



National Seminar on

“India’s National Security: Challenges and Options”

Date: 12-13 March 2020 / Venue: SLS, PDU

School of Liberal Studies and NIAS, Bangalore

Concept Note

Over the last one decade there have been critical developments in South Asian countries in terms of the security challenges they face. Political stability in smaller countries like Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka and continuation of instabilities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Maldives offers interesting issues to engage with. Meanwhile, India’s growing profile as a strong economy and military power with a stable and robust democracy regime continues to be the only South Asian country that demands a clout in Asian as well as world politics. India’s growing capabilities, most often, are challenged by the spillover effects of political and security developments in the neighboring countries. At the same time the Indian state also face a number of internal security challenges that, to a great extent, challenges the journey. The state also has been facing a number of nonconventional security challenges in terms of terrorism to food, water and energy security. While a widely accepted discourse on national security mainly engages with the external as well as internal security challenges, there is a need to deal with beyond the popular understanding of security.

A major aspect of India’s national security is the external threats that it faces. Surrounded by disturbed neighbourhood, the Indian state has always been at the receiving end of the spillover effects of political mishappenings in and around the neighboring states. Moreover, neighbors like China and Pakistan have been major sources of security threat in terms of challenging the territorial sovereignty of India. There continues to be efforts by both the above mentioned countries to claim their legitimacy over the Indian Territory. And such attempts also carry along a number of other security threats to the Indian state.

Cross border terrorism sponsored by Pakistan, illegal dumping of China made goods into Indian Territory, frequent skirmishes between the border guarding forces over territorial claims are major instances of overt security threats to India from the neighborhood. Apart from these, there also national security threats from counterfeit Indian currencies for which the role of Pakistan and the Nepalese soil as safe haven been always the case. Similarly, there are a host of other external security threats posed against the Indian state like the nuclear security, especially in regard to Pakistan. With the latest development of surgical strike and the Balakot attack the fear of nuclear war between the two countries has been doing rounds.

A second major aspect to India's National Security is the internal security threats. The post-independence India has been facing a number of internal security threats in various forms and shades. An important internal security threat has been in form of the Maoist conflict. Once termed as the single largest internal security threat by the former Prime Minister the Maoist Insurgency pose a serious security threat to the very idea of India and to the parliamentary form of governance. Spread over 10 states covering 180 districts in and around East and Central India, the Maoists aim to seize political power through an armed struggle and herald a new democratic order. In little more than 50 years of its existence the Maoist conflict has claimed thousands of lives. Presently, though the violence related activities have comedown drastically, the Maoists continue to a serious threat to the Indian state. Another important internal security threat in India is the ethnic conflicts in the Northeastern states. A home to multiple armed groups, the northeastern states have been at the receiving end of militancy. The geographical location of the region in terms of sharing its boundaries of Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh play a vital role in sustaining and providing safe havens to the militants. As a result of which the region lives with constant fear and has not been able to see development. Most times the militancy in the Northeast is factional in nature as militant groups keep on changing their objectives leading to formation of smaller groups. Demands for autonomy, independence, assertion of ethnic identity, etc. are some of the major factors for the fragile security situations in the Northeast.

Another critical internal security threat has been the violent separatism movements in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Demands for a separate state fuelled by Pakistan sponsored violence has been the major factor for fuelling instability and violent movements in the state. With the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A and its bifurcation, the state is going through an uneasy calm which, as many fears, might lead to further the violence movements in future. With the changing political dynamics, the security threat emanating from the state of J&K demands a critical engagement. Along with this the

issue of growing radicalisation in J&K and some other parts of the country also pose serious security threats. Religious radicalisation, especially Islamic radicalisation, challenges the very secular fabric of the country by manufacturing religious divides and sustaining an atmosphere of hatred among various religions. India has witnessed many episodes of ugly communal tensions in the past. With the growing religious radicalisation and its links with the external linkages with groups like ISIS there is need to engage with the very nature and extent of religious radicalisation in India.

Another important aspect National security is about the non-conventional security issues. While the issues flagged above has got a lot to do with the state security concern, the non-conventional security issues got to do with the individuals as unit of analysis. Talking about the non-conventional security threats we highlight the issues of energy, food, health, and environmental security aspects. It is important for a country like India to deal with these issues with equal, if not more, rigor in manner in which it deals with the external and internal security threats. As India making progress as a world power these non-conventional security issues need to be critically engaged with.

In order to critically engage with the above mentioned aspects of India's National Security, the School of Liberal Studies (SLS), Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University (PDPU), in collaboration with Conflict Resolution Programme (as a knowledge partner) organizing a two-day conference in PDPU campus.

A major objective of the conference is two folds: one, to have experts debating over the issues on the first day of the conference; secondly, to involve selected students from the SLS, PDPU to contribute to their understanding by participating and presenting papers in the conference. We plan a dedicated schedule for students' participation on the second day of the conference.

As an output of the conference we are intending to come out with an edited volume carrying the writings of the experts

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**Conference Conveners: Dr. Prashant Panda, Dr Sitakanta Mishra (SLS, PDPU) and
Dr. Anshuman Behera, NIAS, Bangalore**

