

Opening Frames:

Gender & NTS Formulations in South Asia

By:

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Introduction

One of the most positive outcomes of scholarship in International Politics from the closing decades of the last century has been to generate a growing acknowledgement that **security is a contested concept**.

This reflected the dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the **agenda** of mainstream security studies after the end of the cold war and their unwillingness to interrogate state centric and military centric paradigms. From there on the attempt to 'humanize' security in tune with people, politics and processes was an inevitable next step, with the consequent theoretical 'wideners' and 'deepeners' that this involved. Critical security studies, in attempting to close the gap and foregrounding the process of human emancipation (as making the prospect of security more likely) placed security, hitherto seen somewhat deterministically, within a realm that involves choices and therefore human agency.

The feminist critique of traditional security, and of its professed gender-neutrality in particular, provided the further impetus for rethinking security. It exhorted a reconceptualization which factored in militarism and patriarchy, the skewed distribution of resources; the relationship between poverty, marginalization and conflict, the masculinized and reified language of techno strategic discourse and the linkages between militarism, sexism and domestic violence in society. It problematized questions of identity in important ways, with the obvious implication that traditional security studies is gender-blind and not gender-neutral. Accordingly, its assertion that traditional security studies became a part of securitizing the state and supporting the gendered nature of international politics is borne out by the marginalization of women's voices and concerns, in the discourses on security. Women, who "hold up half the sky" and who are most adversely impacted by the violence of conflict and war, and who constitute one-third of the paid labour force, receive one-tenth of world income and own less than one percent of world property, have seldom been given either space, or their due, in security literature and more importantly 'strategic' decision making.

Engendering security therefore remains a crucial part of any project that attempts to provide an emancipatory orientation to reconceptualizing security.

The Human Security paradigm, by taking cognizance of conflicts within nations, post cold war, (as opposed to only between states) and focusing on the *freedom from fear* and *freedom from want* in its concern with human life and dignity, allowed for a non-essentialist perspective on gender concerns to find greater spaces for articulation within the security discourse.

Despite criticism that in its attempt to be all things to all individuals it diluted the concept of security beyond recognition, the Human Security Discourse opened up a crucial space, providing for conversations and a possible confluence between the discourses of Democracy & Development. Its salience for societies of the Global South cannot be overstated. The trajectory implicit in Mahboob Ul Haq's evocative articulation of Human Security¹ has yielded as Amitav Acharya points out three different conceptions of human security today: one focusing on **human costs** of violent conflict, another stressing

human needs in the path to sustainable development, and a third emphasizing the **human rights** dimension.

While traditionalists still allege a kind of conceptual obesity, the discourse on what is termed Non Traditional security has nevertheless opened up the possibility of multiple conversations that pluralize the conception of security, making it more amenable to entering the noisy yet vibrant arena of democratic debate and ideas. 9/11, its reverberations and consequences, dramatically highlighted the reality of 'Worlds in Collision' and the need for non-strait-jacketed, non conventional 'non-traditional' approaches, methodologies and debates around issues of security. 'Security' had to be rescued from the opacity of security establishments. The search for conceptual alphabets that would fashion the vocabulary of a relevant, accessible, intelligible and people centric understanding of security poste 9/11 and beyond, has found resonance in the NTS project of the Ford Foundation.

The Wiscomp Project: Findings and Outcomes

The WISCOMP Project titled **Transcending Conflict: Gender and Non Traditional Formulations of Security**, aimed at contributing to a corpus of knowledge both empirical and theoretical, focusing on the manner in which gender and security concerns intersect in sites of inter or intra state conflicts. It sought to integrate gender analysis into the evolving discourse on Security from a Non Traditional perspective. The aim was also to provide points of entry to engage with issues in a manner in which gender concerns begin to be reflected in peace initiatives and processes of poste-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation.

What are often described as the "non-traditional" variables are now recognized as impacting both inter and intra state security beyond what the cold war discourse cognized or envisaged. Gender is not just another 'non-traditional' variable in the growing menu of security concerns, but an integral factor that shapes the manner in which they play themselves out. **Engendering security** is consequently an inescapable element in the formulation of an inclusive discourse. In the globalized environment of the poste-cold war period that has thrown up new challenges, threats, new actors and indeed new concerns, it is not difficult to see that gender mediates each of these concerns and may impact male and female populations in dramatically different ways.

This finds reflection in the seven studies undertaken by the WISCOMP project, and form the basis of our recommendations.

1. The study on **Gender & Displacement** addresses the issue of population flows across and within borders and boundaries in India's North East, Bangladesh and Myanmar and Nepal.
2. The study from **Bangladesh** is an expose on how state formation and political governance breed fear, violence and insecurities by privileging gendered experiences. The state and the globalizing market are continuing sources of insecurity for women, especially from among religious minorities.
3. The study on **Gender & Armed Conflict in Kashmir** opens up a dialogic space between constructivist and feminist approaches to security. The focus is on the

'antagonistic' view of national and human security paradigms and how agency is both perceived and developed in a situation of conflict and how it is mediated by gender.

4. The study on the **Maobadi Movement in Nepal: Gender Perspectives** on the "structural" causes of conflict – economic disparities and deprivations, highlights the fact of "chains" of insecurities unleashed in S. Asian societies, when a life is lost, injured or circumstantially changed as a result of an armed conflict. Victimhood in S. Asia is never an individual isolated experience owing to the social structure and close community ties.

5. The study of **Land Gender & security** engages with questions of food and water security and land rights with reference to Pakistan while locating itself in the broader S. Asian context. Women's activism in a farmer's movement in Pakistan Punjab is explored where the ubiquity of the military – economic elite and indeed the force of the state is a continuing source of violence and insecurity.

6. **Gender & Peacebuilding** – a study from Sri Lanka, highlights the challenges of 'mainstreaming' women's concerns at the Peace Table, made more acute, by their under representation in legislatures and formal structures of decision making.

7. The study of **Peace Keeping Operations** in East Timor and Cambodia, uses the lens of gender to examine the spaces offered by interim structures or institutions set up under the peace-keeping dispensation of the UN to facilitate the participation of women in post-conflict reconstruction and peace building processes as mandated by the landmark Security Council Resolution 1325.

Pathways

In reproblematising security and addressing the gender – security problematique in the context of S. Asia, the learnings and findings from the WISCOMP project suggest some insights and pathways – conceptual and some policy related.

It might be more useful and less problematic conceptually to look at Non Traditional **formulations** of security rather than NTS per se. (From the South Asian perspective, much of what is purveyed now as **Non Traditional** reflect the long standing concerns of the region eg. issues of water, food, livelihood, displacement, etc.) In this manner constraining and artificial conceptual binaries can be overcome, allowing for non traditional approaches to even conventionally framed security issues. This would also respond to the apprehensions about hierarchies implicit in a 'politics of labelling' in current discourses on security.

The evolving discourse needs to take on board **gender as a cross cutting issue** especially in light of the emerging factors contributing to peoples' insecurities. From the issues of food and water security, livelihoods, displacement and distress and forced migration to curbs on human rights, persecution of minorities, to the result of environmental degradation, natural disasters, pandemics, insurgency, terrorism and state coercion – it is not difficult to see how these are all mediated by gender and gauge the intensity of their negative impact on women, in particular.

A certain reflexivity in **methodology** is called for in consonance with the epistemic shifts that are involved in the search for new directions. **Ethnographic narratives** and first person accounts -as the CSDS project has shown - yield multifaceted insights such that the cloistered world of security establishments can be touched by the heat and dust of

subaltern insecurities and the manner in which identities are being negotiated and renegotiated. Women and their concerns, hitherto on the margins of the meta-narratives of security, can provide some conceptual alphabets for a discourse on security that expands its scope to include not just threats but also, empowerment, entitlements and rights.

Clearly then in giving 'voice' to the marginalized, Amitav Acharya's concerns about opening up spaces for seeing the "periphery as the core" and also his emphasis on the importance of the third world (in)security experience to broaden/ deepen the discourse on security and for rethinking the requirements of the international order has resonance for this process. All three aspects, of the different conceptions of human security articulated by him, namely the **human cost** of conflict, the **human needs** in the path to sustainable development and the **human rights** issue, cohere and combine in almost inextricable ways for large sections of the population of the South Asian region.

The prevalence of strong kinship and community ties in the region requires a greater appreciation of **interdependence** and **relational realities** than *'the individual as referent'* posited in the Human Security discourse suggests. Reweaving the web of life in light of communities torn asunder by conflict, fractured by structural violence and the attendant dislocations of some processes of globalization, impact communities in aggregate ways. The community / clan / caste group – sometimes nurturing, often times oppressive remains as important referent and its role as a source of security / insecurity cannot be overlooked in the evolving discourse. Yet again, distinctions need to be made between communities of coercion and communities of choice from the perspective of the individual.

Migration, Borders and Boundaries

9/11 is not **the** contemporary marker for societies in S. Asia. To cognize it as such (while a Copernican necessity for the dominant power/s) would be to fall back into the lap of Westphalia and the hegemonic theorizing of Realist paradigms. The violence of terrorism, broadly construed, has been a palpable almost everyday experience in this region for well over two decades. Rather it is the **partitions** in the region from the early 1900s not just post 1947, with their typical ruptures, dislocations and societal struggles that still inform the cartographic anxieties of the region, and contribute to inter state and intra state tensions.

The formalized state order of the post partition world is constantly subverted by various forms of mobility, that refuse to be tamed and territorialized by reasons of state, and persistently 'violate' the supposed "security" of borders and boundaries².

In India, 'illegal' migrants particularly from Bangladesh are seen as a major security threat, subverting both 'stability' and 'democracy' in India's volatile North East. Tamil refugees in India create apprehensions in Sri Lanka. The apprehension of potential terrorists slipping in through porous borders, in collusion with Intelligence Agencies of hostile and non friendly neighbours, and also impacting electoral outcomes, has had several unfortunate outcomes in terms of Human rights of those affected by the phenomenon of forced and distress migration which is widely prevalent in the region, women being the worst sufferers³.

As the WISCOMP study has shown the figure of the female migrant is paradigmatic – the migrant becomes the object of another person's, community's and state's insecurity;

and for her, “memory does not coincide with history, territoriality does not coincide with homeland and state does not represent law, but its opposite, and modernity and mobility do not represent liberation but the reinscription of new hierarchies, whether racial or patriarchal. (Sammadar)

At the conceptual level non-traditional approaches to (in)security could interrogate the structures that go “into the making of a territorialized order imposed from above and dictated largely by state-centric spatiality firmly entrenched in hierarchical socio-cultural structures of patriarchy”⁴. Rather than circumscribe and tame the spatial in all its diversity, S. Asian security could perhaps be better served by acknowledging space as a “simultaneity of multiple trajectories”⁵.

In fact this ‘boundary fixation’ has imprisoned India and Pakistan in grappling with the legacy of the Radcliffe Line for six decades, even as they commit invaluable resources, energy and lives into guarding disputed boundaries in the inhospitable spaces of the Siachen glacier.

At a policy level a shift in orientation would better secure South Asia. and India in particular, although these may be difficult to do under current configurations of National Security sentiment. A new **borderland development policy** is needed where boundaries become irrelevant by treating borderlands as vital areas of cultural exchange and trade. Rather than treating border zones between India and her neighbours as inaccessible, remote and consequently ‘secure’, these need to be saturated with economic activity with the traffic of goods and people, and linked with excellent infrastructures to the rest of the country. Interlinkages, in this sense will yield a new security paradigm. A borderland development policy will be successful only if borders are nurtured, even if they cannot be settled⁶.

Extremism and The Human Security Deficit

India’s Prime Minister has cited Naxalism (Left Wing Extremism) and Terrorism as the two big threats to Internal Security. Registering a steady escalation over the last ten years, the Maoist movement has embraced 76 districts across 12 Indian States and is gaining some influence in another 100. The fraternal links of Naxalites with the cadres of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) across the Bihar-Nepal border has laid the ground work for the creation of a **Compact Revolutionary Zone** in 2001 extending from north Bihar to southern Andhra. A serious cause of concern is that this movement may be further facilitated by foreign links. In nearly 1600 violent incidents involving Naxalites last year 669 people died. It is estimated that they now have nearly 10,000 armed fighters and around 40,000 full time cadres with access to about 6500 weapons.

The Naxalite movement is rooted in the problem of poverty and distress facing the marginalized groups, especially in areas that have not seen land reforms. Further, development (and some conservation) strategies that dispossess, tribals and indigenous people and alienate them from forest land, without due regard to equitable rehabilitation and resettlement process have exacerbated their resentment in these natural resource and mineral rich areas, which the Naxalites capitalize on to mobilize cadres around issues of distributive justice. Further the nexus between corrupt government officials, contractors and the land and forest mafia, divert development funds leading to high levels of unemployment.

Here the link **between Governance and Security** needs to be highlighted. More initiatives to redress these injustices like the **Scheduled Tribes** and **Other Traditional**

Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2006, a landmark legislation that seeks to empower traditional forest dwelling communities by giving them security of tenure, access to minor forest produce and a stake in the preservation of natural spaces, need political will for “effective” implementation.

The closing decades of the twentieth century have witnessed in India a series of people’s resistance movements that interrogate prevalent State positions on **security** and **development**. These movements exemplify the political assertion of erstwhile-marginalized sections of civil society which are demanding humane and responsive governance. Focusing attention on the complicity of the State with indigenous elites, and the new inequities of power and privilege unleashed by globalization, they appeal beyond the nation state to international civil society, invoking issues of human security. This erodes the nation states’ claim to the exclusive allegiance of its citizens.

Some of these movements are those mounted against the erosion of human security like dismantling of workers’ rights, the right to health, the right to land and the right to biodiversity. They interrogate the developmental priorities of the Indian State, and also the co-mingling of the sanction of the State and the new market power of global capital. They highlight the fact that governments are no longer willing, or able, to protect the sources of livelihood of their citizens.

The interrogation of governance practices in India today comes, not *directly* from arguments for democracy, per se but from mounting protests on questions of survival, against displacement by mega-projects of people from their habitats, ways of life, cultures and on issues of food and water security and what has come to be termed ‘belief security’. The continuing plight of those displaced by the Sardar Sarovar project of the Narmada Dam on account of the failure of the state to deliver on commitments of rehabilitation for the oustees is one of the most dramatic examples of the human casualties of development projects in recent years⁷.

An even more stark example of the human security deficit is the recent spate of farmer’s suicides in the wake of massive crop failures and heightened vulnerabilities as a result of flawed agricultural policies, reversal of successful farming practices due to the compulsions of global markets and indiscriminate monoculture. As these resentments grow the gap between *India* and *Bharat* widens.

The complexity of Indian society, as it is fractured along several axes – class, caste, gender, religious community – and sometimes along more than one axis simultaneously, has created the group characterized as ‘doubly disadvantaged. These groups – women of minority religions or dalit communities, tribals, oustees due to development projects – constitute a sizeable segment whose security needs have been met with a singular lack of responsiveness. Their continued marginalization poses the greatest challenge to security in India today⁸.

As inequalities grow both globally and nationally (80% of the world’s gross domestic product belonging to one billion people i.e. 10% of adults in the developed world and the remaining 20% being shared by 5 billion people in the developing world) the **Report on The World Social Situation, 2005** of the UN cautions that focusing exclusively on economic growth and income generation as a development strategy and ignoring inequality will prove perilous for security. While the market economy is here to stay, it cannot be relied upon for developmental tasks as pointed out by Amartya Sen. The

implementation of land reforms, spread of education and extension of health care to all, will have to remain primarily the responsibility of the state. The challenge would be then to work with the market economy without relying on it and build effective partnerships with civil society organizations to put in place a new security architecture that addresses the **inequality predicament**.

The Culture of Militarism

The failure of the Indian state to address the tensions between what it sees as *national security* and the *human security* requirements of increasing numbers of newly articulate groups, has resulted in spawning a **culture of militarism**. The link between militarization as social processes and militarism as world view is too firmly established in social science discourse to bear elaboration here. While deconstructing the military readings of landscapes which are aimed at mastering space, it is important for gender perspectives to critique the ways in which militarism and military activities often distort and destroy social – cultural geographies of contemporary S. Asia and how in its various guises and influences make state sanctioned violence possible against marginalized sections, especially women (as our study on Pakistan also suggests).

The 1980s marked the decade when the militarization trend manifested itself. Civilian regimes, unable to tackle the rising tide of communalism, casteism and militant regionalism politically, came to rely on the police and armed forces to maintain internal stability, and perform such diverse tasks as quelling communal riots, providing relief during natural disasters, maintaining essential services during strikes, and counter-insurgency and anti-terrorist operations.

The use of draconian anti-people Acts that were used to contain dissent during the 1975-7 Emergency under Mrs. Gandhi continued into the 1980s with more such legislation added to the list. The Armed Forces Special Powers Act gave almost carte blanche powers to the security forces in the North-East: it was extended to Punjab in 1983 and Kashmir in 1990. The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) gave vast powers to the States in 1985. It was made more rigorous (the burden of proof being shifted to the accused), and its powers extended to the centre in 1987. The TADA, which was widely misused and had acquired a distinct anti-Muslim orientation in the 1990s, was revoked in 1995.

The separatist movements with demands ranging from autonomy to independence in the North Eastern states of Assam, Nagaland and Manipur and Kashmir reflect the tensions between assertions of ethnicity, religious identity and the nation building project. They target innocent civilians to dramatize their cause, advocate terrorist tactics and are militarist.

The State response to these movements has demonstrated tactics and strategy that favour militarism over dialogue and reconciliation. The flushing out of terrorists by extensive military operations has required combing operations where lawful citizens are mistaken for terrorists with the attendant torture, wrongful confinement, custodial death and rape. The excesses of the militants are met with the might of the State, resulting in abrogation of the rule of law, and breakdown of institutions and processes of democracy. The suffering of civilians caught in the crossfire (with women and children being the worst victims) has highlighted the fragility of a federal structure that treats the failed promise of development as a law-and-order problem. An estimated 60-65 percent of

India's military and paramilitary forces are deployed in anti-insurgency operations. The hazards of over-reliance on containment as a tool of governance have far-reaching implications for a plural society. The strengthening of such mechanisms outside democratic accountability narrows democratic space, but also contributes to a brutalization and criminalization of official agencies and institutions.

The dramatic nude demonstration by women to protest the alleged custodial rape and killing of a women political activist in the North eastern state of Manipur snowballed into a major conflagration which eventually forced the government to commit to 'humanizing' the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

The real problem arises as in the case of most South Asian states, when draconian laws, which are enacted to deal with extraordinary contingencies and as temporary measures, become, to use Peter D'Souza's phrase, the "paradigm of government." The normalizing of the **deployment** of the military in domestic affairs is a serious concern not just for the democratic governance, but people's security.

Today such instances are not restricted to India or South Asia. After September 11, 'liberal democracies' have introduced anti – terrorist measures (mostly against migrants) that significantly compromise and erode individual security and freedoms in the name of state and security of which Guantanamo is not an isolated example.

The Military Commissions Act of 2006 which eliminates habeas corpus for anyone defined as "unlawful enemy combatant" as well as all aliens, including permanent residents – green card holders – of the United States is only a case in point.

The Terrorism Conundrum

This raises significant NTS questions on **Terrorism** and its containment, which for India and many countries of the region is a major challenge today. The entry of terrorism into the security lexicon as a variable straddling both the domains of 'traditional' and 'non – traditional' reconfigures the notions of conflict and war, with non state actors and states in confrontation subverting all established conventions and boundaries and shared vocabularies and methodologies of combat. As Bruce Ackerman points out in *Before the Next Attack* the key feature of the modern world is that the state has lost control over violence. Small groups, without countries or uniforms can cause irrevocable damage. The root of the problem is not any particular religion or ideology as Ackerman says, but a fundamental change in the relationship between the state, the market and the technologies of destruction. Traditional approaches to problem solving have not stemmed the tide.

A new vocabulary that **institutionalizes Dialogue and Conflict resolution** techniques and methodologies as **central** to the security – terrorism conundrum need to be actively explored. Non Traditional wideners have brought what were considered the 'soft issues' of development squarely within the ambit of security. It is time to integrate **dialogues** on Conflict prevention and peacebuilding **within** the security problematique. Hitherto these have remained almost discrete domains. The UN initiatives to move even the essentially military exercises of peacekeeping towards a peacebuilding trajectory opens important avenues in this regard.

For India (along with Pakistan and other S. Asian States) retaining the balance between maintaining its relationship with the international coalition against terrorism (in its operational dimensions) and not being 'band wagonned' on the US adventurist agenda

is crucial. This has to be sensitive to developing deeper ties with the Muslim world and also to the resentments against US hegemonic posturing. Cross Border Terrorism does not emanate from Pakistan alone. Groups operating from the North East states and other states have links within terrorist organizations like LTTE and so on. A sustained effort should be made to see that labels of terrorism and terrorist violence are not ascribed to one religious community / caste group in a short sighted manner. **The Joint Mechanism against Terrorism** in Jammu & Kashmir currently being envisaged by the Indian and Pakistani leadership, breaks new ground, in evolving new metaphors and mechanisms for borders, boundaries and issues of sovereignty. It may be a good augury for the shape of things to come on the subcontinent.

Managing Diversity

A major challenge facing the S. Asian region and India in particular is the management of diversity. There is need to use the Non Traditional lens to look anew at how issues of identity impinge on security. The challenge is made much more complex because there are several nation – states in the region. The religious, ethnic and linguistic characteristics of civil societies in these nation states overlap with each other. This overlapping results in apprehensions about respective national identities. The challenge is to resolve the contradictions between the nature of civil societies and anxieties about consolidating subnational identities, by promoting a democratic citizenship that is integrative rather than ethno religious nationalism that is separative. It is crucial to reclaim the receding secular spaces to resist religious fundamentalism that is on an alarming rise in South Asia⁹.

Within nation states this would need, purposeful **affirmative action for religious minorities and marginalized social groups**. Fundamentalism and manifestations of terrorism are the price of exclusionist policies that deny access and equity. The answer to the problem of national security in the future may be not in the acquisition of weapons, or the mindless deployment of para military forces, but in concerted efforts to overcome the 'development deficit', structural and ideological violence and prejudice against these groups. India's secular agenda, which had been somewhat on the wane since the 1980s needs to be both reclaimed and rearticulated in the face of contemporary global discourse. This is bound to have a positive impact in the region in light of anxieties about minority rights across the border.

In the multicultural, multi religious societies of S. Asia, discrimination is still rampant. A recent report (The Sachar Committee) irrefutably revealed the profound lack of educational and employment opportunities and the consequently attenuated life choices that confront the majority of Indian Muslims who account for 17% of the population of the country. Their representation in all sectors of employment seems to have frozen between 3 to 5%. In the midst of chauvinistic majoritarian agendas the nadir of which was witnessed in the anti-Muslim program in Gujarat in 2002, official appeasement, if any is extended to the oppressive clerical elite, which has contributed to the community's backwardness and ghettoization.

South Asia is home to the largest Muslim population in the world, and India has the second largest number of Muslims in the world next to Indonesia. An ideational shift is required which sees **minorities as a resource for multi cultural societies** than a liability or a challenge that somehow needs to be "managed". This will prove the bulwark against religious fundamentalisms of all kinds. India could through genuine democratic

dialogue and transparent **processes of reconciliation** seek to give voice to the progressive, inclusive and democratic forces of Islam in global partnership. It also needs to actively engage in processes and platforms that seriously interrogate the discourse of equating terrorism with Islam.

Reconciliation is an invaluable tool to address institutionalized violence in gendered multi ethnic societies. At the societal and political levels, the basic obstacles to reconciliation emanates from the non-recognition of due claims of certain groups. **Reconciliation** therefore needs to be grounded in concepts of representation, democracy, truth, justice and responsibility. For disadvantaged social groups in India like SCs, STs and OBCs and women for example , exclusions and deprivations have to be overcome by more imaginative modes of affirmative action and representation than merely numerical quotas, to right historic wrongs **and** guarantee new entitlements.

What is significant for security in India and most countries of South Asia is that the State is neither consistently 'protector' or 'predator'. It oscillates between these roles depending on which group or interest is negotiating its agenda or seeking entitlements or benefits by democratic appeal. It has been argued that the Indian State's project of social transformation is not above bargaining and compromise. It is not open, however, to negotiation by vulnerable categories of citizens. In its attentiveness to some powerful interests, the public agenda is open and inclusionary, while towards others it is severely exclusionary. The core projects of the State are, it is argued, rendered differentially open to negotiation, and so it is not a problem of too little or too much democracy, but of its selective availability. The importance of placing the four pillars of an inclusive society namely – **Development, Democracy, Dialogue** and **Diversity** – at the Centre of Security choices needs to be underscored.

A Renewed Arms Race

India's nuclear tests in May 1998 – moving it decisively from its position of nuclear ambiguity around which a political consensus had obtained since 1974 – has impelled changes in approaches related to Non – Proliferation. This is also indicative of the shift in the mainstream agenda of the International Community, where the emphasis on comprehensive disarmament and elimination of nuclear weapons is becoming feeble and giving way to graduated area control aimed at preventing further horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.

The insecurities generated by a nuclearized environment on the subcontinent, in particular have been further exacerbated by Big Power engagement and the U.S. 'strategic partnership' with India. Augmenting 'civil nuclear energy cooperation' between the two countries, is threatening to spur further augmentation with reports of Chinese assistance to Pakistan to build six nuclear reactors.

The skewed and acrimonious debate in India on the Indo-US Nuclear deal, has made strange bed fellows of the Left and Ultra Nationalists in opposing caps on the development of nuclear capabilities and resisting IAEA safeguards. Here, the concern about US hegemony provides the cementing glue. Within the country, the Indo-US Nuclear Deal has saturated the nuclear agenda – a typical example of how 'techno-strategic discourse' disallows significant questions from entering the debate.

While the Deal may cater to some of India's energy needs, it has at the immediate level obscured thoughts of nuclear disarmament in the region. Interest has focused instead on how much the Deal will affect India's ability to make more nuclear weapons. While hawks fret that it curtails the ability to make bombs, arms control activists read into the Deal an enhancement of weapon making capability. Therefore the debate is only about how fast India's (and Pakistan's consequently) arsenals will grow. There is very little focus on the subcontinental arms build up.

The net result of misinformation, ignorance and obfuscations about the deal, has been a resurgence of the chauvinist discourse. The impact of its rationalizations for enhancing defence spending could adversely affect long term allocations for the social sector. The need is to enhance the visibility of an **epistemic community** around NTS approaches that will systemically engage with security establishments in genuine dialogue. As Shrin Ebadi said on a recent visit to India, "the answer to the Nuclear issue, in Iran, India, or elsewhere is more democracy". The wresting of the nuclear issue from the iron curtains erected within states is crucial.

Not just S. Asia, but Asia as a whole, which is home to half the world's people and resources finds itself at a strategic crossroads. Its ability to give rise to a new architecture and institutions that foster and enhance security, cooperation and growth, will depend on how it is able to move away from the suspicions and insecurities that outside powers have traditionally taken advantage of, in order to offer themselves as 'balancers' of power in the region.

In the final analysis Japan, China and India are the three principal pillars on which a cooperative Asian security architecture can be based with ASEAN providing the sheet anchor. Asia cannot be "led" by any one power, and so a cooperative, inclusive regionalism will serve all countries of the region well, or else the United States is likely to seize the strategic initiative in Asia leading to further strains and tensions.

The security of the peoples of the region would be served, if India's overall objective remains the **complete elimination of WMDs** in a gradual and practical manner. This would involve decisions regarding capping further expansion internally. The argument that India must push to replace NPT by a new Convention on Non Proliferation of Nuclear weapons in both bilateral discussions and multi lateral fora with stipulations to be applicable to all countries, nuclear and non – nuclear without the discriminatory and discretionary clauses like CTBT or FMCT can purposefully resonate in Non Traditional approaches.

N.T.S. formulations cannot abdicate the responsibility of continuously demanding strict compliance to nuclear safety standards in the interim, from the perspective of people's security and environmental security The challenge for India and other states in the region is to structure new equations, keeping in mind the new geopolitical compulsions after the end of the cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, to correct US unilateralism. An important dimension would be the creation of a stable and calibrated relationship with the U.S. without losing independence in foreign and security policies. Managing the prospects of Pax Americana will prove a major security exercise which would require the refining of non-traditional approaches.

MDGs and Beyond

The meeting of Socio-economic developmental requirements in the context of the region through appropriate domestic and external policies remains an abiding challenge for the countries of South Asia. Within the ambit of these concerns, attention needs to be given for ensuring energy security particularly in terms of hydrocarbons and hydel power.

The complexes and apprehensions generated by asymmetry between India on the one hand and other S. Asian countries in terms of size, levels of technology and military power need to be addressed through bold initiatives in trade and unfettered **people to people contact**. India particularly needs to make purposeful efforts to manage these tensions. Structuring cooperative regionalism and dealing with political and human security problems **within SAARC** in a pragmatic manner, will open unforeseen possibilities. To contain the rising tide of internal centrifugal forces affecting the resilience of the nation states of the S. Asian region the strengthening of democracy, in each of the nation states by making them safe for diversity, is crucial.

The big security challenge is to manage the ongoing process of globalization and its inequities. This is made more complex because of the under currents of restrictive and acquisitive economic and technology regimes forming part of the policies of major powers of the world. The developing countries have been greater victims of non fulfillment of a number of WTO stipulations.

India should continue to work, from the perspective of the region as a whole, within and through WTO to revise and modify aberrations that may have arisen. India's policy towards WTO should be to make **common cause with other countries** in the region to underline that the pattern of free market economies, competition etc. generated by the WTO, has to be tempered by the need for distributive justice of disadvantaged sections of civil society. The alternatives will be upheaval and violent unrest.

In this context India needs to increase the substance of its relationship with regional blocs and particularly the 17 Like-Minded Major Diverse Countries (LMMC) bloc leveraging the resource of biodiversity more effectively and also creating new terms of reference to function together with the group of 'Non-aligned' countries in the context of new hegemonies in the global scenario.

Food and water security, healthcare, education and environmental security, remain abiding concerns for most states in the region. The HDR of 2006 has pointed to 'Water for life and water for livelihood' as posing the biggest challenge for security in this century, with the real risk of water wars breaking out in the less developed world. The cooperative Management of water resources, with sustainable and appropriate technologies both within and between the countries of the South Asian region remain traditional challenges for which Non Traditional approaches are needed. The impact of Tsumani and other 'natural' and 'man made' disasters have drawn attention to the need for special measures, including specialized disaster management, and disaster comprehensive risk insurance for vulnerable sections in particular, by harnessing latest technologies. India has recently put in place a National Disaster Response Force drawn from traditional para military forces. The countries of this region working in concert for more rigorous and committed implementation of the **UN Millennium Development Goals**, could introduce new parameters for comprehensive and cooperative security in the region¹⁰.

The Road Less Travelled

Women as refugees, widows and as workers without personal or family security have become markers of the emerging international landscape that cannot be ignored. The internal and transregional wars shaping the global landscape are being fought not only on battlefields, but also in homes, communities, cities and villages. Despite the multiple roles of women in conflict, their 'voice' is seldom heard in the 'hard' issue areas – security, foreign policy, finance and trade. It is important to foreground those integral to feminist discourse: its questioning of realism and notions of security as a zero sum game; its interrogation of the public / private separation; its critique of war, gendered citizenship and nationalism; its emphasis on respecting 'difference' in democratic arrangements and its stress on the links between patriarchy, militarism, intolerance and violence. These are issues integral to the (in) securities of those who constitute nearly 50 percent of the population in South Asia.

The centrality of women's concerns in armed conflict and the importance of their participation in conflict prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding is reflected in the landmark **Security Council Resolution 1325** mandating the inclusion of gender in peace operations.

Yet, for this inclusion to be effective, as our studies have shown, the challenge is for women to gain political power and transform political structures and processes into more democratic and egalitarian forms¹¹. It was, after all, a woman who spearheaded the path breaking movement for **Right to Information** in India. Equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflict are essential for the maintenance of peace and security as articulated by the Beijing Plus Five Conference.

States of the South Asian region must commit to 'engendering security' to **implement Resolution 1325 and also CEDAW** (Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) and engage actively with fashioning a **life affirming** discourse on security. The continuing absence of women from the negotiating tables when Peace is being brokered, may be one of the reasons why most accords break down within 5 years. It is not just the size of the table that women wish to alter, but what is **brought** to the table as well. The countries of Asia have shown no initiative to include women at the negotiating table – and this **should be a key concern for policy makers of the region**. The imaginative leveraging of women's extended (often informal) networks for active peace building may be an important route for reversing the pervasive **trust-deficit** between countries of the region.

NTS formulations open up spaces to truly **engender** Security. **Engendering** security goes significantly beyond mainstreaming women's concerns. It attempts to construct an alternative discourse, re-socializing men and women into a qualitatively nuanced understanding of security, shifting priorities from threat perceptions and deterrence vocabularies to a language that cognizes *structural challenges* and *enabling spaces*. It also emphasizes moving beyond the discourse of **victimology** to understand the spaces for agency that open up, especially for women, as they negotiate and renegotiate their security, empowerment and citizenship in the contexts of both "peace-time" and situations of armed conflict.

Non-traditional formulations of security would inevitably engage with issues of representation (particularly of women), constitutional arrangements, legal frameworks and their inclusions and exclusions. These 'alternative' formulations break out of the straitjackets of reified discourses; wrest security from congealed definitions, concerns and elite bastions; and place it squarely within the arena of democratic dialogue and negotiation.

Perhaps this is the place to speak the unthinkable and dream the seemingly impossible – to speak of *desecuritizing* military (and nuclear) security by bringing it into the arena of *governance by discussion* which as Amartya Sen says is the crux of democracy.

This could be done through several Non Traditional explorations, which will at some point of critical mass effect a transformation. After all, as Camus has said *“Great ideas, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps then, if we live attentively, we shall hear, amid the uproar of empires and nations a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirrings of life and hope --- I believe it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and words negate frontiers of the crudest implications of history, that each and every man and woman on the foundation of his own sufferings and joys builds for all.”*

¹ “In the final analysis human security is a child who did not die, a disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human Security is not a concern with weapons – it is a concern with human life and dignity.

² The designation “stateless” is now so commonplace that it excites little comment, even as governments grapple with another category of people called “permanent liabilities”. The repatriated Tamils of Jaffna and the Eastern Provinces, for instance, have no place to call their own in either India or Sri Lanka; “displaced persons” of erstwhile East Pakistan are still in a kind of limbo in India and live under the threat of being declared “infiltrators” or “illegal immigrants” any time. Any number of second-class citizens are to be found in every country of South Asia and, everywhere, those in a minority whether linguistic, ethnic or religious, are vulnerable. 80% of those affected are women and children. They constitute 75% of the numbers of concern to UNHCR – 21.5 million at beginning of 1999.

³ The recent rulings by the Supreme Court of India, striking down executive orders and the IMDT Act, that attempted a more humane identification process for “illegal” migrants are cases in point. The fact that many of those deported belong to a particular religious community may not be entirely coincidental.

⁴ Sanjay Chaturvedi “Geopolitics and Gender in the South Asian spaces”, paper presented at WISCOMP Symposium **Revisiting Non Traditional Security** November 2006 p 5.

⁵ Sanjay Chaturvedi, *Ibid*, p 3.

⁶ See Pratap Bhanu Mehta ‘Peripheral Vision, **The Indian Express** Nov 7, 2006.

⁷ A recent movement to protest a new 1000 MW Kaichan-Wangtoo mega hydel project being constructed on the Sutlej river in the northern province of Himachal seems poised to turn into a major confrontation between local tribals and the state police force cutting to protect the interests of private industry.

⁸ See Niraja Gopal Jayal, **Democracy and the State**, Delhi, OUP, 1999, pp 239-48.

⁹ J. N. Dixit, ‘Emerging National Security Challenges for India’, **Security and Society** vol 1, no1, p 2.

¹⁰ The 8 goals highlight 1) Eradication of extreme poverty, 2) Universal primary education 3) Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women 4) Reduction of child mortality 5)Improvement of maternal health 6) Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases 7) Ensuring environmental sustainability 8) Building a global partnership for development.

¹¹ As compared to Nordic countries who have well over 34% representation of women in the Parliament in India today (which reserves 33% seats at the local self government level) they constitute a mere 8.3%. In Bangladesh, in the present Parliament elected in 2001, there are no seats reserved for women, but their percentage in the 2001 elections in Parliament was 2%. Pakistan reserved over 40,000 seats for women in Union Councils, District Councils and Town & Tehsil Councils. In 1997, their representation in the National Assembly was a mere 4%. By a 2002 legislation, the military government reserved 17% seats in the National Assembly for women.

All three countries however have 25-33% seats reserved for women in local government bodies.