DEFENCE AND DIPLOMACY

IN PURSUIT OF NATIONAL SECURITY

INTELLIGENCE IN THE NEW WORLD

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"Intelligence capabilities are critical instruments of national power and integral to implementing the national security strategy. Strong intelligence capabilities are needed for providing warning of threats to national security, support to the policy and military communities to prevail over the threats and identifying opportunities for advancing national interests. Decision-makers, military commanders and policy analysts at all levels rely on the intelligence community to collect information unavailable from other sources and to provide strategic and tactical analysis to help surmount challenges to national security."

—National Intelligence Strategy, Office of DNI, USA[1]

INTRODUCTION

In November 2018, Russian President Vladimir Putin, in his address during a function marking a hundred years of the establishment of the military intelligence agency (GRU), hailed its "unique" capabilities and remarked that the agency had played a "decisive

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1. "National Intelligence Strategy of USA 2019", at www.dni.gov. Accessed on September 10, 2021.

role in dealing devastating blows to terrorism and restoring peace in Syria".[2] This somewhat rare public adulation was an apt testimony to the constantly expanding scope of intelligence in the new age world.

The field of intelligence, though, is as old as mankind itself. Sometimes referred to as the "World's second oldest profession", there is definitely a certain kind of fascination, glamour and even mystique attached to the profession of intelligence.

Intelligence has traditionally fulfilled wide-ranging crucial functions in national security, diplomacy and statecraft. Ever since ancient times, the discipline of intelligence has played a key role in not only ensuring the security of nations but also in strengthening various other instruments of national power. Intelligence is therefore increasingly been considered as the "First Line of Defence" of any country.

Each country has developed a peculiar system of intelligence mechanisms but globally all the intelligence agencies have been affected by the modern developments especially in the field of technology. The complex modern-day threat environment and the changing nature of warfare have forced a major change in the role and methodology of functioning of intelligence agencies. They, therefore, need to adapt themselves to cope with these international complexities and technological transformations.

Intelligence is a user-driven tool of decision-making and must provide policymakers with a wide range of options and tools. It is imperative for decision makers to understand the various disciplines of intelligence, including collection, analysis and dissemination in order to utilise them fully.

SCOPE AND TYPES OF INTELLIGENCE
Every individual, organisation and nation strives for information that will preserve their interest, reduce risks and contribute to their well-being. Intelligence means different things to different people. Intelligence and Information, while slightly different, are often confused with each other. Intelligence is basically the information

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2. Raed Jaber, "Putin 'Proud' of Russian Intelligence Role in Syria", *Aawsat*, November 4, 2018, at https://english.aawsat.com//home/article/1448996/putin-%e2%80%98proud%e2%80%99-russian-intelligence-role-syria. Accessed on September 18, 2021.

that has been processed to meet a specific requirement. A commonly stated dictum to differentiate between the two is that "All intelligence is information but not all information is intelligence".[3] The Hoover Commission report has defined intelligence as the "collection, collation, analysis and assessment of information pertaining to national security or having a bearing on formulation of national strategies."[4]

In a modern sense, intelligence is closely related to three major fields or consumers, namely, National Security, Law Enforcement and Economic Business. Although these three end-users have their own peculiar requirements and challenges, they are also interlinked in many ways. For example, an intelligence operation to penetrate a religious fundamentalist organisation may reveal foreign linkages and illegal corporate funding.

Intelligence is related to capabilities and intentions of adversaries and may cover a wide array including military, political and economic fields. It is in essence a user driven multi-domain specialised activity which is generally undertaken on three broad aspects, i.e., External Intelligence, Counter-Intelligence and Covert Operations.

Depending on the level and type of information, External Intelligence can be further subdivided into two broad segments, i.e., Strategic Intelligence and Tactical Intelligence.

Strategic Intelligence is related to strategic or larger issues concerning **c**apabilities and intentions of foreign countries. A nation needs these inputs to plan and accomplish its strategic aims. Development of space programme or acquisition of missile capability by an adversary is one such example of strategic intelligence. **Operational or Tactical Intelligence** is primarily related to combat intelligence which is information required by commanders for executing actions within an operational area to achieve immediate operational and tactical objectives. Mobilisation and deployment of troops in a particular area can be categorised as operational intelligence.

3. Mark M. Lowenthal, "Intelligence—From Secrets to Policy", CQ Press, 2009.
4. Office of the Historian, "Report by the Task Force on Intelligence Activities of the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government", at https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950-55Intel/d220. Accessed on September 27, 2021.

Counter-Intelligence are those actions taken by an intelligence agency to prevent adversaries from acquiring own information and ensure that the hostile activities of espionage, sabotage and subversion are neutralised. Counter-intelligence supports the intelligence process by focusing on the acquisition efforts of foreign intelligence agencies. Some countries also work on the principle that Counter-intelligence should deal with issues, such as protecting own scientific advancements, combating terrorism, and narcotics trafficking.

It is no secret that many nations use their Intelligence agencies to not only gather intelligence but also to undertake covert actions and achieve their national objectives. These covert actions may range from armed intervention to influence operations. Some experts consider covert action as an essential component of intelligence functions while some characterise it as an additional activity, somewhat separate from the main business of intelligence. One of the earliest covert operations conducted by CIA nicknamed "Op Mocking bird" was aimed at influencing the media.[5] Many American journalists and intellectuals were recruited to primarily oppose communism. "Active Measures" is a legacy of the erstwhile Soviet Union which involved conduct of influence operations by its intelligence agencies. In four years between 1972 and 1975, KGB reportedly planted more than 17,000 articles in Indian media as part of their attempts to discredit the USA.[6] Although there hasn't been any conclusive evidence yet, many people still suspect that the 2016 Presidential elections in US were influenced by Russia.[7]

EVOLVING DYNAMICS: A PARADIGM SHIFT

The contours of national security frameworks across the globe are being shaped by emerging issues such as technological developments, economic considerations, demographic dynamics and environmental

5. China News Zone, "CIA's Operation Mockingbird a precursor of US manipulation of world public opinion", *Helsinki Times*, November 10, 2021, at https://www.helsinkitimes.fi/china-news/20343-cia-s-operation-mockingbird-a-precursor-of-us-manipulation-of-world-public-opinion.html. Accessed on November 18, 2021.
6. Christopher Andrew, *The Mitrokhin Archive II: The KGB in the World*, Paperback 2018.
7. Sophie Marineau, "Fact check US: What is the impact of Russian interference in the US presidential election?", *The Conversation*, September 30, 2020, at https://theconversation.com/fact-check-us-what-is-the-impact-of-russian-interference-in-the-us-presidential-election-146711. Accessed on November 23, 2021.

concerns. These paradigm changes have also impacted the role and functioning of intelligence structures thereby providing fresh possibilities and challenges to the intelligence community.

Nature of Warfare. The nature of wars has undergone a paradigm shift due to which asymmetric and unconventional forms of conflict, or what is known as '5th Generation Warfare' or 'Unrestricted Warfare' has become predominant. The revolution in military affairs and resultant doctrinal evolution has led to newer ways of force application with concepts such as effect-based operations, joint warfighting, multi-domain operations, etc. Intelligence and precision engagement is critical for adopting these new ways of waging wars. Modern militaries are therefore becoming increasingly dependent on intelligence, sensors and networks. The generic term, ISR, meaning intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, has become even more critical towards war-fighting and military decision making.

The threats that nations face today are no longer only about conventional territorial threats from adversaries but have become more complex and non-traditional. The scope of these threats has expanded to include international terror, social unrest and organised transnational crime such as drug running and cybercrimes. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to fore another dimension of state-sponsored biological threats.[8] This diverse proliferation of various actors, different sources of conflict and innovative means of using force have resulted in a complex threat matrix for any independent state. For a developing country like India, the uncertainties and instabilities of the strategic environment in a polarised world will further add to the challenges of upholding national security.

Technological Developments. The pace and reach of technological developments has increased manifold in the modern world and is accelerating at an even faster pace. The developments in Biotechnology, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Nanotechnology, or the BARN revolution, have impacted every field of human endeavour. This has transformed the nature of social and

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8. Agencies, "Scientists in China discussed weaponising coronavirus in 2015: Report", *Business Standard*, May 9, 2021, at https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/scientists-in-china-discussed-weaponising-coronavirus-in-2015-report-121050900916_1.html. Accessed on September 18, 2021.

individual beliefs and capabilities thus creating new disruptions and tensions. Emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics, have fundamentally transformed the security architectures across the globe while simultaneously posing unique and unprecedented challenges from technologically proficient adversaries.

Modern developments have resulted in increase in the quantum and nature of information available. This exponential growth in volume, speed and range of information has far-reaching impact on national security and military planning. While earlier times were characterised by scarcity of information, intelligence analysts now are faced with information overload. Easy availability of information tools at a low cost to the common man has not only led to empowerment of individuals but also made them more vulnerable.

The attitude of the common man towards intelligence has changed over the years. Each human being is today either a potential intelligence target or a potential collector of intelligence. Many organisations and even individuals have started to actively indulge in the field of professional intelligence and security analysis. The rapid growth of social media, easy access to information and familiarity with basic analytical tools has enhanced the value of open source intelligence. In addition, the challenges of strategic and operational environment have resulted in an increase in the number and kind of intelligence consumers. The requirements of such end-users are bound to vary enormously. They are also now increasingly receiving data from non-intelligence sources that compete for attention and confidence.

TRANSFORMING INTELLIGENCE: IMPACT OF CHANGES

The changes described in the preceding paragraphs have become increasingly relevant to the profession of intelligence and have wide-ranging implications on the functioning of intelligence agencies. Intelligence in the 'New World' is full of extraordinary opportunities and formidable challenges. The age-old traditions and techniques practised by the intelligence community are no longer adequate to deal with modern complex threats. There is therefore a need for intelligence agencies to move beyond traditional tradecraft and adopt new methods.

PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTS

With the improvement in military equipment, communication systems and other technological innovations, the distinction between Strategic and Tactical intelligence is now getting blurred. Intelligence inputs can no longer be strictly compartmentalised in terms of time and magnitude. Due to the speed and availability of information, the policymakers and military hierarchy want to be aware of minutest details. This has resulted in "tacticisation" of intelligence inputs requirements wherein intelligence professionals no longer have the luxury of discretion and now have to feed the policy planners with the smallest details.

The traditional concept of "Intelligence cycle" is also undergoing a rethink. Due to the increased velocity and volume of information, there is now a greater interplay between collection, analysis and decision making. Thus the intelligence cycle which is sequential in nature may no longer be adequate to cope with speed of information flow. Analysts will therefore have to constantly think ahead and raise intelligence requirements in anticipation of future developments.

ROLE AND RANGE OF ACTIVITIES

Although the "traditional" threats such as interstate conflicts and rivalries will continue to be the top priority for intelligence agencies, the modern complex threats like international terrorism and domestic instability have acquired additional focus for intelligence professionals.

Since the nature of warfare has undergone a paradigm shift, traditional understanding and functioning of intelligence services must also change from providing battlefield intelligence during operations to a proactive broad-based role of combating adversaries even during peacetime. Military concepts have become increasingly intelligence-centric. Future concepts of operation such as multi-domain operations will therefore require timely collection, seamless fusion and quick dissemination. China, for instance, has already made "Intelligentised Warfare" as its core military strategy. Li Minghai, Associate Professor at the National Defense University, elucidates Intelligentised Warfare as "integrated warfare based on Internet of Things (IoT) systems that uses intelligent weaponry and equipment

and their corresponding operational methods in the land, sea, air, space, electromagnetic, cyber and cognitive domains."[9]

Since the future battlefield will be characterised by multiple sensors resulting in collection of large volume of data about the activities of adversaries, it will be important to not only focus on intelligence collection assets but also on investing in intelligence processing tools. Failure to do so will result in information overload and inability to sift the relevant pieces of information which may paralyse timely decision making. This changing information environment will force a change in the conduct of military intelligence analysis.

Intelligence agencies are now increasingly contributing towards a nation's ability to build and control narratives. A globally networked and dense public information environment offers exciting opportunities for waging information warfare. Intelligence agencies are in a unique position to play a crucial role in this potent tool of statecraft.

TECHNOLOGICAL AGILITY

The adoption and assimilation of emerging niche technologies into the methods by which intelligence inputs are collected, analysed and disseminated will therefore be central to the success of intelligence organisations. Exploitation of technologies, such as cloud computing and big data analytics, will enable intelligence agencies to 'process' information at a much grander speed and scale.[10] The shift to technical collection and automated analysis of data has already revolutionised the intelligence world. This transformation from an ancient craft into a technical enterprise hinges on adopting technical capabilities in the areas of data collation and interpretation.

The intelligence dimensions of the cyber domain are also quite significant. Since most of the critical infrastructure used by individuals and organisations is based on information technology, use of cyber

9. Maj Gen P.K. Malick (Retd.), "Defining China's Intelligentized Warfare and Role of Artificial intelligence", VIF Paper, March 2021, at https://indianstrategicknowledgeonline.com/web/Defining%20China%20Intelligentized%20Warfare%20and%20Role%20of%20Artificial%20Intelligence.pdf . Accessed on September 18, 2021.
10. Ardi Janjeva and James Sullivan, "UK Intelligence Agencies and the Commercial Cloud: What Does It All Mean?" RUSI, November 5, 2021, at https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/uk-intelligence-agencies-and-commercial-cloud-what-does-it-all-mean. Accessed on November 10, 2021.

tools for both offensive and defensive measures has become a key consideration for intelligence agencies.

Human Resources. Despite far-reaching progress in technical abilities, intelligence professionals remain convinced that the fundamental role of human intelligence will not change. In a more complex world, there will always be the need to understand the intentions and motivations of people in target countries. However, there is a need for practitioners of HUMINT to develop specialised skills like social engineering. Availability of tech tools will have to be suitably exploited to complement and qualitatively enhance HUMINT skills. In the Stuxnet attack on Iran's uranium enrichment program in 2010, the cyber sabotage operation was probably carried out by an insider with technical skills and physical access to the controlling computer systems.[11]

Public Profile. Intelligence agencies are traditionally believed to be operating in a cloak of secrecy. However, in this information age there is more public glare on intelligence agencies. Many intelligence services now have websites and active presence on social media platforms. They also increasingly use the media channels for propaganda and even for recruitment of new personnel.[12] Crowd sourcing of information is a reality which will define the new frontiers of public private partnership in intelligence matters.

Operational Security. In 2013, Edward Snowden, a contractor employed with US National Security Agency, turned whistle-blower and revealed the mass surveillance programme being undertaken by US intelligence agencies.[13] While espionage and surveillance have been traditional functions of intelligence agencies, the issues of intelligence sensitivity and operational security are becoming even more predominant in the modern era. The transformation in military

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11. Stilgherrian, "Do intelligence agencies need restructuring for the digital disinformation age?", Zd Net, August 26, 2020, at https://www.zdnet.com/article/do-intelligence-agencies-need-restructuring-for-the-digital-disinformation-age/. Accessed on September 18, 2021.
12. Marie Fazio, "The U.K. Spy Agency MI5 joined Instagram. It wasn't for the Likes", *The New York Times*, April 23, 2021, at https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/23/world/europe/mi5-british-intelligence-instagram.html. Accessed on September 8, 2021.
13. Raphael Satter, "U.S. court: Mass surveillance program exposed by Snowden was illegal", Reuters News Service, September 3, 2020, at https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-nsa-spying-idUSKBN25T3CK. Accessed on September 18, 2021.

systems and their interconnectivity makes them vulnerable as an adversary could find ways to intrude into these systems and render them ineffective. The efforts by intelligence agencies of Pakistan to acquire military secrets from India by cultivating espionage agents have been persistent and quite successful.[14] Since it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain secrets, any intelligence set-up will also need to have a robust counter-intelligence capability. Similarly, the requirements of widespread dissemination should be balanced with cautious sensitivity.

OVERSIGHT

An efficient intelligence system has to operate with a certain degree of secrecy and discretion. At times these have resulted in extraordinary authority and disproportionate influence in policymaking and execution. This makes creation of a regulatory framework and independent oversight of intelligence activities essential.

The evolution of civil society and concept of civil liberties, especially in the western world, have resulted in a sharp focus on individual privacy and freedom. The global outcry over Pegasus software has reinforced opposition to abuse of power on the pretext of surveillance for national security requirements.[15] As a result, intelligence services have come under increased scrutiny and criticism from individuals as well as social groups.

India's neighbour Pakistan is a test case in the perils of disproportionate role of intelligence agencies. The frequent interference by ISI and its notorious record in political engineering and installing favourable regimes are a grim reminder that in a democracy like India, Intelligence activities should be conducted in strict accordance with law, and with responsible oversight and accountability.

14. Shiv Aroor, "Army probes data breach as massive Northern Command espionage case could see heads roll soon", *India Today*, February 26, 2021, at https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/army-northern-command-espionage-case-data-breach-details-1773365-2021-02-26 . Accessed on September 18, 2021.
15. "Demonstrations and inquiries: the global impact of the Pegasus project", *The Guardian*, July 23, 2021, at https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/jul/23/demonstrations-and-inquiries-the-global-impact-of-the-pegasus-project. Accessed on September 20, 2021.

INTELLIGENCE PARTNERSHIPS

In today's complex security environment, it is imperative that intelligence agencies coordinate more closely with intelligence services of other nations. The "Five Eyes" alliance which started during World War II as an intelligence-sharing agreement between the US and UK and now includes Australia, New Zealand and Canada, is a fine example of the benefits of intelligence partnerships.

In March 2018, suspected Russian agents used nerve gas to target former Russian military intelligence officer Sergei Skripal who turned rogue and had provided MI6 with classified information. This bold action on UK soil drew a deliberate response which was led by intelligence agencies of UK who with the help of allies brought out incriminating evidence and coordinated the collective expulsion of suspected Russian intelligence officers from NATO and other states, thus significantly affecting Russian intelligence capability.

During the prolonged stand-off with China on LAC in Eastern Ladakh in June 2020, India also reportedly relied extensively on US for intelligence support. This intelligence sharing, although not based on a formal intelligence partnership, was critical to shaping India's military response.[16]

Apart from forging partnerships with other intelligence services, it has also become paramount for intelligence services to engage with the private sector and exploit their expertise in subjects such as threat analysis and risk mitigation. In fact, some of the services and products, such as satellite imagery are at times considered better than that of the state organisations.

The dynamics of present and future security environment necessitate that intelligence agencies within the country closely coordinate with each other. The multifaceted threats faced by the nation leave no room for turf battles and that is why collaboration amongst various agencies has become extremely important. There needs to be a greater recognition of the possibilities of convergence of efforts and the value of timely sharing as this is a prerequisite for

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16. Christopher Woody, "The US is helping India keep an eye on China's military, top US commanders say", *Business Insider*, December 23, 2020, at https://www. businessinsider.in/international/news/the-us-is-helping-india-keep-an-eye-on-chinas-military-top-us-commanders-say/articleshow/79885909.cms. Accessed on November 18, 2021.

informed decision making. This will also reduce duplication of efforts which is a major consideration in a resource scarce country like India.

INTELLIGENCE WARS

While the space for conventional conflicts has definitely reduced, constant competition and contests amongst adversaries and even friends will continue. These confrontations provide a vast battlespace even during peacetime wherein intelligence operations have a pivotal role to play. In May 2021 reports emerged that Denmark's Defence Intelligence Service (FE) assisted the US National Security Agency (NSA) to eavesdrop on political leaders and officials in Sweden, Germany, Norway and France.[17] The disclosures only served to confirm the common belief in the world of intelligence that "Nations may be friendly but there is no such thing as a friendly intelligence service."

The "Intelligence Wars" are non-hierarchical and predominantly non-kinetic in nature. They not only focus on exploiting information superiority to gain intelligence advantage, but can also be the key to undertaking punitive actions. Active intelligence operations such as covert campaigns and cyberattacks may be potentially provocative, but they also allow tensions between the states to be managed and not go beyond the threshold of armed conflict.

CONCLUSION

The ubiquitous nature of information, exponential growth of technology and the degree of interconnectivity between nations and societies have made the world intensely complex. Consequently, the boundaries between notions of peace and conflict and identification of State and non-state actors are fast disappearing. This has led to greater ambiguity in strategic and security affairs which can only be dealt with through better intelligence capabilities.

Although the basic purpose of Intelligence is to ensure decision makers are not surprised, anticipation and forecasting threats is undoubtedly a precarious profession. Past experiences have shown

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17. Jon Henley, "Denmark helped US spy on Angela Merkel and European allies—report", *The Guardian*, May 31, 2021, at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/31/denmark-helped-us-spy-on-angela-merkel-and-european-allies-report. Accessed on September 28, 2021.

that success during a crisis requires effective intelligence collection prior to the crisis.[18] Although it is possible to renew intelligence and increase acquisition efforts at times of crisis, it is desired that such capabilities are developed well before an emergency situation is created.

While the means and methods of intelligence process will inevitably change with the passage of time, the interplay between collection, analysis, and decision making will endure. Intelligence organisations, especially those in the armed forces, cannot afford to be resistant to change. This transformation should not focus only on acquisition of sensors or exploitation of technology but should be more comprehensive, cognitive and broad-based.

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18. Rahul Bedi, "Intelligence Failure on PLA Intrusions in Ladakh Brings Back Memories of Kargil", *The Wire*, July 24, 2020, at https://thewire.in/security/indian-army-intelligence-pla-ladakh-kargil. Accessed on September 10, 2021.