

Imperatives of national security



Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema

The writer works for Islamabad Policy Research Institute

picheema@ipri-pak.org

While setting out to analyse country's security problems, the security planners often begin initially with the identification of threats emanating from external or internal sources. Later they move on to the evaluation of the manner and the intensity of the perceived threats. Comprehensive dossiers on actual and potential adversaries are carefully prepared highlighting the adversaries' capabilities and intentions. The justifications for a certain level of force posture are frequently found in the perceived adversary's intentions and country's security requirements as assessed by the planners. Prior to an examination of security problems

National Security, to many, means national defence that they often equate with the military preparedness of a nation. They perceive it as being ensured or protected through the existence of particular institutions such as the Armed Forces. They believe that well disciplined Armed Forces equipped with latest military devices can provide the requisite level of security and ensure national survival. Many knowledgeable scholars and writers of this group dwell rather heavily upon that aspect of national security: which is directly concerned with the threats emanating from the changing international environment or the dynamic nature of interstate relationships.

What about internal problem like revolutions, subversion, violent struggles for power, coups disturbances disorders ranging from ordinary conflict to a full scale civil war? It has been often observed that many minor internal disturbances snowballed into a conflict situation where it became indistinguishable from international conflict and thereby acquired what these school term as the characteristics of a national security problem. Does this imply one should wait and watch until the so-called insignificant internal disturbance magnifies and acquires a threatening institute? By then, it may be too late at least in some cases (to deal with problem

The opponents of this group rather relay heavily upon the sole monopoly of sanctified means of violence as detriment to the greater interest of society They tend to project the institutions of Armed Force and Police as potential threats to liberty of man in society. They advocate the obsolescence of military and violent means, and stress that alternate must be found to replace this traditional method of national survival. They suggest security must be perceived essentially in non-military terms such as the provision of education, employment, social welfare housing, health and sanitation facilities, protection of environment, the establishment of a just international economic order etc.

This notion seems to be a logical extension of an old idea that security lay in the defeat of the five major evils of society - Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness. But assuming that one has been able to get rid of the above mentioned evils of society and acquired the much desired cultural refinement and economic prosperity, would it not then be right to assume that the principal concern of that state would become the preservation of what has been achieved.

Both groups seem to be obsessed with only one aspect, though a very important aspect, of national security and, therefore, both are guilty of underplaying the other equally important aspects. For instance, the exponents of Armed Forces are over projecting the utility of military means and are more concerned with international considerations only. Thus they tend to focus exclusively on external threats ignoring those that emanate from within. A satisfactory explanation of national security must take into account external and internal threats as well as threats emanating from economic insecurity and inequalities. National security is a national public good producing collective outcomes. Collective outcomes are those whose use or enjoyment cannot be denied to any potential consumer within a state and whose consumption does not reduce the availability of the outcomes to other users. In the economists' terminology these characteristics are called "non-excludability", "indivisibility" and "non-rivalness".

Collective outcomes include many of those services which national governments furnish to their citizens, such as the defence of the country, preservation of territorial integrity, police and fire protection, sanitation facilities, anti-pollution controls etc. It is not surprising therefore that one often hears of various ministries squabbling for increased allocation of resources all in the name of security. However tenuous may be the connection between a particular ministry's proposals and the security of a nation, the claim that they are related indicates that references to security are expected to evoke a sympathetic response

National Security may be perceived as being ensured through preparedness and vigilance to the Armed Forces, guaranteed protection against disintegration and subversion through the joint efforts of Armed Forces and the Police and socially secured through ideological consolidation and economic prosperity. Admittedly, under the operative international political system, almost all states maintain that the fundamental goal of a state is to ensure its own survival as an independent and distinct political entity. But true security is generated only when real national interests such as survival, security, power, prosperity, freedom, peace and ideology are attained. The priority order of these essential goals of state is somewhat debatable, but they certainly tend to be overlapping and interdependent; peace is dependent upon prosperity and power, prosperity generates power and vice-versa and so on. The intriguing question that arises here is: Has security any meaning when detached from survival power, prosperity, peace and ideology?

Security, essentially a negative term, is the absence of real or perceived threats, whether stemming from external sources or internal turmoil or economic disparities and inequalities, to certain coveted values. To obviate these threats, nations seek power (political, economic and military). Power can lead to prosperity and prosperity may generate further power. This process is continuous under the existing international political system merely because of the fact that the incumbent nation-state system breeds insecurities and is not conducive to enhancement of security for all of its member units.

Economic, physical and power disparities and inequalities are the salient features of the operative system. In addition, the absence of a supreme supranational institutional set-up, such as World Government, to regulate the conduct of interstate relations further aggravates the national security problems of the smaller nations.

The prevalent anarchic state of affairs (by which is meant the absence of a Central Governing World Authority) leaves the member states with no other option but to fall back upon the long standing recognized principle of self-help. Thus we witness the phenomenon in which almost all nations are constantly striving to attain that level of security that makes them feel more secure than the others.

No one ever admits that he wants the other nations to be insecure yet he favours the creation and preservation of that kind of equilibrium or disequilibria that affords the maximum security to him. It amounts to stressing that 'it is all very fine to have an even fifty-fifty balance, but if our side is a little bit stronger than the other side, we can be all the more secure'. Various programs, often contradictory in nature, ranging from absolute deterrence to total disarmament, from complete isolation to world government, from nonalignment to active participation in a variety of military alliances from economic self-sufficiency to free trade, are put forward in order to be more secure than others. This, of course, makes all security policies more subjective than objective. To apply objective measurements to a nation's security is an impossible task and perhaps that is why subjectivity looms larger in security policy than in any other policy.

Security is not only relational (relating to external environments and internal situations) but also comprehensive in nature. The comprehensiveness of security implies that national efforts, (to attain an acceptable and satisfactory level of security), must be directed simultaneously at various levels: first, the transformation of overall international environment into a favourable one; second, a reasonable level of self-reliance (both in economic and military affairs); and third; a stable political system satisfying the sense of participation among the public in general that in turn is likely to minimize the sense of deprivation if not altogether eliminate it.

While setting out to analyse country's security problems, the security planners often begin initially with the identification of threats emanating from external or internal sources. Later they move on to the evaluation of the manner and the intensity of the perceived threats. Comprehensive dossiers on actual and potential adversaries are carefully prepared highlighting the adversaries' capabilities and intentions. The justifications for a certain level of force posture are frequently found in the perceived adversary's intentions and country's security requirements as assessed by the planners. Prior to an examination of security problems

National Security, to many, means national defence that they often equate with the military preparedness of a nation. They perceive it as being ensured or protected through the existence of particular institutions such as the Armed Forces. They believe that well disciplined Armed Forces equipped with latest military devices can provide the requisite, level of security and ensure national survival. Many knowledgeable scholars and writers of this group dwell rather heavily upon that aspect of national security: which is directly concerned with the threats emanating from the changing international environment or the dynamic nature of interstate relationships.

What about internal problem like revolutions, subversion, violent struggles for power, coups disturbances disorders ranging from ordinary conflict to a full scale civil war? It has been often observed that many minor internal disturbances snowballed into a conflict situation where it became indistinguishable from international conflict and thereby acquired what these school term as the characteristics of a national security problem. Does this imply one should wait and watch until the so-called insignificant internal disturbance magnifies and acquires a threatening institute? By then, it may be too late at least in some cases (to deal with problem

The opponents of this group rather relay heavily upon the sole monopoly of sanctified means of violence as detriment to the greater interest of society They tend to project the institutions of Armed Force and Police as potential threats to liberty of man in society. They advocate the obsolescence of military and violent means, and stress that alternate must be found to replace this traditional method of national survival. They suggest security must be perceived essentially in non-military terms such as the provision of education, employment, social welfare housing, health and sanitation facilities, protection of environment, the establishment of a just international economic order etc.

This notion seems to be a logical extension of an old idea that security lay in the defeat of the five major evils of society - Want, Disease, Ignorance, Squalor and Idleness. But assuming that one has been able to get rid of the above mentioned evils of society and acquired the much desired cultural refinement and economic prosperity, would it not then be right to assume that the principal concern of that state would become the preservation of what has been achieved.

Both groups seem to be obsessed with only one aspect, though a very important aspect, of national security and, therefore, both are guilty of underplaying the other equally important aspects. For instance, the exponents of Armed Forces are over projecting the utility of military means and are more concerned with international considerations only. Thus they tend to focus exclusively on external threats ignoring those that emanate from within. A satisfactory explanation of national security must take into account external and internal threats as well as threats emanating from economic insecurity and inequalities. National security is a national public good producing collective outcomes. Collective outcomes are those whose use or enjoyment cannot be denied to any potential consumer within a state and whose consumption does not reduce the availability of the outcomes to other' users. In the economists' terminology these characteristics are called "non-excludability", "indivisibility" and "non-rival ness".

Collective outcomes include many of those services which national governments furnish to their citizens, such as the defence of the country, preservation of territorial integrity, police and fire protection, sanitation facilities, anti-pollution controls etc. It is not surprising therefore that one often hears of various ministries squabbling for increased allocation of resources all in the name of security. However tenuous may be the connection between a particular ministry's proposals and the security of a nation, the claim that they are related indicates that references to security are expected to evoke a sympathetic response

National Security may be perceived as being ensured through preparedness and vigilance to the Armed Forces, guaranteed protection against disintegration and subversion through the joint efforts of Armed Forces and the Police and socially

secured through ideological consolidation and economic prosperity. Admittedly, under the operative international political system, almost all states maintain that the fundamental goal of a state is to ensure its own survival as an independent and distinct political entity. But true security is generated only when real national interests such as survival, security, power, prosperity, freedom, peace and ideology are attained. The priority order of these essential goals of state is somewhat debatable, but they certainly tend to be overlapping and interdependent; peace is dependent upon prosperity and power, prosperity generates power and vice-versa and so on. The intriguing question that arises here is: Has security any meaning when detached from survival power, prosperity, peace and ideology?

Security, essentially a negative term, is the absence of real or perceived threats, whether stemming from external sources or internal turmoil or economic disparities and inequalities, to certain coveted values. To obviate these threats, nations seek power (political, economic and military). Power can lead to prosperity and prosperity may generate further power. This process is continuous under the existing international political system merely because of the fact that the incumbent nation-state system breeds insecurities and is not conducive to enhancement of security for all of its member units.

Economic, physical and power disparities and inequalities are the salient features of the operative system. In addition, the absence of a supreme supranational institutional set-up, such as World Government, to regulate the conduct of interstate relations further aggravates the national security problems of the smaller nations. The prevalent anarchic state of affairs (by which is meant the absence of a Central Governing World Authority) leaves the member states with no other option but to fall back upon the long standing recognized principle of self-help. Thus we witness the phenomenon in which almost all nations are constantly striving to attain that level of security that makes them feel more secure than the others.

No one ever admits that he wants the other nations to be insecure yet he favours the creation and preservation of that kind of equilibrium or disequilibria that affords the maximum security to him. It amounts to stressing that 'it is all very fine to have an even fifty-fifty balance, but if our side is a little bit stronger than the other side, we can be all the more secure'. Various programs, often contradictory in nature, ranging from absolute deterrence to total disarmament, from complete isolation to world government, from nonalignment to active participation in a variety of military alliances from economic self-sufficiency to free trade, are put forward in order to be more secure than others. This, of course, makes all security policies more subjective than objective. To apply objective measurements to a nation's security is an impossible task and perhaps that is why subjectivity looms larger in security policy than in any other policy.

Security is not only relational (relating to external environments and internal situations) but also comprehensive in nature. The comprehensiveness of security implies that national efforts, (to attain an acceptable and satisfactory level of security), must be directed simultaneously at various levels: first, the transformation of overall international environment into a favourable one; second, a reasonable level of self-reliance (both in economic and military affairs); and third; a stable political system satisfying the sense of participation among the public in general that in turn is likely to minimize the sense of deprivation if not altogether eliminate it.

For Live Classes, Recorded Lectures, Notes & Past Papers visit:
www.megalecture.com

Mega Lecture

+92 336 7801123
<https://www.youtube.com/MegaLecture>