

## Holistic Approach to National Growth and Security

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Good morning Ladies and Gentlemen. First, I would like to thank General Hector de Silva and Dr. Premadasa for this Opportunity to speak today. Also like to thank Sqn Ldr Wijesuriya and his team to make this participation possible all the way from New Delhi. I'm privileged. I also wish to Chair; I understand from his CV that he is a fellow aluminate of RCDS. And I would like to wish my fellow panelists a very good morning as well as the audience a very good morning indeed.

I think General Wanigasooriya who started typically this is the advantage of [you know] as keep coming later down the chain of speaking you find a lot more and more aspects which wanted to cover only have been thrust upon. But since it is the beginning, I still have a fair advantage and I do wish my fellow panelists the very best.

As the saying goes May you live in interesting times could not have been more apt to describe our world today in more ways than one. Our world, in recently, was bound together by globalization appears to have been turned upside down by micro scoping virus. This definitely is not mankind's first blush with the last pandemic, but it is probably not since the World War II that we have been faced with such a widespread disaster of the scale and magnitude.

The effects have led to a sharp downturn of economies, loss of lives and livelihoods which have been exacerbated by trade wars, breakdown of supply chains, increased nationalism and geopolitical jostling. As nations jockey for their political interests the concept of national security has evolved into a wider canvas of threats and challenges. While the previous panel just very clearly elicited what national security was all about and how the fundamentals were I will take little steps further by discussing how it has become a widening concept today.

For those who were in uniform, the perception of security traditionally and quite nationally is related to a military binary. But the fact is the security challenges of the 21st century is today of an increasingly non-military construct. There has been a widening of the very concepts of security and peace. Security has become more dynamic, complex, controversial and contested across the world. And consequentially, these on the other hand, has become relative in its character. It is no longer the absence of threat or danger which was once the central to the transactional relation between the citizen and the state. Today the dangers are often beyond and the outside of the state capacity to control or to deal with. Not only have the once separate baskets of traditional and non-traditional threats merged and their boundaries blurred. The proliferation of new challenges of climate change trigger environmental disasters, technology- cyber and digital threats, devastating pandemics have all arrived at the very doorsteps of our homes. The enemy is no longer at the gates it is already inside.

In this milieu, the international environment has come under immense pressure of the changing dynamics. Changes essentially brought about by some key drivers. The first driver of change is increased geopolitical complexity which has come about due to the growing number of independent, international and transnational actors engage in power play across multiple levels. The national, regional and the global levels. This means the actions of state actors, non-state actors and private actors directly or indirectly play a role in statecraft. And their transnational cross linkages directly or indirectly impact geopolitics.

The next is sharp increase the levels of uncertainty in everyday life and of the future. Which has been brought about by the threat proliferation. These

are increasingly being less predictable, arrives from diverse sources and operate under the convenient anonymity.

The last driver is that conflicts or wars are no longer only because to result disputes or contestations. As all measures shorter or equally provide a wider way of coercive options. The current transitional face which the world is going through towards the inevitable changes in the world order and the associated emergence of conditions that we are experiencing today is almost reminiscent of the Cold War. The changing international dynamics have therefore led to shift in the regional contestations and the alignments. The security challenges of the century are steadily shifting from the realist paradigm of security dilemma of the nuclear age when national threats led to arms races and military competition to a more contemporary survival dilemma of the information age where the non-military challenges necessitate multilateral cooperation rather than competition. Despite the initial and understandable surge of nationalism in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic which is visible to all of us there has been an increasingly widespread international realization that no nation can go it alone. The immense loss of lives and livelihoods across the world which has affected all nations and pushed some to the economic disasters as ironically forced them all to police on the grounds of human survival and safety. Similarly, affecting all is the outcome of mankind's apathy towards climate change which was brought up by the previous speaker. In the past decades which is playing out its own course as nature exacts its revenge. As temperature rise there has been unprecedented increase in natural disasters. While the rising sea levels threatening the very existence of some countries the melting ice is also opening up the Arctic waterways which will benefit many. Among all these challenges the world appears to be heading towards an era of competition for control. Control of natural resources including water, control of technology, control of data and information including control of the global commons. There seem these into be the new areas of power contestations which will

play out the own course and sadly in the process raise the risk potential of the world at large.

So, is economic growth keep paradigm? Let's examine this. Among all of these the common underpinning driver for all nations today is economic growth without which none can truly survived. Developed countries are faced with their own challenges of shifting demographics, sustaining economic growth and maneuvering to works favorable realignments whereas developing countries on the other hand are confronted with the added burden of an expanding array of challenges in their efforts to eradicating poverty, ensuring equitable development and removing inequalities while ensuring that democratic institutions remain robust and resilient. The causal link between economics and security I think it is best illustrated by James Harrington, a 17th century English Philosopher who said the source of state power is a balance of economic sources and not divine right or military power. In today's world it has never been more relevant as economics drive national growth. And hence national growth is no longer a mere outcome of trade or commerce but a vital aspect of security. In fact, national growth and national security are complimentary to each other and two sides of the same coin.

However, the defining factor which shapes the quality and quantity of economic aggregates depends heavily on the state's public finances. Increased integration of the national economy into global markets means that national security will unavoidably depend on the stability of the global economy and international financial systems. And the ability to coordinate key national economic policies with trading partner nations. Here the strategic outlook of a nation places a vital role. Not only where, how and with whom you engaged but most importantly the timelines of engagement.

Economic of financial engagements for a short-term political gain may have long-term strategic price to be paid. As it will impact the flexibility of a nation to shape its national security outcomes.

Therefore, national security is no longer a mere a fiscal defense of a state, but defense of financial systems and institutions, defense of trade interests, defends of markets, defense of supply chains, the list is long. The increasing use of trade as a leverage in the current geopolitical construct clearly underscores the interdependency of growth and security.

So, we need a holistic approach. What is the way forward? The widening of the concept of national security to include human security, economic security, environmental security, digital security, information security, cyber security along with traditional security today necessitates states to look at and address all this in holistic manner, overlapping of this individual relevance has naturally led interdependencies to an extend today. It is almost impossible to act on any one aspect of security without some aspects impacting other. This approach will need the government to analyze, strategize, prepare an act comprehensively by integrating all elements of national security. This is extremely hard to do. Getting all stakeholders together is easy, getting them to speak the same language is much more difficult and getting them to agree is almost impossible.

But there is a way out. While it is difficult to break silos, it is definitely possible to proliferate them. Creating cross linkages to connect verticals and every structured level. It is not easy but doable. We also need to realize that the age-old conventional strategic approach of aligning may no longer necessarily provide a roadmap to achieve the desired the outcomes. The binary relationship between the country's development, growth needs, and security needs have to be viewed differently today. In an increasingly aspirational world human growth and development probably assume much more important as geographical security. Therefore, it is getting more and more difficult to find the right balance. The state has to identify the outcomes which are national interest which would need to be followed up as a much more integrated priority to desired outcomes balance in a short medium to long-term. This is

possible. The most difficult part as that we more wants and outcome desired than the resources and the budgets permit. Plans, policies and processes will continuously need to be adopted. Greater horizontal synergy between ministries, stakeholders and public and private sectors today are essential for the government approach. Whereas vertical synergy would be necessary between strategy, policies, plans and execution to achieve the desired outcomes.

So, what does the regional outlook look like today? Quickly sum-up by saying that the emergence of new threats and increasing risk to global security have raised fundamental questions regarding the adequacy of existing international arrangements to foster peace and security. On one hand, we see growing helplessness of world forums such as UN in managing and avoiding conflicts and on the other hand we see growing reluctance on part of traditional responsible past to assume world leadership. Thereby seeding space to ambitious revisionist who disregard rule-based normative world order. Today, more than any other time and more urgently for the turbulent future we face the world needs stronger institutions, stronger commitments, stronger results and most importantly stronger friendships. If anything that the current pandemic has forced us is to look at our lives. That is today the strategic window of opportunity which is open. And opportunity to examine our common interests, find paths of convergence and concentrate not just only regional cooperation but more importantly on regional cohesion. It is time to come together to seek a collaborative security. It is time for a new strategy- one of actively seeking fresh common ground and rally together to secure our common and shared future.

Thank you very much.

Marshal also an alumnus of the Royal College of Defence Studies, UK, Postgraduate in Strategy and International Security from King's College London and also holds an M. Phil degree in Defence and Strategic Studies.

### Author Biography



Air Marshal Choudhury is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and was commissioned into the fighter stream of the India Air Force on 22nd December 1983. The Air