Symposium on India's Cyber Strategy: Opportunities and challenges

August, 31st, 2018 | 1:00pm to 6:00pm

Casuarina Hall, India Habitat Centre

Lodhi Road, Near Airforce Bal Bharati School, Institutional Area, Lodi Colony, New Delhi, Delhi 110003

Background

Global discourse on cyber security has become increasingly fragmented since the inability of the UN GGE 2017 to arrive at a consensus report. Various initiatives, comprised both of state and civil society actors have attempted to pick up the pieces and galvanize consensus despite core ideological differences between states on the nature of cyberspace itself. Further, norms, saliencies and pragmatic strategic considerations would also drive the formulation of a credible cyber doctrine that underpins the approach undertaken by various regulatory bodies, including the military, sectoral regulators and the private sector. CIS has undertaken some preliminary research in this space-in the form of a paper on the norms formulation process that was published by the Global Commission on the Stability of Cyberspace (GCSC) and a set of briefs on the substantive aspect of norms and standards of International Law that could drive India's strategy at the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts (UN-GGE) process. (See here, here and here)

The standards of international law combined with strategic considerations drive a nation's approach to any norms formulation process. With the cyber norms formulation efforts in a state of flux, India needs to advocate a coherent position that is in sync with the standards of international law while also furthering India's strategic agenda as a key player in the international arena.

Exchange of ideas between government officials, private sector actors and research organisations will help formulate India's strategic agenda. This symposium endeavours to delve into certain thorny questions in the norms formulation process and explore how India should approach these issues-both while framing domestic policy and engaging globally.

AGENDA

Session 1 (Scene-Setting): Identifying the debate: Cyber Norms Formulation and the Role of International Law

This session will lay the foundations for the debate in the two panels. CIS will present its existing research done thus far in this space and would identify the challenges of applying the tenets of traditional international law to cyberspace.

Key Questions:
- How could some of the existing initiatives in cyberspace be improved?
- What is the role for the tenets of international law in this space?
- How could specific legal regimes such as self-defense, IHL, countermeasures and state responsibility be applied in cyberspace?
- Are there lessons to be learned from the development of regimes in other fields? (Trade, UNCLOS, environment, space, Missile Control Regime etc)

Panel 1: Towards India's Cyber Doctrine: A Coherent Approach to India's Cyber Security Framework

This session would boil the debate down to an Indian context and seek to explore how the national security community and government officials view India's cyber-security framework. It would explore the key stakeholders responsible for ensuring the protection of digital infrastructure both from cyber threats. It would be extremely interesting to obtain perspectives on the various endeavours the military and intelligence community in particular, are engaging in this regard and also explore possibilities of collaboration between various stakeholders.

Key Questions:
- Are the various cyber security instruments initiatives and strategies in India coherent and sufficient?
- Is there a broader cyber security vision or doctrine that India could aspire towards?
- How could there be cross-sectoral cooperation in this regard?

Panel 2: Breaking the Deadlock: Regional and India-specific Approaches to Norms Formulation

This session will apply the global debate to a regional and India-specific context. It would ideally highlight key considerations that India should bear in mind when approaching these negotiations.

Key Questions:
- Should India articulate a clear stance on any of the covered issues?
- What region and context-specific considerations should India bear in mind when approaching the global norms formulation process?
- What are some of the regional processes in existence and how should India best engage with them?