

The Belt and Road Initiative of China and Geostrategic Context: A Reverse Perspective

By Dr Prabhakaran Paleri

Author is a strategist, researcher, academic and author with professional experience in Indian naval, customs and coast guard services and also as a non-executive corporate director in public sector undertakings. He retired as the director-general of the Indian Coast Guard in August 2006, and thereafter continued as a research scholar and academician in India and abroad.

In international relations, ideally, a nation deals with a nation, not the governing ideology of the nation. But that, often, need not be the case. China today is a globally powerful nation thanks to the centralised governmental system it has been with since 1949. The achievement of China on date is that of the communist party of China (CPC) and not that of China the nation. The powerful CPC eclipses China, the nation. The students and scholars in political science and other related national security strategy topics mostly overlook this aspect while deciding the character of a nation under study. The centre of gravity of national power may dynamically shift between the nation and the ideology under which it is governed. This statement is debatable. But it is the view of the author that geostrategic conclusions and decisions can go off beam if this difference is not understood and balanced ab initio in geostrategy. This paper addresses the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China against this backdrop primarily from the Chinese perspective with brief afterthoughts on other countries, some associated and some not, with India as a referent. The main organisation in China's international relations is the International Department of the Communist Party of China (ID-CPC). The Belt and Road Initiative is ab initio supervised by the ID-CPC. It has intensely established network at international level, which is a great achievement for the secretary of CPC, expected to remain for life, Xi Jinping. China has well established foreign relations based on various demands on its one-party regime through power projections and diffusions appropriate to the global scenario in a centralised decision making model. The power of China in international relations is evident in the Belt and Road Initiative too. There are also traces of history that are noticeable about the Chinese mindset. Though the initiative promises high economic and political advantages to its members and other beneficiaries, it is yet to be proven geostrategically beneficial to all unless it comes out of the choking feeling caused by the C19 virus among others. But the CPC and its arms across the globe seemingly have the sway to come out of the cold at least for now. As far as India is concerned, the author briefly concludes that the country has made responsible decisions and is on track to deal with the changing issues of geostrategic security without unduly eschewing China and its rights in international affairs, though the countries are poles apart in ideology and political preferences.

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CYBER FORENSICS - THE FUTURE

By Sanjay Sahay

Author belongs to the 1989 batch of the IPS, of Karnataka cadre. He has accomplished high degree of professionalism in wide and varied professional assignments. He took voluntary retirement from service in March 2020. At the time of retirement he was ADG of Karnataka Police of Computer Wing and is credited for imbibing technology in policing. He is an avid public speaker on information technology, cyber security and management issues.

While Cyber Security is becoming more and more critical in our day to day functioning, given the all permeating nature of this technology in our lives, courtesy COVID-19, its Cyber Forensics which will show us the way forward. In this technological age there is cyber forensics in everything. Lots of work in the forensic domain is conducted on a day to day basis by Cyber Security professionals and also normal cyber professionals of different domains. A bit of a cyber-intelligence built through or enabled by Cyber Forensics tools can do wonders. If we were to have scientific cyber forensic analysis of all major hacks / breaches and insider data theft, our understanding of the cyber world would have been totally different.

Beyond the standard cyber forensic tools being used by our forensic science laboratories, in an equally mechanical manner, there is whole wide world to be tapped. There is the niche area of preventive cyber forensics, ready to be exploited both for providing one of kind business opportunity and also the examination and analysis which we all deserve; from a research institution to any business enterprise, need not be only IT enterprises. Today, no enterprise or govt. can exist without this facility or capability or expertise. However strange it might sound, there are very few professional courses available in this country and general forensics degree holders are supposed to handle this. This turns out to be an unacceptable proposition.

Loads of the current professionals are managing with substandard certifications not commensurate to the vastly complex requirement. Lots are managing with half-baked knowledge or what they have picked up on the job, certainly without any mentor or guide. Their success is in managing what they have been assigned to and not what can be the optimum. Who knows the roadmap of this expertise and this discipline? How may cyber forensic scientists do you know of? Is that the aspiration of the technical oriented mind in this country or is it just coding, coding and coding. There is world beyond that. Cyber Forensics should become an aspirational discipline, much like Data Scientist or cardiac or neuro surgeon.

Such professionals will not come to of nowhere. Its high time we find the first level of mentors. They are few are far between and they are dispersed. They have to be brought together to create, guide, monitor and upscale cyber forensics education in this country. National Forensic Sciences University, a leader in the Forensic Science education, should take the lead and become world leaders in Cyber Forensics education too. It is already a force to be reckoned with in forensic science education globally. Under the astute leadership which it has, it is certainly a doable proposition. It would take 5 years of hard work, but would certainly be worth the effort both by way of creating world class professionals and also developing the capability of taking care of our cyber infrastructure operations and professionals end to end.

PREVENTIVE CYBER FORENSICS IS ALREADY RULING THE WORLD.

BrahMos: Ensuring peace with strength

By Courtesy: Indian Express

In a fast-paced, highly intense military conflict situation, BrahMos, encompassing an “across the spectrum” warfare capability in all-weather, day-and-night conditions, can ensure a clear, decisive outcome in the battlefield.



Power-packed all the way: BrahMos has enabled Indian Army to undertake divergent land warfare operations in difficult & treacherous terrains also helped carry out deep surgical strikes

A resurgent India’s military capability and combat preparedness to deal with any sort of conflict and eventuality has taken centre-stage in the backdrop of rapidly evolving security dimensions at the regional and global front. While adhering to the longstanding principle of “peace with strength”, the Indian Armed Forces have not shied away from showing their absolute assertiveness in safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity in times of conflict.

Indian Armed Forces, in possession of a huge inventory of state-of-the-art, high-end military platforms and systems, have also deployed BrahMos, the world’s most formidable, uniquely versatile tactical weapon having outstanding anti-ship and land-attack capability. The precision attack missile has been deployed along India’s strategic positions, rendering unprecedented strength to the country’s defence forces to resolutely deal with any kind of aggressive military posturing by an adversary nation.

In a fast-paced, highly intense military conflict situation, BrahMos, encompassing an “across the spectrum” warfare capability in all-weather, day-and-night conditions, can ensure a clear, decisive outcome in the battlefield.

“The very name ‘BrahMos’ has created ripples all across the global military circles. Rightfully reckoned as an undisputed leader in its genre, BrahMos has not only revolutionised modern missile technology, but completely redefined present-day warfare strategies and tactics as well,” says Dr Sudhir K Mishra, DG BrahMos, DRDO, and CEO & MD, BrahMos Aerospace – the India-Russia Joint Venture (JV) developing and producing the versatile BrahMos missile systems.

While the land-attack BrahMos has enabled Indian Army to undertake divergent land warfare operations in difficult, treacherous terrains and carry out deep surgical strikes, the missile, deployed on Indian Navy's frontline maritime platforms in both anti-ship and land-attack configurations, has enormously sharpened the Navy's anti-surface warfare and coastal defence warfare capability.

In addition to the mobile ground-launched and sea-based weapons, it is the fielding of the highly advanced BrahMos air-launched cruise missile (ALCM) deployed on the Indian Air Force's Su-30MKI air combat platform which has profoundly strengthened India's deterrence posture and expanded the country's strategic outreach.

On January 20, 2020 the IAF commissioned the "TigerSharks" Squadron, deploying the deadly combination of Su-30MKI armed with BrahMos. Being the heaviest and deadliest "stand-off" precision strike weapon to arm the long range Sukhoi-30MKI, BrahMos-A has ensured that India punches a deadly blow to potential enemy positions on the ground and sea from far off ranges.

Developed as a joint military technological programme in partnership with Russia in the 1990s, BrahMos has steadily evolved and ascended to become India's most lethal and highly powerful indigenous strike weapon that has entrenched well into all major military strategic thinking and planning as a key force multiplier. The diligent efforts undertaken by the Indian scientific community and the domestic defence industry to indigenise such a critical military asset has brought in significant breakthroughs over the past few years, thus bolstering India's national security apparatus manifold.

Reform or perish

By Ashok Mahapatra

The writer is Director (retired), Maritime Safety Division, International Maritime Organisation, UN.

Following the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 that came close to toppling the British rule in India and pursuant to the Government of India Act 1858, the administrative responsibilities were taken over by the Viceroy of India. The Viceroy was a direct representative of the Queen of England and assisted by the Imperial Civil Service (ICS). The ICS was headed by the Secretary of State for India, a member of the British cabinet.

Initially, almost all ICS officers were British and had been educated in elite British schools. Thereafter, a few Indians were inducted into the ICS. At the time of Independence, there were 322 Indians and 688 British ICS officers. In their heyday, those of the ICS were the most powerful officials in the Empire. A tiny cadre, a little over a thousand-strong, ruled more than 30 crore Indians. The ICS directed all the activities of British India, and every ICS officer had an average of three lakh subjects under him and lorded over every corner of his subjects' lives. The ICS, as belied by its name, was beholden to the British Empire and its principal role was to control colonial India on behalf of the Crown. Accordingly, all administrative and legal infrastructure were built to further this cause. This ethos of controlling every part of the subjects' lives was carried forward by the successor service, the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), after Independence.

Jawaharlal Nehru noted that someone had once defined the Indian Civil Service "as neither Indian, nor civil, nor a service, but with which we are unfortunately still afflicted in this country." At the time of Independence, the ranks and posts of the erstwhile ICS along with its top people were retained for continuity. The only thing that changed was the nomenclature as "IAS". Other than that, nothing else changed.

Their main role was still to control almost every aspect of lives of the people under their jurisdiction and distribute largesse to those whom they fancied. There was no doubt at the time of Independence that the civil service was the frame of the country and that, without them, the country would collapse.

After Independence, India adopted a controlled economy to manage its finances. Hence, the ethos of the ICS continued with the IAS. As result, while the political class was coming to terms as how to govern the nation, the philosophy of control set forth by our colonial bureaucrats was continued and strengthened by the IAS.

In 1979, Margaret Thatcher, elected on the promise of change and reform, stated, “We have to move this country in a new direction, to change the way we look at things, to create a wholly new attitude of mind.” She appointed Sir Derek Rayner, who was not connected with the Civil Service, to recommend reforms and make the government administration more efficient and accountable. This resulted in core policy being made by a core team of competent civil servants while the operation and execution of the approved policies were entrusted to a number of independent agencies headed by professionals.

Furthermore, Margaret Thatcher was a visionary who recognised the onset of globalisation and that there was the need for professionals rather than generalists in positions of decision-making to ensure that Britain continued to retain its place in the world order. She faced strong resistance from the well-entrenched British Civil Service. Nonetheless, she stood firm in her conviction and reformed the service anyway.

The role and competence of the policy makers have evolved since the 1950s. Today, no policy can or should be made purely from a national perspective. It needs to be made after taking the geopolitical situation and the state of the world economy into account. Therefore, the policy makers need not only be competent, but also specialised in the subject matter that they are handling to define the nation’s policy.

I have no doubt that, at the time of being inducted, the officers of the Civil Service were the brightest. However, once put in a policy making position, without specialisation, they are not fit for the job. It is impossible to make a considered judgement without having a complete understanding of the subject matter to ensure that it is acceptable both at international and national levels.

Additionally, without in-depth knowledge of the subject matter, it would be impossible to defend the country’s interests socially and economically when negotiating with investors and trade partners; particularly so when every country is competing for the same piece of the pie and protecting their own interests.

The initial training prepares our civil servants for fieldwork. After they have done their mandatory fieldwork, they move to policy making positions (at the level of joint secretary at the Centre). At this stage, they are not specialised in any particular area from where they can dictate policy for the benefit of the national economy and the welfare of the Indian people after taking into account the geopolitical situations of the world. You cannot, and should not, have someone making policy on one subject one day and on another the next day. As a result, that person often gets either overwhelmed or over-dependent on the un-experienced junior cadre who do not have enough of exposure to fathom the larger picture. This often leads to decisions which have undesirable results.

The recent cabinet decision encouraging civil servants to reskill voluntarily is not the answer. When have the civil servants accepted any change to their service conditions voluntarily? They have responded only when the political masters ordered them to do this or that. Hence, mandatory specialisation is a must for policy makers.

While the civil service has served the country reasonably well, there is a need for an overhaul to meet the challenges of today. The Modi government came to power on the promise of change. Hence, it is incumbent on the Prime Minister to lead the charge for change for a new direction, to change the way we look at things, to create a new mindset for an India of the 21st Century. This is his ‘once in a century’ moment. No doubt there will be pushback from bureaucracy as they would not like to be disturbed from their comfort zones. Furthermore, the process cannot be led by the existing bureaucracy. It needs to be led by someone from outside the system and not having any existing baggage and definitely not a retired bureaucrat. Every bureaucrat will always protect his own brethren. Nonetheless, I believe the PM can do it. This is India’s chance of the century – reform we must or we miss the opportunity of the century and perish.

Deepening Partnership - India And United States Sign Fourth Defence Cooperation Agreement

By Gopal Dhok

Author is a researcher with Forum for Integrated National Security.

India and the USA signed the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for geo-spatial cooperation on the occasion of 2+2 annual dialogue. It is the fourth of the fundamental defence cooperation agreement between two countries.

BECA will be helpful in exchange of geospatial intelligence between two countries. The agreement will enable a systematized exchange of geophysical, geomagnetic, aeronautical, topographic, hydrographic, and bathymetric information. The agreement includes exchange of maps, nautical and aeronautical charts, along with geomagnetic and gravity data. The agreement will enable sharing of classified data as well.

The agreement will be especially helpful for operations in mountainous (like Kargil) and underwater terrains for pinpoint precision of weapons systems. It can help India in military operations beyond range of NavIC geo-positioning system.

In 2016, Former Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar and his American counterpart Ashton Carter signed the second agreement - Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA). LEMOA allows both countries to use each other's defence facilities for resupply, refueling and repairs. Such logistics support agreement is crucial in extending the range of air and naval power. India signed similar agreements with Singapore, France, South Korea and Australia. India is also in talks with Japan, Russia, and the United Kingdom for a logistics support agreement.

The third agreement, Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) was signed in September 2018. COMCASA enables encrypted communication and sharing of information between defence platforms of the two countries (like P-8 Poseidon). In bilateral or multilateral military operations, secure communication between military platforms is valuable for the success of the mission.

Covering intelligence, logistics, communication, and navigation; these four agreements will act as a foundation for future bilateral military operations by enhancing interoperability.

In 2002, India signed the first of the four agreements, the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA). The first agreement is for sharing of military intelligence and to protect classified information of two countries.

After the first agreement in 2002, second agreement (LEMOA) took fourteen years to formalize other three agreements as strategic experts considered that such agreements could jeopardize India's 'strategic autonomy.'

In 2016, Former National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan wrote that "India resisted signing the foundational agreements on the ground that these agreements would undermine India's strategic autonomy". Though agreements are not binding on either country and require case-specific clearance.

The idea of strategic autonomy become part of India's strategic discourse when the epicenter of the cold war was Atlantic (North), and India was at the periphery of that war. Yet, India was not able to escape the conflict and was forced to partner with one side due to the complex security situation in the neighbourhood.

India needs to examine if strategic autonomy worked in favour of India's strategic and economic interest or not.

Furthermore, Recent Indian preemptive actions against terror camps suggest that deepening cooperation and better understanding between India and its strategic partners have been more effective in securing the nation against an external threat.

The focal point of modern-day conflict is Indo-pacific. And we cannot escape that reality. Considering emerging threat perception, expanding defence partnership with like-minded nations will be a suitable choice and best utility of "strategic autonomy". As former Foreign Secretary said recently that India is no longer a 'non-aligned' state and follows issues-based alignment. That will be a more pragmatic approach to foreign policy.

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Nation is Indebted to:

Damodar Ganesh Bapat

(29 Apr 1935 – 17 August 2019)



Late Sri Bapat, was a Bachelor of Arts and Commerce from Nagpur University. After completing his studies, he worked at several places. However, he was not happy with his jobs and was interested in social work. In 1970, he moved to Jashpur, in Chhattisgarh, and started working in rural areas in India. He came in contact with Sri Sadashiv Katre who had founded a community in 1962, named Bharatiya Kushtha Nivarak Sangh (BKNS) at village Sothi in Champa, to care for leprosy patients. Initially Sri Bapat worked there as a teacher for the tribal children. While teaching he also met leprosy patients. He also worked to improve public awareness about leprosy. It is on record that he had improved the lives of an estimated 26,000 leprosy patients and remained there to serve them throughout his life in Janjgir–Champa district, Chhattisgarh, India.

In 2018, the Government of India awarded him the Padma Shri in recognition of his social work. He was awarded the Chhattisgarh Rajya Alankar by the state of Chhattisgarh. Shri Badabazar Kumar Sabha Pustakalaya in Kolkata awarded him the Vivekananda Seva Puraskar. Bhaurao Deoras Foundation awarded him Bhaurao Deoras Seva Smruti Puraskar.

In 2006, he was awarded the tenth Devi Ahilyabai National Award by Shri Ahilyotsav Samiti in Indore for his work in the rehabilitation, education and improvement in health of leprosy patients and making them self-reliant.

Today, Bhartiya Kushtha Nivarak Sangh is serving humanity. In house, it runs a 30 bed hospital, Kendriya Vidyalaya School for patient's children, Old age home, Gaushala, farming and skill development centre.

"What a great inspiration Sri Bapat got from Sri Sadashiv Katre and he devoted his whole life to serve neglected and contemned leprosy patients"

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