skillful diplomatic policies, and efforts to forge friendships with other countries, especially those with a different political and economic system. Joining a sponsored military does not increase it by embroiling the country in East-West conflict. These views are embodied in Nehru's twin foreign policy pillars of Non-alignment and Panchsheel.

The significant challenge for India's security during Nehru's period came from the politics of the Cold War. The choice before India was either to accept the policies of alignments, *i.e.*, Join one of the blocs, or adopt an independent, non-aligned foreign policy. India chose the latter. The reasons were (a) the influence of the nationalist movement, (b) the need to widen the source from which economic aid would be received, and (c) to neutralize threat perceptions from China through friendship with the Soviet Union⁵.

Gandhian Philosophy:

Gandhi's view on defence and the armed forces left an imprint on the people's minds and influenced many

national leaders who eventually controlled political power. As Jawaharlal Nehru remarked, 'He (Gandhi) taught us the doctrine of non-violence not as a passive submission to evil but an active and positive instrument for the solution of international differences⁶. This influenced the attitude towards the armed forces and defence requirement of the country. Wearing out these views and revising public opinion took a long time⁷. In this period, defence spending never rose above 2% of G.N.P.⁸. This emphasis on moral principles found practical expression in collective security through the United Nations' adaptation of the principles of Panchsheel and Non-alignment.

Defence vs. Development debate:

The debate on defence vs. development, which progressed in the country, was an important feature of this era. This emphasized development and planned economic progress—the desire to achieve security through independence became central to India's economic and security strategies. Defence, though not ignored completely, was accorded a step-motherly treatment. They were accorded a step-motherly treatment. There was no defence plan to match the country's economic five-year plans. It was seriously argued that with India's policy of peace, non-alignment, and non-aggression, there was no need for a large defence force.

The foremost aim of Nehru's administration was to pursue rapid economic development. Economic growth was possible only within the framework of peace and non-alignment. The logic for this was incontrovertible, for a country's defence policy must be related to its economic and industrial policy. Since self-sufficiency was the inherent in the policy of non-alignment, it became necessary for the country to build its defence mechanism and produce its own arms and equipment. But unfortunately, with emphasis on economic progress and development, the advancement of defence took a back seat.

Nevertheless, spade work was done in the 1950s to build up a defence system. Attention was paid to equipping the army, navy, and airforce best. India obtained most of its equipment from Britain to fit the existing defence mechanism.

Geopolitical Factors:

(a) Pakistan: While the Cold War posed a general and, in a sense, broad challenge to India's security, the

more and the specific threat came from the immediate neighbor, *viz.*, Pakistan. In the initial period, the central and governing concern of India's defence was the likelihood of a war with Pakistan. The threat was politico-strategic. Pakistan's persistent effort was to alter the balance of power in the sub-continent by attaining parity with India and by joining the U.S.-sponsored alliance system. This also brought the Cold War to the sub-continent.

Apart from Pakistan, no visible threat was perceived by any other neighboring state. Burma was necessary for the security of the Neo-Eastern frontiers of India and to prevent any infiltration of battle forces across the border. China's control over Tibet was tenuous and Tibet posed no threat to India with the impregnable defence line. Treaty arrangements were made with Sikkim, Bhutan, and Nepal⁹. This diplomacy and foreign policy were 'maneuvered' to a position where India would stay out of all power politics and military conflicts¹⁰.

Nehru failed to perceive the possibility of the Chinese threat manifesting itself in the form of a military confrontation between the two countries. This was undoubtedly a significant error in Nehru's threat perception. As the then Defence Minister K. Menon told Michael Breche in an interview, "At no time was there an indication that China would wage a war against India¹¹". India's military policy was one of continual and unsatisfactory compromise between what was "Politically desirable, financially feasible and militarily prudent"¹².

It was only after the border war of 1962 that India realized the limitations of the approach that laid stress on diplomacy *per se* in managing threats to national security. Preparedness in defence and diplomacy became the bedrock on which India's approach to national security was based in the post-1962 period. The First Defence Plan was formulated in 1964. The 1962 was the watershed in more ways than one. India realized for the first time that she could have enemies more than Pakistan and more substantial than her.

Unfortunately, however, the improvement in defence matters in the wake of the disaster was translated more into monetary terms by way of greater allocation of funds but not in strategic terms¹³. It needs to be emphasized that the military debacle of 1962 was more a failure of strategy and military tactics. In the sphere of intelligence, it was largely a failure of assessment than of acquisition. Such was the case during Pakistani infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir in August 1965.

The only strategy India had so far was the negative defence strategy, which, by definition, implies surrendering the initiative to adversaries and merely reacting to their hostile activities. Consequently, right up until the Indo-Pak war of 1971, it can be stated categorically that India never entertained any offensive strategy against Pakistan. The adverse effects of the negative defence strategy were exacerbated by the bizarre notion among the Indian leaders not to surrender an inch of territory to the aggressor.

The post-Nehru Phase:

During the sixties and seventies, India's security was threatened by (i) two wars with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971; (ii) Sino-Pakistan's strategic collusion *vis-s-vis* India. The major thrust of India's response to the above threat was to strengthen the country's defence. Secondly, while non-alignment had developed in earlier years, India developed a more substantial tilt towards the Soviet Union.

Another significant development on the international strategic horizon in the 1970s that impinged India's security was the Sino-American Detent, which led to the Beijing-Washington-Islamabad axis *vis-à-vis* India. India's response to this challenge was to strengthen its relationship with the Soviet Union.

One of the important security issues in the 70s, which continued in the 80s, was the impact of big power rivalry in the Indian Ocean on India's security-strategic environment. The U.S. administration's decision to move its naval aircraft carrier enterprise into Bay of Bengal in December 1971 confirmed India's fear. The Indo-Pak War of 1971 was undoubtedly a glorious chapter in the planning and conduct of military operations. The Pokhran nuclear explosion of 1974 strengthened India's position in defence.

The Morarji Desai government sought to return India to 'genuine non-aligned status'. He pleaded that India would not develop nuclear weapons. He sought to undermine the military's power by turning it into a force more closely aligned with developmental efforts¹⁴. In effect, he sought to swing the pendulum ideologically back from a more forthright foreign policy adopted by Mrs. Gandhi to something nearer to Mahatma Gandhi's ideals. But in reality, the defence policy remained the same.

Defence Policy of Rajiv Gandhi: 1984-1989:

With the coming of Rajiv Gandhi to power in 1984, there was a change in India's defence policy outlook.

This can be attributed to a number of geo-political, strategic and economic factors. The war of 1971 had established India as the predominant power in the region. This fact has been accorded recognition even by the U.S. Its new approach in defence was very much one of consolidation. It reflected a growing maturity and a realization of the meaning of India's emergence as a significant power¹⁵. The ideologically defined role of the Indian defence forces as being the border protector now underwent an expansion to include force projection. The defence policy was in the process of being redefined more through action than through statements in terms of seeking to bring the Indian defence ministry at par by its style and operation with the defence establishments of the major Western power, including the U.S. It was this professional approach to defensive planning which perceived defence policy as an integral act that placed India in a league apart from other developing states¹⁶.

An eminent analyst¹⁷, in his comprehensive examination of Indian security policy under Rajiv Gandhi, wrote that changes in the Indian strategic environment over the last thirty years had produced significant shifts in India's defence policy. It was only under Rajiv Gandhi that there spawned an Indian doctrine of regional security. The essence of this formulation was that India strongly opposed the outside intervention in the domestic affairs of other South Asian nations, especially by external powers whose goals were perceived to be inimical to India's interests. Therefore, no South Asian government should ask for outside assistance. Rather, if a South Asian nation genuinely needed external assistance, it should seek from India. A failure to do so would be considered as anti-Indian policy. This was subsequently referred to as the 'Rajiv Doctrine', which was manifested in India's Sri Lanka and Maldives policy.

Various factors which influenced India's defence policy during this period were:

Geo-Political Strategic Factors:

For years, the Ministry of Defence had spoken of a grim security environment, the ethos of which remained same-Pakistan and China continued to pose threats, and the superpower rivalry in the Indian Ocean had not diminished. The Indo-US relations did not improve much, although Indo-Soviet relations remained warm.

China:

An essential dimension to India's security scenario

was China. Though the Sino-Indian relationship improved a little, the crux of the problem was the border issue, regarding which China showed no signs of relaxation. China was exerting pressure on India's eastern border to obtain an advantage on India's western border. The strained Indo-China relations demonstrated China's willingness to engage in border wars to teach neighboring military power a lesson.

China-Pakistan Military Linkages:

China-Pakistan military linkages were of grave concern to India. The Karakoram Highway and the coordinated China-Pakistan military activities in the Ladakh region were the manifestations of the crisis. China continued to be Pakistan's biggest arms supplier. This China-Pakistan animosity against India was casting omnibus shadows on the neighboring states of India-Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Nepal played China against India to extract the maximum gains. Islamabad became the cementing factor between Bangladesh and Pakistan, China was wooing Bhutan, whereas Sri Lanka was leaning on the United States¹⁸.

Pakistan:

Pakistan continued to pose a threat to India's security. Her deep involvement in the Punjab and her hands in terrorist activities in the Punjab and Kashmir further strained the Indo-Pak relations. The Pakistanis' capacity to build nuclear weapons at reasonably short notice provided a real military threat that India could not ignore.

Sri Lanka:

The induction of foreign security and intelligence organisation in Sri Lanka and the unilateral declaration of the surveillance zone around Sri Lanka's northern and eastern coast were other security strains for India¹⁹.

Indo-Soviet Détente:

According to the Ministry of Defence²⁰, the growing friendship between China and Russia would likely affect India's international and security calculations. It feared that China-Russian friendship might enable China to redeploy its forces from the Sino-Soviet border to Tibet, which would have far-reaching consequences for India's security environment. Thus, the regional environment could have been more conducive for India. Every single neighbour, except Maldives, had something to contend with her. Territorial bickering still plagued bilateral

relations. For example, the Siachen Glacier dispute between India and Pakistan on several occasions in the mid-80s provided a catalyst that almost led to conflict.

Finally, as India became more politicized and the task of governing became more complex, there was another significant shift in the concept of security, which was described by Rajiv G.C. Thomas²¹ as the “widening of the concept of security from a concern with external factor to a concern also with internal threats to national integrity.” This shift reflected the growing role of the security forces in the maintenance of law and order and the political integrity of the country; for example, from 1987-89, the military was called thirty-six times mostly to resolve law and order.

(B) India's economic growth and military modernization program coincided with the withdrawal of the superpowers. India in the eighties had a middle class of around 150 million people, most of whom earned the average European wage. This group alone gave India a tax base considerably bigger than all of France. The result was that India had the resources to fund a significant defence budget. By this time, India developed the technological knowhow regarding nuclear capability. Added to this were the advances made in the missile technology program. India's economic growth and potential had opened her defence forces for systematic and significant growth since 1982-83.

(C) The Indian Ocean : Geo-politically, India occupies a unique position in the Indian Ocean. Indian juts into the northern Indian Ocean and virtually cuts it into two halves- The Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. These accounts of India's vital interests in the region, namely safeguarding its security against possible encroachments, especially the threats emanating from the presence of big powers, its interests further South in Antarctica and deep-sea bed resources of the region, its maritime interests which have been increasing due to its gradually expanding trade and commerce.

The great power rivalry in the Indian Ocean in 80s and the rejection of the concept of 'peace of zone' by the industrialized significant powers, their naval presence in the Indian Ocean and the linkage they might develop with regional powers not friendly to India, further deteriorated the security environment close to India's shore. Thus, the absence of Western agreement to the concept of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace has been an important factor in India's resolve to become a major maritime power. While laying the foundation stone

for the naval base in Karnataka, which was described as the most extensive and most sophisticated in South Asia, Rajiv Gandhi said:

“If we have to remain independent, we must look to the South and the Indian Ocean for safety and security²²”.

The sending of the Seventh Enterprise in 1971 by the U.S. during the Indo-Pak war highlighted fragile security and the need for strengthening security in the Indian Ocean. Secondly, despite the warming trends in Indo-US relations, New Delhi was concerned over the growing linkages between Pakistan's defence forces and U.S. CENTOM forces centered on Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

Under these security perceptions, India under Rajiv Gandhi witnessed unprecedented improvement and modernization in three wings of the defence forces Army, Navy, and Air Force. We will now discuss each of the following wings;

Army:

While Rajiv Gandhi preached peace and disarmament whenever he traveled abroad, he presided over the largest expansion of the armed forces at home. Defence expenditure doubled during the five-year tenure as his government strove to maintain and modernize the armed forces, the fourth largest in the world after those of the U.S., the Soviet Union, and China. Though India's gross national product is similar to that of a more minor European power like Spain, the Indian armed forces continued accelerating dynamism and strength. A significant proportion of India's defence expenditure was used to purchase sophisticated arms abroad;. However, it was the third world's largest manufacturer of arms, India became the world's largest manufacturer. India became the world's major importer of defence equipment during the late 1980s. according to a strategic analyst, “Rajiv Gandhi spearheaded a new activist foreign policy to establish India as the greatest military power along the arch stretching from the Himalayan crest to the North Sea²³. An unprecedented re-equipment of the armed forces involved the purchases from Britain of a 2nd aircraft carrier- VIRAAT, and the purchasing of F.H. 70 howitzers from Sweden. India joined the exclusive club to become the first non-nuclear power to operate a powered submarine with the lease of the vessel from the Soviet Union in the form of the CHAKRA.

Some breakthroughs were achieved in electronic warfare and counter electronic and radio local systems

(RLS) of communication equipment²⁴. Thus, in the late 80s, a massive drive for the modernization of armed forces launched in the early part of the decade gained momentum. Though Rajiv Gandhi did not initiate the defence buildup, he did continue and accelerate it. This gave rise to what is known as the “Rajiv Doctrine” (which we have already discussed), which manifested in the sending of Indian forces to Sri Lanka and Maldives. India engaged in military operations beyond its short line on these two separate occasions, which was the main evidence of its new “defence” posture beyond the strictly defensive approach. Both these operations revealed a willingness to fight battles abroad and subsequently led to question the *raison d’être* of Indian military intervention abroad. This was a change in the defence policy of the previous governments.

Navy:

In the field of navy, significant changes in the defence policy were initiated during Rajiv Gandhi’s Premiership. The Indian Navy graduated from a “Brown water fleet” to a full-fledged blue water capability. Rajiv Gandhi, however, only carried out a policy that Mrs. Gandhi had initiated. Indian Navy became a powerful blue-water navy, *i.e.*; it developed inoffensive capability over a wide area of the Indian Ocean. The importance of the naval defence was enhanced by India’s decision to exploit underwater resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). Since 1985, the submarine division of the Indian Navy has undergone both qualitative and quantitative change. It possessed four different classes of submarines incorporating the latest technologies and state-of-the-art weaponry systems²⁵. The lease from the Soviet Union of INS CHAKRA –which is nuclear powered and can carry nuclear warheads – was another demonstration of the blue-water capability, which gave India a maritime and monumental advantage in naval power and altered the balance of power in the Subcontinent. India became one of the five major naval powers capable of sustained long-range deployment of sea-borne strike aircraft. Rajiv Gandhi explained this at the induction of INS-CHAKRA, “if we are to keep the destiny of India in our hands, we must have full control of the waters around us and the thousands of kilometers of shoreline which stretch along the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal and upon the Indian Ocean²⁶”.

The Indian navy has also contributed immeasurably to the success of the seven Indian expeditions to

Antarctica. The induction of HMS HERMES was also a part of Rajiv Gandhi’s blue-water navy policy. It arrived in service with the Indian Navy in 1988 as an Ins-VIKRAT, joining the older VIKRANT. This finally gave India a round-the-clock blue water navy, providing the more excellent capability to withstand any onslaught against India’s maritime interests.

While the great powers were in the process of reducing their naval presence in the strategically important Indian Ocean, the already formidable Indian navy was flexing its muscles. As a result, the fulcrum of the military balance among the South Asian nations had moved to the sea. This raised alarm in as far as countries like Australia. Mr. K.C. Pant, the then Defence Minister, justified the need for the blue water navy during the induction ceremony of TUIUZN. He outlined the growing naval capabilities of Pakistan and China and the threats it posed to India’s maritime interests. He pointed out the massive presence of extra “regional navies” in the Indian Ocean and the consequent escalation of tensions in the area. He further argued, “The navy cannot hope to safeguard the country’s maritime interests if it were to be a coastal force. It necessarily had to be an open ocean force capable of safeguarding the trade routes and taking care of other legitimate security interests²⁷”. Also, a country of India’s size and resources in the ocean, which is dependent on the sea lanes for commerce, had to ensure a “blue water navy” to safeguard its sovereignty and independence²⁸.

Airforce:

Since 1984 India has been upgrading the Indian Air Force systematically. An indication of its growing importance and rapid pace of modernization can be seen from the fact that in just about two years’ time, five new aircrafts were acquired by India, *viz.*, Soviet Mig-9, Fulcrum Multirole Combat aircraft, the Anglo-French Jagurdeep strike bomber, the French Mirage 2000 air superiority fighter, and the M.I.G. 23 B.N. flogger H Multirole aircraft. Besides, a transport helicopter had been included. Such a large induction of the new aircraft accompanied by state-of-the-art technology and manufacture in such a short time was unprecedented not only in Indian Air Force history but that of any third-world nation.

Militarization and Technological Modernization: A New Boost to Missile Development:

To defend against possible attacks from Pakistan

or China, or as Rajiv Gandhi's government put it to match their weaponry, India invested a great deal of money in improving the quality of its artillery and developing an indigenous program for designing and manufacturing guided missiles. A major domestic defence research program in guided missiles was initiated by Mrs. Gandhi in 1983, and the fruits of its success were tested during the late half of Rajiv Gandhi's Premiership. The successful firing of the new generation 250 range surface-to-surface missile, Prithvi, in February 1988 gave India a tremendous tactical advantage. India had already developed Trishul and Akash, both surface-to-surface missiles. These weapons enhanced India's defence capacity significantly serving as a strong deterrence to India's adversaries. The testing of the Agni, an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBH) with a range of 1,500 miles, brought it into the club of IRBH manufacturers whose membership primarily consists of China, France, the U.S.A., the Soviet Union, and Israel. Guided missile program owes everything to the theory of deterrence.

Raja Raman, a defence scientist defending the modernization program, said, "the main thrust of our modernization program is to achieve a higher degree of self-reliance²⁹".

The Nuclear Policy :

India's nuclear policy is related to the country's general foreign policy framework, which is based on historical factors, the imperatives for national security and strategic considerations, and the urge for technological assertiveness. All the successive governments, from Mrs. Gandhi to Rajiv Gandhi, aimed at the peaceful use of nuclear energy and emphasized the need for nuclear disarmament while keeping its options open. Rajiv Gandhi's nuclear policy was based on the very theory of deterrence that he rejected. However, his policy had always been that India would go nuclear to respond to others and would not lead the way. Underlying the defence policy and Rajiv Doctrine lay his government's somewhat ambivalent nuclear policy, a policy that was followed by all the previous Prime Ministers of India. One discerns a certain contradiction in Rajiv Gandhi's nuclear policy.

On the one hand, his government set about acquiring sophisticated fighter aircraft and an equally sophisticated array of guided missiles soon to be in service, which had alternative means to deliver nuclear warheads. On the other hand, India strove to win other countries for the

cause of nuclear disarmament and subscribed to a plan that Rajiv Gandhi presented to the U.N. special session on disarmament in June 1988 that nuclear weapons should be totally eliminated by the year 2001. Rajiv Gandhi's dual approach revealed a determination to remain in the forefront of the world campaign for nuclear disarmament without sacrificing what he regarded as India's sovereign right to exercise the option of developing nuclear weapons at some stage to meet perceived threat from Pakistan³⁰.

India perceived that Pakistan sought to use its nuclear program to deter its adversaries, particularly India, by raising nuclear training to offset India's conventional military superiority, to acquire a superiority over India to increase Pakistani bargaining power and reopen the Kashmir question, to reduce its military dependence on other powers. It was perceived that by the end of this decade, India might face a nuclear Pakistan as well as China with a significantly enhanced nuclear capability.

Thus, India adopted an open-option policy to oppose the N.P.T. regime or nuclear hierarchy in the highly stratified international system. It might go nuclear in response to a successful nuclear explosion by Pakistan or a bomb manufactured by that country.

On the question of capability acquiring, the nuclear weapon policy has continued to be not to acquire nuclear weapons, but as Rajiv Gandhi further said in the interview with *Le Monde*, "If we decide to make a nuclear weapon, it would take a few weeks or a few months³¹". K.C. Pant, the then defence Minister, stated, "India was considering changes in its nuclear policy in response to Pakistan's nuclear development³²".

Military Brinkmanship:

India's active defence policy coincided with General Krishna Swami Sundarji's tenure as Chief of the Army Staff from 1986 to 88. He coined the theory of "coercive diplomacy," *i.e.*, the use of force without war. As a result, the country was on the brink of war on more than one occasion, e.g., Operation BRASSTACTS crisis, which brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war in early 1987. When General Sundarji was at the helm of the affair, he got involved in the three most crucial low-intensity conflicts the Indian nation has fought: Operation Blue Star, Operation Pawan, operation Falcon.

Defence Export:

A significant change in India's defence policy under

Rajiv Gandhi was to promote defence exports. India's policy was to refrain from exporting defence material. When concern at the level of defence spending led to a budget freeze in 1989, Rajiv Gandhi's Government encouraged defence public sector units to sell their produce abroad. It was noted that China's arms export was the major source of its modernization program. However, for India to move from a buyer to a manufacturer of arms for its self-defence and become a purveyor in the international marketplace further undermined the cause of peace and disarmament that the successive Indian governments promoted.

Defence Budget:

During Rajiv Gandhi's five years Premiership, the defence budget increased nearly 5% every year by 3.94% in 1985-86 to 4.12% in 1986-87, 4.47% in 1987-88, and 5.15% in 1988-89. From Rs. 7,987 crores in 1988-89, the defence budget jilted up to Rs.12,000 crores in 1989-90, which was also the fifth year of the integrated five-year defence plan designed to build a modern fighting force streamlined with state-of-the-art weaponry system. In 1987-88, defence accounted for 17% of the total budget of the Indian government. It came down to 15% in 1986-87 to 14% in 1989-90.³⁷ This was a major departure from the previous government. But while the country's defence budget went up in absolute terms as a proportion of G.N.P., it remained lower than the global average and much lower than that of China and Pakistan. Defence spending was much lower³³.

Interaction of Defence and Foreign Policy: Sri Lanka and Maldives:

One of the significant phenomena during the late 80s *i.e.*, from 1984-89 was the interaction between defence policy and foreign policy. The successive events since 1984, *i.e.*, the occupation of the no man's land of Kashmir, Siachin Glacier in 1984, the sum Drong valley crisis, operation BRASTRACTS in 1986-89, India's intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987 and Maldives in 1988, etc. suggested India's predilection to use military force as the main element of power projection.

Arms buildup :

What was unique in the arms buildup in the Subcontinent, especially under the administration of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi from 1984-89, was that India was leading the arms buildup rather than essentially reacting

to one, e.g., India's naval expansion triggered Pakistan's naval expansion. It set off the alarm as far off as Australia. According to Rajiv G.C. Thomas, "India's military capabilities have been mounting steadily from a minimalist conventional defence posture directed primarily against Pakistan and secondly against China to a maximalist nuclear deterrence posture that would extend India's military reach through Asia and the Middle East³⁴".

India's threat perceptions and its response under Narendra Modi:

Since the end of the Cold War, the world has become more complex and unpredictable. The Indo-Pacific area is emerging as the new strategic center of gravity, with North America and Europe losing ground in the balance of power. In the Indo-Pacific region, "competitive cooperation" is envisioned inside a "cooperative security" matrix by an evolving security paradigm. India faces persistent challenges from China's and Pakistan's security postures, their strategic cooperation, and their support for non-state actors.

Moreover, there is still a good chance that the present Hamas-Houthi rift may encourage parties in the Subcontinent to push their anti-India agenda. Indian interests may be harmed by the recent developments in Myanmar (the *Rohingya* problem) and their impact on the northeastern region of India, as well as the Maldives' pro-China political stance.

Regarding the Kashmir issue, there is still another significant threat concern. China and Pakistan have made fruitless attempts to "internationalize the Kashmir issue" after Article 370 was repealed. Additionally, Pakistan is actively helping several terrorist organizations carry out another incident in the valley similar to Pulwama. Even though Kashmir is an internal Indian problem, China has attempted to bring it up before the U.N. Security Council.

The deliberate efforts to radicalize the youth of Northeast India, Punjab, and Kashmir are highly harmful to India's demographic dividend. The fact that India is situated in the middle of the "Golden Crescent" and "Golden Triangle" contributes to the problem of drug smuggling, which is also tearing apart Indian society. India's sovereignty and territorial integrity are also seen as threats. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor's building is flagrantly violating India's sovereignty through the Gilgit-Baltistan area. The Chinese army's recent attempts to seize control of Pangong Tso Lake and Galwan

Valley pose grave threats to India's territorial integrity.

China has attempted to seize land from India before; in 2017, it attempted to seize the Doklam Valley, which sits at the intersection of China, Bhutan, and India. Bhutan and its neighbours have always had cordial relations. However, to counter the Chinese presence, India must address the bilateral concerns with Bhutan. The Doklam event highlighted the vulnerability of "Chicken's Neck," the thin region that separates northeastern India from the Indian mainland. States in the northeast are already vulnerable to insurgencies. Its weak borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar give rebel groups like ULFA, NSCN, and others a safe harbour. These porous borders with Nepal and Bangladesh are also utilized for human trafficking.

The Rohingya Muslim population, who are illegally entering India due to persecution in their home state of Myanmar, is perceived as a considerable threat. They are susceptible to religious extremism and radicalization. Because the border is permeable, there is a significant influx of undocumented immigrants from Bangladesh into India, primarily as a result of climate change. It places undue strain on India's already limited resources. They are in charge of the sensitive matter of national citizen registration (N.R.C.) in states like Assam, where population shift is problematic.

Because China is a major economic force, it poses the greatest threat to Indian interests, even when other neighbors see threats only in specific areas. China is India's second-largest trading partner, and the extremely skewed trade that China enjoys is detrimental to Indian commercial interests. India has paid a high price for the inexpensive goods dumped on the market.

China has an advantage over Indian markets because India relies on Chinese imports of raw commodities like silk and API (active pharmaceutical ingredients). In an era where data is the new oil, much more has to be done, even if the Indian government has taken some action to protect the interests of Indian consumers by outlawing apps like TikTok. Regarding India's maritime border, the greatest danger currently facing the Indian security establishment is China's 'string of pearls'. Chinese ports ring India in the Indian Ocean, with locations in nearly all of its neighbours, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Pakistan, and the Maldives.

Apart from these, in 2023, "there were total of 16 broad current and emerging security challenges such as managing influence of Chinese Commercial Entities

(C.C.E.s), which are engaged in Counter-Intelligence (CI) in India and China's increasing influence in the neighbourhood as well as rise in cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, cryptocurrencies, implementation of 5G technology, issues of unfenced land borders, mass agitations, overstaying foreigners, radical organizations, Khalistani activities, and use of Interpol to achieve international cooperation.

India thus needs a well-defined plan to effectively address and meet all potential security threats. Combining our military, social, political, economic, and diplomatic strengths is crucial.

Modi Government's Defence Policy:

Under the Modi government took a number of measures, including delicensing, deregulation, export promotion, foreign investment liberalization in the defence sector. While focusing on transparency, predictability and ease of doing business. With the mantra of "Aatmanirbhar Bharat" given by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, the Defence Sector in India is poised to take a leap forward with a multi-pronged approach. Now, with focused attention on promotion of export of Indian defence products, India is steadily marching from "Make in India" towards "Make for the World".

The vision is to make the private defence sector a global leader. Under the Hon'ble Prime Minister's leadership, several policies and initiatives have been implemented to boost the private Defence and Aerospace sector. The steps taken include

- Digitising internal processes,
- Providing checks and balances to restrict imports and promote exports,
- Formulating schemes aimed at promoting ease of doing business and
- Encouraging the manufacture and purchase of indigenous products, which act as the wings for the private defence sector to take flight.

A new category of capital procurement, 'Buy {Indian-IDD (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)}', has been introduced in Defence Procurement Procedure (D.P.P.)-2016 to promote indigenous design and development of the defence. The procurement of capital equipment has been given top priority³⁵.

Situation Before and After Reform:

The reform has helped to create domestic design

capabilities in the Defence Sector. Another essential thing introduced in defence policy was the defence procurement procedure, which aims to provide the highest degree of probity, public accountability, transparency, fair completion, and a level playing field for Indians. Under the strategic partnership model, both public and private companies can participate in the acquisition, providing a level playing field for both. The reform also provided preference to local suppliers in procurement, thereby giving a boost to made in India.

The government also took several steps to encourage investments and FDIs in the defence sector. It established a defence industrial corridor in the U.P. and Tamil Nadu to serve as an economic development engine and grow the country's defence industrial base. Thus, the government focused on developing a holistic defence manufacturing ecosystem.

Though the security threat perception did not change much with China's One Belt One Road policy, which poses a strategic threat to Indian security, Pakistan's animosity towards India continues—for example, the Pulwama attack.

Conclusion:

The security schizophrenia displayed by the Indian nation during Rajiv administration resulted primarily from the paradoxical emphasis on universal peace rhetoric and regional power ambitions. The Rajiv administration consciously distanced itself from Indira Gandhi's regional power politics and returned to Nehruvian emphasis on universal peace issues with India's principal regional antagonist. It sought to build peaceful relations through personalized diplomacy.

India's defence policy during the Modi period has always responded to the challenges raised by threat perceptions; the government has adopted aggressive steps to counter them and embarked upon a track to maintain a cordial as well as hawkish policy to establish military relations with powerful nations to fend off Chinese threat.

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