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### THE MILITARY DILEMMA: LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE

Author: Lt Gen Satish Nambiar

#### I THE CONTEXT

- (i) **The current levels of ethnic, religious, theological, and other such forms of conflict, are not likely to reduce in scope or extent in the foreseeable future.** As we approach the problem of peacekeeping in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there is a growing view that military conflicts between the most advanced and major powers are unlikely because available military technology has made warfare in the classic sense too costly and unwinnable. Even in the developing world, conventional war does not appear to be the preferred option. On the other hand, there are some social scientists and futurologists who are of the opinion that in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we are likely to experience war, violence, upheaval and change on an unprecedented scale.
- (ii) **Activities like “genocide” or “ethnic cleansing” cannot be allowed to go unchallenged or unchecked by the international community.** The time has gone when a State could humiliate and destroy its own people behind the rigid façade of sovereignty, and claim protection under the United Nations Charter that forbids intervention in matters essentially under the domestic jurisdiction of the State. The security of a State and its unity and integrity, devolve on the security and well-being of those who reside in that State. It is no longer possible for a State to presume that it can have, for all time, totally inviolate borders, and citizens living in deprivation and terror within those borders. If the citizens of a State are being hurt, the State itself can become mortally wounded. **A State, even if militarily powerful and further strengthened by alliances, is greatly weakened when its citizens judge that their rights and privileges are not sufficiently protected within the State. Such a State becomes vulnerable. It invites implosion from within; and intrusion from without.** The Soviet Union collapsed under the contradictions of the system it was following, particularly when it tried to match the growing military power of the Western Alliance, without the financial base to support such an effort. Yugoslavia collapsed when its constituent republics went their own ways. Under such circumstances, outsiders can only too readily help the disintegration process.
- (iii) In the past, the international community had to deal with inter-state conflict. Through political, diplomatic and sometimes, threat of economic pressure, belligerent states were coaxed or compelled to cease fighting and arrive at agreements under the aegis of the international community. **Today, most of the recent conflicts have taken place, or are taking place, within states, or between units that were part of unitary states till they began to fall apart.**