

RCSS Policy Studies 3

**Newer Sources of Insecurity:
The Crisis of Governance in India**

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Regional Centre for Strategic Studies

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Newer Sources of Insecurity: The Crisis of Governance in India

Deconstructing the Problematique

It is universally accepted that the end of the Cold War has eroded super-power tensions and decreased inter-State conflicts in the international system. But, it is further accepted that this erosion of inter-State conflicts is restricted to the developed world. The absence of the Cold War certitude of a bipolar world has had a decompression effect and released long-dormant animosities: this has heightened regional instabilities, which characterises the Third World configuration of nations. It has also deepened the subsisting crisis of sub-national identities, which is an offshoot of the decolonization process. In theory, religion and language are important constituents of the civilizational inheritance of nations. They serve to bind their populations through a shared sense of history. But they can also heighten latent antagonisms, especially if they encapsulate basic aspirations for greater economic and political power. Today, ethnic resurgence and religious fundamentalism represent the zeitgeist. In fact: "The ghosts of various forms of nationalism and tribalism are reawakening and ethnic, national and religious conflicts are breaking out."¹

That conflicts are more usually motivated now by emerged sub-nationalism, apart from cultural and religious factors, and that the focus of national insecurity has shifted from external to internal security is no longer disputed. Further, the conviction is growing that the study of international security, premised on the State, realpolitik and capitalism, is inadequate to explain the growth of injustice and violence in the Post-Cold War world. Indeed, current threats to nation-states arise, not from tensions and instabilities between them, but from conflicts inside and within their confines. Indeed, "the major conflicts since the end of the cold war have had a domestic character. All the major armed conflicts in 1993 were of an intra-state nature".²

In India, intra-state conflicts largely arise from differences stemming from ethnic and sectarian identities, rather than class struggles envisioned under the Marxist paradigm. The Telengana and Naxalite movements are obvious exceptions to this general rule. Their genesis could be traced to the "patterns of power and domination that arise in rural society and the injustice and exploitation that are associated with the unequal distribution of land and other productive assets".³ One might note further that current threats to national security in India largely arise from non-military causes like

cross-border movements of populations; ethno-political, socio-economic, and communal-religious politics; terrorism, with its seminal linkages to money-laundering operations, and drugs/arms smuggling; environmental degradation, spawning its related problems of deforestation and desertification; internal migration; chaotic urbanization; and so on. These non-military threats embody the newer dimensions of national insecurity. Their roots lie in the polity and need to be investigated further.

So much is clear. The liberalization and globalization policies currently being pursued by India unleashed enormous economic and social forces that have greatly heightened expectations in the people. Their growing impatience with delays in improving the quality of their lives lends a new urgency to dealing with these newer sources of insecurity. Otherwise, impatience would promote frustrations and lead on to violence. "Military tools, for all their technical sophistication, are exceedingly crude in relation to many socio-political objectives. They are well-suited to sweeping tasks like the destruction or disruption of existing structures, or the control of peoples, but they are much less useful for the fine-tuning of voluntaristic exchange relations where neither conquest nor destruction is desired".⁴ Consequently, the military instrumentality is of limited utility to resolve the newer threats to insecurity, although it might be required to quell its violent manifestations. Hence any solution premised on 'exchange relations' would require the State to 'fine-tune' its socio-political transactions by non-military means.

The question now arises whether these newer sources of insecurity should be delimited? Otherwise, their ambit would become so hugely over-extended as to confuse their recognition and identifying the remedial measures to counter them. Exemplifying this over-extension of national security threats are beliefs that "global security must be broadened from its traditional focus on the security of States to include the security of people and the planet".⁵ The rhetorical question has also been asked: "Security for whom?" to broad base the definition of security. But over-stretching the definition of security creates insuperable difficulties in recognizing and countering these newer security threats with any immediacy or adequacy. Defining them should be tempered therefore with pragmatic understanding of what can be remedied by the State and what must remain in the domain of society.

This is also necessary because the power of Third World States to remedy the multi-faceted challenges to national security is fast diminishing. It is not axiomatic that democracies are better equipped to "meet the challenge of pressures for religious/ethnic autonomy since legitimate aspirations and needs can be accommodated within the constitutional framework of the State through political processes. Democratic States, especially in the Third World, are what might be termed 'soft states' and are also vulnerable to centrifugal forces when

the latter espouse violent activity and militancy”.⁶ India qualifies eminently for the status of a ‘soft State’. It has obvious vulnerabilities in dealing with religious/ethnic strife arising within its multi-communal and multi-ethnic society. The weak and indecisive character of its governments in recent years is painfully apparent. It is also apparent that divisive coalition politics would characterise Indian polity in the foreseeable future. Its capacity to grapple with these newer threats to national security would be limited. Compounding these difficulties is an incontrovertible fact: “The administration was converted into the instrument of serving partisan political ends. Therefore, civil strife increased, challenge to the motives of those in authority was legion, and the machinery of non-official conciliation and harmonization went into hibernation. The cost was quite heavy in terms of the emotional integrative processes...”⁷

These difficulties are compounded by the constraints broadly distinguishing intra-State conflicts in the Third World. They are aggravated by: “... the collapse of State institutions, especially the police and judiciary, with resulting paralysis of governance, a breakdown of law and order, and general banditry and chaos.”⁸ The unfolding of scandals revealing massive corruption within the Indian administration has highlighted the ruthless exploitation of public office by politicians and senior bureaucrats for selfish political and personal ends. The chasm between precept and practice has widened over the years. This has seriously eroded the credibility of the government. The resulting disillusionment and alienation of the people with the State, and its moral authority has eroded its ability to resolve civil strife and undertake the systemic reforms needed to grapple with these new threats to Indian Security.

Further, this alienation of the people from the State has obvious implications for the stability and cohesion of India. Violent dissent against the State can be triggered on the slightest pretext, but public cooperation for implementing remedial policies is difficult to obtain. There is some concern that the on-going economic reforms would lead to a further marginalization of the poor, and “give rise to social unrest and conflicts when identities such as caste, community will be the most powerful rallying points for the people”.⁹ Apropos, the IMF has adopted a new strategy to promote good governance on the premise that public corruption vitiates programme implementation, project execution, dissuades foreign direct investment and, in general, dilutes the development effort. It, therefore, seeks the commitment of States to wholesome principles like adhering to the rule of law, improving the efficiency and accountability of their public sector and addressing the menace of public corruption. In effect the IMF has made good governance a non-financial conditionally for providing financial assistance in future.

Newer Sources Of Insecurity: An Overview

The newer sources of insecurity in India can be identified now. We shall ignore the external threats emanating from Pakistan and China in their conventional and nuclear dimensions. But transnational factors aggravating internal threats would be noticed. Limitations of space would only permit the causes underlying these security threats to be briefly touched upon.

Decay of Political Parties

This phenomenon has been linked with the unraveling of the monolithic Congress Party. It had dominated the Indian political scene after Independence. It was in the forefront of the freedom struggle, and included its tallest political leaders. Its ascendancy under Nehru's leadership was inevitable and it remained virtually unassailable for the first fifteen years after Independence. India's traumatic defeat in the Sino-Indian border war of 1962 shattered the illusion of Nehru's Congress's indestructibility. But the event, which truly destroyed its historic image, was imposition of the Emergency by Indira Gandhi in 1975, transparently to perpetuate her continuance in office after the Allahabad High Court found her guilty of electoral malpractice. The spirit of the Indian Constitution, if not its precise letter, was subverted in this process. The wave of repression which followed has etched an indelible furrow in the Indian psyche.

It took another two decades for the Congress party to reach its present state of disarray. But the roots of its denouement are traceable to the Emergency. It also established certain practices and traditions that have undermined the Indian political system. These are the notions that political leaders are above the law; that elections within parties could be 'managed' to sustain the leadership in office; and that the party's basic ambition was the attainment of power, untrammelled by "any other social activity or reforming ideology".¹⁰ These developments within the Congress party are of extraordinary importance to Indian polity because other political parties have defined their position within the political spectrum in relation to the Congress. Several rival political parties are splinters of the dominant Congress party. Others have differentiated their position by stressing casteist, religious, linguistic and regional particularities. Indeed, some part of the struggle in the Indian political system is for seizing the centrist space vacated by the Congress party "over the last two decades as it went from a mass party to a centrally-controlled organization under Indira Gandhi to a collection of warlords under Narasimha Rao".¹¹ That situation continues at present.

Ironically the empirical evidence reveals that non-Congress governments have also centralized power in the same manner as the Congress on achieving office. Power has been utilized by them also for no higher purpose than the acquisition of privilege, patronage and self-aggrandizement. This has

heightened the disillusionment of the people with and their alienation from, all political parties. An apocalyptic judgement holds that: "politics in India has become an instrument to exercise power and use public resources for class, group and personal advancement. The road to political legitimacy is through ballot. After winning the elections, the capitalist classes, landlords and rich peasants, politico-bureaucratic decision-makers use their political power or political linkages for cornering public resources for their advancement".¹² In this process, the historical pluralism inherent in Indian society, deriving from its all-inclusive synthesis of caste, community and religion has steadily diminished over the years. This augurs ill for the continued unity and stability of India.

Moreover, the Indian federal structure has been exploited by political parties to serve their parochial interest by carving out smaller administrative units—states, Union Territories, Autonomous Hill Districts and so on. This has largely been pursued to serve personal ambition, and not on the basis of administrative principles. The economic and political viability of these new units was never considered; hence they are helplessly dependent on Central largesse for survival. The empirical evidence reveals that demands for such administrative units are conceded after an intervening phase of State violence and bloodshed. The manner in which Uttarakhand was recently conceded is instructive, because it could be the precursor of more such demands. This entire spectacle only delineates the decay of India's political parties and their inability to govern the country. This too, augurs ill for the 'idea' of India that has sustained its unity and stability over the years.

Ethnicity-related Conflicts

Many definitional problems arise here. There is dispute, for instance, over how an ethnic group might be recognized. A syncretist view holds that it has five components: "(a) a subjective belief in real or assumed historical antecedents; (b) a symbolic or real geographical centre; (c) shared cultural emblems, such as race, language, religion, dress and diet... (d) self-ascribed awareness of distinctiveness and belonging to the group; and (e) recognition by others of the group differentiation".¹³ Ethnicity provides the group with its "impulses and motivations for power and recognition ... ethnicity may be viewed as a device as much as a focus for group mobilization by its leadership through the select use of ethnic symbols for socio-cultural and politico-economic purpose".¹⁴ Clearly ethnic identity has a much longer history than the 'nationness' of newly established States. Therefore, the appeal of ethnicity by one ethnic group against another, or against provincial or central authority evokes considerable support, which can easily be channeled into violence. This is especially true in India now, despite beliefs that the 'idea' of its 'nationness' provides the glue for its unity.

Interestingly, the Government of India classifies the deployment of its armed forces in Kashmir and Punjab as designed for the maintenance of law and order, but their utilization in Northeast India (Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram) as intended for counter-insurgency operations.¹⁵ There is fair recognition, however, that militancy in Kashmir and Punjab derives from communal-political reasons but the insurgencies in Northeast India arise from ethno-political causes.

It has further been noted that: "The various movements in the Northeast have all to do with identity. Some have been fought for outright independence, the outstanding case being the Naga movement. A second lot has something to do with minority communities or sub-nationalities seeking separation not from India but from Assam or Bengal or autonomy within them in order to safeguard their identity (ethnic, linguistic, tribal). The third kind has been struggling to forestall or fight against a demographic transformation as a result of the in-migration of foreigners or outsiders so-called."¹⁶ The Mizo movement, which carved out the Union Territory (later State) of Mizoram out of Assam, and the Gorkha National Liberation Front, which wrested the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council out of West Bengal, are examples of the 'second lot'. The struggle against 'in-migration of foreigners' proceeds against the entry of Bengalis from West Bengal or Bangladesh into Assam, Bangladeshis into Tripura and Nepalis into all the Northeast Indian States.

However the major cause underlying "ethnic and other sectarian conflicts is the sense of deprivation and discrimination regarding a share in political, administrative and economic power (or decision-making) suffered by a communal (caste), religious, linguistic or regional group, which begins to protest and agitate. The sense of discrimination is always relative to the position of other social group..."¹⁷ Unapprised, such grievances can fester and develop into conflicts between such groups, or between them and the State and or Central government. But the state's capacity to address these grievances with any clarity or firmness of purpose has been seriously undermined by its growing inability to govern.

In consequence, the Government's response to insurgencies in Northeast India has been two-fold: "(a) an increasing dependence on military (and, one might add, paramilitary) forces ... and (b) a lavish grant of funds to accelerate development."¹⁸ This policy has been informed by the over arching principle that the measures to contain insurgency must proceed on two fronts. These are, firstly, bringing military pressure to bear on the militants and force them to enter negotiations with the State in a spirit of 'realism' and compromise; and, secondly, to create a constituency inside the targeted ethnic group with a vested interest in cooperating with the State. The former group is sought to be co-opted by coercive means. The latter group is co-opted into the power structure

on its own volition. The failure of this two-pronged approach is evident from the continuing ethno-political strife in Northeast India for almost four decades. The number of ethnic insurgencies has, in fact, increased over the years.

Social and Sectarian Conflicts

It would be utopian to conceive of a society in which no antagonisms exist between its constituent elements. But it is not axiomatic that such antagonisms must progress into social or sectarian conflicts. Recognizably, the development process, which is the harbinger of change in Third World countries, also generates pressures for altering the status quo. Indeed, change is integral to the evolutionary and historical process. However, "Attitudes to change fall within a wide spectrum, at one end of which the extreme conservatives oppose it in all its manifestations while, at the other, innovators – the neophilicists – welcome change regardless of cost ... We can assume that within each society there are intangible forces working for and against change, and that these forces emerge into the light only occasionally. Even then the issues are often sufficiently ambivalent to be amenable to opposed rationalizations according to political needs."¹⁹

A Marxist approach to social and sectarian conflict suggests that such conflicts highlight the crisis inherent in the capitalist route to development. Since the State apparatus is controlled by the exploiting classes they strengthen their power over the rural poor and working classes by using private armies and lumpen youth. This has caused an increase of violence in rural and urban areas.²⁰ This judgement over-states the case, but is informed by an element of truth. Witness, for instance, the caste-based violence in rural areas with its origins in the time-honored exploitation of agricultural labor. Private armies have sprung up in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh to enforce this caste-based discrimination which continues in Indian society. No doubt, the Indian Constitution envisages reservation of seats in educational institutions and job reservation in Government and public sector undertakings for members of the scheduled castes and tribes, apart from allocating them seats in the legislature.

This 'affirmative action' dispensation has been extended now to include members of the socially and economically backward classes within its ambit. This was recommended by the Mandal Commission in a Report presented in 1984 that was accepted by the V. P. Singh government in 1990. Its sudden decision to implement this report was a political act designed to woo the same backward classes' constituency as was being mobilized by former Deputy Prime Minister, Devi Lal, in his political struggle against Prime Minister Singh. Thus, an obvious political ploy was sought to be imbued with the coloration of a statesman-like measure to achieve social equality. This did not deceive the constituency primarily affected by this extension of the reservations dispensation and the subsequent diminution of educational and job opportunities for

'merit' candidates. The spate of self-immolation by young persons after this decision was announced has widened the chasm between castes, and sharpened existing conflicts in urban and rural society.

A polarization of political forces on caste lines has now occurred with the rise of caste-based regional parties in various states of India that are plainly committed to advancing the interests of particular caste denominations. Indeed, the State-level elections to the Uttar Pradesh legislature in 1996, representing a population of some 130 millions, marked a total polarization of its politics on the basis of caste. A sequel to this phenomenon is the struggle for political and economic power that is intensifying between the scheduled and backward classes. This represents complete reversal of the tolerant, inclusive nature of Indian society.

Much the same could be said about the growth of sectarian politics within India. The Hindu riots in 1984 following Indira Gandhi's assassination by her two Sikh bodyguards, and the widespread killing of Sikhs thereafter confirmed, unfortunately, the complicity of the State in this sectarian violence. The failure of the State to prosecute those guilty of organizing and directing these riots has cast serious doubts on its impartiality. These doubts have strengthened after the destruction of the Babri mosque by Hindu fundamentalists in 1992, despite the State being forewarned that this event was most likely to occur. More disconcertingly the communal riots that followed in different parts of the country again revealed the unwillingness of the State to protect the lives and property of its own citizens. The cleavage between Sikhs and Hindus and Muslims after these communal riots is yet to be bridged. Bloc voting by the two minority communities in subsequent election has further widened their differences with the majority community, and given a communal twist to domestic politics that was not present earlier. This contains the potential for future sectarian strife and conflict.

It is arguable that these developments are representatives of broader trends in the international system that is witnessing growth of religious revivalism and religious fundamentalism. The growth of Hindu fundamentalism, and similar developments in the Muslims and Sikh, communities, become explicable therefore as replicating global phenomenon. It would be realistic therefore to believe that sectarian violence is unlikely to abate in India. The failure of the Indian State to address this situation despite its continuance since pre-independence days reveals an obvious failure of its governance processes.

Environmental Security/Resource Depletion

The link between environmental change and security has only recently been recognized. A realization has accrued that a symbiotic link obtains between environmental degradation, resources depletion, and national security. The inter-

relationship between these factors underlines their potential threat to national security, but also the centrality of the State to dealing with them. Obviously, no military response is available to meet such threats, although military means can be used to counter the socio-political violence that might ensue. The military option is no solution either for countering the basic problems underlying these issues. For this reason also the governance processes of the State must enjoy a higher credibility with the people.

The resources whose depletion are most likely to generate conflict and threaten national security are agricultural land, water, fisheries and forests. Clearly, the unregulated growth of population is responsible for depletion of all these resources and heightening pressures upon them. The conflict potential arising out of this environmentally generated depletion of resources, therefore, occurs indirectly. This generalization is applicable to the Indian situation, because "Resource scarcities do not, by themselves, send angry mobs into the streets. Rather, such scarcities help to generate secondary effects such as poverty, ethnic tension, migration, and weak social and governmental institutions that make conflict more likely".²¹

It could be argued that the environmental change is an international problem and need to be addressed at the global level. Issues such as global warming, ozone layer depletion and loss of bio-diversity affect food production and increase pressures upon land, water and marine resources. They require global cooperation and global solutions. Within South Asia disputes over sharing river water, land, and, in future, over sharing oil and marine resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone would require regional solutions. This suggests the need for India to actively engage in the international and global efforts to address the problems of resource depletion caused by environmental degradation.

But the intra-State threats to security arising out of this range of threats to national security prominently include deforestation and water-table recession due to over-exploitation of underground water sources. Over the years the community-administered controls over natural resources based on village traditions and societal sanctions have broken down. Greater demands on food and water availability due to population increases have an obvious and close bearing on national security. Moreover, "... the very process of economic development can erode traditional methods of control. Increased urbanization and mobility can do so as well. Social rules are also endangered by civil strife and by the takeover of resources by landowners or the State."²²

The conflict potential stemming from this situation has manifested itself in the violent agitation that are becoming common place between States in the Indian Union in regard to sharing of river water. This occurred recently between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu regarding the sharing of the Cauvery waters.

Violence has also ensured following efforts to resettle and rehabilitate the oustees affected by large dams and industrial developmental projects. As regards fisheries, a prolonged struggle is proceeding between traditional fishermen and those using mechanised trawlers to exploit fishing zones in the coastal regions of India. An arbitration between these competing claims to natural sources by the State is the only solution possible to resolve these difficult issues. Again, public faith in the impartiality and credibility of the State is important for this purpose, which, as noted earlier, has eroded over the years.

But the major problem arising from deforestation, recession of the water table, food and water scarcity, poverty, joblessness and so on resulting in environmental degradation and resources depletion is the large-scale internal migration taking place within the country. It is well established that the phenomenal growth in the Indian urban population since Independence is largely due to migration and not natural growth. The problems resulting from this unchecked movement of rural population to urban areas has not been fully comprehended by the decision-makers. Extrapolating from present trends, however, it seems that roughly one third of India's population would be living in urban centres by the end of the millennium. And, one third of this urbanised population would be living in slums. In terms of absolute numbers, this implies that around 100 million people would be slum dwellers by 2000 A.D.

Although the transference of population from rural to urban areas was a professed goal of the early Indian planning process, its pursuit has led to a distorted urbanization pattern. Its prominent manifestation is the intolerable pressure upon municipal/civil services and rapid growth of slums. This has spawned huge socio-economic and political problems, as these slums have become centers of social unrest, and a perennial law and order problem. Indeed, "the potential for strife and disorder rises, particularly if there are huge disparities in wealth within the city or society. The interplay between scarce land in the countryside, urban migration and conflict in the cities is complicated, but the scramble for resources in a developing world city can create an environment ripe for exploitation..."²³

The potential for large-scale violence here emanates from the cruel contrast that obtains between the stark misery in which slum dwellers are forced to live and the luxurious life style enjoyed by the privileged few within the same urban confines. The inability of the Indian State to bridge this increasing gap between the rich and poor - sharply visible in urban areas - is a certain prescription for violence arising out of the growing alienation and frustration of the urban poor. This has manifested itself in the sudden and violent riots that break out in urban centres with disconcerting regularity every few years. But this range of impending threats to internal security has yet to gain fuller recognition in official circles. The incapacity of the State to take the remedial

steps needed to stem the flow of rural population into the cities is evident. In theory, this is possible by developing 'counter-magnet' and 'satellite' towns around major urban centres, and by promoting larger investments in rural areas to provide local job opportunities. In practice, very little has been achieved in this direction.

Transnational Factors

Finally, the presence of external forces, that could aggravate these newer sources of insecurity, might be noticed. It is possible to exaggerate their role in complicating India's security problems. References in the past to the ubiquitous 'foreign hand' by the ruling elites were obviously designed to deflect attention from the systemic inadequacies of the governance processes to address these security issues. Hence the unsubtle attempts to externalize them.

The fuller ambit of the current militancy in Kashmir would illustrate this observation. External encouragement to the local militants by supply of arms, military training and the provision of sanctuaries across the border has indubitably aggravated insurrection within the state. But the roots of this militancy lie in the subversion of the democratic processes in the State over the last several decades. Hence, a lasting solution to the Kashmir problem would only be possible by seeking a *modus vivendi* with its people through the political process. This has been sought by New Delhi holding elections, first to parliament, and then to the provincial assembly in the State. These are obviously first steps, but in the right direction.

It would clearly be an over-statement, however, to urge that no external factors are aggravating India's security in the non-military sphere. An essential Indo-centricity distinguishes South Asia in appreciation to its weight in the regional polity. But, a tension also exists between India's natural predominance in the region and the determination of its neighbours to resist its 'hegemonistic' ambitions. Still, India's security remains inextricably linked with that of South Asia's: developments in one part of South Asia have their unavoidable repercussions elsewhere in the region. Sub-continental security, therefore, has to be sought in holistic terms. This proposition needs emphasis, because the purposes of external intervention could be diverse, namely to "destabilize the country in question, effect a regime change, gain leverage over its regime as a bargaining chip or a security gain."²⁴ Hence conjoint efforts are needed to grapple with this range of non-military threats to the security of the region.

Several examples could be provided to illustrate these assertions. The pouring of arms and drugs into Pakistan from Afghanistan had spilt over into the Indian States of Kashmir and Punjab, but also now into Maharashtra and Gujarat. The Northeast Indian States are suffering similarly from the ravages caused by the uncontrolled entry of drugs from the Golden Triangle in

Southeast Asia. The LTTE's (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) armed struggle against the Sri Lankan government has spilt into South India, prominently into Tamil Nadu, with predictably apocalyptic results. Earlier, the moral and material assistance provided by Pakistan and China to insurgencies in Nagaland and Mizoram had encouraged their struggle against India during the incipient and developing stages of these movements. This role is now suspected of being played by Bangladesh. Clearly, none of these security problems could be resolved either by India or its neighbours without a regional approach being adopted.

These direct and indirect interventions by its neighbours has indubitably exacerbated India's internal security problems. They represent threats to India's national security at one level. These threats arise, at another level, due to domestic developments within South Asia of a nature over which India's neighbours may have no practical control. A prime example would be the continuous flow of indigent population from Bangladesh into India in search of a better quality of life. The 1991 census figures are instructive in this regard. In contrast to the all-India (1981-1990) decadal population growth rate of 23.85%, Nagaland recorded 56.08% growth, Tripura showed 34.50% growth, Manipur revealed 29.25% growth, and Arunachal Pradesh registered 36.83% growth.²⁵ This abnormality in their population growth rate - far exceeding the natural rate of growth in population - was obviously due to in-migration from Bangladesh and Nepal. Enormous socio-economic tensions have been created thereby in these States, reflecting in a competition for scarce job opportunities.

Besides, the migrant population is especially vulnerable to exploitation by anti-social elements in the host country which generates further tensions between the immigrant and local population. Adding to these underlying instabilities and tensions is a psychic fear in the host population that they would be submerged within a larger evolving community and lose political control over their local government. Such anxieties are evident, for instance, in Sikkim where the indigenous Lepcha-Bhutia people have become a minority due to a large-scale influx of Nepali population into the State. A similar situation obtains in Tripura, where the migrants are Bengalis; and in Assam, where both a Bengali and a Nepali influx has occurred. Incidentally, immigration was officially encouraged originally into all these States in the past, but for different reasons. These included creation of a buffer state in Sikkim, the populating of Tripura, and obtaining professionals, businessmen and tea-garden labour for Assam.²⁶

The resulting tensions ensuing from these migration patterns are plainly evident, especially in Assam and Tripura. They have led to violent upheavals and extensive communal rioting in these States. A general animus obtains against Bangladeshi refugees. It has a visibly communal flavour, which has been generated by Hindu fundamentalist parties like the Bharatiya Janata Party. It

has made the return of illegal immigrants - predominantly Muslims - to Bangladesh a plank in their electoral platform. These Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh, incidentally, have become pawns in a political chess-game. In earlier decades the Congress party had permitted them uninhibited entry into Assam and Bengal, because they had provided that party with a captive 'vote-bank' during the elections.

A similar situation obtains in Tamil Nadu in regard to the Jaffna Tamils who fled the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka to seek a peaceful and settled life in Tamil Nadu. Since their ranks have been infiltrated by LTTE elements, they present a threat to the internal security of Tamil Nadu. The LTTE strategy could be to extend the ethnic problem beyond the confines of Sri Lanka and bind India into promoting the LTTE and Tamil cause with the Sri Lankan government.²⁷ The dilemma before India is that supporting the LTTE and Tamil cause in Sri Lanka has become an emotive and plebiscitary issue in Tamil Nadu politics. The Dravida parties are vying with each other in appealing for national support to the Sri Lankan Tamils and in pressurizing New Delhi to prevail on the Sri Lankan government to concede the LTTE demands for an autonomous State. The entire Sri Lankan Tamil issue has, therefore, become a delicate Union-State question within the structure of Indian polity.

The real dilemma before the Indian government in dealing with the migration of political refugees from Sri Lanka and economic migrants from Bangladesh is that neither the parent countries, nor the host country, India, can do very much to halt or reverse this population flow. In theory, these problems are manageable if migration occurs over a period of time providing the host country the opportunity to absorb these migrants/refugees in an orderly fashion. Otherwise, immense pressures would be generated within India that could disrupt its socio-economic fabric. In theory, again, the refugee flows from Sri Lanka could be reversed if a political solution to the ethnic conflict can be discovered by Sri Lanka. Similarly, the flow of economic refugees from Bangladesh could be prevented if Bangladesh could develop its economy and provide employment to its indigent population. The difficulty in reaching these ideal solutions is that they lie largely within the governance processes of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. But, India can influence these processes and assist its neighbours in a constructive fashion.

It has been prognosticated that the economic liberalisation and globalisation policies promoted by the World Bank and IMF would, looking into the future, lead to increased economic migration within the region. This would be in line with the capital inflows and industrial growth therein. Consequently: "There has been a sudden spurt to (sic) the movement of capital, goods and services from one country to the other in the region. In the event of this trend gaining momentum, the spurt in the movement of labour cannot be avoided."²⁸ The

direction of these labour movements would be largely towards India since it possesses the largest and the most diverse economy in the region: it would, therefore, also attract the largest investments from abroad.

These labour migrations would have a deleterious effect on India's socio-political and security environment. The only viable solution to this problem would be pursuit of the presently chimerical goal of regional cooperation. This would allow the traditional channels of trade and commerce, capital and labour migration to operate. An economic balance of forces would thereby establish itself in South Asia based on historical factors and current realities that would, hopefully, reverse the distortions introduced by divisive political developments. Regional cooperation would also permit regional threats to security arising from transnational sources like drugs and smuggling to be effectively countered. In the absence of regional cooperation, on the other hand, it would be virtually impossible to prevent transnational migratory movements from continuing and aggravating the threat to India's national security.

No doubt, migration can only be effectively stemmed by the country of origin, which has to mitigate the compulsions driving its population to emigrate. Here, it bears recognition that, "... people become international migrants for a complex mixture of concerns, including their material security, their physical safety, their ability to participate in the political and social life of their country, and the degree of respect which the State gives to their interests and ideas."²⁹ But the host country cannot remain unconcerned with the efforts being made by the countries of origin to stem this emigration. The joint economic development of South Asia, especially by placing emphasis on sub-regional patterns of development, provides a *modus vivendi* for this purpose.

The Crisis of Governance

It must be noticed here that a visible enfeeblement of the political processes has occurred in India over the years. Two important manifestations of this phenomenon can be cited.

First, the electoral system has been perverted by money and muscle power to serve the interests of the rich and powerful, apart from feudal, communal and caste elements. The laws codifying electoral offences, especially the injunctions regarding the observance of restraints on election expenditure have been largely observed in the breach. The electoral laws in general have been made impotent by the failure to prosecute those who infarct them. Those prosecuted, moreover, are able to avoid conviction by resorting to procedural delays in the courts. Those convicted, furthermore, are able to, almost indefinitely, avoid serving the sentence inflicted upon them by filing appeals

before higher courts. This causes more delays. This cumbersome process of bringing influential offenders to justice has considerably eroded public faith in the efficacy of the criminal justice system.

Secondly, the farcical manner in which the legislatures are functioning at the State and Central levels has brought them also into public disrepute. The exhibitions of lung and muscle power within the legislative chambers has made them the subject of ridicule by the people. Hardly any session passes without its quota of walkouts, deadlocks, forced adjournments and so on. Legislators are notorious for doing everything else but performing their basic functions of attending the legislature and legislating. The large number of ordinances that are routinely issued during the inter-session period and the laws passed without debate supports this criticism.

The consequent inability of the legislature to discipline the executive explains, in part, the incapacity of the Government to meet the non-military challenges to Indian security. The executive has not shown any capacity either to carry out the development schemes required for allaying the sense of deprivation which currently afflicts the ethnic and communal minorities. Or address the underlying problems leading on to environment degradation and resource scarcities. The credibility of the executive in regard to countering the threats to India's national security in the non-military sphere has further been eroded by its frequent co-optation of anti-social elements into the governance processes as the price for ceasing their resistance to the State. One such instance of statecraft relates to Kukka Parray, who was used by the Indian Army to organise a counter-militant force in Kashmir along with other such surrendered former militants. Kukka Parray received arms training in Pakistan, and had fought against the Indian security forces in Kashmir, before coming overground and cooperating with the Indian Army.³⁰ This, incidentally, is a time-honoured tactic used by the Indian executive, and was adopted earlier to co-opt Laldenga into the governance of Mizoram. He had led the Mizo National Front in its struggle against the Indian government for over two decades. Tactics of this nature are hardly calculated to secure the willing cooperation of the people to counter militancy or proceed against anti-social elements. They would obviously calculate that cooperating with the State to resist the militants could be dangerous, since they would ultimately be co-opted into the governance process, and wreak vengeance upon "collaborators".

In essence, however, the crisis of governance in India derives from the basic inability of the government to govern. But, citizens' protests against bureaucratic excesses are construed by the ruling elites as embodying challenges to the State's authority. This paranoia has led to the numbers of the police and Para-military forces increasing exponentially in recent years. Intelligence agencies have also increased their influence enormously in the

political and administrative system. The State's consequent suppression of violent dissent has lacked credibility due to the undisguised politicisation of the administrative services, police, para-military forces, and, prominently, the investigative and intelligence organisations. They are, in fact, perceived as political instruments of the party in power, rather than organs of the State.

Worse still is the nexus that has developed between corrupt politicians, bureaucrats and business interests to defraud the exchequer. This underlines the phenomenon of growing black money (unaccounted income) in the parallel economy, and the inability of the State to unearth and proceed against tax-evaders. An especially apocalyptic judgement holds that "all the agencies dealing with corruption, tax evasion, smuggling and other economic offences have been so politicised over the decades that prompt and proper action against the politicians is the exception rather than the rule".³¹ Indeed, the process of liberalising and globalising the economy has provided a further opportunity for malfeasance by selective deregulation of industry, and the divestment of the public sector through dubious deals. Enormous sums of money were involved in these transactions. The scale of malfeasance, that has come to light, has also been enormous.

A linkage between organised crime, drugs, arms smuggling, and money-laundering operations has also been established. For instance, it has been proven that 'hawala' (a form of money laundering) funds reached both the Hindu fundamentalist elements responsible for the demolition of the Babri Masjid (1992), and the Muslims who had organised the Bombay bomb blasts (1993). Hawala money also reached several Kashmiri secessionists and politicians – their membership cuts across party lines.³² Such funds, generated largely through organised crime, have a lethal potential for destabilising the State. A resultant danger to national security arises from such criminal elements entering the governance processes. A further danger arises, which is not being perceived, of such elements, after entry into the government, serving the interests of foreign governments and intelligence agencies.

Lest this picture of the crisis of governance in India and its becoming a new threat to its national security seem overdrawn, the official Vohra Committee Report can be cited to support our conclusions. It notes: "...crime syndicates have become a law unto themselves. Even in the smaller towns and rural areas, muscle men have become the order of the day. Hired assassins have become a part of these organisations ... there has been a rapid spread and growth of criminal gangs, armed 'senas' (armies), drug Mafias, smuggling gangs, drug peddlers and economic lobbies in the country which have, over the years, developed an extensive network of contacts with the bureaucrats/Government functionaries at the local levels, politicians, media persons and strategically located individuals in the non-State sector ... DIB (Director Intelligence

Bureau) has stated that the network of the Mafia is virtually running a parallel Government, pushing the State apparatus into irrelevance ... The linkages developed by crime syndicates get generally confirmed when pressure is mounted on the concerned agencies not to take action against the offenders or to go slow in the cases against them. Such pressures are mounted either immediately after a raid is conducted or at the time prosecution is about to be initiated. Pressures are also exerted whenever corrupt or undesirable officers are shifted from sensitive assignments.”

These excerpts from an official document highlight the inability of the law-enforcement agencies to apply the laws of the land in an impartial and equitable manner. This is evident from a general reluctance in these agencies to proceed against influential criminal elements, and particularly those that have established linkages with politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and other segments of the ruling elite. No organised crime, it can be empirically observed, can proceed without official knowledge, if not official connivance. The gang-wars proceeding between mafia elements in Mumbai, for instance, manifest this empirical observation and have been compared with Chicago during the prohibition era. In consequence, the prestige of the State and its law-enforcement agencies has lowered in the eyes of the common citizens. It is this prestige which truly permits the State to maintain law and order and to ensure internal security without recourse to violence, except as a very last resort.

Conclusions

The foregoing informs that the external threats to national security in their military dimension are unmistakably receding. However, the availability of local dissent within regions like South Asia offers manifold opportunities to adversary States to use subversive means for prejudicing the territorial integrity of their neighbours. This could be effected through moral and material assistance being provided to militant and/or secessionist elements within the targeted State. The proliferation of small arms from reservoirs like Afghanistan adds considerably to the ease for mounting external intervention in South Asia. They are currently being used in Kashmir, but have been discovered with terrorists in several parts of India. Another route to effect an entreie into the internal polity is via the global trade in drugs/arms and international terrorism. It is no secret that the international drug/arms trade operates through well-knit cartels that have close linkages with the ruling elites in both the manufacturing and recipient countries. Quite apart from these non-military threats to national security there are several more insidious avenues for eroding national sovereignty that are becoming available to developed nations through their control of financial assistance, technology transfers, access

to natural resources and so on. India cannot remain insulated from these global developments.

Indeed, the trade in arms and drugs illustrates the fuller contours of organised crime in the international arena. The scale of its operations are so massive, its tentacles so extensive, and their profits so immense that the corrupting of politicians and bureaucrats is not difficult. The danger to national security of these criminal elements entering the governance processes has been noticed. It is significant that, over the years, the criminalisation of politics in India has transformed into the politicisation of crime. This has been described above through the microcosm of Uttar Pradesh, which is the largest, and politically, the most weighty State in the country. No great perspicacity is needed to conclude that the entry of criminals into the structure of government eviscerates its capacity to cope with the problems of governance.

Moreover, the problems underlying the newer forms of insecurity accosting the Indian State require an imaginative vision to frame appropriate policies and to exhibit dogged persistence in pursuing their execution. These problems are deepening the fissures in its domestic polity. Short-term and ad-hoc solutions, however, have proved woefully inadequate to deal with them. Moreover, "... the wedding of ethno-communal grudges to nationalistic aspirations frequently produced a destructive offspring of considerable longevity. Indeed, it is the emotional nature of the demands raised by communal groups that often places communal conflict beyond the normal channels of cost-benefit analysis, accommodative politics, and conflict resolution."³³ What has been noted in regard to ethno-communal problems is equally true of the several other causes underlying the newer sources of national insecurity.

Appropos, we have identified that the fissiparous trends in Indian polity arise out of an institutional malaise like the decay of political parties, germinal societal issues like ethnicity-related social and sectarian conflicts, Malthusian questions like environmental degradation and resources depletion, and the transnational factors that exacerbate national security. These cannot be purposively addressed if the governance process remains in crisis. This does not permit an evolution of the consensus needed, transcending party lines, to grapple with difficult problems like burgeoning population, unemployment, public corruption and so on that underlie this governance crisis. In truth, they present the future threats to India's national security.

A theoretical framework can be established to present this conclusion. The basic contentions in any domestic polity depict the antagonisms that underlie the forces that favour change and retention of the status quo. They are, of course, reconcilable. But the capacity of the State to effect this reconciliation depends on its credibility, apart from the inner resilience within its polity. On the other hand, the likelihood of these antagonisms proceeding further into

conflict is contingent on how the dialectical struggle develops between the status quo-ist vested interests, and elements that “seek to increase their share of authority, income, possessions and honour”.³⁴ The ability of society to internalize these contradictions through institutional or non-formal processes before dissent transmutes into conflict is important.

For their part, States can either adopt a revisionist or quiescent policy towards external (regional/international) and/or internal (domestic) change. India has traditionally been identified as a quintessentially status quo State in national security matters. Now, it is believed that: “In pursuing its security policy the status quo power has four basic strategy options in relation to revisionist pressure.

1. It can seek to adapt itself so that the change no longer represents a security threat.
2. It can seek to appease or co-opt the source of the pressure.
3. It can seek to resist or contain the pressure by military or other means.
4. It can withdraw or in some way allow the pressure to succeed.”³⁵

Empirical evidence suggest that India has pursued the second and third strategy options successfully in dealing with internal security issues. Analyzing its ‘successes’ in Nagaland, Mizoram and Punjab informs that a two-pronged policy was followed. At one level, India vigorously pursued its counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. But it also sought to co-opt the militant and dissident elements into the power structure, at another level. This same two-pronged policy is being pursued in Kashmir; but, thus far, with limited success. Neither the adaptation, nor the withdrawal option, has commended itself to the Indian State, although the adaptation modality could prove effective to deal with the newer threats to national security, now, and in the future.

A last issue might be considered. Can the judiciary reverse the present crisis in governance? Can the current phase of judicial activism restore India’s administrative processes? Allegations of corruption and lack of integrity in high places within India had, for instance, been voiced for several years in the public debate without any apparent effect. Judicial activism, using the instrumentality of public interest litigation, succeeded in action being taken against the highest in the land under the provisions of the existing criminal laws. It is still too early to conclude that this phase of judicial activism will reverse the crisis of governance in India. It bears mention that the judicial system in India has become over-loaded. The criminal justice system is in disarray. Delays in reaching decisions are proverbial which, as noticed earlier, favours the vested interests over the common citizenry.

More importantly, the Indian Constitution has conceived of a structure with checks and balances obtaining between the different institutions in the country

that are concerned with governance like the legislature, bureaucracy and so on. The judiciary is striving to fill a vacuum by failure of one of these institutions viz., the political and bureaucratic executive to perform their roles with either honesty or celerity. In this effort, the judiciary has the support of the media and the general population. The politician has become their hate symbol. It is very dubious, however, if the judiciary could, in effect, govern India through legal pronouncements.

Administrative functions have perforce to be performed by the executive. The judiciary can only draw attention to its glaring inadequacies. And those inadequacies can only be addressed and the majesty of the law respected if the *demos* (people) assert themselves and demand that their country be governed, and not ruled by its elected representatives. What happened in Italy would be instructive in this regard. In short, what is required is people's activism and a people's movement to cleanse the governance processes. This is an inescapable pre-requisite for the Indian State to counter the newer threats to its national security.

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