



# SOME ASPECTS OF NON-TRADITIONAL SECURITY

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## ABSTRACT

*Security of a nation is closely linked to development and the growth of institutions and democracy. Human development is an essential dimension and security means empowerment of the people. In advancing the step towards non-traditional security, the dissemination of information is an important aspect.*

## Introduction

The emergence of the idea of human security as a somewhat controversial corollary to the traditional, statist military dimension was perhaps inevitable with the growing salience of globalization as a subject of inquiry. The universal quest for some kind of consensual global order has spawned its own debate but for the purpose of this paper the "reformist" response has been a useful one, of a system based on countries committed to internal participatory democracy and robust domestic institutions and bound together by the rule of law.<sup>1</sup> The areas of divergence between the two initially appear more conspicuous than their convergence but when security assumes the dimension of State policy, the mutually reinforcing properties surface in bolder relief. Interestingly, the National Security Advisor, Mr. J. N. Dixit, has stated that his

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objective in office was to achieve comprehensive security, usually understood to be a blend of both variants.

For a brief background, to traditionalists the State is the central unit of analysis. Security is equated with national survival within a world that is seen as essentially conflict-ridden and anarchical. States perceive each other's military postures and systems to be offensive, threatening their own. Their critical preoccupation grows into one of measuring force postures and capabilities. As a consequence, States develop military doctrines; weapons systems serve their defence. The focus on State survival leads to cumulative knowledge on the role of military force.

## Non-traditional Security

The non-traditional broadens the traditional security horizon beyond the parameters of the State into the sphere of civil society, of individuals, groups, organizations and institutions that are not part of the paraphernalia of formal governance. The roots of non-traditional security have been traced back to the work of the Canadian psychologist, WE Blatz.<sup>2</sup> Blatz's views were based on the human learning process and discernible inter-relationships between society and authority. For security to be sound it had to be all-inclusive and all-pervasive. Blatz adopted the gospel of individual self-sufficiency. People within a community could best facilitate their own individual security. Though Blatz's conclusions bore the indelible imprint of developed Western society, his opinion contributed to theories of international development and the world system.

The broad conclusion was that conflict between State structures was endemic. Containment of that discord was possible through the devolution of resources. The UN was seen as the focal point for reordering priorities towards that end. The UN Development Project's annual Human Development Reports have reflected this paradigm.<sup>3</sup> The UNDP's basic principles of governance are based on the strengthening of key institutions (the legislature, executive and judiciary and their delivery systems) and civil society. These institutional facilitators of governance are formed through the exercise of public choice, are accountable to the governed and maintain transparency in their various functions and transactions. They derive their vitality and efficiency from the human component. People have to be nurtured through the provision of security in the comprehensive sense.

Human development has been defined as the enlargement of their capabilities.<sup>4</sup> For people to be able to do so, they must have entitlement i.e. access to property and empowerment i.e. access to political decision - making. This is in contrast with

economic development that pursues the objective of raising per capita income alone. The theory is an evolving concept and passes the tests provided by contemporary human experience. For instance, China quadrupled its per capita income over the last two decades of the last century.<sup>5</sup> The pace of China's breakthrough has been widely lauded and scrutinized for instruction in future Asian growth. There have been many valuable lessons for the rest of the continent and the world, of down-to-earth decentralization of governing structures and bottom up planning, and financial self-management at the local level that unleashed vast energies and entrepreneurship. Trade and exchange in response to the market diktat led Chinese provinces to deal with contiguous territories even if it meant transcending political boundaries. But the physical and psychological displacement suffered by many adds credence to the simple yet holistic standards of the universal principles of governance based on human development viz. entitlement and empowerment for the vast majority (along with provisions of food, shelter and education) for leading fulfilling existences. The facilities to be acquired are not just the ability to read and write but also the security and aptitude to participate in discourse, formulate opinion and contribute to the formulation of choices on which public policy is based. China's economic fundamentals were sound and probably accounted for the political continuity of the famous post-Mao years.

The inclusive nature of the model anticipates economic blossoming as an outcome as briefly examined in the section on the other facets of non-traditional security. But the vital endeavour of this exercise is to focus on the prospects of widening public choice through selective contributions of the Press. That segment trails the synoptic allusion to the economic element. However, the linkages with traditional security in the South Asian context are important because the conventional idea of security begins from there.

## Linkages between Traditional and Non-traditional Security

In the Indian context, policy makers warn of disruptive external agendas.<sup>6</sup> There are proven nexuses between neighbours and the export of terrorism. Nuclear arms proliferation has posed a direct threat to military security. The State is committed to meeting these threats not only militarily but also by other agencies and means at its disposal. The reformist agenda is ultimately designed to meet such contingencies also. If comprehensive security can be provided and the institutions of democracy strengthened, an empowered civil society can supplement the endeavours of the State to raise the level of inter-State communication and dialogue.

For example, if India and Pakistan both face urgent pressures pertaining to socio-economic basics, informed and articulate civil societies could urge their governments to focus attention on them. If, however, the trade-off between guns and butter ends in the acquisition of more guns than butter, it should ideally take place at the behest of the people themselves. There is a growing impression that an informed State-civil society/people consensus does not exist. The election platform of the former Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, who campaigned for peace with India and won a resounding victory, provided an appealing illustration. There are instances to suggest that the people at large do not always condone confrontation as policy. Such situations could change qualitatively if opinion on both sides of the border overwhelmingly advocated agendas for constructive growth in place of strategies involving the costs of habitual enmity.

The dissemination of information and public discourse are two important instrumentalities in the governance paradigm for people to widen their choices. In this context too it can be realistically appreciated that the sub-continent's sensitive geo-political position and the pressures incumbent on policy-makers and governments of the two bigger countries make it difficult for them to always make productive choices on behalf of their people. But a future scenario in which both the people and their governments help each other is not inconceivable.

The global system based on the rule of law would have to gain wider recognition. This could come about through freer forums of public expression and is arguably already taking place in the subcontinental media where the latent opportunities of potential empowerment is sometimes anticipated. For example, the drugs and gunrunning nexuses on the subcontinent's northern extremities are subject to laws governing not only themselves but also their governments. In an approaching decade in which the length of the law's arm becomes more transparent alongside more regular electoral exercises that invest inhabitants of these regions with the right of political choice, people would have more to fear as well as to gain. If the transfer of nuclear technology and arms in violation of existing missile control technology regimes can be established and brought to the attention of the concerned global authorities, "lawful" societies would not resent their stoppage. But they would also have to be convinced that the law takes care of them.

The laws of humane governance would predicate an empathetic look at the conditions in which the raw material for terrorism is developed. Religious fundamentalism found virtual State sponsorship in schools of instruction that also preached terrorism. Key institutions failed to deliver; internal assessments have described networks of power and patronage and vestiges of feudalism centralizing authority at almost all levels of governance. The strategic environment and war in Afghanistan have left

residues in the form of terrorist outfits that have been used for export. The emotional rally over Kashmir can ring false in India where strenuous endeavours have been made to put participatory democracy in place despite limitations.

Yet this is an essentially Indian perspective and the authentic Pakistani response to many common tribulations are bound to be dissimilar. (They could also turn out to be similar if endeavours to help the marginalized e.g. fishermen, Dalits meet those on the other side succeed).<sup>7</sup> This is a classic situation when non-State actors can gain appreciation of adversarial perspectives without fear of compromise. If people-to-people communication cannot always keep pace with developments, the space created by writers and opinion makers "through the interplay of ideas and ideals ... (can) neutralize the various kinds of deprivations that inhibit freedom."<sup>8</sup> Human ingenuity has kept political dialogue alive and learned commentators have penned the methods by which the skills of diplomacy are being exploited not only to build confidence in seemingly hopeless conditions but signal to each other how it can be sustained. The last linkage is probably the most interesting. India, Pakistan and China need to convince their developed counterparts that market access to them in a sensitive area like agriculture and the restriction of subsidies to their own farmers is fraught with universal risk. India and China were parties to the limited success at the World Trade Organization meeting in Cancun, particularly when, going by reports in the Press, they succeeded in convincing representatives of the developed world that the realization of their aspirations was a recipe for disaster, at least for certain marginalized sections. Adversaries in the traditional security paradigm have thus to close ranks to ensure security defined by non-traditional standards.

Action and reaction over nuclear power, terrorism and Kashmir are likely to keep the State on both sides busy. But a combination of traditional and non-traditional approaches would not only preserve the peace but also keep alive hopes of future solutions.

## Other Dimensions of Non-traditional Security

Human development has earlier been defined as the enlargement of capabilities. Capabilities mean basic skills. But the enhancement of capabilities is thwarted by crucial "unfreedoms".<sup>9</sup> These include deprivations e.g. poverty, hunger, inequality etc. Such denial has to be overcome for development to take place. The component of progress that deals with economic well being (the market mechanism) is also dependent on the existing level of freedom. The absence of the opportunity to transact business through exchange is held as a denial of freedom and hence an obstacle to development. The market mechanism expands income, wealth and

opportunities and in the process substantially inflates human freedom. It has also been indicated that sometimes uninhibited expansion of business freedom can have an adverse effect on others. But even the limitations created by this process are on balance more welcome than curbs on the freedom of exchange. It is generally assumed that economic fundamentals are in order, or at the very least on the way to realization, when such economic interface takes place. Limitations on freedom created by dodging democratic processes, even for the stated objective of eventually arriving at satisfactory outcomes, is not considered either prudent or justified. The purpose is to empower more and more people to transact business through exchange.

With participatory democracy budding as the most acceptable form of contemporary political organization and government, its agencies, like communication, trade and commerce are seen as facilitators in the interplay of ideas among people. This interplay can neutralize the various kinds of deprivations that inhibit freedom and pave the way for progress.

There is also a link between democracy and human development because government must guarantee its citizens basic liberties for the expansion of their social opportunities. In this civil society as a function of democracy plays a role, often through the instrumentality of the Press.

The Press has been introduced into this paradigm by virtue of a critical benchmark viz. the freedom of speech, a fundamental freedom necessary for the expansion of human capability. It has diverse roles in this scheme of things viz. the instrumental, of disseminating information; the protective, of giving voice to the disadvantaged and helping the cause of greater human security and the constructive, of generating ideas, forming values and raising public standards central to social justice.<sup>10</sup>

## Democracy and Human Development

This relationship (between democracy and human development) was vividly restated in the 2004 general elections in India when policy decisions that appeared to have overlooked welfarist considerations in a developing State were questioned through the ballot box. People, mostly from the small agrarian sector, were among the large segments that were pushed to the brink by reformulated policies. In its instrumental role of disseminating information, the Press (in the generic sense of newspapers and television) reported the unpredictability of the monsoon, with one poor season carrying over its ill-effects to the next, declining market demand for agricultural produce, the drying up of agricultural credit, the avarice of private moneylenders and the weakening of the public distribution system that was often leaving the rural

poor without work or food. Mounting foodgrain surpluses in government godowns remained beyond the reach of the poor because they had no purchasing power. At places authorities were siphoning off foodgrains from food-for-work schemes for commercial gain, contractors were appropriating funds and denying labour its dues. There was also the spectre of external entrants into the market rendering small local producers superfluous. Rights over natural resources could also one day be forfeited when they devolve to rich and powerful entities. Sections of the Press played a consciously instrumental protective role in bringing such information to the notice of the public at large. They disseminated information, helped formulate opinion and at times expedited official action. At one level they were involved in crystallizing judgement that voted in parties and candidates who were in principle committed to the redressal of pressing civic grievances.

The change of government witnessed a shift in the stated intent of policy through a Common Minimum Programme that took clear cognizance of the aforesaid lapses. As the heat and dust of the electoral exercise and government formation subsided, however, reasoned assessment chose to give the credit to the unraveling of a democratic process and warned of the perils ahead. Governments in today's highly interactive global system are invariably subject to the demands of the international marketplace. Hence the resilience of the early nineties when subsidies were sought to be reduced and the flow of easy credit to the rural sector discouraged. There has been admission of a quid pro quo in the national interest to tide over a difficult balance of payments situation at the time. Yet the policy decision led to widespread distress and required adjustment. And yet again, one section of the ruling coalition threatens to agitate if policy reversals occur again. It would not be entirely far-fetched to suggest that the media has played a catalytic role in opinion formation during these interregnums, not only by keeping its followers abreast of the news but by providing analyses and projecting interfaces between officialdom and members of civil society.

For instance, the author of the tome on development and democracy, Dr. A. K. Sen, has explained the seeming anachronism of the coalition in office being criticized by one of its own constituents.<sup>11</sup> When he mentioned the Left's "dialectical" pre-occupation he necessarily meant the art of investigating the truth of opinions, testing facts by discussion and logical disputation. This is plausibly also the job of an open forum like the Press, the sphere for "generating ideas, forming values and raising standards central to social justice". The objective is to arrive at constructive solutions.

The editorial pages of major newspapers, arguably their analytical segment, contain contributions by thinking people of diverse backgrounds and interests, mostly with

a commitment to come to the grips with complex questions, in the bargain creating opinion on subjects of public policy. Even a random perusal of the topics and contents would reveal the boldness and incisiveness with which contributors sometimes probe basic public and even individual concerns that are ultimately interrelated. Their endeavours do not always go in vain because policy makers as well as those who are involved in the process of opinion formation closely follow the contributions made to major national newspapers. It might also be recalled that eminent figures have at times played the devil's advocate themselves in an obvious tactic to feel the pulse of the people. The most celebrated case to date still remains that of Chanakya's column through which the late Jawaharlal Nehru anonymously fired broadsides at his own style of functioning as Prime Minister.

## Conclusions

Non-traditional security is another facet of the term defined in the conventional sense but given that the latter definition deals with order both within and between States, the "reformist" position in international relations, of a global system bound by institutions created by participatory democracy could be a convenient starting point for argument. In the South Asian environment, residues of the past and the strategic location have made the paraphernalia of the State irreplaceable over the foreseeable future. But there too, the instrumentalities of non-traditional security are required for fulfilling desired objectives.

The Press is ideally suited to be the implement for the attainment of human development through the dissemination of information and the protection of the disadvantaged (as a watch dog over discriminatory practices). It also plays a creative and constructive part in generating ideas and forming values. The coverage of recent developments in India has illustrated the critical link between democracy and human development as an aspect of non-traditional security.



## End Notes

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3. Human Development in South Asia, *The Crisis of Governance*, 1999, Humane Governance - A conceptual framework, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, pp 28-39.
4. Human Development Report 2000, OUP, New Delhi, pp 19-22.
5. John King Fairbank and Merle Goldman, *China, A New History*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2003, pp 406-450.
6. J.N. Dixit, *India-Pakistan in War & Peace*, Books Today, New Delhi, 2002, pp 327-50.
7. Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy: a Profile. [Http:// www.pipfpd.org](http://www.pipfpd.org). The profile states that marginalized sections like Dalits, workers "need to be linked for alternative development in the subcontinent".
8. Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, pp xi-xiv, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1999.
9. Ibid.
10. Amartya Sen, "Speaking of freedom: why the media is important for economic development", *The Little Magazine*, New Delhi, Volume iii, issue 3, 2002, pp 9-16.
11. Amartya Sen on NDTV 24x7 programme Walk the Talk, July 25, 2004.