Technological Developments and Border Security in India's North East - Part 2 of 2

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Vivek Mishra, Doctoral Candidate at the US Studies Programme, Centre for Canadian, US and Latin American Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi & Associate at indicia Research & Advisory.

The New Government's Promise

The new government has expressed an interest to improve technology driven security in the Northeast. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has committed to increasing its monitoring facilities near the Arunachal Pradesh border between China and India from the current 30 points to 84. The 54 new facilities will be equipped with satellite communication equipment and solar power stations, while army teams will be formed for retrieving and analyzing the information coming through these facilities. These developments are on the back of the government's promise to improve border infrastructure. The incumbent Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has allocated Rs 2,250 crore for the modernisation of India's border infrastructure. An important constituent of this allocation is the induction of high technology surveillance on the borders along Bangladesh and Pakistan. In a much needed move, Rs 367 crore has been allocated for building infrastructure along the India-China border for the current financial year. The government has also cleared the entry of some private players in the area of defence research. The DRDO has also planned to set up advanced technology centres in prominent academic institutes including IITs. This will include research activities in advanced propulsion technologies and next generation aero engine technologies among other things.

Border security in India's northeast is contingent upon two very important technological usages in modern day security; surveillance and reconnaissance. The new Indian government has pledged to invest more on border surveillance, primarily through the installations of high resolution cameras along the vast stretches of its borders with China and Bangladesh. In March 2014, the Chinese troops took away one of these cameras in order to prevent Indian surveillance in the Chumar sector near the LAC. This incidence, in isolation, is capable of pointing towards the threat posed to neighbouring countries just through better monitoring and surveillance of our border areas.

In so far as reconnaissance near India's north-eastern borders is concerned, the use of UAVs and other surveillance devices will have to increase. Due to the immediacy of the threat posed at the LoC, India's maximum surveillance focus has been near its border with Pakistan. The use of India's noiseless UAV, NETRA is also currently only limited to the LoC. India should shift its focus towards better surveillance and reconnaissance in its northeastern borders through the involvement of high-tech electronic surveillance equipment in the border areas like the Long Range Reconnaissance and Observation System (LORROS), Night Vision Devices (NVDs), Hand-held Thermal Imaging Cameras

(HHTIs), Battle Field Surveillance (BFSR) Radars, direction finders, ground sensors, high powered telescopes and UAVs, most of which are currently being used near the LoC.

Conclusion

India's current security approach is lopsided in favour of the sequence "first LoC, then LAC". This has resulted in not just a sequencing of prioritisation in security towards India's two border outposts but a 'chalk-and cheese' difference between the technologies being used at its northeastern and northwestern borders. There is a need to divert India's military-technological capabilities to its north-eastern borders. Current comparisons with China's military render India on the back foot. If India has to emerge out of this second fiddle military situation, besides convincingly thwarting the dangers emanating from the possibility of a two-front war, it has to expedite modernisation of its armed forces with technology at the helm.

The spate of border transgressions and illegal immigrations in India's northeastern States has catapulted the issue of security to the centre stage. Reported Chinese incursions up to 19 kms inside the LAC in the Daulat Beg Oldi sector in August 2013 and the subsequent series of sightings of UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects) clearly shows the lack of the requisite technological know-how on India's side to predict intrusions in advance, carry out surveillance, reconnaissance and other such activities. Many of the Indian States in its northeast share international borders and more often than not these borders are porous, thinly-manned and without adequate technological requirements. The lack of friendly terrain and the height above the sea level render the possibility of relocating even movable technology virtually impossible. In such topographically challenging circumstances, India needs considerable investments in the coming decade to revolutionise the Indian military through an influx of technology and information.

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