

**National Security: South Asian Perspective**

**Mohammed Arif\***

*\*Dr. Mohammad Arif is a Lecturer, of Political Science at Bundelkhand P.G.College, Jhansi, U.P.*

The Security of the nation is a very old concept — even older than the concept of the Nation –state. However, a serious discussion about security problems of nations and popular interests in national security studies developed after the World War II. The scope of National security has widened with the emergence of newly independent states of Asia, Africa and Latin America after decolonisation.

**Definitions**

In conventional terms, national security means the protection of territorial integrity. But in real terms, it includes the preservation of all kinds of operational systems within a political community inside the state. Today, the term security is used in such commonsensical ways that it has become a much more complex concept, and defied any lucid definition. The lexical meaning of security refers to protection from danger, feeling safe and free from doubt [1]. John Herz, who introduced the idea of security dilemma, states that the self help attempt of the nations to look after their security, lead to the rising insecurity for other nations. Nations interpret their own actions as defensive and the actions of others as potentially threatening [2].

Defining national security, Walter Lippmann said, “a nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war and is able if challenged to maintain them by war”[3]. To Michael Louw, national security is “the condition of freedom from external physical threat”[4]. According to Louw, although moral and ideological threats should be included, it is really physical violence which is generally perceived as the ultimate leverage against a state and therefore, as the real and tangible danger to its survival. But if nations were not concerned with the protection of their values other than their survival as independent states, most of them, most of the time would not have to be seriously concerned about their security[5].

Frank Trager and Frank N. Simon define security in these words-“National Security is that part of government policy having as its objective the creation of national and international political conditions favourable to the protection or extension of vital national values against existing and potential adversaries”[6]. As far as the vital national values are concerned, they are related with those fundamental principles of a nation, on which its social, political and physical existence is based. All these definitions, however, assume that threats to a nation’s security emerge only out of the external environment, as Morton Berkovitz and Brooke’s defined national security as “the ability of a nation to protect its internal values from external threat”[7].

A definition more relevant to our times offered by Robert Mc. Namara is that “Security is not military hardware though it may include it, security is not military force though it may encompass it, security is development and without development, there is no security”[8]. This developmentalist perspective

on national security was recognized by the United Nations in its twenty fifth session in 1970 and the UN passed a resolution which among other things, called for “eliminating as far as possible the economic gap between developed and developing countries, which is closely and essentially co-related to the strengthening of the security of all nations and the establishing international peace”.[9]

K.Subrahmanyam defines that, “national security does not merely mean safeguarding territorial integrity it means also ensuring that the country is industrialized rapidly and has a cohesive egalitarian and technological society. Anything which comes in the way of this development internally or externally is a threat to (India’s) national security ”[10]. Although the above definition was made with special reference to India, it can well be generalised to represent the perspective of the vast majority of the Third World Nations on national security.

### **Security: Various Links**

A nation’s security is inextricably linked up with other things: its social, economic and political resources and even the ecological balance. Declining reserves of strategic resources, oil and ecological imbalances now threaten the security of nations everywhere. National security cannot be maintained unless national economies sustained [11].

Thus, the concept of national security is very complex and comprehensive. It is difficult to define and diagnose the internal threats in the manner in which external military threats are defined and identified. National security has two dimensions. One is external security and other is internal security. The external security is required to counter threats or challenges from outside: it could be territorial or threat to the country’s power, influence and position. It involves relations with friends as well as real or perceived enemies, diplomatic efforts to prevent a conflict or to prepare for mobilization of external resources, determining objective and properly handling uncertainties and unexpected setbacks[12].

As far as the internal dimension is concerned it includes socio-economic and industrial capacity, scientific and technological developments, proper mobilization, allocation and development of resources and a high degree of political solidarity over national objectives and domestic peace [13]. The internal threats assume the form of terrorism, ethnic assertion, communalism, casteism and socio-economic unrest etc. Very often misgovernance leads to slowing down or slackening and dislocation of economic progress and declining productivity, disruptions in the availability of economic & natural resources, vulnerability to such shocks, very often result in loss of domestic cohesion crystallising in ethnic, religious, regional conflicts. Conflicts arise mainly out of a growing feeling of neglect by a group of people and the consequent loss of confidence and faith in national political leadership. Conversely, when such conflict leads to violence and internal terrorism, it disrupts the normal functioning of economic processes, results in migration of people from one place to another within and outside the state and all these factors lead to conflicts again, thus unleashing a cycle of violence wrecking the socio-economic fabric of a nation or state. External intervention in fragmented domestic politics may further perpetuate local conflicts.[14]

Terrorism is a worldwide phenomenon, it not only effects international politics but also internal domestic politics of a nation. Terrorism is a deliberate and systematic murder, maiming and

menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends.[15] Terrorists create disorder with the aim of creating fear among the general public through its indiscriminate, random and apparently irrational use of violence. [16] This is geared towards shaking the confidence of the people in the capability of the government in providing them security and thereby destabilizing the viability and legitimacy of governments. Acts of international terrorism is a continued threat to civil society and peace making efforts at international level. As such, international co-operation to combat terrorism has intensified in recent years.

### **Security Problems of Big and Small Powers**

The survival of nation as a territorial, political, socio-economic and cultural entity is the primary aim of big and small nations, but their national security problems are different in their nature and intensity. Big powers, especially nuclear haves, seldom face the danger of violation of their territorial integrity. Their security problems are generally as follows :[17]

- (a) Threats to the position of domination and hegemony they enjoy in the international system ;
- (b) Threats to the control and influence they wield, over the decision-making processes of regional powers and small powers.
- (c) Threats to the ideology/value system they believe in and want to spread among nations in the international domain.
- (d) Threats to their technological offence and standards of living, and
- (e) The security problems of their allies and alliance partners are also taken as threats to their own security.[18]

On the other hand the small nations generally face problems of survival as independent entities in the international system. Their shortcomings are size, political instability, economic dependence on big powers, linguistic and ethno-cultural diversities etc.[19]. The newly independent nations which achieved independence, just after the second World War, faced security threats which were mostly internal, where as the security prevailing in the Western world ignores the internal dimension. However, these third-world nations follow a security policy which is dominated by the security thinking of the western world and emphasise on securing themselves against external enemies. Thus most of this world countries are seen bent on developing and modernizing their was machines on western pattern of security by avoiding and ignoring the domestic dimensions of security. As Mohammad Ayoob observes, “despite the rhetoric of many Third World leaders the sense of insecurity from which these states and more particularly their regimes suffer are mostly within their boundaries rather than from outside”[20]. Although he does not rule out the existence of external threats, he maintains that “the mix of internal and external sources of threats to Third World states-structures, and particularly to their regimes, is quite often heavily weighted in favour of internal sorces”[21].

The third world countries may be able to defend themselves in greater of lesser degree from external threats but almost all of them remain vulnerable to internal threats. External threats mostly help in augmenting the problems of insecurity that exist with in the state boundaries.” Thus, the military-hardware-based security system is not applicable to the third world countries. It has come under vehement attack from different quarters[22]. The greatest problems of the security of the third world countries are politico-economic and social in character [23]. The economic insecurities

manifested in draconian poverty, rising curve of unemployment, massive external debt, endemic sense of economic deprivations among the competing groups etc. The political and social problems are no less insignificant than the economic ones.

Such types of security concerns of third world are entirely different from the security concerns of the developed West. As a result, since the early 1970s national security began to be redefined in the context of the third world countries. It was realized that the abstract concepts of sovereignty and territorial integrity cannot have enduring appeal for hungry masses and it is poverty or lack of resources to meet the needs of the population and not the lack of military hardware that is responsible for insecurity across the southern half of the planet [24]. It is necessary, to revise the democratic political order to promote social, political and economic institutions in these states in the South. This is also important because our past experience reveals that high per capita income is no guarantee that access of resources and opportunities are equal or equitable for all citizens and thus economic growth, in narrow sense has not ushered in a truly liberal democratic political order.[25]

Moreover, in the age of science and technology the concept of security has been expanded to include environmental crisis, that has become a major threat to the survival of human beings. The environmental nightmares age such as deforestation soil erosion, acidification, desertification, global warming induced by green house effect, depletion of the ozone layer, etc., have made people scary about their future on the earth. Recently Rio-De-Janerio summit on environment protection encapsulated the great concern of humanity towards this threat. Now it seems that threats to security may arise less from the relationship among nations and more from the relationship between man and nature". [26]

### **Security in South Asia**

The term South Asia is used for the countries lying south of Himalayas and Hindukush mountains and surrounded by the Indian Ocean from three sides [27]. It comprises India, (the second most populous nation on the earth), Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives. Some also tend to include even Afghanistan when they talk about South Asia. While the countries of this region differ from each other in regard to climate, race, religion and history they constitute a single geographical region and possess some common features:

- 1) Most of the countries are economically very poor and majority of their people live under poverty line.
- 2) Religion is a pre-dominant factor in these states. The State of Pakistan was created on the basis of religion. All the states have one dominant religion and the inter-religious differences are overlaid in the political sphere leading to violent conflicts.
- 3) These countries are facing common problems of unemployment, illiteracy, over population, ethnicity, communalism, casteism, secessionist, etc.
- 4) These countries are basically agricultural and industrially backward.

Despite the presence of a number of common features, the countries of South Asia have not been able to evolve co-operative relations and their relations are strained due to numerous conflicts. The security of South Asia has over the years been adversely affected by the Indo-Pak Wars and India-China War [28]. The Soviet presence in Afghanistan also affected the security scenario of the region badly.[29] On the other side, the US naval military bases in the Indian Ocean, the Chinese

control of Tibet (30) have had their impact on the security of the South Asia. Emergence of Taliban in Afghanistan is a serious long term security threat to the region as well.(31) As far as national security of SAARC countries is concerned, it is more complicated because of their border disputes, the phenomenon of aiding and abetting of militancy in other states, internal problems of subversion and demands for secession etc. The nuclear capability of India and Pakistan has dramatically changed the security scenario, and made the issue of national security of South Asian countries more complex and complicated.

### **The Extra – Regional Threats**

The extra-regional threats emanate from several factors: the emergence of China as a nuclear power state, presence of military bases in Indian Ocean and the fall-out of a possible nuclear conflict at the regional level with three nuclear players facing one another in the region, i.e., India, Pakistan and China. The interventionary activities of developed countries in the internal affairs of South Asian countries are more prominent. The South Asian countries like other third world countries are economically, socially and politically backward, and this backwardness has become a source of exploitation in the hands of strong powers, particularly the developed countries of West and the international monetary organisations such as IMF and World Bank, which amounted to abridgment of their right to decide their own ways of economic, political and social development. The USA from the very beginning, after the decolonization of the region, used its economic assistance programme as an instrument of coercion to effect changes in the policies of South Asian countries as per its foreign policy objectives. The transfer of sophisticated arms to Pakistan by the USA and China had impact on the National Security of India. China's arms deals and training facilities to Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have created a sense of insecurity in India. In the field of nuclear weapons, China has actively supported Pakistan in developing various types of missiles so as to neutralise India's advances in defence field.

Ever since the first Prithvi test by India in 1988, China has been quick in response to help Pakistan to balance Indian advances in the field of missile technology and weapons delivery systems. For example, the transfers of M-11s to Islamabad began barely two years after the Prithvi test, the delivery of ready-made missiles was followed by Chinese aid in the domestic production of Half-2 and Half-3- Pakistani names for the M-11s & M-9s [32]. Now comes the Ghauri II test just after one year of the Ghauri-I test. As intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs), the Ghauris can help Islamabad to strike deep into India [33].

### **Inter-State Conflict**

There is hardly any region in the World whose countries enjoy harmonious relations with each other at all times. It is due to fundamental differences in ideas, outlooks, composition, attitudes, capacities, hopes and expectations. The South Asian countries are linked together in terms of religion, language, cultural traditions and blood and racial ties. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh share similar historical experiences and memories arising out of the colonial period. All these factors constitute as inputs in the generation of intra-regional cooperation or conflicts and tensions.[34]

The inter-state problems arise due to differences over demarcations of boundaries and distributions of assets and liabilities. When there are natural resources such as rivers, on which the agriculture and

industry of more than one country are based, differences arise over the issue of proper sharing of such resources. The case of the river-water sharing in South Asia is a case in point. There are other issues affecting inter-state relations such as trade and commerce, migration, employment opportunities and of course, refugees moving across the borders for seeking a better life.

The core of conflicts in South Asia lies in the Indo-Pak differences. India and Pakistan have fought a number of wars since 1947. Very recently, in the summer of 1999 Pakistan launched its fourth war for Kashmir, which is known as Kargil war. Around 700 heavily armed infiltrators had occupied several positions at the top ridges facing Kargil, Drass, Batalik and Mushkoh in Kashmir. They were being provided fire cover by the Pakistani artillery, which had begun a systematic bombardment on national highway that links Leh to Srinagar in the Drass-Kargil region. They were not the usual hit-and-run infiltrators.[35] Pakistan's effort to send these infiltrators into Kashmir through Kargil was a part of plan to boost the dying militancy in Kashmir and to keep Kashmir alive as an issue on international level. This is the reason behind Islamabad's plan to escalate trouble and force a military solution on Kashmir border. The Kashmir dispute is the main issue, which has bedeviled Indo-Pak relations.

Even the end of the cold war and the consequent changes in world order have not been able to normalize the issue. The Pakistanis treat the Kashmir dispute as an unfinished agenda of partition and evidence of the broken pledges and Indian duplicity [36]. While the Indians consider Kashmir as an integral part of India and not ready to budge even an inch from its position, Pakistan claims that the Islamic republic is incomplete without Kashmir. All Pakistan's attempts to raise the Kashmir issue at international level provoke strong Indian reactions. With the passage of fifty years, the issue has become so complicated that neither government can afford to go back from its avowed positions.

Another major issue invoking security concern is the nuclear factor that has threatened South Asia in post-Pokhran-Chagai days. India crossed the nuclear rubicon with Pokhran-II tests of May 11&13, 1998.[37] Pakistan's response came on May 28 and May 30 in Chagai hills in Balochistan. The presence of the American military bases with nuclear weapons in Indian Ocean, the Chinese nuclear capability and its nuclear-missile-technological nexus with Pakistan have been re-analysed in the context of nuclear weapons acquisition by India and Pakistan. After nuclear explosions both India and Pakistan drew flak from international community. The UN security Council passed a unanimous resolution 1172, reprimanding them and join the NPT.[38] Sandy Berger, the then US President Bill Clinton's National Security Advisor said in the matter of curbing weapons of mass destruction, 1998 was year of living dangerously. (39), while referring to the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan.[40]

### **God's Grace not Deterrence!**

It is fact, that India and Pakistan are disaster-prone societies with a remarkably poor safety culture and a bad record of accidents in military hardware. With this drawback the nuclear deterrent equation between them highly unstable and dangerous.[41] Deterrence can collapse for many reasons — misreading of moves, false alerts and technical failures, that could have cause devastation. General Lee Butler says it is not deterrence but "God's grace" that could prevent disasters. India and Pakistan do not have reliable command system.[42] In view of the introduction of the nuclear weapons in the security calculus, there is an urgent need for both India and Pakistan to promote understanding and

stability in order to avoid arms race and conflict in the region and carry out a wide ranging review and analysis of sensitive issues including nuclear safety and security and establish safe nuclear command and control system.

The third level of security concerns in South Asia is of internal stability and peace. South Asian region is now in the grip of sectarian and destructive forces: as for example, the problems of Kashmir, North East and Punjab, communalism and casteism in India; the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka ; the Chakma problem in Bangladesh, the Tarai and hill tribes in Nepal, the people of Nepali origin in Bhutan, the problem of refugees in North-West Frontier Provinces, Baluchistan, the Sindhi, Mohajir and Shia-Sunni ethnic violence in Pakistan. All these problems are fast assuming grave dimensions and if they are not tackled properly and in time, they may tear the South Asian Societies apart.

### **The Routes to Security**

Despite the prevalence of internal disturbance and external conflict, efforts have been under way to obtain a degree of cooperation and harmony in the region. As far as matter of security is concerned, Stephen Cohen says: “The South Asian security is an insecurity system and the trade-offs for each regional government involve minimizing insecurity, not maximizing security; insecurity whether due to internal disorder or external conflict has become the norm after 50’s and one cannot honestly say that the situation will radically change for better in the foreseeable future. Military bureaucracies have become an entrenched component of the political order and even where they have not taken it over, their civilian allies are numerous and powerful and outside powers have done precious little to ameliorate the situation.(43)”

The transformation of the insecurity syndrome in South Asia into a security system may occur if two situations emerge, with superpower acquiescence: first, if India flexes its military muscles to such an extent that its neighbours do not have much of an option other than to accept the hegemony of India in the region, and the second: if India agrees to a regional solution of the problems of the area through a series of bilateral agreements with the neighbours, and agrees to sacrifice its vantage position in dealing with those problems.

As far as the first possibility is concerned, India appears to be still half-hearted about attaining a power status decidedly unmatched in the region, As K.Subrahmanyam and others have pointed out, in order to attain this, India must get rid of its region-oriented military posture. For this, there is need of acquisition of real military might, including a nuclear arsenal and a suitable delivery system, which would help India’s image as a great power. It would also neutralize the China factor which plays an important role with some of her neighbours as leverage against India. And it would earn for India respectability with the guardians of the dominant system of the World there by making the process of an India dominated regional system much simpler.(44) The Indian bid to approve of the National Missile Development programme of US in the recent days can be seen in the light of this contention. This model is more complicated and could jeopardize the regional process.

As the demographic and ethnic problems cause disharmony among the regional state they also have positive elements, which could contribute to the growth of regional consciousness and cooperation. One may recall in this connection the reaction of Pakistani Prime-Minister Liaquat Ali Khan when his military advisor suggested to take military action against India. Brushing aside the suggestion,

Liaqat Ali Khan said, “while you have in mind only military and strategic consideration, I have to think of the whole of the subcontinent. Have you ever realized what would happen to the Muslims on the other side in case of all out of war?” [45]

Geographical situation is another factor that creates lots of problem. India is located at the heart of the region, touches almost all the countries of the region while no two other countries have common borders. Being a multi-ethnic and multi religious society, almost all the countries in the region find people belonging to their own ethnic and religious groups in India. Thus the neighbouring states take interest in, and often therefore in, the internal politics of India leading to problems of security in the region.

### **Conclusion:**

As the South Asian states have followed different type of strategies of nation-building and have different stages of political development, and because these strategies contend with each other, the strategy adopted by one tends to thrive on the failure of the strategy of the other. So, there is a need of mutual consideration on developmental strategy for the South Asian states.

After the dramatic changes in World scenario, the inter-state and intra - state relations have shown a marked of improvement: there is no major inter state conflict in the Indian subcontinent after 1971 and if war-like situations have arisen, they have been quickly defused. But the proxy - war conducted by Pakistan against India in Kashmir is a matter of concern for whole South Asia. It is the greater responsibility of Pakistan to stop supporting to armed infiltrators and Mujahideen in Kashmir. On the other side acquisition of Nuclear Weapons by the both countries also have changed the over all security scenario of South Asia.

India and Pakistan countries have a credible nuclear deterrence and now it is responsibility of the both countries to work towards peace and friendly neighbourliness, under the SAARC umbrella, rather than waste of resources for building nuclear weapons that may never be used. At last we can say that the geo-political importance of the South Asian region is such that the states in the region would eventually have to agree to a security doctrine that would view the whole region as a single strategic area. At the same time, they would have to realize that if they try to make political capital out of the problems of integration in the neighbouring states, they themselves will have to bear the fall out. Such type of attitude would lead to a confederacy of South Asian States.

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