POLITICS, SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE THIRD WORLD: THE INTERLINKAGES

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As the world is approaching the 1990s to get itself ready for the transition to the 21st century, the Third World which is the abode of the overwhelming majority of mankind is experiencing a state of appalling poverty, draconian malnutrition, and inhuman deprivation. It is estimated that nearly a billion people in the Third World live below a modest poverty line. Most of these people are malnourished, the incidence of infant mortality has been recorded as high as 14 million a year. Not only that, the wretched strugglers for survival in the Third World are often denied the basic amenities of life. Millions of them do not have any kind of shelter, hundreds of millions have no access to safe drinking water. Education and health care facilities have still remained a dream for most of them. On the other hand, the people of the other world i.e., the developed world live in the sophistication of space-age. Development is a universal goal for every society in the world. Yet three or four decades after decolonization, development remains as elusive as ever for most of the Third World countries. In fact, the gap between the rich and poor countries have widened over the years.

Closely associated with the goal of development, every society places a high value on security. Often security goals are defined in narrow military terms. Narrowly defined security goals lead to big claims on the scarce resources of the Third World societies. Even a cursory look at defence expenditures of the developing societies reveals the fact that security sector has taken a big chunk of their available scarce resources. Military expenditures have been on the rise in an alarming fashion in the Third World. Military
expenditures have grown 600 percent during the period 1950-85 in the Third World\(^1\). The political elites of these societies are confronted with the dilemma of deciding between defence and development. There is an intricate relationship between politics, security and development in any society. This paper seeks to examine the inter-linkages between politics, security and development in the Third World.

A word of caution should be pronounced here. Although the concept of the Third World is used here as a complete cluster of countries, it is by no means a homogenous society. The countries of the Third World represent diverse cultural, social, geographical, economic and political background. It is the nexus of various degrees of underdevelopment that binds them together.\(^2\)

**Development Experience**

The development experience of Asian, African and Latin American countries is in general rather frustrating. At the close of the Third UN Decade of Development, the Third World societies are characterized by poverty, hunger, illiteracy and unemployment. In growth terms, however, the performance of the Third World economies does not look very unimpressive superficially. But if we take a deeper look into these societies, we find the statistical data of per capita growth deceptive. Persistent poverty and inequality are all pervasive. Eminent economists of the 1950s and 1960s prescribed growth-oriented model for rapid economic development of the underdeveloped regions. They hoped that the gains of economic growth would ‘trickle-down’ to the masses. In reality, inequality has become more pervasive. Import substitution, price regulation and other fiscal measures were adopted as part of this unidimensional development strategy. Emphasis on industrialization at the expense of agriculture has also not brought the desired results. Also, the “Green Revolution” strategy adopted in the 1960s in some countries in the agricultural sector helped the rich and middle peasants and other affluent sections of those societies.

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The vast masses of agricultural populations have not been able to reap the benefit of the Green Revolution.

The world food grain production has registered impressive gains during the past four decades. World grain output climbed from 631 million tons in 1950 to 1.65 billion tons in 1984. However, per capita food grain production has declined for many Third World countries despite the use of advanced technology and rising investment in agriculture. Food insecurity in Africa and Latin America is notable. For countries like Ethiopia, Chad, Mozambique, Somalia, Uganda, Madagascar, the food production is falling at an alarming rate. Latin America used to export more grain than North America only a half-century ago, but its per capita grain production has registered a decline of 7 per cent since the beginning of the present decade. Agricultural decline and unchecked population growth render an ever increasing number of people in the ranks of hungry and malnourished in the Third World.

A more alarming side of the Third World economy is the horrifying debt problem. The public and commercial debt burden of these societies, especially those of Africa and Latin America, is approaching a holocaust. Debt servicing is costing an increasing share of GNP of the debtor economies. In cases, their mounting external debt service ratio is one-third to half of their annual export earnings.

The external environment of Third World development cannot be fully grasped just by looking at the massive amount of external debt. Besides commercial loans from foreign banks, a large part of the debt is the economic assistance received as foreign aid. Foreign aid is not an act of simple charity. Closely associated with foreign aid is the commercial, national, and strategic interest of the donor nations. Multilateral agencies like the World Bank, IMF and the


bulk of the Western donors are notorious for their interventionist policy. Their policy interventions are hardly congruent with the genuine development needs of the Third World societies.

Another crucial element in the external environment is the nature of world market economy. The global economy is showing all signs of recessions and crises. The global economy as it exists now is favourable to the capitalist world. As net exporters of primary commodities, the Third World economies are witnessing horrifying price fall of their exports, while there is a steady rise in the price-tags of the products imported from the industrialized North. This has an adverse impact on Third World economies, since their technological dependence on the West has grown manifold.

After the failure of earlier policy of import substitution, the Third World countries were encouraged to follow a new policy of monetarism, plus supply-side economics in the form of export promotion. The World Bank gurus thought that this policy would bring economic miracle. Except for four East Asian NICs, this policy did not bring economic miracles for other Third World countries. The world market is becoming more competitive for the new entrants. Moreover, the global economic crises have led to unprecedented rise of protectionist measures. The prospects for Third World development are currently undermined by negative balance of payments, inflation, low investment and high unemployment of these economies. In fact, national income of 16 Latin American countries declined at an average rate of 10 per cent between 1981-83.6 The role of Multinational Corporations and other form of foreign investment is believed to be not in the interest of host countries. The benefits accrued to them are supposed to be meager, compared to the benefits derived by the country of origin of the MNCs.

Moreover, the distorted growth of the Third World economies, it is forcefully argued by a group of development scholars, is rooted in the past colonial experience. According to this school, the structural imbalance created by past colonial experience is being perpetuated by the present world economic order. As a result, dependency of the Third World on the global capitalist order is increasing at a rapid rate.7

The experience in the Third World painfully points out that development has remained an elusive goal for these societies. Growth-oriented strategy has not been successful in eradicating hunger, poverty, and malnutrition. The benefits of growth have not ‘trickled-down’ to the masses. The trickle-down effect has not been evenly distributed among different sections and strata of society. In some cases this development strategy has led to sectoral and regional disparity. Some sectors and regions received priorities in the development strategy. For example, agriculture and forestry did not grow at par with the manufacturing sectors in India.\(^8\) In the process, members of some ethnic or religious groups have been deprived of the benefits of development.

Growth-oriented development model has a tendency to neglect the issues of social development. The common goal of development should be the well-being of the vast majority of people rather the economic prosperity of a select few. It has been observed that some countries with less impressive economic growth records have been able to achieve considerable gains in the areas of social development. For example, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, and China have been able to make remarkable strides in the expansion of entitlements.\(^9\) They have set better records in the reduction of infant mortality, increase in life expectancy, literacy, education, health, nutrition and other social welfare measures than the economies with higher growth rates.\(^10\) So, it is evident that the prevailing development notions suffer from serious inadequacy and contradiction.

**Security and Militarization**

Now let us turn to an examination of the security approach in the Third World. Like all other societies, the pursuit of national security constitutes an overriding concern of the Third World. However, the Third World security approach has been largely dominated by the traditional concept of security. The traditional concept of security emphasizes defence capability and weaponry.

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\(^9\) The concept of entitlement of groups and individuals has been developed by economist A.K. Sen. See his *Poverty and Famine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

As such it has acquired an overwhelming military dimension. Traditional security concept in the West has been heavily influenced by the works of people like Walter Lippmann and Arnold Wolfers. Lippmann maintains that "a nation is secure to the extent 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".\(^{11}\) Wolfers maintains that the above definition "implies that security rises and falls with the ability of a nation to deter an attack, or to defeat it".\(^{12}\) He adds further that security "after all is nothing but the absence of the evil of insecurity, a negative value, so to speak".\(^{13}\) Talukder Maniruzzaman has expanded this concept of security in the context of small Third World state. He also defines security as "the protection and preservation of the minimum core values of any nation: political independence and territorial integrity".\(^{14}\) The common thread that finds these definitions of security together is the accompanying emphasis on the military and weaponry.

The security needs of the superpowers and their respective alliances are not identical with those of the Third World. But under the inescapable influence of the Cold War, Third World security policies were dictated by the prevailing world order. However, an important feature of Third World insecurity is its internal nature of threat. It has been aptly observed by a reputed scholar of Third World security scene that "despite the rhetoric of many Third World leaders, the sense of insecurity that these states and more particularly, their regimes suffer from emanate to a substantial extent from within their boundaries rather than from outside".\(^{15}\) He however, does not overlook the existence of threats. "But as the 'mix' of internal and external sources of threat to these state structures", he maintains, "and particularly to the their regimes, is quite often heavily weighted in favour of internal


sources”.

Majority of the Third World leaders are guided by the considerations of regime vulnerability and regime security in their perceptions of security. Internal security considerations often push them to establish linkage with the external forces.

Following the footsteps of Kenneth Waltz in the levels of analysis problem in international relations, Barry Buzan has developed a three-tier analysis of security. According to him, national security problem cannot be understood without reference to the three levels of analysis i.e., individuals, states and the international system. In the Third World, it seems, security issues are perceived from the state and systemic levels. Interests of the individual citizens and different groups are often ignored in such a perception. Regime perception becomes the predominant factor in security decisions.

Such a distorted view of security has led to the militarization of the Third World economy. Although the Third World share in the global military expenditure has remained considerably low, it has increased significantly. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, their share has grown three-fold since the early 1950s and more than doubled since 1970 (see Table I and Figure I).

Table 1. Third World regional shares of military expenditure 1950-84 (in percent of world total)

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<td>3.6</td>
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16. Ibid.
Military expenditures in the Third World have grown nearly sixfold during 1958-1978. In 1958, the Third World security expenditures were about $7 billion which grew to over $38 billion in 1978.18

Figure 1: The Third World military expenditure 1963-83. In billions of ACDA 1982 constant dollars. Source: ACDA, World Military Expenditure and Arms Transfers, various issues.

One of the reasons for the steady growth of Third World security expenditures is that international strategic environment has undergone significant changes during the past two decades. As a result of much relaxed relations between the two competing alliances, most arms deliveries to developing countries are no longer gifts nor are provided under favorable credit terms. Arms transfers are increasingly taking the form of commercial sales. This trend has been set since the early 1970s.19 Foreign aid and loans for the purpose of military purchase are believed to have strongly contributed to Third World indebtedness.20

Only small number of Third World countries produce arms domestically and their share in the global production of arms is very small. Of the 26 developing countries producing arms, India and Israel account for over 50 per cent of Third World arms

20. Ibid., p. 29
production. So, going into arms production does not seem to be an alternative strategy to minimize security spending.

Traditional concept of security with heavy emphasis on military strength has not been able to insulate the Third World from aggression and conflicts. It is reported that 90 per cent of the major conflicts since the end of World War II took place in the Third World. Greatest number of these armed conflicts may be classified as civil war. The civilian casualties in these conflicts have been on the rise. Civilians accounted for 52 per cent of war victims in the 1950s, while their share rose sharply to 85 per cent in the 1980s.

Closely associated with the traditional concept of security is the role of the military in the Third World. In majority of the developing world, the military has become the instrument of the privileged class instead of becoming the protector of the interests of the vast majority of the populations. It has become the instrument of preserving the political and economic order which is oppressive and exploitative. Moreover, majority of the Third World countries have experienced military intervention at one point or another.

Military intervention usually leads to greater demands for armed forces on scarce resources. Post-intervention period is usually characterized by greater allocations for the military. However, the track record of the military as governors is not at all impressive. Eric A. Nordlinger found negative and zero order correlation between army rule and socio-economic development in his extensive survey. Maniruzzaman concludes that military regimes "seem incapable of furthering major socio-economic development - - - despite their claims to the contrary. The military's performance in the field of political development has been even more dismal. Inadequacy of military rule as an agent of development has been increasingly recognized by scholars.

21. Ibid., p. 25
The traditional concept of security has neglected the goals of socio-economic development. An increasingly larger defence budget has deprived the other sectors of socio-economic development like education, health and social security measures. A cursory look at the pattern of spending in the developing economies will vindicate that sectoral allocation for the above mentioned areas have declined, while the share of the military in national budgets is on the rise. Deger and Sen maintain that "a higher defence burden is associated with a lower quality of life and the failure of the country concerned to enjoy the fruits of development. Even if the military does not spend an excessive amount, an increase in militarization per se...may not be good for entitlement enhancement and development."26

The ever rising share of the Third World military spending is a great cause of concern. One observer argues that if the Third World military expenditure had retained the trend of the 1960s, it would have saved resources to repay nearly two-thirds of their outstanding debt.27 In view of the negative impacts, Kenneth Boulding remarked that "national defense is now the greatest enemy of national security."28

Economic and Environmental Dimensions of Security

Traditional notion of security with exclusive emphasis on military strength has come under attack from different quarters. Especially the Third World context is quite different from that of advanced nations. The Third World countries are economically underdeveloped. These societies are also confronting the stupendous problem of nation-building. Their poor resource base with weak institutional and political structures make them vulnerable to various sources of internal and external threats. The various ethnic, regional, religious groups and classes clamor for meager resources. Since these societies have not been able to develop appropriate institutional structures and acceptable norms, the sense of deprivation is endemic. This makes the security issue much more complicated. In the context of the Third World, the economic issues constitute legitimate security

26. Deger and Sen, op. cit p. 100
28. Quoted in Renner, op. cit, p. 13
concerns. It is exceedingly important to incorporate economic dimensions in an expanded definition of security.

There has been an increasing realization to redefine the concept of security since the 1970s. Even World Bank president Robert McNamara maintained that “Security means development. Security is no military hardware, though it includes it, security is not military force, though it may involve it, security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it. Security is development and without development there can be no security.”\textsuperscript{29} And development is to change the unbearable conditions that a great majority of Third World people are going through. The aim of development is to bring about a desired level of standard of living.

The expanded concept of security must also include environment as an important security consideration in view of the impending environmental crisis. The impacts of environmental degradation on global and national security are enormous. Some of the principal manifestations of deteriorating environment are deforestation, soil erosion, acidification, desertification, global warming induced by ‘green house effect’, depletion of the ozone layer, and loss of biological diversity. It has been aptly noted by the World Commission on Environment and Development that “the whole notion of security as traditionally understood must be expanded to include the growing impacts of environmental stress...There are no military solutions to environmental insecurity.”\textsuperscript{30} Environment, economy and security are closely interrelated. If the environmental foundations of a nation are depleted, its economy will decline. As a result of economic decline, political structures are quite likely to be destabilized. This in turn may lead to internal conflict and external hostility.\textsuperscript{31}

**Primacy of Politics and the Interlinkages**

As we have discussed above the issues relating to development and security in the Third World, now let us turn to a discussion of

the interlinkages among them. Although the three sets of variables are interlinked, politics has a predominant role in deciding and defining development and security goals. In the context of the Third World where resources are scarce, the political leaders are always confronted with difficult task of deciding the priorities. They have to make the final decision about the strategy of development as well as to define security needs. Developmental benefits will not be evenly distributed, rather development policies will benefit one group or region or ethnic population at the expense of others. It can be safely said that no development policy will bring optimal benefit for all the groups, classes and individuals.

Third World leaders have to make the decision whether their policies would be aimed at growth or distribution? Urban sector or rural development? Large scale industrialization or small scale? Export promotion or import substitution? High technology or continued dependence on low technology? Capital intensive or labour intensive development? Producer price incentives or consumer price subsidies? Immediate rewards for now or for the next generation? The consideration of these issues make “development an intrinsically and intensely political subject.”\(^{32}\)

The choice of a particular development policy by national decision makers is guided by the political and economic considerations of the power-holders. As mentioned above, a group, class, or region may derive disproportionate benefits at the expense of others which might lead to conflict in society. An outstanding example of the case of ethnic conflict is the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. The hydroelectric development project in Kaptai was undertaken without giving due consideration to the legitimate interests of the ethnic tribals initially generated discontent among them. As we are aware, the discontent of the tribals have taken the form of ethnic insurgency over the years due to a host of other related grievances.

Political expediency of policy makers defines the development priorities. One sector of the economy may receive preferential treatment than others due to political considerations. Political considerations rather than pressing economic needs are at the core of important development policy decisions in the Third World. The

linkage between security and development has been touched on earlier in this paper. Suffice it to say here that traditionally defined security goals often make excessive demands on scare resources. As a result, socio-economic development suffers greatly in the Third World. This in turn may lead to further conflict in these societies.

Conclusion

There is an intricate relationship between politics, security and development in the Third World. Politics plays a predominant role in defining security and development goals. As such, security and development are integral part of the political process. They are problems of politics, issues of politics. Political action sets in the course of security and development. Security and development goals in the Third World societies are often defined by narrow regime perception and by the dictates of external environment. Development model that most Third World countries adopted were borrowed models which reflected the policy preference of the western countries coupled with the regime interests. An overriding concern of the Third World elites is to remain in power and to secure their sectional interests.

A shift in priority is urgently needed in order to bring genuine development and security in the Third World. The old models of development have miserably failed to bring about the well-being of the vast majority of the Third World populations. This need has also been recognized by western countries. Even the World Bank has been forced to reorient its development policies. What is needed is a redefinition of development and security concepts that takes into account genuine interests of the masses of the people rather than that of a few. If the present course is to be reversed for the benefit of the masses, it will also need political action of a new kind which reflects the hopes and aspirations of the great majority of the masses. Primacy of politics is to be recognized in the process of priority formation relating to development and security. Politics is to be taken at the heart of development and security thinking.