

## **SECURITY FOR WHOM? HUMAN OR THE NATIONAL? A Plea for Comprehensive Security in India**

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Security has been of paramount concern of the human beings from the very beginning of the human history. To begin with, it raises the issue of individual *vis-a-vis* collective security. Should an individual be considered as an atom or a faceless common man or a citizen of a civil State? At what level, should one identify the collectivity? Community, tribe/cast, 'State', world-wide civilized humanity, or United Nations Organisation (UNO)? Is it not a fact that current security obsession has something to do with colonial heritage? The former British colonizers' concern for the security of their Indian empire and consequent 'Forward Policy to the Himalayas' as a part of 'the Great Game' in the Central Asia is too familiar. The two Great World Wars further developed the obsession of their national securities to the extent that the rivalry between the world powers turned into 'cold war' between the world power blocks. So much so that even when one of them, the USSR collapsed, the only super power in the world, USA, is so much concerned with its national security, that she has identified her counterpoise in the form of a world-wide Islamic terrorist movement.

It is nobody's surprise that today every member of the civilized world is terror-stricken because of the deteriorating security environment all over the world. In this brief paper, our effort is to examine the security concern from Indian point of view. There

are a number of aspects in this presentation. Firstly, we propose to provide a brief historical background of the security concern. Secondly, we seek to identify the various security concerns in India. Thirdly, we intend to survey the security scenario from vantage point of North Eastern Frontiers of the Indian State. And lastly, we end our presentation with a plea that the one-sided concern for either the individual or the 'State' security is logically misplaced. We should endeavour for a comprehensive human security world over. And only then, every individual, community, or the 'State' will have a sense of security. Till then, we keep on trying to acquire it.

### **The Background of the Security**

The prehistoric man terribly insecure in the face of the daunting natural objects. He was awfully afraid of the natural forces: fire, water, wild creatures, flood, earthquack, sun. He was invariably awe-struck because of the fact of human technological and mental infancy. In course of time, the rational man, who lived in woods along with wild creatures, developed a moral and spiritual approach to the physical and natural forces. Man as well realised the strength of the collectivity when he formed the tribal bands. And thus, he had the first experience of communal living. Chieftainship, principalities, kingdoms, states and empires did emerge in course of time in different parts of the world in different forms. However, valours in the wars against the adversaries got engrained in, the psyche of the various communities and nationalities. Thus, one finds folk heroes and folk warriors all over the world as the centres of the legends and myths. The classical literature abounds in the songs, ballads and exploits of these folk heroes. Needless to add that one of the most potent principles of the state formation has been the principle of conquest, with its validity till date.

In course of time, individual valour came to be replaced with excellence of armaments, because of increasing scientific inventions and improved technology. This process gave birth to arms race among the nations to collect/develop more and more of articles and weapons of mass destruction. Connivance of the

callous men and materials of mass destruction during the two World Wars further increased the appetite to search for more potent weapons of mass destruction: nuclear, hydrogen and chemical. These means of mass destruction were used sparingly, but when they were used against all forms of live force: human, animal, bird, insect and vegetation. This has been the phase of human experience, when the 'State' appears to be all powerful entity, unchallenged and drunk with its own might against the individual dissent.

Refusal to accommodate some of dissent gave birth to individual or ideological desperation. There have been occasions, when 'States' appear to be helpless against well-armed and desperate extremists, who manage to create a psychosis of insecurity and destruction. There are occasions, when the all powerful states appear increasingly helpless and insecure against such fanatic adversaries and they even are unable to provide basic security to life to the common citizenry. As the 'State', whether the welfare one or the totalitarian one, appear to be unable to facilitate the basic security to the citizen—one of the rationale for its existence—man is left at loose, as a helpless and mindless entity. In such a situation, a common man's physical, mental and moral strength is no match to this new form of challenge to its existence.

In such a situation, what does one expect from the state apparatus? What should be the security scenario today? Whose security are we referring to? Granted that the 'State' has turned out to be ineffective, how does an individual, an ordinary citizen, ensure his security on the teeth of desperate havoc of a terrorist? Is there any mechanism available to an average human being against this menace? In case there is no tangible remedy to this menace, then in the absence of the state structure, who will ensure even the very physical continuation of the individual against such an adversary? Thus, in the ultimate analysis, human rights and human security, which are certainly distinct from state security, have to be accommodated within the ambit of the state security. This is because of the fact that once the institution of 'State' goes,

the very existence of humanity is at stake, a risk, which cannot be and must not be taken knowingly.

### **Dimension of Security**

The classical definition of security is that “a nation is secured to the extent to which it is not in danger of having sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid, and it is able, if challenged, to maintain them by such victory, in such a war” (Raghavan, V.R.: 2001). Hence, war is accorded primacy to preserve a country’s national security leading to defence preparedness. Such a perception in one country may cause apprehensions, and thus, insecurity in another, possibly a neighbouring country, leading to an armed race between two or more neighbouring powers. However, security in its widest and true sense of the term should result in the well-being of the people at large. After all, there can be little security in a state of endemic poverty, illiteracy, and absence of health care. That’s the reason why some of the scholars talk about security. By human security, they imply that “ultimately state is for individual security. In the end, the State is the provider of security for the citizenry; it is a means to security (of its inhabitants) and its security cannot be end of security” (Bajpai, K.: 2002).

To begin with, at the conceptual level, security does encompass a series of aspects. Some of them may be arranged in the following order:

#### (i) *Economic Security*

- (a) Free movement of work force across the national boundaries can be an area of co-operation between nations; and
- (b) Tariff and trade barriers, if reduced, will enhance the economic security among the nations.

#### (ii) *Environmental Security*

- (a) Depletion of prime resources such as water, clean air will

affect the security of both—the state and its population even across the national boundaries; and

- (b) Energy security and its impact on the people is a matter of concern among the nations.

(iii) *Political Security*

The challenge of harmonising plural societies *versus* a distinct national identity as a determinant of security needs in a state is fraught with serious consequences and thus, such efforts need to be studied in greater details.

(iv) *Societal Security*

- (a) Migration of population segments across the national boundaries may pose security risk;
- (b) Influx of refugees from one to another country after a possible persecution may endanger the security environment among the nations; and
- (c) Lack of participation in the State sponsored development plans by the civil society may lead to a totalitarian regime.

### **Security Concerns from the Indian Regions**

Delhi Policy Group has been organising a series of seminars on security related aspects. Its first such seminar was called in January 2001 on 'Comprehensive Security for South Asia', scholars and policy planners from SAARC countries participated and the proceedings of the seminar were made public within few months. The second seminar in the series was organised in August 2001 and it was on 'Comprehensive Security: Perspectives from India's Regions'. After a three-day long deliberations on the presentations from the various regions of the country, certain common concerns were identified as the summery on the issue (Raghavan, V.R.: 2002). They may be enumerated in the following:

1. Issue of poverty, economic backwardness and economic growth;

2. Problems of governance, dissonance between resolutions and implementations; and
3. Problems of identity, migration and social fragmentation.

### **North Eastern Concern for its Security**

The above security concerns from the Indian regions were equally applicable to this region. However, certain points needed to be emphasised and some unique ones to the region are to be added to. Among them mention may be made of the following:

#### *Identity*

We held a seminar in 1978 on the problems of youth as a part of an all India exercise in North-Eastern Hill University. Unlike other regions of the country, the issue of ethnic identity, and not poverty and unemployment, were the key concerns within the region. The problem of identity continues to be of cardinal significance even today. There are communities, which have been rightly as the 'bridge communities', while there are others, which have been functioning as the 'buffer' ones. The relatively smaller ethnic groups in the region have seen both the processes of fragmentation and consolidation of the smaller entities into larger ones *vis-a-vis* larger socio-cultural units. These are the reasons for being apprehensive of their submergence in the ethnic melting pot of the Indian Union.

#### *Migration*

The local ethnic groups rarely resort to a sizeable out-migration; but thinly populated region is subject to in-migration from Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Tibet and other states of the Indian Union. In such a situation, the small ethnic groups naturally feel encapsulated and drowned. They apprehend that their forested hill tracts may be turned into an alien land to them within no time. The Assamese are yet to get over Sir Sahdulla's encouragement to settle the British Assam with immigrant Bengal Muslims in second quarter of 20th century.

### *Social Fragmentation*

The North Eastern Frontier region of India is naturally identified with reference to the Indian Union. The region, which was known as British Assam during the colonial period of its history, has not been able to evolve a regional identity. It has a tenuous link in terms of racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious and even historical context with rest of India. Even historical linkages are problematic, formal and legal one and there is a limited emotional involvement in Indian things. Within the region, again the 'seven sisters' have a plethora of social, religious, ethnic and other types of combinations. There are really very limited fora actively engaged in the region for social integration of the region with the Indian cultural commonwealth.

### *Lack of Effective Governance*

Fragmentation of composite state of Assam led to emergence of small states with limited revenue and considerable expenditure. The Indian Union treats them as a special category states because of their limited revenue base, on-going insurgency, location on the backward frontier region and predominance of the scheduled tribes. These states suffer from lack of fore-sighted, committed, and effective leadership. The state level decision-making process is far from satisfactory to deliver the welfare programmes to the grassroots level. In such a situation, the common man of the region is lost, insecure and always apprehensive.

The North Eastern region of India as a whole is subjected to an intense insecurity at all the levels. The Indian States, the federal and the provinces, and its denizens, indigenous and migrants, all are insecure in the region, because of the contested legitimacy. Insurgency and counter-insurgency operations cost a considerable amount of investment in terms of men and material. On the other hand, human dignity to the citizens cannot be ensured because limited economic resources are thinly distributed even among the aliens. Poor quality of life and high level of political consciousness breed an atmosphere of insecurity in which political unrest ensures a chain of violence, suppression and reprisal.

One may pose an obvious question: what type of security scenario for the 'State' and human dignity for the individual emerge from the above survey? Add to this is the security scenario from the neighbouring countries. Sri Lanka and Pakistan had their internal problems, which invariably spilled over to India. Similarly, Myanmar and Tibet have been in turmoil for decades now. Of late, even Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh have turned out to be locales of pronounced anti-state uprisings. There have been persistent reports that the agent-provocators of Inter Service Intelligence of Pakistan have established a network of espionage in India in general and North Eastern region in particular. It is invariably reported that the chain of Islamic theological schools (*Madarsas*) are extensively used for anti-Indian activities. We have noted elsewhere how even the legendary loyal members of the Gorkha background have been recruited for creating unrest and causing harm to men and materials (Sinha, A.C.: 2002).

The picture presented above indicates enough dark spots on the security map of India. There are aspects of security, which go beyond our national boundary; in which co-operation from the neighbouring countries is urgently needed. Needless to add that our security policy continues to be state centric, which is possibly a colonial inheritance. It has to be broadened and human dimension has to be added to it. Defence related strategy is a must, which has to be pursued by qualified policy-makers. However, no defence policy will succeed unless common interests are identified with countries, which have common borders with us. We continue to be captive of the past colonial heritage in the matters of defence. For example, we have open borders with Nepal and Bhutan, but we raising electric wire fencing on our Bangladesh borders. We know that the history of both the situations is different; still we should review the strategic concerns together with the neighbouring countries. Can we not help to chalk out "a security charter of the SAARC countries" minus the stumbling block of Pakistan? One imagines that the time has come to think aloud and take unconventional and bold steps in this direction. And only then the above dark picture of national and human security will be different and pleasant one.

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