Chapter 5

Conclusion

What makes people feel insecure? This fundamental question can lead us to the complexities of sources of insecurity among human population in various situations and locations. It also confronts us with orthodox accounts of security and their inadequacy in understanding and assessing the actual nature and scale of threats to human security. The central premises of orthodox account of security have been constantly challenged, particularly in the context of the end of the cold war and the changing nature and structure of threats and instabilities among human populations. As a sequel to this situation, alternative discourses and conceptual underpinnings are emerging.

Another way of assessing this trend is to confront the question, “what makes people feel secure?” There are situations where intrinsic feeling of security accomplishment exists, though this is relative and subjective, at both the individual and community level. This feeling primarily emanates from meeting of things that people cherish most. A common discontentment with orthodox security analysis is that it neglects the wider meaning of security. It openly assumes that threats are targeted directly to sovereignty of the state. The state needs to be secured particularly from the sovereignty angle. Therefore, the state becomes a primary referent object in the entire orthodox framework of security. In such a situation, the military-defense framework has been the handiest tool to ensure minimum deterrent to external aggressors. This has predominantly militated the entire discourse on security. The domestic realm becomes left out. This leads to compartmentalisation in the thinking and management of domestic and international security.

On the other hand, in the emerging discourse of human security approach, human beings are the primary referents. In the new approach, attempts are being made to relocate security discourse so that human security is considered as an underlying condition for sustainable human development and the nation’s security at large. It results from
social, psychological, economic and political aspects of human life that in times of acute crisis ensure the survival of individuals and support individuals. The major causes of human insecurity are invariably related to conflict, health, food, environment, energy and personal hazards, communal tensions and political insecurity.

India, given its political history and topographical and socio-cultural diversity inevitably, has been a theatre of major security concerns. Much importance has been consciously placed on traditional military-based security issues in the Indian state too. There are, however, concerns and vulnerabilities both at federal and local levels. The nature and contents of these insecurities are not only diverse but mostly related to non-traditional paradigms. They are manifested in various forms and are reflected in political demands pursued through terrorism and insurgency, forced and voluntary migration resulting from socio-political conflicts, environmental displacement caused by natural disasters and development projects, hunger, deaths and farmers suicide emanating from food insecurity, electricity riots and poor health triggered by energy insecurity and marginalisations of both localities and institutions.

At the heart of these security concerns unrecognised in the orthodox framework of security is the poor state of human security directly related to livelihood and nutrition concerns, decreasing accessibility to public utilities, human rights violations, skewed distribution of natural resources, regional disparities, political alienations, harmful development schemes and technological interventions, natural disasters, inimical production structures and market-based reforms. There are also newer concerns that are linked to the globalisation process.

India is not an exception. The state has been a referent object of security. The state is omnipresent in every sphere of life and a dominant theme of political economy. For the State of India, too, security threats are only variants of orthodox-external dimensions and these are largely determined by the threat to its sovereignty based on the integrity of its geographical whole. The state is an impregnable fortress.

At the same time, the Indian State like others is an intermediary between the evolving global economy, forces of globalisation at home and tenets of human security at the grass root level. Therefore, understanding and assessment of human security issues need to be done in the framework of traditional state-society relationships. Under such situations, can we play down the role of the state?
There are major constraints in India in trying to change the traditional contours of security and bringing in human security discourse upfront and juxtaposing it with orthodox accounts. Firstly, concepts of security are predominantly military-based. This is in the very nature of post-colonial state formation, strategic and military alliances and diplomatic engagements. All these have oriented national security issues more to external parameters and determinants rather than internal dynamics. In the process, citizen's insecurity has often been neglected, ignored and sacrificed by the state in the name of larger military security interests. Human security, on the other hand, brings citizens to the central focus, thereby opening the state up for critical scrutiny.

Both the Kargil war fought against the Pakistani forces in 1999 and the communal riots of Gujarat in 2002 killed and displaced a large number of people, destroyed property and caused huge losses to the exchequer. Both situations created serious human insecurity. Both were localised problems with potentiality for further outbursts and could even lead to a conflagration. The central security forces, including the army, were used in both situations. Both were covered extensively by the media and widely discussed in Parliament. Despite these striking similarities, the former remained a “national security” problem and the latter an “internal security” concern, popularly called a “law and order” problem. Was this only because the latter took place essentially within the country and the former had a major external dimension?

Both, however, had strong national implications. The Kargil war also had a high content of human insecurity, which was possibly, overshadowed by the “externality” and “national security” concerns. Could it be a problem of political denial and power-risk to declare the internal human security-related problem as a national security problem? The question here involves the extreme situation of communal conflagration engulfing the major portion of the country, for when a national emergency is declared to quell violence and maintain order, will it then also continue to be an internal security problem? Or will it at one stage transgress the impregnable wall of “internal” security to become a national security problem? In a conflagrating war situation too a national emergency could be declared. Once inside the “national emergency box,” could we continue to maintain this exclusivity between human insecurity as an “internal” problem and war as a “national” problem, although both could have a debilitating
impact and reach? Why this fine distinction between a communal riot-led “internal security” threat and an external dimension-led “national security threat”? The former is a non-traditional and the latter a traditional security threat. What stops us from recognising the former also as a national security threat? What is the distance between “internal” and “national” here? Where is the meeting point? They have all elements of convergence yet in the State’s thinking they hardly have a centrifugal tendency. What makes these two concepts so different? In the answer to this question lies a solution to these complex issues of the orthodox (military) vs non-orthodox (human) paradoxes of security.

Secondly, the other threats to security that are mostly non-military and non-traditional have tended to be treated in the exclusive framework of problems of nation building, socio-political contingencies and development dynamics. The inherent assumption and belief is that they do not impinge upon our sovereignty directly and immediately. They have been consciously kept out of the national security agenda and its management. Therefore, treatment given to “non-traditional” security threats emanating from issues related to food, environment, energy, conflict, displacement etc are more on the line of maintenance of law and order and internal security perspectives than national security dynamics. Even if these dimensions acquire national proportions they could still be treated in the same way.

For instance, despite hunger deaths, suicide by farmers and conflicts triggered by deprivations, food security and protection of national boundaries for sovereignty could never be linked. They are two separate watertight compartments. Could this mean that food provisioning can be neglected but not national boundaries? Here the most fundamental question is: for whose security are national borders to be protected? Where does individual and community insecurity and national insecurity meet?

Thirdly, conceptual and empirical literature on human security issues in the national context is scarce in the country. In the inevitable yet readily discussed linkage between human and national security, the sensitisation aspects have been neglected and ignored, thereby categorising them in the very exclusive framework of “internal” and “external” dynamics. Most of the related literature has been written in the exclusive framework of the political economy of development rather than in the emerging non-traditional security framework.
However, conscious attempts have been made by scholars, institutions, civil society organs and even by a few governmental agencies across the country to “import” and link the emerging international discourse on the changing contours of security to complex realities in India. Nevertheless, conceptual acceptance and empirical applicability of such an “imported” paradigm is yet to make a dent. At the same time many such “imported” conceptual underpinnings may fit the Indian situation as they capture a huge varieties of cases, concerns and vulnerabilities that have occurred in similar other situations across the globe.

In fact, the overarching matrices of security are themselves fast changing. The notion of nationalism based on perspectives of territoriality is diminishing. Security has assumed wider connotations and stretches beyond borders. Even borders are no longer treated as sheer points of military incursion by neighbours. Seventeen provincial states of India (out of 28) have international land borders. The North East States have 98 per cent of their borders with neighbouring countries. Their interactions across the border are fast becoming of critical importance. The entire character and contents of border are changing. The Indian state is now recognising the threat of floods triggered by the global warming process, cross border environmental injuries caused by international rivers like Kosi and Brahmaputra, and also environmental degradations in neighbouring countries, the burgeoning dimension of violent Maoist movements, economic and political crisis emanating from energy deficit situations, and the consequent need to constructively engage neighbours for transit routes, power grids and gas pipelines.

Uniformity and singleness that seemingly prevail in the perception and handling of border at the national level are now steadily diluted and blunted by very local and micro-understanding and multi-faceted interactions in border areas. National policies and institutions very often are not able to comprehend and capture these micro-nuances. These include security threats including related to natural resources, environmental dislocations, insurgency and terrorism, smuggling and trade in small arms, migrations, cross-border crimes and other development deprivations. These could be threats to the security of the people at the local level at the first instance and then to the nation in the not very long run. In other words, security dimensions are becoming more local than national. There is apprehension that since all these
situations have very high human security and less military-strategic contents, they may not arouse the attention and interventions of the Indian State as much as was the case during the Sino-India war of 1962 and the Kargil war of 1999. Both national and human security concerns tend to converge in certain specific cases. In some situations, human insecurities have resulted in protracted violence, insurgencies and terrorism and have attracted cross-border sympathies and affiliations. This in turn has injected threats to both “internal” and “national” security.

Given these fast-changing conceptual framework backed by tested realities, the basic objective of this study has been to examine the possibility of enlarging the scope of security by breaking the rigidity injected by traditional forms of dominant state-centric security concepts and their determining matrices. This has been done mainly by drawing knowledge, experiences and practices of various human security-related situations based in various social and spatial contexts. The basic idea has been to relate security to the more positive aspects of human existence and other wider dimensions of security in India.

An attempt has been made to understand and analyse linkages between internal and external security concerns. In some cases we examined how gains from food, environmental and energy security could transform the security perception in the nation as a whole. Could it help in building a broader framework of security at the macro level? How addressing such issues and making interventions at a decentralised level could in turn enhance security at the micro- and sub-national levels?

In fact, these newer trends of human security as a driving force to enhance and ensure national security could already be seen though in subtle but substantive ways. For instance, the human development approach to development is being discussed widely in India today. It highlights non-GDP matrices as objective of social progress and regards people as the real source of wealth. It emphasises the formation and extensive use of human capabilities and provides and broadens whole range of choices available to people. The decentralisation project so vigorously undertaken after the 73rd amendment of the Constitution focuses entirely on people.

Though there have been attempts to study aspects of human security, the data, literature and knowledge continue to remain limited, scattered and unorganised. Not much systematic and focused research
has been done. On the whole, there are serious gaps in both theoretical-conceptual and applied research on human security-related issues in India. Policy makers in the country have had to rely on dispersed knowledge systems and unorganised information-databases in formulating policies and taking major decisions on human security concerns. At the same time, critics maintain that the core issues that are now being raised in the human security discourse have long been discussed in India in much more intimate and intensive manner. What is new is the framework that has been essentially evolving in the western literature which we are trying to replicate and practice in this sub-continent also.

There are several key themes and issues that can be studied in the context of human security discourses and debate in a country. The main thrusts of this study has been however, on three very critical areas viz.,

i) environmental security,
ii) food security, and
iii) energy security.

Environmental security for long remained a discourse restricted only to environmentalists. This could be attributed to the consistent disregard shown by core military advocates despite the inter-connections of the environment with other disciplines. It is the conjunction between environmental conditions and security interests that actually generate a condition for environmental security. Both the conflicts over natural resources and degradations of the environment threaten to undermine the security of states and other entities.

If natural supportive conditions are disturbed all human enterprises become insecure, impinging upon the very construct of the state system. Therefore, environment and security become “ineluctably part of the larger constructions of geopolitics.” At the same time, environmental security may not threaten national security directly. In India environmental security concerns have local, national and international dimensions and reach. At the local level, it is related to health, physical safety, poverty and deprivation, issues directly related to environmental conditions. At the national level, it is concerned with natural resources scarcity that could lead to conflict. For instance, the dispute over sharing of river water between the southern states viz, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, and northern states viz., Punjab and Haryana and Rajasthan could both lead to political instability and
cause large scale dislocations to human beings. Similarly, Bihar and Assam have been demanding share in development resources commensurate to their contributions in terms of mineral resources. This could acquire a very serious dimension as the Naxalites in Bihar and the Students Union in Assam have raised this issue to show how livelihoods are affected and the cream of developments siphoned off to other destinations. These movements are violent and severely impact upon the capabilities of the State.

At the international level, trans-border environmental injuries could cause a displaced population to cross state boundaries. The impact of global warming on flooding and water scarcity on the one hand and natural resource-based conflicts on the other have been noted and highlighted in discursive contexts. There are ample examples ranging from human displacement and migration caused by the rather low release of water through Farakka in Bangladesh and concerns about the likely trans-border injuries to the disputes with Pakistan over the Baglihar Dam project in Jammu and Kashmir and the “interlinking of rivers” project in India.

In India, a range of institutions has been studying the issue of environmental security both in the exclusive domain of the environmental paradigm and in the context of its linkages with wider issues of conflict, instability and security. Many of these institutions initiated these studies long before the concept of environmental security started emerging in the international security discourse.

Natural disasters have been recurring and devastating phenomena in India and have been single most vital threat to human security in the country. There are indications that the phenomenon of climate change has started impacting on occupational patterns and agricultural practices in the hills and mountain areas. The damage to environment and displacement of people has been widely noticed in many developmental projects. Here the displacement has meant a loss of livelihood, habitat and assets, social disruption and disorder and severance from an ecosystem which had sustained them earlier. An overwhelming majority of these displaced people are still awaiting resettlement and rehabilitation. Some of them as in the case of the Sardar Sarovar Project (Narmada), have become the foci of major international and national environmental and human rights confrontations.

A widely-debated issue has been to what extent the patenting of genetic resources would be detrimental to India which is primarily an
agricultural economy and heavily dependent on genetic resources for upgrading and maintaining agricultural stocks. More pertinently, in all these practices the rural folks with well-founded traditional technological tools and experiences have been active. The environmental disturbances and dislocations generated by private sector activities have been widely reported. The most devastating and relatively recent example is that of the Bhopal Gas tragedy, Nandigram in West Bengal and tribal area of Kishpur in Orissa, euphemously called “globalisation’s new laboratory.” Similarly the World Bank’s attempt to privatise water in Delhi has evoked debates and protests. Water conflicts are now found at every level in India.

Food security is a central issue in the human security discourse. There are diverse set of definitions that also includes the ability of a country “to supply an assured access of food in an adequate quantity and quality to meet nutritional demands” by all spectrums of people in socially acceptable ways. The central question in a food insecure community or group is that of livelihood security as its members lack tangible assets, geographical scales, formal education and technical skills. They have little or no access to basic needs such as food, water, health care and safe shelter. In other words, the notion of variability and vulnerability becomes the nucleus in the conceptual dynamics of food security where spatial and temporal sets and subsets of food security intersect to make the matrices more expansive and complex.

The food security concept cuts across the concerns of other aspects of human security and incorporates in it economics, health and environment and issues stretching from governance to social relations. In recent years, emerging WTO regimes have brought in newer vistas of food insecurity. The differentiation between food availability and food security has been blurred. The threats to food security emanate from both remnants and legacies of colonial practices, historically practiced socio-economic norms and also the nature, methods and extent of modern development interventions. On the other hand, the very concept of food insecurity has both transitory and chronic matrices. Food insecurity also becomes rather conspicuous and blatant in conflict-ridden situations.

India’s journey from a nation suffering from chronic food shortage and dependent on heavy food imports to a self-sufficient nation due to food grain production and a net exporter of food has in it strong elements of political determination to ensure food security through
protracted scientific, technological and institutional interventions. The Government has mostly used four broad instruments in addressing poverty and more specifically the issues of food security. The most widely used instrument has been the public distribution system (PDS). The other three are related to wage employment schemes, credit based self-employment programmes and more specific nutrition-oriented programmes. A score of food for work programmes have been floated that have both direct and indirect contents of food subsidies. As recently as 2007, a National Food Security Mission has been launched.

There is wide prevalence of chronic food insecurity as manifested in hunger and malnutrition, starvation deaths, suicides by farmers, chronically malnourished children and anemic women. Ironically, these happen against the backdrop of a steady decline in the percentage of people below poverty line and unprecedented level of buffer stock of food grains. The incidence of hunger varies sharply across households in various social groups. Farmer-suicides are mounting everywhere from prosperous Punjab to semi-arid Warangal in Andhra Pradesh. These suicides are mostly triggered by indebtedness occasioned by crop failure, depressed prices and high costs of cultivation. Hunger and starvation deaths, particularly in the closed tea gardens of Dooars region in West Bengal, have also been serious and demeaning. Land is again a crucial question today. There have been two way pressures on land viz., from the increasing population pressure leading to fragmentation of holding and from encroachment on agricultural land for urbanisation, industrial and other development activities. The low growth rate in agriculture in the last decade has again brought back the spectre of agricultural stagnation.

In India conflicts, violence and political instability have caused large-scale problems of food insecurity both within and outside conflict zones. For instance, large scale displacement and migration have taken place from the Kashmir valley of J&K over the last 15-20 years. While over 200,000 people still live in abysmal conditions in Jammu, the other half remain as “internal refugees” in cities like Delhi and Mumbai in squalid camps sufferings from spiralling health and economic problems.

The very uneven distribution of food production is a threat to food security. The Green revolution has had no apparent impact on many states. The new regime of intellectual property rights under the WTO has the potentiality of undercutting the very basis of food security
among the relatively poor farmers. What if MNC like Monsanto and Cargills usurp the seed market in the country and if farmers are forced to buy their seeds every time they decide to produce food of their choice? At the same time, the social, political and long run economic implications of making the farming community dependent on subsidised food items has in fact been “debilitating.”

Over the years, several grass root movements have emerged to ensure alternate routes and sustainable means to food security. They mostly made use of traditional knowledge, local resources, village labour force and local leadership. They have used awareness, advocacy and action to master a variety of strategies, tools and techniques to influence policy changes. The common elements in all these micro-level initiatives are effective participation of people through formation of self-help groups, equitable sharing of costs and benefits, the quality and commitment of local leadership and use of local and modern technologies.

The concept of energy security has been deliberated upon from two crucial perspectives i.e., the sustainable development point of view and from the security-militaristic point of view. In case of the former, energy security as a critical aspect of sustainable development refers to the availability of energy in different forms at all time to the users according to their needs at reasonable and affordable prices. On the other hand, from the security-militaristic plane, energy insecurity could bring large-scale instability in a given nation-state thereby threatening sovereignty and identity. This happens when a country is mainly dependent on external sources for its energy supplies. The human security aspects are actually the real linkages between these two parallel strands of thought and conceptual delineation of energy security.

There are multifarious linkages between energy and national security. Energy insecurity strains foreign policy flexibility. The changes of draining natural resources like coal, natural gas and oil reserves, thereby posing serious energy insecurity, has always loomed large in human history. On the other hand, energy-human security linkages are expressed when various sources of energy are used by human beings to improve their living standards, communications, societal interactions and choices.

Energy security has three very distinct local, national and international layers and related dimensions that directly impinge upon human and national security matrices. At the local level, the traditional sources of energy resources are so important that the entire livelihood
pattern and, to a large extent, socio-cultural practices are inter-woven with it. Besides overuse and also commercial exploitation with a “predatory” attitude; slow and tardy regeneration process; the methane gas-emanated by local energy sources has come under severe attack as a major agent contributing to global warming. Traditional energy saving practices like ghattas and gharats used for major household and community activities are fast vanishing because of costly modern energy intensive technologies.

At the national level, of paramount importance is ensuring an energy resource base and physical availability of supplies to satisfy demand at a given price. National energy resources have increasingly faced problems of overexploitation, discontentment in terms of benefit sharing with locales of their extraction between provinces and states and also skewed distribution both in their access and use. And at the global plane, it is very important for a country to have a stable source of supply. In the last five decades, over 15 major disruptions in oil supply have occurred. They are mostly related to political and military upheavals. The inability of a particular State to diversify their sources of supply has at times cost it exorbitantly.

India has made huge investment in the energy sector both at the national and local level. However, despite the consistent drive undertaken to reach rural areas, a large part of India’s population does not have access to commercial energy. Energy security issues in India essentially came to the forefront in the early 1970s when crude oil prices increased more than five-fold in 1974. India’s energy security challenges today include its ability to cope with the increasingly volatile international oil market, international pressure to shift to cleaner fuels, diversifying sources of supply, sustainably harnessing biomass, strengthening non-conventional sources of energy, broadening the substitutions and effectively managing the political economy of energy demand in the country. The understanding of the new dynamics of global energy politics and the complex process of entering into it and comprehensively remaining in the global arena is another very crucial challenge. This requires an absolutely new range of strategies, sharp deviation from orthodox thinking and highly imaginative and bold policy interventions.

Besides volatility of prices, the contingency and structural risks are equally destabilising. A major challenge to energy security comes from the very geographical distribution of available primary commercial energy sources within the country. India has never had a conscious and
concrete energy security policy. Growing concerns and deliberations apart, energy security policy continues to remain scattered and highly compartmentalised among the three critical segments of commercial energy sources including coal, gas, and oil. The conventional sources of energy—though still a major source for the overwhelmingly rural population—are exclusively discussed more in the context of environmental conservation rather than from the perspective of having secure and sustainable sources of energy.

Energy prices have been under an administered regime. However, subsidies have come under attack increasingly because of the heavy burden of economic inefficiency, environmental problems and the strain on government budgets. What is more, poor targeting and massive misuse by agencies and people outside the target groups have been widely highlighted. The concentration of supply sources in the past made India vulnerable to any geo-political tensions and instability. Seventy per cent of India’s crude requirements are met through imports, primarily from the Persian Gulf. Oil prices have remained highly volatile. India has no alternative than to develop strategic reserves at both national and sub-national levels and also must diversify the sources of oil, gas and electricity imports through using modern means including pipelines. India has been a late entrant in this process. There are many strong players in the field.

One of the major options to ensure energy security in India is to go for energy exchange and trading with neighbouring countries in a systematic and planned manner. There have been discussions on this, however, not much headway has been made. Creation of a South Asian energy market and cooperative development of the available diverse energy sources in the region can help increase the level of energy security in the region and can subsequently contribute to achieving sustained higher economic growth. The reality is that till 1947 an overwhelming part of the region had an integrated energy market and system. As options for power trading in the broader ambit of regional cooperation in South Asia, the three mechanisms viz., bilateral power trade, pool-based trading and wheeling facility can be cited.

Besides electricity, the three areas which can be identified for cooperation in the oil and gas sector in South Asia region are

i) trans-boundary natural gas trade,

ii) trade in refined petroleum products, and

iii) cooperation in oil and gas exploration.
One of the attractive options of this trans-boundary natural gas trade is to undertake the Iran-Pakistan-India Pipeline. Pakistan and Iran have already signed an agreement on a bilateral "peace pipeline". Though India continues to show its interest in the project, there are serious uncertainties about it created by India’s Nuclear Energy deal with the United States of and US’s anti-Iran stance. This may induce India not to have any long-term energy deals with Iran.

The capital intensive nature, uncompetitive generation, safety aspects and environmental fallouts related to nuclear waste disposal will increasingly come up as major constraints in India’s switch over to nuclear energy. The success or failure of the nuclear deal with the US will largely depend upon how fast India can take advantage of this agreement in getting nuclear energy technology and nuclear fuel from other countries including Nuclear Suppliers’ Group and how much of difference it makes in the energy mix in the country. More importantly, how will this new deal broaden the choices of the people in terms of energy services?

To sum up, this study makes an attempt to bring in theoretical and conceptual underpinnings upfront and examine their fitness in the Indian context. It puts together an analytical note on the empiricism of human security in India both at macro and micro levels. It also provides a broad direction to the human security discourse and its determining variables in India. It finally throws open areas for action research on military and non-traditional security issues and linkages.
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