

India's National Security Annual Review 2016–17,

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The volume under review is the sixteenth in the series of the project supported by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS). The series has occupied an important niche over the past many years in catering to the significant need for quality analyses on issues of national security. The contributions in the volume, specifically those by the editor, continue to exhibit the same high standards and rigour that have characterised it since its inception.

Over half of the publication is the review of the country's national security environment by Professor Satish Kumar and his able staff. This includes an analysis of major strategic trends and thinking relating to the United States (US), China, Russia, Europe (the United Kingdom [UK], Germany and European Union) and Japan—as captured in significant policy documents/white papers released during the time period under review. This is followed by an examination of the status of international conflicts and crises, ranging from the Islamic State (IS) to Syria, Afghanistan, North Korea, South China Sea and East China Sea, as well as issues relating to major international concerns like terrorism, cybersecurity, climate change, global governance and nuclear proliferation.

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In the next two sections dealing with the 'External Security Environment', India-specific developments vis-à-vis the US, China, Russia, Europe, Japan, Pakistan, other South Asian countries, Asia-Pacific (Australia, Singapore, Myanmar, South Korea, Vietnam, Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN]), Central Asia, Southwest Asia (Afghanistan, Iran), West Asia (United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Palestine, Israel, Syria, Arab League) and Africa (India–Africa Forum Summit, among other pertinent events) are highlighted. The issues covered range from India's cooperation with these countries in the defence/security realm as well as those related to economics and trade.

The editor then turns his attention to 'Internal Security Developments'. Issues pertaining to the North-East, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and left-wing extremism (LWE) are covered, while aspects relating to 'growing intolerance' and 'rural distress' are also flagged. The next section highlights 'India's Defence Initiatives', and includes decisions by the Defence Acquisition Council and developments relating to the acquisitions/inductions of the tri-services. All the above sections are an exhaustive survey of the developments on each issue area during the time period under survey.

At the end of the volume, the editor does a 'national security assessment' in which he highlights the 'unmitigated threats' from China and concerns emanating from Pakistani revisionist behaviour. His call for India to develop more innovative and 'courageous thinking' vis-à-vis China cannot be faulted. As for internal security issues, Kumar notes that the lack of dialogue between India and Pakistan is providing greater impetus to protesters and inimical elements inside Pakistan to further aggravate the situation in J&K. He affirms that India has not been able to offer an effective security response to Pakistani machinations and airs the possibility of a 'deep strike' to inflict unacceptable damage to Pakistan and call its 'nuclear bluff'. The grave repercussions of such a policy course though may not be mitigated by just the 'courage of the government' or 'national will', two aspects the editor flags as contingent factors that should drive such a decision. The editor notes that while left-wing violence and insurgencies in the North-East have gradually reduced, the fundamental fault lines still remain unresolved in either case.

The editor's contention that India has been 'overly cautious' in providing military equipment to Afghanistan 'for fear of hurting Pakistani sensitivities' can perhaps be contested, given the complexities involved, ranging from the capabilities of the Afghan Army to put to

effective use equipment that could be provided to the Indian ability to spare the combat equipment requested by the Afghans, amongst others. While Kumar advises that India's relationship with some of the major powers may have to be 'nurtured' so that they can 'come to India's help in any event of attacks on India's sovereignty', what is left unsaid is the specific country/countries with which such an alliance relationship should be pursued, if at all. Further, the impact of such policy options on the country's strategic autonomy is left unexplored.

Apart from the editor's wide-ranging contribution as just detailed, the volume has contributions from industry leaders, practitioners and academics on specific issues of relevance/interest. The section 'India's Security Zone' has essays on India–Iran relations, India's Gulf agenda, India–Myanmar relations and the need to better prepare to counter vulnerabilities in the Indian Ocean. Dinkar Srivastava's essay on India–Iran relations and Gautam Mukhopadhyay's essay on India–Myanmar relations are sober and sharp assessments of the status and challenges involved in the two critical bilateral relationships. Kanwal Sibal, in his essay on Indian Ocean vulnerabilities, draws attention to the 'fiction of China's peaceful rise...' and notes that the burden on India to act as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region, in conjunction with the US, Japan and others, is set to increase.

Stanly Johny's advice that India should be wary of being sucked into regional rivalries in West Asia is well taken, though his laying of the blame for India's policy decisions in the recent past vis-à-vis Iran solely on 'American pressure' is a partial explanation. Issues intrinsic to the India–Pakistan–Iran pipeline for instance, including those relating to security of the pipeline inside Pakistan, among other issues, derailed the project. His charge that India's vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) against Iran 'ruptured the mutual trust both countries had built over the decades' is difficult to sustain, as it was a vote in a multilateral setting on a specific issue of regional and international security concern which, subsequently, was under the purview of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for nearly a decade till mid-2015. Johny attributes authorship of Nicolas Blarel's book on India–Israel relations to E. Sreedaran and Sumit Ganguly (cited in endnote 6), probably inadvertently but at odds with the rigour of most of the contributions of the volume.

The next section, 'Challenges for India', includes essays on Make in India (MII), water security, Islamic radicalisation in South Asia and

cybersecurity. The essay on water security makes for a fascinating read and Shashi Shekhar's call for a paradigm shift in how India needs to think about the issue and his advocacy of a 'comprehensive water resource management' is timely. Baba Kalyani's plea is for the government to handhold the private sector and act as a catalyst given the prohibitive entry costs in defence manufacturing. At the same time though, he notes Rs 18,000 crore (\$3 billion) private sector investment in the defence sector so far 'despite lack of concrete orders'. The Rafael saga (involving the joint venture between Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited and Rafael to make Spike anti-tank guided missiles [ATGMs]) is proof of the challenges private sector companies face in an environment where the government is laying a premium on transfer of technology among other requirements for foreign original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) as a condition to MII.

Shishir Gupta believes that despite the disintegration of the IS, the rabid ideology espoused by it will continue to spread in parts of South Asia, with issues like Kashmir and Rohingyas continuing to fuel the fires. Samir Saran, in the chapter on cybersecurity, flags critical issues relating to regulation and legislation to deal with the ever-growing threat. The author calls for building of 'norms that dissuade states from attacking critical infrastructure' during 'armed conflict'. It is not explained however as to why any antagonist will subscribe to 'norms' and desist from seeking military advantage in a situation of armed conflict.

A specific section on internal security has essays on LWE and border security. It includes novel contributions on unemployment, national security implications, agricultural productivity and national security planning. Chandrajit Banerjee brings to attention the social and economic risks of insufficient job creation—with concomitant negative security implications—in a country where working-age population is slated to cross 1 billion by 2050. Ramesh Chand highlights the fact that adequate availability of food at affordable prices is essential for maintaining national security.

Pushpita Das flags the challenges involved in border management (ranging from difficult terrain, border disputes to underdeveloped border areas, among others) and the inadequacies in the country's border management system (from manpower and equipment shortages to lack of coordination among the 12 different ministries involved). Ajit Lal notes that the challenge from LWE relates not just to the longevity of the issue but also to the geographical spread and the varied issues involved. He

cautions that the Maoist movement ‘remains an ideological force rooted in the objective conditions in India’.

The last section on ‘Changing Security Environment’ has essays on China’s anti-access area denial (A2AD) strategy, hybrid threats, and India and global governance reforms. S. Chadrasekhar deals solely with the China–US competition and the Taiwan issue in his chapter on China’s A2AD strategy, though implications for the Indian Ocean region, if any, are not explicated. The chapter on hybrid warfare draws attention to the myriad challenges to a nation state from both state as well as non-state adversaries and the need to develop capability-based forces rather than threat-based forces, given that future threat and challenges are difficult to predict due to rising strategic uncertainty. Asoke Mukerji draws attention to the UNSC reform process and the need for India to be proactive to gather support for a resolution proposing amendments to the United Nations (UN) Charter with the 75th anniversary of the UN in 2020 as the looming deadline.

The volume is not just a ready reference guide for the informed public interested in the finer details of India’s national security environment during the time period under survey but is also a commendable effort that offers critical policy recommendations on areas as diverse as water security and defence manufacturing.

