China and the Security of India

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China's growing military and industrial power, its skill in unabashed practice of realpolitik, and its location on the northern boundary of India makes it strategically a most vital concern in Indian security perspective. The territorial problems that led to the brief war in 1962 and which remain to cloud relations between the two states only heightens the security and strategic concerns. Beijing's single-minded search for great power status, its militant and often narrow nationalism, and the continuous shifts in its political and strategic positions makes China a potent factor not only in India's security scenario but in Asia as a whole. It is through deepest political understanding, diplomatic skill and military vigilance that India can come to terms with the challenge posed by China.

In the early phase after independence, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, sympathetic to China's revolutionary upsurge and national liberation, and conscious of the strategic problems it posed following the end of the buffer status of Tibet, had sought to build close and friendly ties with Beijing. Panchsheel was the major result of this effort. The five principles of peaceful coexistence, however, were by themselves not adequate in containing an expansionist and irredentist China. Militant nationalism was of far greater importance in shaping Beijing's world view than the internationalism of Marxism-Leninism. Moreover, with the wind of ultra-leftism blowing strongly in China after 1957, New Delhi and Beijing began to differ on a whole gamut of security issues—territorial settlement, nuclear weapons, outlook towards the West, issues of peace and disarmament, the strategy of development, and on the nature of military bloc politics. Panchsheel and Bandung were brief interludes in this counter-current.

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War, the turmoil of the Cultural Revolution and the xenophobia of the 1960s and 1970s enhanced hostilities and later put a freeze on relations. By this time China had forged military ties with Pakistan, become a nuclear weapon power, and reached a strategic consensus with the US and the western powers. India too had regained confidence.

The political and strategic perceptions of China changed again in the 1980s. The needs of modernisation and development were clearly ill-served by the "enemy-friend" dichotomy that marked China's foreign policy since 1949. With the formulation of the "independent foreign policy" in 1982, the new leadership broke away from its previous groove and declared that reduction of tensions and peaceful environment were necessary for China's progress.

In the past six years, China has taken significant steps in opening up its economy, forging peaceful ties with many states with which it was previously on a collision course, dismantled much of its ultra-leftist policies and engaged in active diplomacy; with the end of isolationism, ultra-nationalism too has significantly dwindled. Relations have improved with the East European Socialist countries and the rapprochement with the Soviet Union is developing.

Changes have also occurred in China's strategic thinking in keeping with the new situation. Beijing has now affirmed that a major nuclear war is unlikely and instead of preparing for war it is necessary to build for peace. China has joined disarmament conferences and has on several issues, such as Palestine, Central America, the Gulf, South Africa and general developing world issues, adopted positions akin to the nonaligned movement and India's policies.

However, many of the old policies linger. China continues to aid the rebellion in Afghanistan and Kampuchea. It is in a constant state of war with Vietnam, and clashes have recently occurred at the Spratleys. It also remains a major factor in militarising the region by its own high profile military programme and support to the military build up in Pakistan and Thailand. The Pakistan-US-China strategic consensus remains a major factor of instability and tensions in Asia, and deeply affects India's security interests. Significant intelligence collaboration has been forged by the

Chinese leaders with the US and military collaboration is growing.

Moreover, China's new strategy—political, economic and military —is still unveiling. A full-fledged paradigm is yet to emerge. And despite the enunciation of the thesis of the "initial stage of socialism" considerable differences exist on the exact details of the new model. Trends towards a peaceful foreign policy coexist with old militaristic thought patterns. The Chinese society is inaflux and prospects for a smooth take-off as well as internal disturbances are strong.

It is in this changed scenario that China's foreign policy and military strategy as they affect India and the Asian theatre must be assessed. Close examination will reveal that while there are possibilities of a positive turn towards a genuinely peaceful foreign policy given the current stress on development, there also exist strong negative tendencies that would continue to vitiate the security environment of Asia and Sino-Indian relations, unless corrected. Indian strategy would have to take both trends into account and perhaps utilise the relatively relaxed diplomatic atmosphere to initiate steps that would strengthen the peace constituency in China and weaken the militarists and ultra-nationalists.

Since normalisation of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1976, there has been certain relaxation in tension between the two countries. Eight rounds of talks at the diplomatic level have been held to resolve all disputes, including the territorial claims of China. Cultural, academic and trade links have revived. Both India and China have asserted their resolve to establish friendly relations and peacefully settle all outstanding problems. Acting Premier Li Peng is the latest to call for peaceful settlement of Sino-Indian disputes and has insisted that relations have improved.

However, nearly 12 years since normalisation the progress in resolving the territorial dispute has been tardy. Strategic perspectives still differ widely and the prospects of even a small misunderstanding touching off tensions are high. Much of current Indian thinking on the challenge posed by China to India's security tends to be narrowly focused on the border problem and is measured in bilateral terms. While the situation on the

Sino-Indian border—yet unsettled and replete with ominous prospects of boiling over at the sign of slightest military movement as in the 1986-87 Sumdorong Chu-Wangdong incidents—is clearly important and the immediate cause for concern, the security challenge, is wider in dimension and much of it may outlast a possible border settlement. The Chinese strategic challenge flows from the great power ambitions of China, its glorification of the PLA, its possession of the largest army; the third largest air force, a wide array of nuclear weapons, nuclear submarines, a large fleet of conventional submarines, and a growing naval presence in the South China Sea, the Pacific and the Indian Ocean region. The Chinese military machine, though ravaged by the turmoil of Cultural Revolution and loaded with obsolete conventional weaponry, is in the process of modernisation and acquiring greater lethal quality. All this is backed by an increasingly outward looking and active military strategy.

The paper will seek to examine some of the key strategic issues that are of vital security concern to India. They have both short-term and long-term implications and would do well to come to grips with the emerging trends, both diplomatically and militarily, and not only ensure that another conflict is avoided, but that friendly relations are forged.

Strong Border—The Guiding Ideology

Since October 1987 the PLA's *Liberation Army Daily* has published a series of articles by senior military officers on the need to strengthen China's border defences. On January 22 this year the daily carried two articles on the same theme, entitled: "Strengthening border build-up should be an important content of military strategy" and "Strong border must become the guiding ideology of national defence construction." The major articles, published in October and December 1987 and in January 1988 make essentially the same points indicating a general understanding of the PLA on the issue.

The articles argue that partial and local wars constitute the main trend in modern warfare with territorial disputes constituting the single most important factor. This has shifted the locale of wars from the interior to the border. Since the founding of

PRC, the PLA's strategy was focused on dealing with the large-scale all-out wars and was based on the strategy of "people's war" that sought to lure the enemy deep into China's territory. The strategy was born of the country's vastness and backwardness. That strategy has now been given up in light of the modern conditions of warfare. "Strengthening combat effectiveness in border regions, placing our emphasis on the border to crush the invasion of the enemy, and defending territorial sovereignty and integrity of the motherland is one of the strategic countermeasures which should be adopted by our troops in the new period." They argue that the strategic environment is abnormal and complicated, and there are many problems left over by history in the peripheral areas of China.

The authors say that "since the founding of New China, the border regions have not been peaceful and tranquil. Armed clashes and local wars never stop. The situation of our territory being nibbled by other countries has occurred from time to time. During the previous national defence build-up, due to the influence of Lin Biao's policy of "political border regions", we failed to make sufficient investment in the regions. Some regions where the weather is extremely cold and conditions are hard, were not under our effective control owing to lack of sufficient material supply, and so on. Under such circumstances, the other side seized the opportunity to occupy our territory, or presented a *fait accompli* of unilateral control of certain parts of the territory. After the self-defence counter-attack in Sino-Indian border region in 1962, India has gradually occupied again the 90,000 square killometre area located south of the McMahon Line, from which we took the initiative to withdraw. India has upgraded the area to be 'Arunachal Pradesh'. In addition, since the 1970s, a score of our islands and reefs have been occupied by Vietnam and other countries."

Thus, the thrust of the Chinese concern is on the Sino-Indian border. The article adds that "Good-neighbourliness does not rule out the necessity of strengthening the border build-up and vice versa. Strengthening the border build up does not mean we do not have faith in friends. It only means we should strive for an equal position and be treated as a friend." The authors meaningfully point out: "Actually, our border forces are inferior to

a certain neighbouring country which has ambition for territorial expansion. This is not beneficial to readjusting our relationships, solving disputes, and dealing with a complicated border situation. In addition, our weapons and border facilities and equipment are also much more inferior to theirs. The unevenness in strength has thus been further aggravated."

It is also argued that "if the imbalance in border construction between us (China) and those countries facing us becomes excessive, then this is very disadvantageous for resolving disputes." The author calls for mending the gap. The articles also say that it is necessary for China to "include the idea of strengthening border build-up as an important part of the defence plan in peace time."

The articles have been followed by a detailed note in a leading Chinese journal on international problems, *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, in its first issue on January 13 this year, restating China's claim over Arunachal largely on the basis of Alastair Lamb's latest book *British India and Tibet* (1986) and H.K. Barpuzari's three-volume study on the *Problems of the Hill Tribes: North-East Frontier* (1982). It calls for a political settlement of the border problem and says that both sides should make concessions. It also says that the recent tensions in the eastern sector were due to Indian troops crossing the line of actual control existing since November 7, 1959.

Together, these mark a new stage in the security environment in the north and is bound to complicate the solution to the territorial problem between India and China. If border defences are to be further strenghtened by the PLA, combat capability raised, foothold gained in border areas to crush the enemy, and "historical" claims reasserted afresh, the effect would clearly be to raise tensions and lead to an Indian counter build-up. The Indian and Chinese cases and territorial claims in both Ladakh and Arunachal have been well documented in the official level talks in 1960 and have already been published as a White Paper by India. Citing new sources selectively adds little to what the Chinese side has already stated, and the Indians countered by citing sources, administrative records, etc. Arunachal has been under British and Indian administrative control for many years now and the people there are actively participating in the political process in India. There have

been no demands by the people for merger with China. Indeed, there have been protests against Chinese claims. Keeping aside for a moment all disputes over "historical claims," the people's aspirations and wishes need to be taken cognisance of by the Chinese government. There lies a sure democratic way for settling all claims. It is astonishing that China, which swears by its people's liberation movement, socialism and Marxism-Leninism, should base its claims on Arunachal on alleged "tributes" paid in a distant past to a feudal Chinese ruler, or a conquest by a royal marauder over non-Han nationalities whose entire basis was coercion, pillage and oppression. Irredentism can only vitiate Sino-Indian relations and sow greater discord between the two peoples.

The PRC's continued occupation of a large area of Ladakh, its renewed stress on its claims on Arunachal, its refusal to spell out any meaningful, legitimate and reasonable proposal on the territorial problem, and its disinclination to even state where the Line of Actual Control in the eastern sector lies according to the PRC, despite repeated Indian requests, keeps the pot boiling in India's northern frontier. Till resolved peacefully it will continue to be a most serious threat to the country's security. What is particularly disturbing is China's ever-preparedness to take on a weaker neighbour militarily in pursuance of its "historical claims." The latest incidents in the Spratley Islands, where the PLA Navy sank three Vietnamese boats and shot down several men, is an extremely negative and sombre statement on China's current policy of promoting a "peaceful international envoirnment" and solving problems through peaceful negotiations.

Nuclear Strategy—Ominous Trends

If the newly articulated ideology of strong border defence is a cause for serious concern to China's neighbours, particularly India and Vietnam, the PLA's post-1980 nuclear strategy multiplies it manifold. There is total asymmetry in nuclear weapons between China and India. Beijing possesses them, deploys them in areas from where India can be threatened and hit, is engaged in a programme of missile build-up and has evolved doctrines wherein they could

be used if war accidentally breaks out between India and China over the boundary problem.

It will be argued that China has sworn by a "no first use" statement and has also voted for the Indian-sponsored UN resolution declaring the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons a crime. However, some of China's latest articulations on the significance of nuclear weapons for medium-sized nuclear powers as deterrent and as an instrument of "limited self-defence counter-attack" even in conventional warfare are of farreaching significance. Since China's attacks on India, Soviet Union and Vietnam have all been described by Beijing as being "self-defence counter-attacks," the threat posed is real and India would do well to take it up seriously both bilaterally with China and at international disarmament fora.

In a major article carried by the Liberation Army Daily (*Jiefangjun Bao*) on March 20, 1987, the PLA set forth a bold justification of its nuclear weapons programme as one of deterrence and described its nuclear strategy as one of "limited self-defence counter-attack" which is not aimed at launching and winning any clear wars but at opposing and checking them. It described China as a medium-sized nuclear power and said "nuclear force is an important material condition that helps medium-sized nuclear powers free themselves from manipulation and control by superpowers and to play their part in world affairs."

The article observed that while the international disarmament activities and those engaged in peace movements are "to be appreciated and respected for their devotion," there is a hitch. Some people, it said, "blindly oppose nuclear weapons because they do not have a sound understanding of the nuclear force and the strategic nuclear theory and cannot distinguish between right and wrong. In their view all nuclear weapons should be opposed no matter who possesses them. They do not consider that nuclear weapons are objective reality in the world today. Demanding total destruction of nuclear weapons from superpowers is not different from asking a tiger for its skin. Even if it were so, that is to say even if all nuclear weapons on earth are really destroyed and man's society turned to the times of having on nuclear weapons as before world War I and II, perhaps the world would not become stable and tranquil immediately."

Further, it argues: "Peace-loving medium-sized nuclear powers

do not take the nuclear deterrent strategy as a strategy of launching nuclear wars but of forcing their opponents not to dare to launch nuclear wars rashly by means of possessing and developing nuclear weapons." It further asserts that "deterrence must have its reliability...making an empty show of strength cannot deter others but produces an adverse effect if those who are blackmailed are determined to have a showdown. The Cuban missile crisis is vivid evidence to show that Khrushchev was put in a dilemma precisely because he made an empty show of strength."

According to the author, "in terms of strategy, nuclear weapons have four functions: 1) When manpower, fire power, and military equipment of conventional troops are short, or when they are reduced to inferiority, deployment or use of tactical or war zone nuclear weapons can make up and readjust conventional forces. 2) In terms of the "positive defensive" strategy, medium and short range missiles with nuclear warheads and tactical nuclear weapons that have actual combat capacity can serve as an actual threat to the enemy's heavy massing of forces and preparation for large-scale offensive. 3) In strategic confrontation nuclear weapons can work as a backup force at a critical moment and force the enemy to politically consider the problem of its self-defence, thus deterring the enemy's blackmail and intimidation to a certain extent. 4) In border conflicts and wars in which small nations act as agents, the nuclear retaliation capacity of medium sized nuclear powers can somewhat stop intervention and meddling by big powers."

The author asserts that: "For medium-sized nuclear powers, strategic missiles with nuclear warheads are an important means of containing wars and defending their security."

"In developing nuclear weapons there is a relatively stable 'saturation point' for all countries, which is marked by 'sufficient quantity' and 'reliable quality'. Before their nuclear weapons reach 'saturation point' medium-sized nuclear powers have a deterrent factor too but they are very liable to have their nuclear force disarmed by the enemy's first attack, because the actual combat capability of their nuclear weapons is hot yet enough. In terms of strategy, this period of time can therefore be regarded as a period of 'latent danger.' Before the period of latent danger is over, their nuclear deterrence is still not reliable and the investment in building their nuclear force should not be readjusted or

reduced. After 30 years of painstaking build up, the nuclear arsenals of the United States and the Soviet Union are now in a state of 'super-saturation.' However, several medium-sized nuclear powers have only a small number of nuclear weapons for protecing their own security."

Arguing that the US plans for SDI are nor realisable for a long time, the article stresses that "the nuclear deterrent theory of 'mutually assured destruction' will remain the key factor affecting the world strategic pattern." It says that some foreign academics observe that "compared with the superpowers, the nuclear force of medium-sized nuclear powers is very weak, but so long as they are able to 'trigger' missiles with nuclear warheads, they in fact have a say in the issue of holding power over man's destiny and will thus be on really 'equal' political footing." The author, having argued for a "saturation" thesis, understandably adds that "he does not readily subscribe" to the view.

The article after clearly laying out the essential nuclear strategy of a medium-sized nuclear power also underlines some of the more well-known Chinese official positions on the issue, most of them quite contrary to his previous arguments and observations about the value of nuclear weapons. Thus he reiterates China's commitment to "no first use", says that Beijing was compelled to develop the weapons in order "to break the nuclear monopoly, oppose nuclear blackmail, strive for the final elimination of nuclear weapons, defend China's independence and security, and safeguard world peace." He also affirms that China will never proliferate nuclear weapons to foreign countries or deploy them abroad. This too runs counter to fairly substantial American evidence of Sino-Pak nuclear cooperation at Kahuta at least till 1984-85 when China signed the nuclear power agreement with US. Thereafter it perhaps became unnecessary as, according to the reports, Pakistan had obtained the design for a nuclear bomb from Beijing in exchange of providing its advanced technical knowhow in centrifuge uranium enrichment technology which it had illicitly acquired from Holland.

Explaining China's "limited self-defence counter-attack" as the strategy under which "China will develop a nuclear force of limited quantity but fine quality," the author says "China will maintain an actual combat capability and is determined to mount a self-defen-

sive counter-attack". He adds that China's nuclear policy must be studied in the context of its strategic principle of "positive defence", also described as "active defence" by Chinese strategists. This is in line with China's actual practice of always fighting early and outside its borders with the adversary. It is not clear what such a principle would imply in the case of the use of nuclear weapons. However, if it means the same as in the case of Chinese practice in conventional warfare, the implications are ominous and would clearly contradict the no first use principle. That the PLA has visualised the use of nuclear weapons, or its threat of use as an exercise in "coercive diplomacy" is clear from the author's assertion that Chinese military strategists of past dynasties all advocated "an army fighting for a just cause" and stressed that "troops are lethal weapons and not to be used unless absolutely necessary". It also says that the five principles of peaceful coexistence are the country's "consistent principles for guiding its friendly relations with its neighbouring countries . . . China has always exercised forbearance and restraint in dealing with problems left over by history and border conflicts, taking friendly consultations as the main way to solve all international disputes. We allow no invasion and occupation of an inch of our territory and we have no ambition to invade and occupy an inch of others territory. In mastering and developing guided missile nuclear weapons on a moderate scale, China is playing an essential role in relaxing international tension and maintaining the stability and balance of the world power structure."

As argued, China has justified its wars with India and Vietnam as one of "self-defence" and as "fighting for a just cause." The peculiar linkage the article establishes between nuclear strategy and border conflicts can, therefore, only mean that in such conflicts China could use nuclear weapons. Indeed, by delineating the use of nuclear weapons it clearly implies that nuclear weapons are to be used to overcome conventional inferiority, and in border conflicts and wars. It extols its deterrent effect, glorifies its role in enabling China to play its part in world affairs, rules out the prospect for a nuclear-free world and says even if it did take place such a world would not be "more stable and tranquil." In short, the author sings a paean of the virtues of nuclear weapons and rules out any Chinese cut-back till it reaches "saturation" point and crosses the

"latent danger" threshold. The security implications of Chinese tactical nuclear missiles, SLBMs and IRBMs, backed up such a strategy is as serious, if not more, as the Pakistani bomb. Moreover, since China remains a major supplier of arms missiles and aircraft to Pakistan and has collaborated in the rise of the Pak nuclear programme, the dual nature of the threat should be noted. Pakistani nuclear warheads on Chinese missiles, such as the ones recently supplied to Saudi Arabia, could be expected and when achieved would radically change the security environment in West Asia and South Asia. Thus, though China has claimed to have shifted its strategy from preparations against "an early, big and nuclear war" to normal peacetime operations, its nuclear strategy and build-up appears to be geared to quite different and quite opposite ends. It is the growing reach of China's nuclear missiles, bombers and nuclear submarines that is bound to give Indian strategic planners many a sleepless night.

The PLA had engaged in simulated exercises involving tactical nuclear weapons as early as 1982 in the Ningxia region. It was the first indication that China visualised the contingency of a modern war involving battlefield nuclear weapons. Since the PRC leadership does not visualise a war with either the US, now an ally, or even Soviet Union—both of whom have vastly superior nuclear arsenals—and only expects local, partial and border wars it would not be too far-fetched to conclude that tactical nuclear weapons could be earmarked for such battlefields if necessary. In fact, all other nuclear weapon powers have deemed tactical weapons as a first use weapon. In recent years simulated conflicts have been developed for troops from platoon to regional level, involving several countries. In these games, according to a western report, the Chinese fared well against the Taiwanese, Vietnamese and Indians. In simulated Sino-Soviet conflicts they emerged losers. China has clearly moved away from Mao's day of "People's War." The Chinese nuclear forces are being rapidly developed with the emphasis on acquiring a credible second strike capability. This has meant concentration on mobile launch platforms, both land and sea based. At least four submarines equipped with intercontinental ballistic missiles will enter service in the next decade.

The Fourth Modernisation Scope

In a major speech on July 31, 1987 marking the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Peoples Liberation Army, the Executive Chairman of the Central Military Commission Yang Shangkun had laid out the role and place of the military modernisation programme:

> To pool our resources for economic construction, we need a perennially stable situation at home as well as a stable and peaceful international environment. Historical experience tells us that a strong defence is essential for ensuring a long-term peaceful environment. The Chinese PLA is an important force for defending the motherland and maintaining world peace. During the new historical period, our national defence and armed forces can only be strengthened, not weakened. Specifically because of this requirement, the party and the state have considered the modernisation of national defence an important task of the four modernisations, assigned it to the party, the armed forces and people throughout the party. Only by building a strong army that matches the status of our country can we deter aggressors, reliably defend our sacred and vast territory, and deal with all eventualities. Army building has a close bearing on the country's dignity, honour, security and interest. Thus even in peacetime, we can still claim that without a people's army, the people have nothing.
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> The army is always a fighting force. It is very dangerous to believe that, since a big war is not in sight, we can relax our efforts, lower our guard against the danger of war, and ignore the modernisation of the armed forces. However, because of longstanding peace, the sense of defence is apt to wear thin, and a false sense of peace and security is apt to be generated. Even soldiers themselves might also lack the understanding of the status and role of the armed forces and the necessity for stronger armed forces . . . the idea of strengthening national defence during peaceful construction not only is the ideological foundation of defending national security, but also a spiritual, centripetal force that can rally and unite the Chinese people.

A clearer enunciation of the importance attached to militarv

build up and its ideological function of uniting China through nationalist fervour is not easily available. The implications are also clear: Pacifist tendencies are growing and even affecting soldiers, Marxism-Leninism is apparently less potent a force in uniting and rallying the Chinese than militant nationalism, or so the leaders feel, and there are reasons to be concerned about unity. Conversely, rallying the nation on heightened nationalism in times of peace could clearly have militarist implications at home and aggressive fall-out abroad. Pacifism, after all, is to be broken, according to Yang.

That such a feeling is generalised in the top echelons of the Chinese leaderships becomes clear from the observations of Defence Minister Zhang Aiping at the same anniversary. Calling for the step by step modernisation of PLA's weapons and equipment so as to enable it to catch up with the world's advanced level, Zhang insisted on creating invincible positions in conventional, nuclear and high-tech weapons.

He further affirms that "far from being very stable, the relatively peaceful situation in the current world is fraught with the smell of gunpowder, given the contention of relative balance of forces between the Soviet Union and United States. Although it is possible to avoid a world war, the danger still exists and partial wars still constantly break out. There are many factors that make our peripheral environment insecure. Our territorial integrity and territorial sea are subject to threats and are violated by Vietnamese regional hegemonism. . . The pacifist trend of throught in the new situation is not only out of keeping with the practical conditions: but harmful to the state construction and army building."

Zhang also dwelt on the core of China's strategic thinking by stating unequivocally that China's aim is to create not only a prosperous state but a powerful state. "A prosperous people and a prosperous state are not tantamount to a powerful state; a prosperous state cannot be substituted for a powerful state. . . By listing the modernisation of national defence as one of the four modernisations our country has appropriately handled the relationship between a prosperous state and a powerful state. None of the four modernisations can be dispensed with."

China's military build up, thus, figures highly in the current

modernisation programme and a systematic drive is on to set up a strong, modern military machine.

Military Modernisation: Progress

The Chinese leaders learnt several lessons from the PLA's attack on Vietnamese forces in 1979, the chief among them was that the PLA had become flabby, inefficient, faction ridden, gerontocracy-led, and a centre of leftism. Also, that its strategy, tactics weaponry, organisational structure, operation plans and logistics were outdated. In the decade since then, the PLA has worked hard to turn itself into a modern, professional military. Key aspects of this task were achieved last year with the completion of the planned reduction of troop strength by a million, in pruning the PLA's political influence, a major restructuring of the high command and a revised operational doctrine.

The weakening of the military's hold over the political process—which will go a long way in democratising and de-militarising Chinese society when completed—has moved ahead rapidly. Only two soldiers, Yang Shangkun and Qin Jiwei, now sit on the Politburo of the CPC compared to some 10-11 three years ago. Military representation in the Central Committee, however, is still large and the old PLA men still wield considerable influence in the Central Advisory Commission.

Deng Xiaoping, in retaining the chairmanship of the CMC and placing CPC General Secretary Zhao Ziyang as its vice chairman, has ensured that the reformists will be in command over the military. According to a western analyst: "Under Deng the PLA has never had it so good. At no other period in its 60-year history has the PLA been in such good fighting shape."

A purge of the leftists and older elements has already been completed. The average age of officers at divisional command level and above is now early to mid-50s. While the younger commanders are invariably party members, they are professional soldiers first. The recent decision of the CMC to restore a military rank system in the armed forces and to institute a civil official system in military science and technology units this year are important steps towards improving operational methods and establishing a modern military.

The establishment of the PLA's National Defence University in Beijing in December 1985 to train future generals and commanders in modern military strategy, doctrine, tactics, battle plans and military research is also a step in this direction. The NDU is in addition to over 100 military academies and schools that already exist for PLA's soldiers and technicians.

The Defence Ministry, which was largely defunct and stripped of power since Lin Biao's fall in 1971, has been revived and Qin Jiwei, the senior serving general in the PLA, is expected to take over as the minister from Zhang Aiping at the current NPC session. The ministry will take over the planning of the PLA's modernisation of management of the budget.

The drive for modernisation of the PLA has already reached a significant point. Basic organisational objeetives have been obtained, such as the administrative—though not qualitative—changeover of its field armies to integrated group armies, and the demobilisation of one million soldiers, originally announced in mid-1985.

PLA researchers have also completed a major document, China's Defence Strategy, to the year 2000, which revamps basic strategic principles and doctrine, and ranges from platoon tactics to "star wars" development. Major portions of the report, now being discussed at a high level, are likely to become policy later this year or in early 1989. The report is expected to affirm theoretically what is already taking place: the development of mobile, well-equipped forces, able to react rapidly to a wide range of situations backed up by a strong well-trained reserve. Some of the demobilised troops and planned conscription for college students are expected to provide the back-up force.

Given the strain on resources, the PLA has concentrated on a three-pronged programme. This involves maintaining high priority on areas such as electronics, strategic missile development, space research, better logistics, modern command, control and communications, nuclear submarines and helicopters; a cut-back on redundant administrative non-operational staff and the aged soldiers. A 50 per cent cut-back has been largely achieved in the cadre strength of the PLA's three General Departments: the General Political, Staff and Rear Services (i.e. logistics) departments. Low priority R&D have been chopped. Finally, except in the most

needed areas, weapons procurement has been postponed but technology import, joint production with foreign, manufacturers, and indigenous R&D for weapon development programmes have been stepped up. Money has been saved by forces restructuring and cut-back and earned by a growing presence in the world arms bazaar.

The PLA is engaging its attention even on space-based defence research. China has strongly opposed the American SDI programme and any agreement between the Soviet Union and the US which will permit a space weapon programme. Such a programme is looked upon as strategically unacceptable as it would end China's nuclear deterrence capability and a loss in political status and power. It is to overcome this problem that China's space programme has been speeded up. A Chinese shuttle and space station "have been put on the order of the day," according to China's Ministry of Aeronautics, "China has capability," the ministry said in November 1987.

Specific areas are being highlighted in the modernisation of the PLA. In January 1988 the PLA's first army helicopter group went into service one of the first visible signs that the Army is acquiring rapid deployment capability. The helicopter group is the air-mobile arm of a group army, providing troop and logistics transport and anti-tank support to ground forces. The first group was attached to Beijing military region covering North China. Western reports say helicopters have been deployed in Tibet as well.

The effort to build up a blue water navy with power projection capabilities has been a major area of attention of the PLA in recent years. The naval fleet has grown with the inclusion of medium sized and large submarines—one of the largest submarine fleets in the world—and includes nuclear submarines. The main naval vessels have been equipped with missiles and submarines with advanced torpedos. The US has agreed to transfer technology for manufacture of Mark-46 anti-submarine torpedos and the Chinese have also asked Washington for LAMPS anti-submarine warfare helicopters. China's new destroyers and escort vessels will be equipped with an operational command system.

Much of the Chinese equipment for the five arms of the Navy—the submarine corps, the naval vessel corps, the airborne forces,

the coastal defence forces and the marine corps—is based on Soviet technology of the 1950s. They are being modified and gradually improved through "selective purchases" of equipment components, systems, and technology from the NATO powers. China has one known ballistic missile, utilised for submarine launches—the CSS-NX-3.—with a down-range capability of 1,800-2,000km. The US estimates that 14 missiles are carried on the Xia-class SSBN.

China's new forward looking naval strategy has been increasingly evident in naval operations in the South China Sea and in visit by PLA ships to Karachi. Trincomalee and Chittagong ports a year ago. In October-November 1987 the Navy flexed its muscles with a series of highly publicised laser and electronic simulated combat exercises in the West Pacific and South China Sea. Amphibious manoeuvres were conducted around the Spratleys, held by Vietnam, the Philippines and Taiwan but claimed by China. War games were also conducted east of Taiwan. According to a Chinese report, during the exercises the East China Sea Fleet travelled a distance of some 54,000 nautical miles, crossed four large straits reaching Zengmu Ansha at its most extreme point, and conducted 17 planned tactical training exercises. "While cruising, the formation staged exercises resisting missile attacks, launching attacks against others and defending themselves, mining pipelines, and shooting at floating mines in the sea under nuclear fall out conditions. . .and using forces in submarine and missile speedboat operations. . .It is the first time that the Chinese Navy has organised a long-range joint exercises of such extended duration, involving such vast areas. . .through this exercise the Chinese Navy's surface units operational radius have been greatly increased and extended." The nuclear fallout detail is yet another indication of China preparing to fight a nuclear war.

With China's trade, economic and military interests growing in the Far East, Pacific, South East Asia, South Asia, and the Gulf, a growing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean region is to be expected. China has already goaded Pakistan into playing a larger naval role in the region and Sino-Pak naval cooperation is expected to grow in the coming years. China is a major arms supplier to the Gulf countries, Pakistan and the Afghan rebels.

It also supplies arms and has strong political ties with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Its expanded naval presence is in keeping with its rising profile in the region around India.

One immediate fallout of the PLA's naval role in South China Sea has been its confidence in militarily staking its claims on Paracel, which it occupied by defeating South Vietnamese forces in 1974, and on the Spratleys. This has already spilled over into clashes as the PLA attacked Vietnamese vessels. Since the islands are also claimed by Malaysia and Taiwan. among others, the situation is likely to worsen. China's forward naval strategy is likely to spur naval rivalries in the entire area, possible spillover into a wider conflict with Vietnam. In the Indian Ocean the Chinese strategy in the long run will pose a challenge to Indian security aims. With Japanese military and naval profile also growing in a major way, the strategic and security environment can only deteriorate.

China's military modernisation, its growing economic power and wider political interests will enhance its military power projection and complicate an already volatile security environment in the Asia and Pacific region. Does China have the resources to sustain such a profile? If Chinese economy keeps growing, Beijing will increasingly have the resources. Its growing collaboration with the West and the strategic consensus with the US also enables it to have access to dual use technology, capital and military equipment from the advanced countries.

According to Chinese official statistics, the proportion of the national budget devoted to military expenditure has fallen from 17.5 per cent in 1979 to 15.29 per cent in 1982, 13.68 per cent in 1983, 13.06 in 1984, 13.9 per cent in 1985 and 10 per cent in 1987. In absolute terms, however, China's defence budget has grown from 16.8 billion yuan in 1981, 17.64 billion yuan in 1982, 17.71 billion yuan in 1983, 17.37 billion yuan in 1984, 18 billion yuan in 1985 and 20.4 billion yuan in 1987. Moreover, according to a western analyst, "China's defence spending allocations do not reveal details of how much is annually allocated for 'strategic' force, R&D, production of weapons, etc. In many cases the 'costs' of such production and development are probably not even included in the 'announced' national defence budget—at least as they would be included in western defence budget allocation

tabulations." The spending in defence R&D, excluded from the published defence budget, will alone double the overall bill of 20.4 billion yuan ($5.5 billion) or to some $11-12 billion. The 1155 quoting *The Economist* estimates, places the figure at $177 million for 1988.

Given lower labour and materials costs in China the figure is not too low either. If its new defence strategy guidelines are to be carried out by the end of the century the Chinese defence bill is expected to rise many-fold with major strategic implications for Asian states, including India.

Implications and Options

China's strategic aims, its nuclear weapons programme and growing missile reach, its "strong border" ideology, and the goal of attaining not only major power status in Asia but in the world have serious implications for the security environment of India and its surrounding regions. The Chinese military, according to some defence analysts, given the obsolescence of much of its equipment and ravages wreaked by the ultra-left period, does not as of now constitute a major threat to the countries Beijing sees as its adversaries—the Soviet Union, Vietnam, Taiwan and India. China, however, is a nuclear weapon power and has the largest army, one of the largest air forces and sizable naval fleet. Given the vastness of its territory, its growing trade and economic profile, the volatile international scene and its economic backwardness, some of its schemes to modernise its military are perhaps legitimate, and in themselves do not constitute a threat to its neighbours and the Asian countries. However, China's single-minded search for not prosperity alone but power in global terms, with a heavy accent on military power, has been and remains the cause for the most serious concern.

In addition, Chinese foreign policy and strategic thinking has for years been irredentist. Its territorial claims on remote historical grounds have little place in modern international relations and the necessity to build a world free from wars and tensions. Yet these claims are very much alive and seriously affect India, Vietnam and the Soviet Union. The militant and narrow nationalism that has dominated the thinking of large sections of the Chinese

leadership over the year is not only a factor of international insecurity but has important implications in militarising the thinking of its youth, strengthening authoritarian and undemocratic trends, and weakening the peace constituency.

The situation is worsened by China's open aid to the rebellion in Afghanistan and Kampuchea, its reluctance to back the Sihanouk-Hun Sen talks, its active support to the military regimes in Islamabad and Bangkok for narrow strategic gains, and its continuing war against Vietnam. Beijing's role in these conflicts, the close strategic collaboration that it has developed with a number of countries, including the US, over their scope and conduct, has vitiated the security environment in Asia with major consequences for India's security. It is indeed a tragedy that few countries protest the Chinese role in Indochina: its active support and involement with Pol Pot's genocidal social and political experiments, its backing for Pol Pot's adventures against Vietnam. its stepping out on behalf of the Khmer Rouge and for territorial gains to attack Vietnam and thereafter its policy of bleeding Vietnam and Kampuchea. its backing for rebels in Laos and Vietnam besides the Khmer Rouge, its active military collaboration with and encouragement to the Thai military regime to be its proxy in Indochina. The power play behind the Indochinese and Afghan rebellions are among the worst and most tragic examples of real politik in action.

Another area of Chinese policy needs to be mentioned here: its reckless sale of arms in the international arms bazaar to the Gulf countries involved in conflict—Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and to Pakistan and Thailand which are the bases for the rebels in Afghanistan and Indochina. In this the Chinese have, much in the style of the western powers, followed purely mercenary instincts and perceived strategic advantages. The arms race, tensions and conflicts the Chinese and Western policies are fuelling are gradually spreading into a wider circle and its effect in worsening the security environment in the region has been incalculable. Chinese weapons from the arms bazaar are flowing into Sri Lanka and Punjab, directly threatening India, while the Silkworm missiles have become yet another cause of tension. The recent supply of the medium-range Chinese missiles to Saudi Arabia is fraught with even greater danger. These can hit targets not only in

Iran and Israel, but also in the Soviet Union and India. China has sold them to Saudi Arabia though the two countries do not have diplomatic relations, and Pakistan seems to have been the mediating agent. Given the close Saudi-Pak strategic aims in the region, a possible scenario where Pak nuclear warheads are placed on the missiles is not altogether improbable. The consequences for India if Pakistan acquires the missiles from Beijing is clear. Saudi Arabia's China missiles will heighten the arms race and tensions in the Gulf and West Asia and its long-terms implications for India's west-side security sphere is serious.

The China-Pak two-front security challenge to India has for years been a cause of tensions in South Asia. Separately and together they have led to wars, distrust and a growing arms race. China's new strategic plans will not lessen the threats and in fact have farreaching regional and continental implications. There have been many positive changes in China in recent years that have raised the prospect of establishment of friendly ties between India and China and a peaceful settlement of outstandiding disputes. The strong negative traits in much of Chinese strategic thought, however, must be overcome if Sino-Indian friendship is to truly materialise and genuine peace in Asia is to be achieved. Since that is the publicly avowed aim of both India and China, India ought to address itself seriously to the issues and initiate talks with China on them. A peace, friendship and security agreement between the two countries which will tackle these issues and also bring about an early and reasonable settlement of the border problem has clearly become essential.

However, both in the short and long term the security problems of India, China and other states cannot be solved through individual state actions with increased reliance on military means. A collective security arrangement in Asia, on the lines of the Helsinki agreement, may bring genuine security to all. It is hoped that China in its own interest and in the interest of peace in Asia would come round to this view, and refrain from a unilateral military-based search for security and strategic superiority.