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**Traditional and Non-Traditional threats in a changing
global order: An Indian perspective**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The end of cold war signalled the end of the hitherto known structures of international politics. Bipolarity and the balance of power has given way to a unipolar world, with one power dominating an international system whose contours and structures are still being defined. In this era of flux, the entire notion of security has witnessed a number of changes. The state-centric traditional security studies, which was the defining paradigm during the cold war period, is today increasingly being challenged.¹ Traditionally, national security is defined in terms of the ability of a state to protect its interests from external threats. Those interests are broadly defined as territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of the nation. However in this web of international relations, the threat to security is not from one nation to another but also from various non- state sources of insecurity. There is a growing debate on the need to expand the traditional notions of security to address the non-traditional threats and so develop a more comprehensive approach to security.² This is mainly because the traditional security paradigm does not address the rapidly growing non-traditional threats to security like, “ the struggle for resources embedded in the pursuit of energy, security, environmental degradation, forced migration, international terrorism, insurgency ascendancy of non-state actors in drugs, arms, money laundering and financial crime organization.”³ The main questions that are being asked today are security from what, when, where and how?⁴

India is one of the world’s oldest civilizations. Its society, way of life and thinking has evolved over thousands of years. *Arthashastra* spelled out the strategy for governance and war in 3rd Century BC, long before any civilization had formed a cohesive thought on war and its strategy.⁵ There exist wide-ranging concepts and traditions in the realm of strategic and security affairs from ancient times. These include “ the realism of Kautilya’s *Arthashastra*, the pacifism of Ashoka, the benevolent and enlightened rule of the Guptas and Akbar, which combined power with tolerance, good governance, the creation of friendly neighbourhoods and the hard realism of Aurangzeb and the British colonial rulers.”⁶

In modern times, India’s post-independence strategic thought was influenced by the Nehruvian world view - which was mainly ‘cooperative’ in nature. It rejected power politics, realist logic and the Cold war, and strived for Afro-Asian and later non-aligned unity to create a non-hegemonic, multi-polar world order. Over the years, India has kept on the

¹ Kanti Bajpai, Human security: concept and measurement John B Kroc Institute Occasional paper no. 19, August 2000

² The Copenhagen school has advocated this for long. See Barry Buzan, *People States and Fear: An Agenda for International security in the post cold war era* (New York: Harvester _ Wheatsheaf, 1991)

³ Dipankar Banerjee, *Security Studies in South Asia: change and challenge*(New Delhi: Manohar, 2000) p.50

⁴ James Derian, “The value of security: Hobbes, Marx, Nietzsche and Boudrillard” in David Campbell and Michael Dillon (eds.), *The political subject of violence*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1991, p.97

⁵ R.P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra: A study part III*, (Delhi: Motilal Banarsi Das, 1986)

⁶ Sujit Dutta, “In search of new concepts” *Strategic Analysis* April 97 p.17

independent and the cooperative path, opposing power politics and external domination. Many of the challenges of nation building that India faced still exist, though in a new form. The North-South divide persists and South-South cooperation is still relatively low.

This paper reflects on the changing dimensions of security from an Indian perspective. It is argued that while the traditional security concerns persist, non-traditional security challenges have attained greater salience in recent years.

2. SECURITY CHALLENGES

What are India's security challenges? Before proceeding further it is important to define the region. Here, the Ministry of Defence defines India's strategic neighbourhood as that extending from the "Persian Gulf in the west to the Straits of Malacca in the east and from the Central Asian republics in the north to near the equator in the South". Is China part of the region? While China is not a part of South Asia it is a significant part of the regional security scenario. India's borders (a significant part of which are disputed) cover nearly 7,000 km of its 16,000 km of land frontiers. Here it should be remembered that over 94,000 sq km of northeast India is claimed by China (not to mention another 60,000 sq km in northwest India occupied by Pakistan). In fact, some aver that the region has been prey to "structural insecurity."⁷ The centrality of India in the South is a historical and geographical fact that its neighbours cannot deny. Most South Asian countries share a border with India, which is both porous and disputed. However, the overall asymmetry between India and its neighbours in South Asia is central to the persisting security dilemma in the South Asia. The threat perception of India's overt power by neighbouring countries has led them to use extra-regional powers or non-traditional means to keep India on the defensive. Pakistan's support to terrorists in Kashmir is part of this strategy.

There is no doubt that India has faced immense security challenges in the last 60 years of independence. The country has experienced four major conventional border wars besides a limited war at Kargil. There exists a nuclearized environment in the region, with both China and Pakistan possessing nuclear weapons. It continues to have territorial disputes with its neighbours. With respect to China, despite an enormous improvement of relations, there are certain issues (particularly the border issue and China's military assistance in nuclear and missile fields to Pakistan) that continue to keep the two countries wary of each other. Nonetheless, it is argued here that the non-traditional threats to security have attained a greater salience in the current context. This trend has emerged due to certain global systemic changes. First, the global trends indicate a change in the nature of warfare and conflict. Traditional wars for conquering territory are already confined to the archives of history simply because the rationale for such wars no longer exists. Second, existence of nuclear weapons with their tremendous destructive capabilities has limited the scope of war among states that possess such capability. As Van Creveld opines, "From Central Europe to Kashmir, and from the Middle East to Korea, nuclear weapons are making it impossible for

⁷Varun Sahni, *India Brazil and South Africa: Three pathways to regional insecurity*, (CIDE, 2000) p.18

large sovereign territorial units or states to fight each other in earnest without running the risk of mutual suicide.”⁸ Thus the possibilities of a major conventional war or nuclear war are no longer viable. A limited conventional war is a possibility. The other option available is the use of coercive military force. While the threat of war in the region may have reduced; the concern over proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and fear of them falling into the hands of non-state actors, remain. The Indian *Ministry of Defence* appears to have realised the gravity of the issue, for it does point out that “the country faces a series of low intensity conflicts characterized by the tribal, ethnic and left wing movements and ideologies as well as a proxy war conducted by Pakistan and various radical Jehadi outfits through the instrumentality of terrorism. India is also affected by the trafficking in drugs and proliferation of small arms.”⁹ It goes on to elaborate on the instability caused by the rise of fundamentalism and terrorism in Bangladesh and Pakistan as well as the threat from the Maoist insurgents in Nepal. The derailed peace process in Sri Lanka is also cited as an issue of concern. Thus India is increasingly faced with the challenge of peace-building and conflict-resolution in the region.

2.1. Non-traditional security concerns

India also faces a number of non-traditional security concerns. One of the major security challenge facing is that of *energy security*. This essentially involves ensuring uninterrupted supply of energy to support the economic and commercial activities necessary for sustained economic growth. As far as India is concerned, the need for energy security emanates from the growing imbalance between the demand for energy and its supply from indigenous sources, resulting in increased import dependence. Highlighting the issue President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam said, “Energy independence has to be our nations’ first and highest priority.”¹⁰ At present India is the sixth largest energy consumer in the world and is projected to emerge as the fourth largest consumer after the United States, China and Japan by 2010. Its economy is projected to grow 7%-8% over the next two decades, and in its wake will be a substantial increase in demand for oil. For more than a decade, India’s energy consumption has grown at a faster pace than its economy and it appears this trend will continue. Moreover, even if India reduces the use of oil in its power and manufacturing sectors, the demand for oil in the transport sector shows no sign of abating. Due to stagnating domestic crude production, India imports approximately 70% of its oil. Its dependence is growing rapidly. The World Energy Outlook, published by the International Energy Agency (IEA), projects that India’s dependence on oil imports will grow to 91.6% by the year 2020.

Within the last decade India has emerged as the fourth largest economy of the world in the purchasing power parity terms. In more absolute terms, as the National Intelligence Council (NIC) in the US underlined recently, India will begin to overtake all the Western

⁸ Martin van Creveld, *On Future War* (London: Brassey’s, 1991) p.194

⁹ “Security Environment” at <http://mod.nic.in>

¹⁰ “Address to the nation on the eve of the 59th independence day- 2005” at <http://presidentofindia.nic.in/scripts/independencedetail.jsp?id=6>

nations except the US, by 2020 in economic size. Hence energy security is crucial for the sustaining the current growth rates. In the short term there appears little likelihood of reducing its energy imports. Currently, around 65% of its crude oil imports are from West Asia and the rest from various parts of the world, including Africa and Latin America. It has also started acquiring oil and gas assets in different parts of the world from Sudan to Sakhalin. Recently the country's Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) has identified 22 countries to pursue exploration, production, pipeline transportation and the refining of hydrocarbons.¹¹ In the long term, India will have to shift its energy sources from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources like bio fuels, wind, solar and nuclear power.

Another crucial security challenge that India faces today is *terrorism*. While globalisation has resulted in the softening of borders, it has also, unfortunately, enabled many security problems to attain dangerous dimensions. The spectre of international terrorism is one such phenomenon. Post 9/11, terrorism has moved centre stage in the security discourse. The shadowy non-state actor - a terrorist who was in the fringes of security discourse - is now the new threat. A threat that has gone global. Indians have suffered cross-border terrorism for decades. In Jammu and Kashmir, the Pakistan-sponsored terrorism has paralysed normal life since the 1980s. According to Indian estimates, terrorism has claimed 34,000 lives since 1990 including over 12,000 civilians and 18,000 terrorists. Pakistan has also been involved in the supply of arms and financial assistance to Naxalites and separatist groups active in India.¹² Apart from Pakistan, Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) is known to have trained the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and Maoists from India and Nepal, respectively. Similarly, it has been reported that Maoists in Nepal also work closely with the People's War Group (PWG) of Andhra Pradesh.¹³

Linked to this issue is the issue of *transnational crime networks*. Many of these networks are not purely criminal but have become involved in Indian politics, providing them with certain levels of immunity from Indian law enforcement.¹⁴ Further, India is the principal target, and it is difficult for it to make common-cause with international partners to address them, though some of these networks have been proscribed as a result of the 'war on terror'.

The best known of these groups is the Dawood Ibrahim network, originally a Bombay-based criminal enterprise, which is today involved in everything from extortion to terrorism in India. The network receives active support from Pakistan's notorious Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), and Dawood Ibrahim himself is known to be based in Karachi and travel on a Pakistani passport. But Ibrahim's activities have become so widespread that he is now on US and UN lists of wanted 'global terrorists' for his role in financing and supporting Al-Qaeda. Nevertheless, Ibrahim remain at large in Pakistan and his network intact.

¹¹ The Financial Express August 11, 2005

¹² Afsar Karim, *Terrorism and Indian response* in NS Sisodia and C Uday Bhaskar in *Emerging India, Security and foreign policy perspective*. (IDSA, 2005) p.332

¹³ PR Chari, ed. *Alternative approaches to security* (Samskriti, New Delhi, 2005) p.325

¹⁴ Vohra committee report submitted to Ministry of Home affairs, government of India, 9th July 1993, p.4

Such criminal groups are linked to a number of trans-national criminal enterprises such as small arms, drug trafficking and money-laundering and have been utilised by the A.Q. Khan network.¹⁵ Small arms trafficking in the region began as blowback from the Afghan war, first affecting Pakistan, but is now becoming a more widespread problem. This proliferation of small arms is changing the character of insurgencies in India, making them more violent and less susceptible to resolution. This spread, at least partly, also explains the growth in the number of violent rebellions in various parts of the country. The market for weapons is big and accessible, and has encouraged a resurgence of left-wing extremism, which is now linked to Nepali Maoists.

These networks are also connected to *drug-trafficking*. India is bracketed by two of the world's three largest narcotics producing-exporting regions. There are indications that the narcotics traffic, from what is euphemistically referred to as the 'Golden Triangle' encompassing Myanmar-Thailand-Laos, constitutes the major source of illicit heroin and opium, although it has shown a decline in recent years. Willy-nilly, India became a passage country (directly and via Nepal) and some, if not most, of the crime and violence in India's Northeastern region is linked to this factor.

South Asia is at present a transit point for drugs, rather than a consumer. However, as Indian and other South Asian countries prosper, there is the potential for this to change and governments in the region are ignoring this risk at their peril. *Money laundering* is another activity linked to these criminal groups. Though originally serving a social function for poor migrant international labour of South Asian origin in West Asia, the so-called 'hawala' networks have become extremely powerful and dangerous. But unlike the various other trans-national criminal enterprises mentioned earlier, hawala networks came under the scanner of the international community because of their links in financing or supporting global terrorism. Though by no means eliminated, there is greater international cooperation in fighting these networks.

Some of these criminal networks are also thought to have been used by the Pakistani government and its agencies, especially the A.Q. Khan network, for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) trafficking. This link between criminal enterprises and WMD proliferation makes it particularly necessary to develop international cooperation on these issues.

Illegal immigration is one of the most serious non-traditional challenges confronting India. Illegal immigration into the country occurs through its huge porous border. Bangladesh in particular, poses a problem for India, with large numbers of immigrants and great difficulties in regulating flows. Though the seriousness of this problem is well recognised, it is nevertheless difficult to tackle because it is entangled in domestic political issues. According to official Indian estimates, there are about 15 million illegal Bangladeshi citizens in India; Bangladesh of course, refuses to accept the immigrants as Bangladeshi citizens.

¹⁵David Albright and Corey Henderson, "Unravelling the AQ Khan and future proliferation, Third World Quarterly, Spring 2005

Illegal Bangladeshi immigration is a significant cause for ethnic conflicts in northeastern India, where it has shifted the balance of ethnic communities, setting off inter-ethnic violence. But illegal immigration has also become a source of trans-national criminal enterprises, some of which, Indian police and security agencies believe, are linked to terrorism. But Bangladesh is not the only one of India's neighbours that is a problem: tens of thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils have fled the fighting in that troubled island and settled in India (though, unlike the Bangladeshi migrants, the vast majority of these are formally registered as refugees). According to the India's Home Ministry, 278,480 refugees have entered Indian territory since 1983. As the fighting in Nepal between the Maoists and the government has picked up, hundreds of thousands of Nepalese have also shifted to India. Should the situation in either of these countries worsen, India can expect another bout of unwanted population flows into it.

The increasing non-traditional *maritime threats* in the Indian Ocean region are also an area of concern. India has a coastline of about 7,600kms and an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of over 2 million km². The island territories in the east are 1,300km away from the mainland. The Indian Maritime doctrine provides an indication of the emerging security threats.¹⁶ Piracy particularly has been on the rise. The Indonesian waters, Bay of Bengal and Horn of Africa are among the worst affected areas of the world. The use of sophisticated weapons and increasing violence is particularly distressing. More alarming, is the news that various terrorists groups have resorted to maritime terror in the form of hijacking commercial vehicles. The LTTE, in particular, has been accused of such acts in past. Moreover, the discovery of Al Qaeda operatives in a container in January 2002 has brought to light the importance of container security. With the dramatic increase in container transport by sea this problem has grown. The US-launched Container Security Initiative (CSI) is a welcome initiative. Also many of the terrorist organizations have merchant fleet of their own. These ships are registered under the Flags of Convenience (e.g. those registered in Panama, Liberia or Cyprus) making it virtually impossible to track them down. To compound it all, the Indian Ocean region has become another theatre for trafficking of drugs from the golden crescent and golden triangle region in Asia. Most importantly, *natural disasters* like Tsunami and Hurricanes such as Katarina, have brought the area of disaster management to the forefront.

Let us now shift gear to an issue that is not often conceived as a security challenge for India, though it is surely emerging as one. Over the last two decades India's *HIV/AIDS* infected population has shot up from two people to 5.1 million. According to the official figures, nearly one percent of India's adult population is now carrying the deadly virus. Also certain Indian cities and regions are reporting more than 5% infection rates. The country's aspirations for the future will be severely impacted by the epidemic. The biggest negative impact would demographic. By 2020 an estimated 64% of the total population would be in economically active age bracket. However, the average age of the HIV-positive population in India is currently between 25-30 years. A severe epidemic would imply 140 million new HIV

¹⁶ *Indian Maritime Doctrine* Integrated Defence headquarters, Ministry of Defence, 2004

infections that would lead to the country losing almost 100 million of its workforce. The socio-cultural impact of such an eventuality will be immense. While there is no comprehensive data available on the extent of the infection on the armed forces, certain reports suggest that the disease has reached military personnel, though the numbers are limited at present.¹⁷

3. CONCLUSION: TOWARDS IBSA COOPERATION

A democratic India with valuable experiences in building a federal multi-ethnic union and the accompanying security challenges, has to work with other like-minded states to build an equitable, prosperous and secure future through the deepening of multilateral structures even as it takes independent steps to safeguard its security. It is against this backdrop that the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) forum is a welcome initiative. While India, Brazil and South Africa are three diverse countries, located in diverse security environs; they share a similar worldview. Moreover, the three are regionally dominant powers. Sceptics hint that embarking on such an exercise will impinge on India's regional commitments. However, in this era of globalisation, it is difficult for countries to remain confined to regional groupings. In fact this endeavour throws open new opportunities for cooperation.

In this context, a trilateral collaboration on energy issues is a possibility. India is an energy deficient country and could gain from the expertise of South Africa in coal gasification and Brazil in the bio-fuel sectors. Similarly, South Africa and Brazil, like India, are party to a number of regional and multilateral instruments to control the menace of terrorism. This effort could provide some new tools for dealing with the deadly scourge. Synergies could also be developed to deal with maritime threats, as all three countries are maritime powers. Finally, India, South Africa and Brazil have faced the epidemic of AIDS for the last two decades. Brazil has had a considerable success rate in tackling the disease. While it is true that typology and the nature of the spread of the infection may vary, there might be some useful approaches that both India and South Africa can emulate. Thus, an IBSA forum could be a trailblazer in South-South cooperation and synergies could be exploited for the mutual benefit of all three countries.

¹⁷ Happymon Jacob, *HIV / AIDs as a Security Threat to India* (New Delhi: Manohar. 2005