



Keeping INDIA Secure:

Congress' Plan on National Security

National Security is an all-encompassing term that includes the protection of the nation and its citizens from multi-dimensional threats and coercion. As an emerging global power and the largest democracy in the world, India faces multiple security challenges in the 21st century that include transnational terrorism, a troubled neighbourhood marred by outstanding border disputes with Pakistan and China, internal militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, left-wing extremism in some parts of the country, threats to the data and privacy of our citizens, economic threats, and climate change and environmental threats.

The Congress Party has always displayed **zero tolerance** on terrorism and placed the highest emphasis on national security. As Lt. Gen (Retd.) D.S. Hooda recently noted, the Indian Army was always given a free hand, without any political interference, to deal with Pakistan and cross-border terrorism. It is unfortunate that national security and the armed forces are being blatantly politicised by the current Government. The Congress party strongly condemns all such efforts of the Prime Minister and his colleagues.

The Congress party accepts the five pillars of the report titled 'India's National Security Strategy', laid out by Lt. Gen (Retd.) D.S. Hooda:

- I. ASSUMING OUR RIGHTFUL PLACE IN GLOBAL AFFAIRS**
- II. ACHIEVING A SECURE NEIGHBOURHOOD**
- III. PEACEFUL RESOLUTION OF INTERNAL CONFLICTS**
- IV. PROTECTING OUR PEOPLE**
- V. STRENGTHENING OUR CAPABILITIES**

The Congress acknowledges that a sound national security doctrine needs to focus on all the five pillars mentioned above. We believe that strengthening our security apparatus and military capability lies at the heart of any such strategy. This is more relevant today than ever before as the last five years have witnessed an alarming erosion in our military capabilities and defence preparedness, even as political rhetoric on national security has scaled new heights. This is best exemplified by the fall in the share of our defence budget as a percentage of overall GDP. It reached a 57-year low in 2019. The lack of focus on enhancing capability as a deterrent to violent threats has been coupled with short-sighted diplomacy, severely compromising our national security. This is evident from a 1.5 fold rise in cross-border infiltration and a 5 fold rise in ceasefire violations from Pakistan in the last 5 years.

Therefore, Congress will focus on strengthening our defence preparedness and capability with the utmost urgency, as reflected by the various pledges made in our Manifesto on the issues of national and internal security.

Specifically, our roadmap for enhancing India's hard power would include, inter alia:

1. Securing our Land and Maritime Borders: Congress is committed to fully preserving the territorial integrity of India. We will take the following concrete steps:

- Adopt the principle of "One border, one force".
- Put in place a "Smart Fence" on the Myanmar border that combines technology with a physical barrier to check infiltration and smuggling.
- Operationalise a Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System across all Indian borders.
- Speed up infrastructure development across the border by restructuring the Border Roads Organisation. Allocate dedicated funds to it and fast-track land acquisition.
- Pass the Coastal Security Bill, to set up a 'National Maritime Authority' and strengthen the Coast Guards. Currently, there are 15 agencies involved in managing coastal security, leading to jurisdiction and coordination problems. We will review and streamline the functioning of different agencies.
- Gradually build up a comprehensive missile defence system.

2. Strengthening our Military Capability: While India has always championed the message of peace and harmony globally, we will only be assured of peace if we can visibly demonstrate our capability to defend our national interests through the use of force. Today, there are significant capability shortfalls in the three services. These have been particularly exacerbated in the last 5 years due to a massive decline in the proportion of the "modernisation budget" in the overall defence outlay. The proportion has plummeted to 18% in 2018-19 from 26% in 2013-14. As a result, in March 2018, the Vice Chief of Army Staff lamented to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence that 68 per cent of the army's equipment was of the "vintage category" and the prevailing budget allocations were not enough to pay for instalments of past emergency purchases, let alone to undertake a modernisation plan. Congress strongly condemns the negligence of the current government in dealing with national security and ignoring the legitimate demands of the armed forces.

The Congress will address this grave crisis with strong political will and a sense of urgency. We will:

- Transform the Ministry of Defence (MoD) into a fully integrated headquarters with the posting of service officers. A Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) will be immediately appointed as the principal adviser to the government on matters relating to defence. Together, the integrated MoD and the CDS will oversee

and coordinate the force modernisation plans of the military focussed on increasing interoperability, enhancing jointness, and optimising the resources between the three services.

- Undertake a comprehensive review of the current and future force structures to transform the army, navy and air force into an integrated fighting force. The force composition that emerges from this review will form the basis for a capability development plan over a mid to long-term period.
- Replace the current system of ad-hoc budgetary allocation by one where budgets are based on a long-term capability development plan prepared by the three services and defence experts and accepted by the government.
- Frame Qualitative Requirements realistically (based on current requirements and prevailing threats), combine evaluation trials to save time and immediately place repeat orders for in-service platforms and equipment, which have been built and developed indigenously. Most importantly, authorities responsible for the processing of cases will be held accountable for any undue delays in procurement. This is imperative since our current Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) has completely failed to simplify or speed up procurements.

3. Indigenisation of Defence Production: India cannot be a strong military force unless it develops indigenous production capability. The current strategy of the Government of India has prioritised building foreign equipment under technology transfer. They have mandated the purchase of "proven and in-service" equipment, which compels the military to buy equipment that has already gone through its development cycle. Such equipment are at least a decade away from being state-of-the-art. Congress will reverse this trend by ensuring that the Ministry of Defence assumes a leadership role in the creation of a robust domestic industrial defence base. We will:

- Provide incentives and support to private sector players, improve accountability and practices of Defence PSUs and boost defence exports through a dedicated strategy.
- Prioritise the strengthening of India's R&D base by expanding DRDO's focus on areas like adoption of artificial intelligence, robotics, autonomous systems, and quantum technology..
- Pursue avenues of joint-R&D with strategic partners like the US, Russia, Israel and France.

4. Reinvigorating our Intelligence Apparatus: Intelligence is a very critical imperative for national security. Timely and actionable intelligence can be a game-changer in all theatres of operations and the conduct of diplomacy. However, our intelligence structure is unable to perform to its potential due to problems of inadequate resource allocation and shortfalls in manpower. Therefore, Congress will restructure the current intelligence architecture with clear-cut responsibility and accountability. As part of the restructuring, we will:

- Establish a career intelligence cadre with qualifications of the subject and regional expertise, proven language capability, and familiarity with local customs.
- Draw personnel with a tested acumen for intelligence work from the broadest spectrum of society including civil services, armed forces, technology experts, and economists.
- Strengthen technical intelligence and remove the inadequacies in human intelligence.
- Give the highest priority to the security of operations and safeguarding of operational details.
- Provide a statutory basis to the National Security Council (NSC) and the office of National Security Adviser (NSA). Their powers and functions will be defined under the law and both authorities, and the agencies under them will be accountable to Parliament.
- Set up a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Intelligence, to regularly audit standards and performance, and make recommendations for improvement.

5. Ensuring Cyber Security: In order to secure India from cyber attacks, we need to create new institutional structures to significantly strengthen our cyber security capabilities.

- Formulate a clear policy on cyber attacks, stating that a malicious cyber attack will be considered as a hostile act against our national sovereignty, and India will respond by using all national resources at our disposal – cyber, military, diplomatic and economic.
- Upgrade the already announced Defence Cyber Agency to a full-fledged Cyber Command. The Cyber Command will have a clear mandate to conduct full-spectrum cyberspace operations.
- Encourage adoption of software and hardware that is designed and manufactured by Indian companies. This will deter vulnerabilities arising from excessive reliance on foreign hardware and software. Domestic companies must be given preference in the purchase of equipment.



Indian National Congress