

EDITOR'S NOTE

It had to be so in the fitness of things that the Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lal Memorial Lecture would be delivered by a person of similar intellectual calibre and national standing to share his views on national security, its challenges and our interests. We are privileged to publish the PC Lal Memorial Lecture delivered by Shri Shivshankar Menon, the National Security Adviser to the present government and are confident that our readers would greatly benefit from it.

When we visualise the issues that Menon has raised, the first thing that strikes one is: are we as a nation, preparing ourselves for what India's destiny now holds out as an imminent prospect of its rise as a major power? Or are we going to continue to quibble over lesser things and merely loom inwards while making various communities into a model of exclusivity? When and where did we start to forget the values for the nation spelt out in the Preamble of our Constitution? The global picture is clear now: the major powers of the world *de-facto* are engaged in a triangle — consisting of the United States, China and India — with many developed and powerful states like Russia, Japan and Germany not far behind, as a consequence of the tectonic changes triggered by economic and political factors of the past two decades that have affected the world. The world had accepted the United States as the sole superpower long ago and perhaps accorded it status and privileges even beyond its capabilities. But it has long ago stitched together a military and economic alliance with almost all the developed industrialised countries of the

world and this factor raises the global power balance in its favour.

China is a new entrant to the major power group. Its rapid progress toward a goal well understood by all sections of the nation and its society has been a major factor in this process. The existence of an all pervasive single political (Communist) party is a major factor in mobilising the nation along the vector of rapid growth without facing unmanageable turbulence. Unfortunately, we are not drawing the right and relevant lessons from China as we are inevitably placed in a situation of competition and potential rivalry. It is fortunate that studies on China have picked up during the past decade or so, especially when we look back and find a total absence of such studies when China in the 1980s was systematically setting itself on the path of growth. What still needs to be done is to ensure that these studies are as objective as we can make them. Only then, would we be able to serve our national security interests in the time and space required.