



A literature review on evolution and growing significance of non-traditional security

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Abstract

The term *security* is an inevitable part of every nation, irrespective of their socio-economic and political conditions. This commonly used term has undergone a smooth transition from traditional security to non-traditional or human security. This shift is visible in terms of both theoretical and practical perspective of world nations. The growing need to address the vulnerabilities of individuals, society and county made the shift to non-traditional security an inevitable process. This has paved way to focus on aspects other than mere military security which has been the pattern since formation of nation-states. This paper attempts to highlight literatures published on traditional security, its change-over to non-traditional security, nature characteristics and significance of the same.

Keywords: traditional security, military security, non-traditional security, human security.

Introduction

Security – A Traditional Perspective

The term *security* is an inseparable part of political and military strategies of every country in the world. The origin of the concept of *security* can be traced back to the formation of nation-states. Political philosophers like Kautilya and Machiavelli had emphasized upon the duty of a king to protect his citizens, land and resources. One of the oldest literary works of Indian history, Thirukkural, contributes a significant thought process to the role and duties of a king in protecting citizens from any form of threat and to emerge as a strong nation in its economic, social and political developments. The emphasis placed on the importance of defending a country's own land, resources and people made nations develop an obsession for security. This obsession was popularly known as national security or military security because armed defence or military was the only tool chosen by countries to defend or secure their assets, be it land or people. This concept, from the ancient to modern times, looks at the nation as a single entity and unit of existence rather than compartmentalizing the elements (land, resources and population) of it (Collins, 2010, p. 2) [8]. In order to substantiate the same, the following definitions are discussed chronologically:

- Security, in any objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values; in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked (Wolfers, 1962, p. 150) [15].
- Security itself is a relative freedom from war, coupled with a relatively high expectation that defeat will not be a consequence of any war that should occur (Bellamy, 1981, p. 102) [3].
- A nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war (Walter Lippman, cited in Buzan, 1991, p. 16) [6].

- Security – insecurity is defined in relation to vulnerabilities both internal and external that threaten to have the potential to bring down or weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and governing regimes (Ayoob, 1995, p. 9) [2].
- If people, be they government ministers or private individuals, perceive an issue to threaten their lives in some way and respond politically to this, then that issue should be deemed to be a security issue (Hough, 2004, p. 9) [11].

The ideas of security have been expressed in different terms by scholars of different times. Yet the core value of *security* remains the same. This can be understood from the definitions given above. *Security* is commonly defined as a freedom from war or absence of external threats. The consequence of threats is war, which results either in victory or defeat. A nation is secure if it is able to or competent enough to defeat its enemies and eventually protect its assets. The only transformation evident in the conceptualization of military security from 20th to 21st century is that security started referring to the internal threats in addition to the external ones. Similar to the latter, an entity threatens another within the territory of a nation, be it for political, economic, social or cultural reasons. These internal and external threats are the traditional approaches to the concept of security.

This conventional approach to security defines it as a military phenomenon. Countries perceiving this dimension of security value power, which is manifested in combination of factors such as territory, population, economic resources and military capabilities. Nevertheless, the politics of security of a nation is identified largely with the diplomatic affairs, predominantly in terms of its military strengths. Therefore, military capabilities take the priority in budgetary allocation by governments and the projection and deterrence of the military force remain central to understanding the workings of politics. In this regard, the protection of a nation in military terms against the

military or political threats posed by the other countries is called as security, now referred to as traditional or conventional security.

Changing phase of traditional security

In this historical backdrop, after the World War-II and the Cold War, many independent nations came into existence. These nations commonly referred to as third-world countries were keen on their political independence and economic development. They initiated their growth process with the support of rest of the world. They were concerned about comprehensive process of development to keep pace with other countries. Therefore, these countries identified development with security of individuals and social groups beyond military security (Bilgin, 2003, p. 205) ^[4]. Thus, the approach to security branched into two namely maintenance of border security and attaining holistic security encompassing economic, social, political and environmental issues (Thomas, 1987) ^[14]. In addition to this transformed understanding of security after the Cold War, economic diplomacy across the world contributed its share to the same. The major economic reforms like liberalization, privatization and globalization (LPG) have brought governments of the world closer. This slowly brought a transformation in the concept of security because the process of globalization since early 1990s converts external issues into internal and vice versa. Globalization is understood as a process of far-reaching change that influences everyone and every nation. As a result of this, closer economic ties have been established between nations, and the threats begin to vary, particularly internal threats. New threats, such as increase in income gaps, environmental issues and foreign direct investments (FDI) affecting the local markets, emerge, and existing threats such as poverty and poor agricultural development intensify. This is due to the pace of acceleration in globalization process, outpacing the capacities of governments to develop policy responses (Chen *et al.*, 2005, p. 6) ^[7]. Therefore, the security threats of a nation began to be multi-causal, multi-dimensional, multi-level and multi-actor affair that have to be addressed by multiple approaches (Frerks, 2011) ^[9].

Non-Traditional Security

In this connection, there is a need for every government of the world, especially of the developing nations such as India, to sufficiently focus on threats, such as poverty, unemployment, malnourishment, environmental degradation, that are equally important as are the military threats. This undertakes a diversion from the traditional view point of security towards a newer, better and closer understanding of the same, considering nation as an entity composed of many elements. This conceptualization gave rise to a new concept called non-traditional security because of the identified branches of nation, threats and security. The concept of non-traditional security was made evident after the release of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP), Human Development Report (HDR) in 1994 ^[10]. The report mentions that the concept of security has for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory

from external aggression, or as protection of national interest in foreign policy or as global security threat of nuclear holocaust...forgotten were the legitimate concerns of ordinary people who sought security in their daily lives (HDR, 1994) ^[10]. The HDR thus insisted upon the need to move beyond the territorial or military security and deliberate upon the security of every individual of the territory. Therefore, this approach of UNDP is to focus attention on the issue of development, or more precisely human development. This is to shift human and financial resources towards poverty relief and the like and away from simple Gross Domestic Product (GDP), economic indicators of development and the all-consuming military and traditional security agenda (Collins, 2010, p. 122) ^[8].

Non-Traditional Security and Schools of Thought

In addition to HDR, exclusive schools of thought emerged to support the evolution of non-traditional security because the traditional lexicon of security was inadequate to accommodate new developments. The evolution of non-traditional security can be attributed to the combination of different schools of thought namely Liberal School, International Relations, Critical Security School and Copenhagen School. The Liberal School of Thought argues that because of close economic ties of countries in the international system, war would become less and less likely over time. International Relation is the study of how countries interact on the international stage. The scholars of International Relation also look into the foreign policy choices of countries and other forms of interaction such as trade or provision of aid. Thus, they look beyond military threats. Critical Security School is the study of an academic discipline within security studies which rejects mainstream approaches to security. Copenhagen School of Thought conceptualizes security as that process which takes an issue beyond or outside *normal* politics. It refers to vast array of analysis of securitization. Though these schools of thought are unique in their own way, they are common in several aspects pertaining to the concept of security. These schools criticize the state-centric and military security that had been the core meaning of security for a long time. They insist upon the need to rethink the concept of security and bring out more substantial meanings and definitions. These schools invariably place citizens at the epicenter of any governmental action and emphasize the need for equality, freedom and human rights. Since the new conception given to *security* comprises of every individual of a territory, non-traditional security is also referred to as human security. This is premised on the idea of empowerment and responsibilities at all levels of society, and not merely political and military actions (Frerks, 2011) ^[9].

Non-Traditional Security as Human Security

UNDP identified the *notion of human security* as a concept both for understanding and assessing the development of countries. The need for non-traditional security or human security arises as a result of hurdles faced in the process of development such as poverty, health related vulnerability, environmental hazards,

natural disasters, and gender-based problems. More does a country strive towards overall development; higher is the intensity of security concerns. The need for human security begins from providing basic needs to the citizens to the employment opportunities, safeguarding his or her personal safety within and outside territory. In this context, the scope for human security increases everyday across every country.

The concept of human security posits that security is not just the end of war, but also the ability to go about one’s business safely, in a safe environment – to have a job, to participate in political processes, to have choices for the education of one’s children, to live a healthy life and to do all this with the knowledge that one’s family is safe and unharmed (Tadjbakhsh & Anuradha, 2009, p. 18) [13]. The Commission of Human Security co-chaired by Amartya Sen and Sadako Ogata defined Human Security “as to protect the vital core of all human values in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment” (Chen *et al.*, 2005, p. 32) [7]. These definitions reveal that human security focuses every need of an individual.

Thus, human security is conceived as emancipatory, encompassing and empowering the hopes and aspirations of people (Chen *et al.*, 2005, p. 271) [7] and it is thoroughly people-centric (Alkire, 2003) [11]. In pursuit of this discussion, the major characteristics of human security are as follows (Richard & Ray, 2006, p. 5) [12]:

- Human security is a universal concern.
- The components of human security are interdependent.
- Human security is easier to ensure through early prevention than later intervention.
- Human security is people-centric.

From these characteristics, it is understood that human security is relevant to people everywhere, be it in developed, developing and/or underdeveloped nations, and it gives attention to individuals. In this regard, the basic comparison between traditional and human security, as given by Taylor Owen, is tabulated below (Burgess, 2010, p. 40) [5]

Table 1: Comparison between traditional and human security

Type of security	Referent object	Protection	Possible threats
Traditional security	The state	The integrity of state	Inter-state war, nuclear proliferation, revolution
Human security	The individual	The integrity of individual	Poverty, disease, natural disaster, violence, landmines, human rights abuses

The table explains the transition from a narrow perspective of security to a wider and broader understanding as it becomes essential to take a closer look at the shifts in the proposal of human security. The major shifts identified by Alpes in the year 2004 are as follows (Tadjbakhsh & Anuradha, 2009, pp. 20-21) [13]:

- From state to individual security
- Linking individual with global stability
- From national to universal values

These shifts are from a simpler dimension of human security to a more complex dimension. This is apparent with the links brought out between individual, state and the world. These shifts are instrumental in designing the development of a nation in different ways (Burgess, 2010, pp. 46-48) [5]. The shift is used to keep a check on the state-centric power and ensure human-centric development. It also helps nations and international organizations to build policies taking this into consideration a wide range of issues concerning human security.

Concluding remarks

Taking into deliberations all schools of thought, scholarly understanding and mounting need, UNDP has identified seven branches of human security issues: food security, environment security, economic security, health security, personal security, community security and political security (HDR, 1994) [10]. These seven areas have been identified after a thorough analysis of existing problems from a global understanding, and therefore every single issue has its unique significance to receive enough attention and focus. These branches are interdependent and complementary in nature because the effect of one

could be seen evidently on the other. Thus, the knowledge on non-traditional security is relentlessly on the rise to keep pace with needs, growth and holistic development at international level percolating to the nations. Both in theoretical and practical perspective, the significance of this area of study would never face a diminishing trend as non-traditional security or human security would exist as long as citizens and nations exist.

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