

National Security Preparedness & Planning for COVID-19

*Anticipating Risks,
Preparing
Countermeasures*

**Version 1.0
June 11, 2020**

**Aditya Ramanathan
Pranay Kotasthane**

This document can be cited as “Aditya Ramanathan, Pranay Kotasthane, National Security Preparedness & Planning for COVID-19, Takshashila Discussion SlideDoc, June 2020”. For any feedback, please email research@takshashila.org.in



Table of Contents

page

3

Executive Summary

page

4

Risk Assessment

page

7

Preparedness & Planning

page

17

Conclusion



Executive Summary

There are four major risks in the ongoing pandemic: the spread of infection, police and armed forces being stretched thin, opportunistic actions by insurgents, criminals, and other States, and finally, collapse of State capacity in India's extended neighbourhood. These challenges are likely to persist over the 36 months until the pandemic subsides. To tackle these challenges, we propose that:

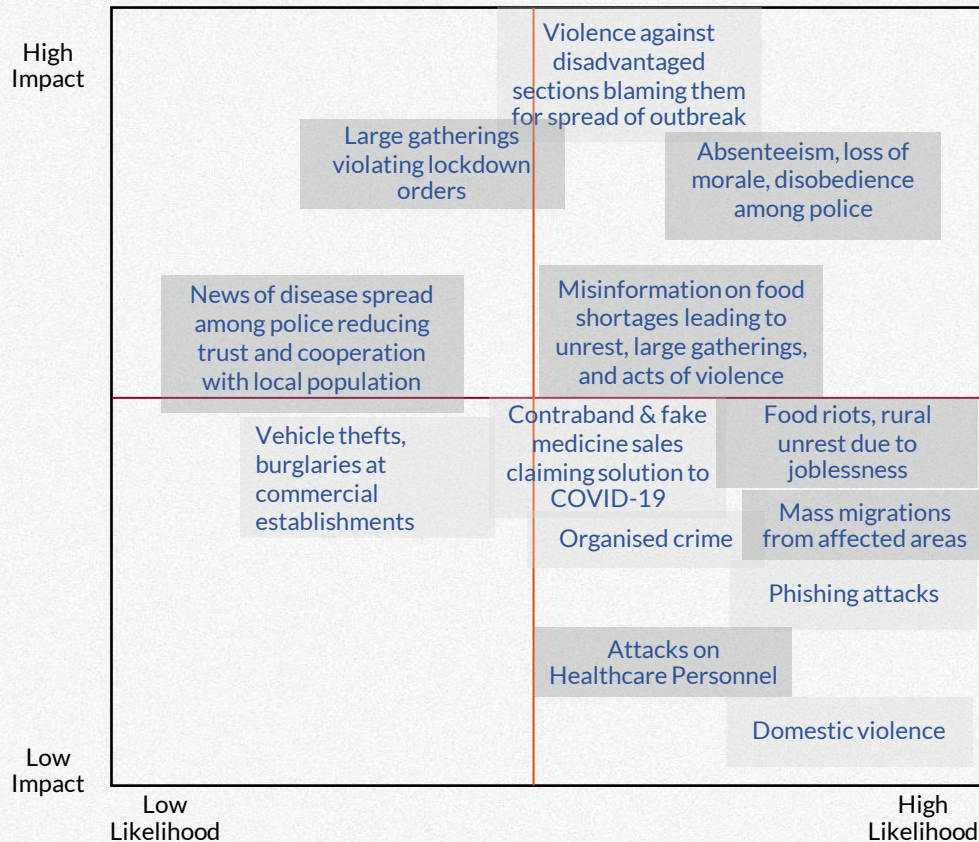
1. India greatly expand its capacity for testing and contact tracing, both to maintain effectiveness of police forces and allow critical activities to continue.
2. State police be routinely supplemented by CAPFs and pre-positioned in sensitive areas to prevent outbreaks of violence.
3. The armed forces prepare for a period of heightened cross-LoC activity and transgressions across the LAC.
4. The government should draw up plans to deal with mass migrations both internally and from other states. It must also prepare capabilities to evacuate millions of Indians from West Asia.

Risk Assessment



Risk Assessment Framework for Law & Order Enforcement

High impact and high likelihood threats must be tackled on priority



What are high impact threats?

Events that directly affect the ability of the State to exercise monopoly over the legitimate use of force.

What are high likelihood threats?

Events that become more likely as lockdowns extend and/or community transmission continues.

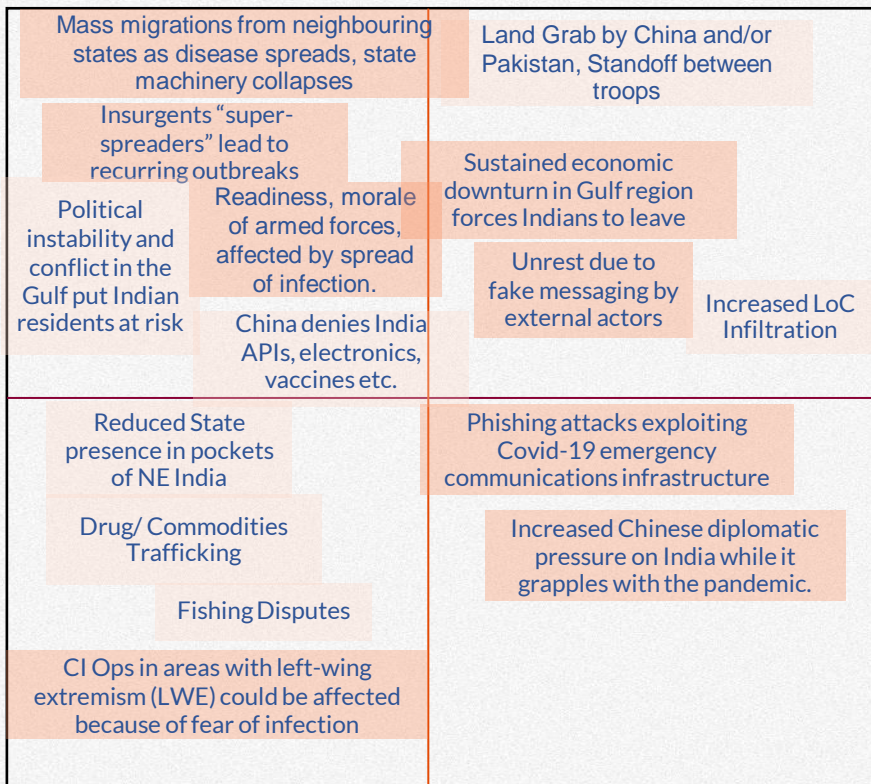
- Old threats whose likelihood or impact has increased after COVID-19
- New threats emanating due to COVID-19



Risk Assessment Framework for External/National Threats

High impact and high likelihood threats need to be tackled on priority

High Impact



Low Impact

Low Likelihood

High Likelihood

What are high impact threats?

Events that directly affect the ability of the State to exercise monopoly over the legitimate use of force.

What are high likelihood threats?

Events that become more likely as lockdown extends and/or community transmission continues.

- Old threats whose likelihood or impact has increased after COVID-19
- New threats emanating due to COVID-19

Preparedness & Planning



Preparedness & Planning

Having identified key domestic and external risks, this section uses a framework to look at how union and state governments can plan and prepare for them.

The following section is based on a widely used framework for contingency planning (WHO 2018). Planning for future contingencies involves identification of four factors: developments, risks, preparedness actions, and countermeasures.

Developments are the underlying phenomenon that cause risks to materialise. A single development can generate multiple risks.

Risks present potential hazards (as mapped in the previous section) that must be identified and mitigated.

Preparedness actions are proactive steps taken in advance primarily to reduce the likelihood of a risk materialising, and secondarily to reduce its impact.

Countermeasures are reactive steps taken to reduce or contain the impact of a risk once it has begun materialising.

This section takes some of the risks and links them to underlying developments during the ongoing pandemic as well as preparedness actions and countermeasures.



Planning for High Risk Law & Order Enforcement Threats (1/3)

Development	Risks	Preparedness Actions	Countermeasures
Thinning out of state police forces due to:			
1. Extensive deployments during lockdowns	1. Violence against disadvantaged sections blaming them for spread of outbreak. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, High Likelihood</i>	1. Supplement state police with CAPF personnel (where possible from the same state)/Home Guards. 2. Standardise and issue a PPE kit for police personnel. 3. Offer temporary accommodation for state police personnel who fear infecting their families.	1. Shift QRTs to sensitive areas.
2. Spread of infection among personnel	2. Violations of lockdown orders (esp. large gatherings) <i>Risk Period: 0-3 months</i> <i>High Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	4. Focus on enforcing lockdown at key nodes. Randomise patterns of police patrolling. Focus on vehicular mobility.	2. “Surge” police presence in areas that have witnessed violence or crime. Use Home Guards/ CAPFs.
3. Absenteeism in state police forces caused by infection/fear of infection	3. Crimes such as vehicle thefts, commercial establishment break-ins, and possibly home burglaries. <i>Risk Period: 0-3 months</i> <i>Low Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	5. Set up quick-reaction teams (QRTs) using CAPF personnel/ Home Guards. Give QRTs dedicated transportation. 6. Provide security for critical personnel. 7. Advertise in newspapers regularly about consequences of attacking health workers.	3. State administrations can provide temporary accommodation to those evicted from homes/ facing hostile environment in their neighbourhoods.
	4. Attacks on healthcare personnel <i>Risk Period: 0-3 months</i> <i>Low Impact, High Likelihood</i>		



Planning for High Risk Law & Order Enforcement Threats (2/3)

Development	Risks	Preparedness Actions	Countermeasures
Spread of COVID-19 among state police and CAPFs. Spread may speed up by living and working in close quarters and by asymptomatic carriers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Absenteeism, loss of morale, disobedience of orders. Risk Period: 0-36 months High Impact, High LikelihoodNews of disease spread among police will reduce trust and cooperation with local population. Risk Period: 0-36 months High Impact, Low Likelihood	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Raise an “army” of contact tracers under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) to aid both general population and police.Strong push for precautionary measures: regular handwashing, wearing masks, sanitising surfaces etc.Extensive testing to spot infections early. Tests will have to be conducted at a higher rate than amongst the general populace.Identify quarantine facilities for infected personnel.Make temporary alternate accommodation provisions for personnel to reduce crowding and aid social distancing.	Rapidly form teams of contact tracers from police and MoHFW to contain outbreaks and allow critical functions to continue.



Planning for High Risk Law & Order Enforcement Threats (3/3)

Development	Risks	Preparedness Actions	Countermeasures
Increased prevalence of misinformation amid the uncertainties created by the pandemic.	Misinformation on food shortages leading to unrest, large gatherings, and acts of violence <i>Risk Period: 0-6 months</i> <i>High Impact, High Likelihood</i>	Create single points of public communication at central, state and district levels. They must create simple, clear communications in all languages relevant to their audience and disseminate this information via traditional media as well as social media.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Police quick reaction teams must disperse crowds before they can build up and cordon off sites where people might congregate.2. Clear public communication must be made to reassure people that supplies of essential items will continue.



Planning for High Risk External/National Threats (1/5)

Development	Risks	Preparedness Actions	Countermeasures
Increased economic pressure and political unrest among India's neighbours.	1. Increase in cross-LoC infiltration. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, High Likelihood</i>	1. Prepare for infiltration, LoC violence.	1. Quarantine immigrants. Use offer of free screening and general healthcare.
	2. Illegal migration from neighbouring countries as disease spreads and state machinery collapses. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	2. Stock up on material needed to set up temporary camps and quarantine facilities for illegal migrants. Stock up on test kits.	2. Devote more resources to aid state police against drug trafficking.
	3. Increased drugs and commodities smuggling across the IB as Pakistan struggles with the pandemic. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>Low Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	3. Step up intelligence efforts to address the drug problem early on.	3. Increased Indian Coast Guard Patrols.
	4. As India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka come under economic pressure, there may be heightened fishing activity in sensitive waters, leading to detainment of fishermen. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>Low Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	4. Have screening in place to safely detain fishermen.	



Planning for High Risk External/National Threats (2/5)

Development	Risks	Preparedness Actions	Countermeasures
Risk of infection from insurgents since they are not screened/ tested.	1. CI Ops in areas affected by left-wing extremism (LWE) could be affected because of fear of infection from some communities. <i>Risk Period: 0-6 months</i> <i>Low Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	1. Provide ample protective gear to personnel involved in CI Ops, especially those detaining suspected insurgents.	1. Highlight risk of infection from insurgents, especially cases of captured insurgents who have tested positive.
	2. Insurgents may act as 'super-spreaders.' Testing/ screening may be difficult in areas hostile to government forces. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	2. Conduct regular and randomised screening tests of personnel. 3. Provide extensive testing for people in insurgency-prone areas with the help of CAPFs and Indian Army.	2. Offer no-questions-asked treatment for COVID-19 treatment.
CAPFs are stretched thin	As security forces turn their attention elsewhere, there may be reduced state visibility in remote pockets of north-east India. This could lead to the rise of armed non-state actors. <i>Risk Period: 0-6 months</i> <i>Low Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	1. Reduce police/CAPF presence only based on intelligence inputs. 2. Conduct surprise patrols in potentially affect areas.	Anticipate trouble spots and 'surge' police forces where necessary.



Planning for High Risk External/National Threats (3/5)

Development	Risks	Preparedness Actions	Countermeasures
Aggressive moves by China: If China contains future outbreaks of COVID-10 and recovers faster, it will be in a position to take advantage of other states' relative weaknesses.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. A <i>fait accompli</i> – for example seizure of a sliver of uninhabited territory. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, High Likelihood</i>2. Increased diplomatic pressure on India in multilateral fora. <i>Risk Period: 0-6 months</i> <i>Low Impact, High Likelihood</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Maintain Major-General-level border talks with PLA.2. Increase surveillance in zones vulnerable to a <i>fait accompli</i>.3. Discuss this concern in regular dialogues with strategic partners and obtain their support.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Develop a plan of action for how to deal with Chinese incursions.2. Join partner countries in blocking Chinese moves in UNSC or other forums that are hostile to India.
Economic slowdown in China and pandemic-related disruptions of supply chains.	<p>China denies India supplies of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) for the pharmaceutical industry as well as electronic consumer goods, organic chemicals etc.</p> <p><i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, Low Likelihood</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Engage in dialogue with Beijing about the shared interest in ensuring API supplies.2. Build India's own API capabilities.	Work with other partner countries to invest in Indian API manufacturing capabilities.



Planning for High Risk External/National Threats (4/5)

Development	Risks	Preparedness Actions	Countermeasures
Spread of COVID-19 infection in armed forces. Shared communal spaces and asymptomatic carriers could result in rapid spread.	Direct negative effects on readiness, cohesion, morale. Greatest risk is to Indian Navy, with vessels out at sea for months. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Testing all symptomatic cases and conducting random tests.2. More intensive tests for sailors about to embark on ships. 100% testing for submarine crews.3. Set up isolation/quarantine system on Indian Navy vessels.4. Armed forces-wide emphasis on sanitising communal/ shared spaces, habits like regular handwashing.	Quickly isolate those with symptoms and test widely. Indian Navy should consider system for evacuating Covid-19 patients from combat vessels at sea before infection spreads.
Low oil prices will reduce the fiscal space of Gulf states to offer welfare to citizens and provide aid to Arab countries being struck by COVID-19.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Sustained economic downturn leaves millions of Indian expatriates without jobs and compels the return home. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, High Likelihood</i>2. Political instability and conflict in the Gulf put Indian citizens in the region in peril. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, Low Likelihood</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Maintain reserves of testing kits, PPE etc. to screen returning Indians.2. Prepare evacuation plan using both aircraft and ocean-going vessels. Brief all stakeholders.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use Indian Army to set up camps where returning Indians can be screened and if necessary, treated.2. Commandeer civilian aircraft when needed for emergency evacuations.



Planning for High Risk External/National Threats (5/5)

Development	Risks	Preparedness Actions	Countermeasures
The crisis opens up opportunities for disinformation/ hacking/ phishing by external state and non-state actors.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Phishing attacks exploiting COVID-19 emergency communications. <i>Risk Period: 0-6 months</i> <i>Low Impact, High Likelihood</i>2. Fake news designed to create suspicion about government, create communal polarisation etc. <i>Risk Period: 0-36 months</i> <i>High Impact, High Likelihood</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Educate citizens, maintain credible police communications on all media platforms.2. Urge citizens to use verified sources of information.	Identify and debunk fake news.

Conclusion



Conclusion

We assume that the ongoing pandemic will last in some form over the next 36 months. However, the types of risks that might play out over this time period are different and therefore, countermeasures over the short, medium, and long terms are identified as:

Short-term plan (0-3 months)

Focus on domestic law enforcement considerations such as ensuring that various restrictions are observed, a rise in small-scale crime and targeted violence against disadvantaged sections is contained via increased policing and critical personnel such as healthcare workers are not harassed or hurt. Increase testing rapidly in the police forces.

Medium-term plan (3-6 months)

Look at mitigating some of the broader risks created by the pandemic. These include countering pervasive misinformation through clear points of public communication, ensuring that, despite the new pressures on them, CAPFs retain their presence in critical parts of the North-East and areas affected by Naxal insurgents.

Long-term plan (6-36 months)

Prepare for a difficult domestic and international environment. Increase vigilance along the LAC. Prepare for renewed international pressure from Beijing at multilateral forums.

Plan for evacuating Indians from abroad in case of repeated outbreaks.

The armed forces will also have to cope with the longer-term impact the economic downturn will have on the force modernisation plans.