

Institute of National Security Studies

Security Salon titled “National Security in the 21st Century”

Press Release

Institute of National Security Studies (INSS), the premier think tank on National Security established under the Ministry of Defence, organized a Security Salon titled “National Security in the 21st Century” on the 13th of October, 2021 from 1800hrs to 1930hrs at Nandimithra Auditorium, Ministry of Defence. The Guest Speaker for the event was Dr. Subramanian Swamy, Member of Parliament in Rajya Sabha, India. The session was chaired by General Kamal Gunaratne (Retd.) WWV RWP, RSP, USP, ndc, psc MPhil, Secretary to the Ministry of Defense and State Ministry of National Security and Disaster Management. The proceedings were moderated by Professor Rohan Gunaratna, Director General of INSS. Mrs. Banu Prakash, Acting Deputy High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka, Maj. Gen. Milinda Peiris RWP RSP VSV USP ndc psc MPhil (Ind) PGDM, Vice-Chancellor of General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, Commander of the Navy, and Commander the Air Force were also among the distinguished guests. The audience comprised highly esteemed representatives from the military, police, intelligence, ministries, and academia.

Dr. Swamy providing an initial outline to his lecture stated that the structure of National Security was placed on four pillars; namely Objectives, Priorities, Strategy, and Resource Mobilisation. Based on these four pillars, he presented what the national security dimensions in the 21st Century would be, its implications, and the necessary preparations that were to be made. He commenced his lecture by pointing out that the statuses of countries would play a minimal role in the new structures and domains of National Security. From an era of displaying military power through medieval weapon use and artillery on the ground to airpower in the skies, National Security has now emerged with its newest dimension of Cyber Security where statuses of countries are irrelevant.

Countries should no longer think of warfare in terms of the size of military forces and weapon mobilization but rather in terms of acquiring artificial intelligence, drones, cyber electronics, etc. Moreover, this also implied that all countries would be perceived as either threats or allies, irrespective of their development statuses or land size. Cyber security, due to its lack of traceability, would emerge as a dimension that is crucially important to the National Security of countries. It redefines the traditional concept of defence which is highly correlated with the quantity of manpower. The objective of a country, therefore, is to develop such technology and use it in one’s defence. Essentially if Sri Lanka could develop the expertise with limited but highly skilled manpower, Sri Lanka could strengthen its capability of fighting a cyber-war in the future.

Such dimensions have important implications on the Education Sector of Sri Lanka. Subjects such as mathematics including concepts like analytical techniques, deductive and inductive logic should be made essential in every level of education if Sri Lanka is to build such expertise. He also emphasized that with the introduction of bitcoin, individuals have purchased and transacted without the supervision of governments thereby increasing the scope for its misuse. Thereby, Sri Lanka should amongst its national security priorities, prioritize Cyber security.

He emphasized that therefore the strategy should be countries getting together and pooling resources to build on the cyber warfare capabilities and cyber warfare intelligence. Resource Allocation, he stated would rely on the right economic policies implemented by the government. Concluding he stated that

National Security in the 21st Century has metamorphosed into a concept that incorporates Cyber Security and thereby Sri Lanka should do the necessary to equip herself with the capabilities in this domain.

Professor Gunaratna expressed his gratitude to Dr. Swamy for the support rendered throughout especially during moments when Sri Lanka had few friends beyond her territorial waters. He further stated Sri Lanka is willing to work with every nation including India following a neutral foreign policy. He reiterated that both countries should work together and overcome common threats such as extremism, crime, terrorism, missile proliferation, and maritime threats.

The event concluded with an insightful discussion, where the guest speaker and moderator expressed their remarks and addressed questions that were posed by the participants.