

Issues on national security: An analysis in Indian context

Dr. Pratap Chandra Swain

Associate Professor & Head, Department of Political Science, Indira Gandhi Govt College, Tezu, Arunachal Pradesh, India

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Abstract

The nation states have been facing threats to their security since inception. The potential challenges to the national security of a state come in the form of military or cyber attack and activities by violent non-state actors indulging in terrorist attacks. In view of this, national security assumes importance for a nation, covering the security of people's lives and property, the economy and resources, food and raw materials, the health of the population, the environment, and the unity of the nation. In a globalised world, security threats have become global. In India, terrorism and insurgency are the most significant issues among security challenges of the country. In order to manage the security threats, India has enacted National Security Act 1980 and constituted a national level body called National Security Council. However, in the globalised world the security environment of India faces a wide variety of traditional and transnational challenges.

Keywords: National security, challenges to national security, globalised world, NSC

Introduction

Globalization has weakened the nation-states in the wake of the rise of strong global forces and problems like climate change, big companies, terrorism, international groups, and the internet. This has compromised the security of nation states. At the same time, it is believed that the nation-state is still very important and a powerful sovereign entity. In other words, nation state continues as an ever growing institution and its role is still alive and its borders are effective. However, the nation states have been facing threats to their security since inception. The potential challenges to the national security of a state come in the form of military or cyber attack and activities by violent non-state actors indulging in terrorist attacks. As such the security of nation has been a crucial issue. The present paper analyses the issue of national security in Indian perspective.

Theoretical Framework

National security implies keeping a country or nation safe. Traditionally, it focuses on protecting a nation from outside attacks through economic, military, political, and diplomatic methods. Over time, the idea has grown to include human security. So, national security now covers both traditional security and human security. Broadly speaking, national security means total safety, which includes the security of people's lives and property, the economy and resources, food and raw materials, the health of the population, the environment, and the unity of the nation. The modern idea of "national security" as a way to protect the nation-state started with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, when the idea of a sovereign state ruled by a sovereign leader appeared on the world stage. After World War II, as a formal government policy of USA, national security became a key element of its National Security Act of 1947.

The issue of national security can be analysed through different lenses. Former U.S. Secretary of Defense Harold Brown (1983, p.5) ^[2] observed : "National security then is the ability to preserve the nation's physical integrity and territory; to maintain its economic relations with the rest of the world on reasonable terms; to preserve its nature,

institution, and governance from disruption from outside; and to control its borders." In the words of Charles S. Maier(1990, p.5) ^[5] : "National security...is best described as a capacity to control those domestic and foreign conditions that the public opinion of a given community believes necessary to enjoy its own self-determination or autonomy, prosperity, and wellbeing." According to Prabhakaran Paleri (2008, p.52) ^[9] : "National security is the measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation-state at any given time, by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance... and is extendable to global security by variables external to it."

Dimensions of National Security

The challenges to a nation's security can come from other countries' actions like military as well as cyber attacks and from non-state groups doing terrorism. Therefore, national security covers several areas:

- **Physical Security:** This deals with managing physical threats through military strength. It means a country's ability to use army to protect its borders and defend against territorial attacks. Countries like South Africa and Sweden focus their military mainly on defending their territory.
- **Infrastructure Security:** It protects important structures like airports, transport centres, communication network, power plants, and water systems. Groups like India's Central Industrial Security Force (CISF, 2020) manage these critical assets to stop terrorism, sabotage, and natural disasters.
- **Cyber Security:** It refers to protecting computer devices, private and public network systems, and the internet connectivity for the safety of hardware, software, data, and digital infrastructure.
- **Political Security:** It protects the state's sovereignty and society from illegal domestic threats and external political pressure.
- **Economic Security:** Involves keeping an economy strong enough to provide for people's basic needs and

ensuring the state has financial independence and protection from external pressure.

- **Environmental Security:** It is also called ecological security; this safeguards the environment from damage like soil erosion, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and climate change.
- **Human Security:** A broader idea introduced by the United Nations through its important Development Programme (UNDP, 1994), describing security as covering safety from hunger, disease, repression, and disruptive changes in daily life.

Challenges to National Security in a globalised world

In a globalised world, security threats have become global. Significantly, globalization has increased following major security challenges:

- **Proliferation of Weapons:** Free trade and finance help spread weapons of mass destruction (WMD) among states and non-state actors.
- **Cyber Threats:** Greater use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) exposes power grids, banking, and communications to ransom ware, spyware, phishing, and denial-of-service attacks.
- **National Security Strategies (NSS):** Countries like Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States have created formal National Security Strategies.
- **Re-assertion of the Nation-State:** After the September 11 attacks, scholars like Buzan (2007) ^[3] argue that even with economic globalization, the nation-state remains the main security provider because it has both the legal power and the ability to define and respond to major threats.

Issue of National Security in India

Indian policymakers believe that terrorism and insurgency are the most significant issues among security challenges of the country. India deals with a wide range of security issues both on land and sea. These include traditional and newer kinds of threats. The followings are the crucial security issues encountered by India:

Terrorism and Insurgency

The terrorism/insurgency in India has been encouraged by political, ideological and ethnic factors which ultimately destroy the social fabric. In the past, the country has faced many terrorist attacks such as: Pulwama attack in 2019, Amarnath Yatra attack in Jammu and Kashmir in 2017, Uri Attack in 2016, Mumbai attacks in 2008 etc. These are the most violent terrorist attacks perpetuated by the terrorist agencies to create more threat perception amongst the citizens of India. The states / regions like Jammu and Kashmir, the northeast Indian states, and Maoist dominated areas of India have been badly affected by terrorism/insurgency. In fact, there are several types of terrorism, challenging the security of the country, which include: ethno-nationalist terrorism, religious terrorism, left-wing terrorism, narco-terrorism and cross border terrorism etc.

Cyber Security:

With the advancement of digital technology, the national security environment of India is confronted with new threats aimed at destroying its technology infrastructure. In the globalized world, the Internet and ICTs are essential for

economic and social development, constituting a vital digital infrastructure of the country. However, due its relatively open nature, the Internet sometimes creates an unsafe environment which leads to wide range of cyber security issues such as critical infrastructure protection, cyber terrorism, cyber threats, privacy issues, cybercrime, and cyber warfare. In India, there is wide range of malicious activities on the internet like malwares, hacking, identity theft, spamming, and cyber defamation etc. In view of this, India faces severe challenges to safeguard vital infrastructures such as banks, satellites, automated power grids, and thermal power plants from cyber attacks. India needs to develop an effective cyber-crisis management plan to overcome the security challenges.

Political Security:

It is linked with the protection of the integrity of the country's territory. Right from its independence, India has been closely guarding its territorial integrity. However, its strategic location has made it vulnerable to security threats from many sources. There has been several challenges before India to keep the nation integrated. The north and north-eastern regions of the country are vulnerable to security threats. The insurgent elements as well as militant groups have been consistently trying to destabilise the nation.

Economic Security:

Economic security primarily refers to empowerment in economic sphere. Poverty is a prolonged issue which has been adversely affecting the growth and development of India. India's liberalisation policy and the related measures have further widened the difference between the rich and the poor. This necessitates the protection of the economy to provide basic minimum things for the people. Further, economic security entails the capability to protect country's wealth and economic freedom from any kind of threat and coercion. It is believed that economic security greatly contributes to the national security of a country.

Food Security:

It is one of the vital requirements for human survival. The absence of food security leads to deprivation of food causing starvation as well as ill-health. Ultimately, it results in hunger, poverty, malnutrition and disease and makes people frail and unproductive. India is grappled with poverty as well as hunger with millions of malnourished and undernourished population. Therefore, India requires to mitigate starvation, poverty and malnutrition.

Health Security:

Indeed, health is an important component of human development. In India, there are primary health centres in most of the localities but they are not adequately equipped to address health problems of the people. In many places, both urban and rural areas, the public access to health is rather dismal. The slum dwellers in urban areas are living in unhygienic and unable to access health facilities. India needs to strengthen reforms for ensuring health for one and all.

Environmental Security:

It is an important dimension of human security as it enables human beings to live in an environment free from pollution

with sustainable natural resources. Due to the degradation of the environment, climate change, depletion of ozone layers, and massive industrial pollution, the environmental security has been gaining momentum in India. The developmental projects are having huge impacts on the natural environment. Further, the increasing ecological damage, by the human beings, has made the security of ecosystems more important. In this context, environmental security plays important role to guard against the degradation of ecosystems, including topsoil erosion, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change etc.

National Security Council of India

In order to manage the security threats, India has enacted National Security Act 1980 and constituted a national level body called National Security Council. The National Security Council (NSC) of India is an executive government agency to advise the Prime Minister's Office on matters related to national security and strategic interest. It is the apex body of the three-tiered security structure which includes: the Strategic Policy Group, the National Security Advisory Board and a secretariat from the Joint Intelligence Committee. The National Security Council of India consists of National Security Advisor (NSA), the Deputy National Security Advisors, the Ministers of Defence, External Affairs, Home, Finance of the Government of India, and the Vice Chairman of the NITI Aayog.

Discussion and Conclusion

The security environment of India faces a wide variety of traditional and transnational challenges in the globalised world. As Beck (2000) ^[1] noted, globalization makes state sovereignty and traditional state structures weaker. Hyperglobalists doubt the ability of individual nation-states to manage global non-military threats like international terrorism, organized crime, pandemics, drug trafficking, and climate change. This has challenged the traditional view of national security, which comes from modernist political thought from Thomas Hobbes to Max Weber. This view holds that the state must have a complete monopoly on the use of force within a defined area.

As a large nation with both land and sea borders, the security sector of India faces many threats. The globalization accelerates economic, technological, cultural and political integration, and affects the security scenario of India with the activities beyond its borders. India, like other countries, is also facing non-traditional /non-military security issues like food security, energy security, information security issues, nuclear security issues, water security, public health security, climate change and environmental security, economic security, human security etc. In spite of these non-traditional security threats, India gives much priority to military/ territorial security to protect territorial integrity.

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