Role of Non-State Actors in Ensuring Human Security in India

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Abstract

The notion of security and national interests under the discipline of International Relations which was deeply influenced by the classical realist school of thought, had witnessed a change in the last decades of the twentieth century. The release of Human Development Report (HDR) by the UNDP in 1994 has challenged the traditionally accepted view of security which was comprehended as protecting the state borders from external threats and the state actors were solely responsible for its defence, by adding a new dimension i.e. 'Human Security' which is a more human centred approach to security. There are numerous threats to human life which are not essentially from outside but can be within the state. India, a postcolonial democracy is also not immune to these threats. In this paper, I have briefly discussed the adverse effects of these new threats on India and how the state (India in this case) had responded to them in past and I have also tried to explain succinctly how the non-state actors, in collaboration with the state actors are mitigating the sufferings of the people from the non-conventional threats. Finally, this paper has also highlighted the importance of essential shifts in policy making which have helped the state to minimize the 'collective dilemma' which has become inevitable in this globalized world.

Keywords: Human Security, State actors, Non-state actors, Non-conventional threats, Policy making, Sovereignty.

Introduction

Security, for a very long time, had been explicated in its restricted sense as the security of states' territorial borders from outside invasion, or as securing of national interests through diplomacy or as worldwide security from the threat of an atomic catastrophe. Its primary focus was more on nation-states than on people. The conventional threats to the 'developing' countries (like India) which had won their independence from their colonial masters in recent times were discussed under the confines of traditional security studies but many less visible threats, having the potential to impact the economic growth, human development and the life of an individual adversely, which is inextricably linked to the security of the state, need to be addressed because these states are more susceptible to any actual or perceived dangers to their brittle sovereignty. Ordinary people of these countries, who are highly insecure in their daily lives, were at the back seat. "Majority of these people perceived security as protection from the threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social conflict, political repression and environmental perils"[1].

Now in the twenty-first century, the understanding of security and threats has been changed significantly. One can now estimate many threats within the state than from outside or from any other state/s. Some of the developing countries, with the cold war mindset, are still prioritizing their external security but in the twenty-first century, the enemy is within their borders in the form of hunger, illiteracy, unemployment, crime, political repressions, communal violence, global warming, climate change, etc. These new kinds of threats were estimated by the world community under the umbrella of Human Security which itself was, for the first time hypothesized by The United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report of 1994.The report had summarized Human security in the following ways: -

1- "Safety from Chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression", and,
2- "Protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life"[2].

This notion of Human Security can also be comprehended as "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want". A new dimension i.e., 'freedom to live in dignity' has also been appended to the discourse of Human Security[3].

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There is a general consensus that most of the threats facing the world in the twenty-first century are associated with the issues like poverty, underdevelopment, inequality, illegal migration, environmental degradation, pandemics, climate change, people & drug trafficking, and conflicts, arising from maladministration and inadequate governance which might lead to state's failure. These perils, not being much visible, in an era of increasing interdependence, are increasingly transnational and interrelated and it is difficult for a state to defend itself from these dangers all alone. If the state fails to ensure the security of its citizens, then this might ignite the anti-state sentiments within the patriotic people, which ultimately lead to the failure of the state. Moreover, the ostensibly stable looking International order is also not immune from these threats, which can directly affect life and safety of people. The need of the hour is to reinterpret the concept of security and how best we can ensure it[4]. These new problems increasingly transcend state borders and have global consequences which require unconventional solutions. The conventional actors i.e., the states, together with some non-traditional actors i.e., non-state actors can ensure the human security of its citizens effectively.

Non-state actors are influential actors in world politics which are non-sovereign in nature, including Super-Empowered Individuals, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Multinational Corporations, de facto regimes, International Governmental Organizations (IGOs), and terrorist organizations[5].Their dual influence over world politics is well observed. A state, in collaboration with another state, can work to ensure the security of its people from unconventional threats but for a state, to collaborate with a non-state actor is easier than that with a state actor. Because from the realistic perspective, International Politics is all about anarchy and self-help, and if a state seeks help from another state it might lead to total dependence and later on in a complete subordination of the former to the latter for example, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan and the Hambantota Port deal in between Sri Lanka and China. So, to avoid such compromise with its sovereignty, a state can ask non-state actors to bail them out from such dangerous situations which have the potential to destabilize the state and the region as well.

Status of Human Security in India

India, the largest democracy of the world, borders China in the North and North-East and Pakistan in the North-West. Both of these countries had created border tensions for India during the Cold War period which forced New Delhi to focus on its Northern frontiers ignoring the immediate concerns of developing a newly independent nation and providing basic amenities to the masses. As per the records of PIB, the literacy rate of India was just 18.33 percent in 1951 and 52.21 percent in 1991. And in 2000, India was the third among the SAARC countries after Maldives and Sri Lanka with literacy rates of 96.3 and 91.6 percents respectively[6]. This high illiteracy rate of India in her initial years was one of the major causes which contributed to human insecurity in later years.

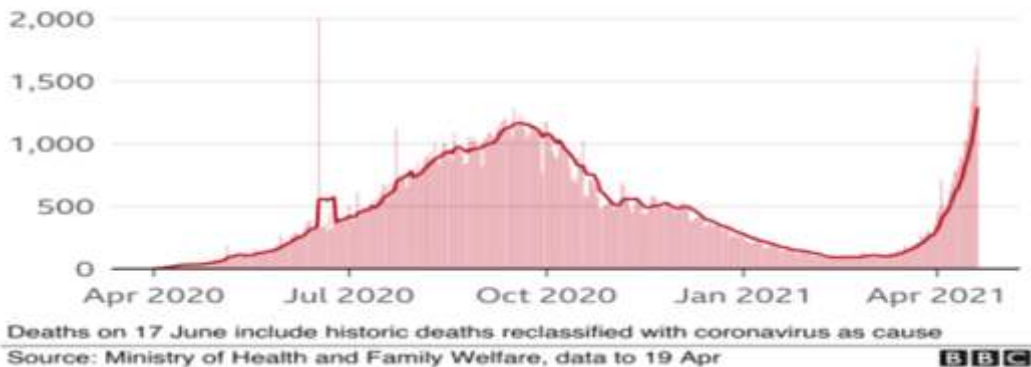| Year	Literacy Rate			
	Total	Male	Female	Differential
1951	18.33	27.16	8.86	18.30
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	25.05
1971	34.45	45.95	21.97	23.98
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	26.62
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	24.84
2001	65.38	75.85	54.16	21.69
Comparison of male and female literacy rates since 1951				

Source: www.pib.in)

Food insecurity is another threat that the country had faced during its initial years of independence. There were several threats of severe famine such as in Bihar in 1967, in Gujarat in 1987 however, these were not equally terrible to the Bengal famine of 1943 because of the state's intervention[7]. In 2011, as per the Global Hunger Index (GHI) report released by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), India ranked 67th out of 81st countries[8]. This was contrary to the claims of India (a state actor in this case) that its population

can be fed from domestic production and there was a buffer stock of 60 million tonnes of food grains for the same year[9]. The situation on the ground is still appalling! Nearly fifty percent of the malnourished children are from rural India, where the majority of the population still resides. Even in 2021, the situation is still alarming. In 2021, India stands 101st out of 116 countries in the GHI report and is still behind many of the South Asian states[10]. The concurrence of sufficient food stocks and prevailing starvation in India explains that the focus on increasing food production is not adequate to attain the food security of the Individual. This shows the incongruence of the state's machinery as this is a problem from the supply side. And this insecurity of food leads to insecurity of health.

Health is another important dimension of human security. For many, health is a basic human right that can be used as an instrument for economic development. In India, during the colonial era, the health sector suffered from under-investment by the colonizers. And at the time of their withdrawal, they (The colonizers) bequeathed India with a weak and limited health infrastructure and due to the lack of resources, it remained at the back seat[11]. During the initial phase after independence, the Indian health sector was assisted by foreign aid. For example, the program for Malaria Eradication was supported by the U.S. At that time this program resulted in limited success because later in the 1960s, lack of health infrastructure and the resistance to Dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) and Anti-Malaria drug helped in the re-emergence of Malaria again in the country[12]. However, even after 70 years of Independence, the country is still struggling in the domain of the health sector. Recently, the COVID 19 pandemic, revealed the shortcomings which are there in the state's health sector and the ignorance of the leadership. During the second wave of COVID 19, the Indian health care system collapsed. Patients died as they waited for hospital beds or oxygen. This was, in part, the result of underfunding. India's expenditure on health per capita was only $ 73 which was well below the world's average spending of $ 110 in 2018[13]. Indian policymakers must look into this domain because a healthy, efficient and skilled population can be a boon to a developing economy like India.

Daily reported deaths are rising

Deaths on 17 June include historic deaths reclassified with coronavirus as cause
Source: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, data to 19 Apr

(*Source:* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-56811315)

Being a post-colonial and developing economy, India had faced serious obstacles in ensuring the economic security of its citizens which is different from the economic security of a state. The economic security of a state provides an ability to leverage its economic strength vis-à-vis its enemies to exert pressure on them either by enhancing its defence capabilities or by choking their enemies' economy. On the other hand, the economic security of an individual is slightly different. According to the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross), economic security can be defined as "the ability of individuals, households or communities to cover their essential needs sustainably and with dignity"[14].

In India, after independence, the Indian government took an arduous task of advancing the living status of its population which accounted for one-seventh of the world's total population and who earned an average income that was one-fifteenth of the average American income of the time[15]. The state chose to invest in its secondary sectors following the belief of economists that the manufacturing sector provides the greatest

opportunity of production growth which will act as a catalyst in economic development which is intrinsically linked with human security.[16] To realize the goal of establishing a socialist pattern of society and a self-reliant state, the government invested in the creation of public enterprises which produced basic and heavy goods over consumer goods. The production of consumer goods was left to cottage industries which were labour intensive and had the potential to generate employment[17]. These efforts to make the country self-reliant did well initially but under the regime of the fixed exchange rate, rising inflation in the 1960s reduced the country's exports and escalated imports, resulting in a shortfall of Forex Reserves. The repercussions were felt all over the economy. This led to the devaluation of the rupee which adversely impacted the economic lives of most people[18]. The balance of payment crisis made the situation worst and it was averted by the help of The World Bank and the IMF (both are Non-State Actors). Although the economic reforms of 1991 gave positive results and the economy generated adequate funds and invested to ensure an annual average growth rate of almost 5%. In between 1991 to 2016, the economy witnessed an eight-fold increase in GDP[19]. But the recent pandemic of Covid-19 has severely hit the nation's economy. As per the data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI), "the Indian economy contracted by 7.3% in the first quarter of the financial year 2021-22"[20]. During the lockdown, $2.9 trillion economy of India remained halted except for some essential services and activities. The informal sector has been the worst-hit sector of the Indian economy by this pandemic. This humanitarian crisis coupled with the silent response from the government has exposed and worsened the existing inequalities in the Indian economy[21].

In India, during the initial years of her independence, the government prioritized the industrial sector at the expense of other alternatives such as health and education. This resulted in the diversion of scarce public resources away from these essential sectors which had the potential to transform India. "The underinvestment on these in India stands in marked contrast to the plentiful attention paid to them in China and other developing countries"(Adhia, 2015)[22].

After seven decades of independence, India is still struggling on many fronts; nearly fifty percent of its children are malnourished, about fifty percent of women are illiterate, and two-thirds of its people are still deprived of basic sanitation[23]. As a result, majority of Indians today are unable to take advantage of the opportunities created by the state's recent tilt toward capitalism and globalization.

Contribution of Non-State Actors in ensuring Human Security

State actors, being the primary actors in global affairs are now being influenced by many secondary actors known as the Non-State Actors (NSAs). These secondary actors, being the non-sovereign players, exercise enormous political and socio-economic clout at a national and at some instances even at the international level. These NSAs can be the Intergovernmental Organizations (IGOs), Transnational Corporations (TNCs), Super-Empowered Individuals, Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs), Government Organised Non-Governmental Organizations (GONGOs), Terrorist Organizations etc[24]. Barring the last example i.e., terrorist organizations almost all the other NSAs have a positive role to play in global and domestic affairs. Now one might ask why there is a need for these NSAs in global politics when we already have sovereign state actors. In this section, I'll try to answer this question and will also discuss the role which these NSAs are playing in developing countries (India in this case) to ensure human security and in tackling the problems associated with it.

As we all are aware that the national governments are responsible for territorial security, enforcing laws, international communications with the help of diplomats, determining the terms and conditions of trade (before the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) and so on[25]. However, with the unprecedented increase in economic interdependence and with the advent of globalization the ability of the state actors to deal with the new transnational threats of climate change, pollution, poverty, terrorism, the refugee crisis, and so on, has been adversely affected. These transnational threats motivated the requirement of non-state actors so that the states in collaboration with these NSAs can effectively tackle these new challenges which are directly related to the security of individuals who are an essential constituent of a state[26]. And even since 2001, the works done by the Advocacy NGOs that work on transnational issues such as the environment, public health, social and economic justice, and migration and displacement have received greater attention[27].

On many occasions, non-state actors have actively participated with the state actors (India in this case) to ensure human security in general and worked particularly in the fields of education, environment protection, social development, and health. Recent examples of NSAs' active involvement in India can be the STARS program. This program is being implemented by the assistance of the World Bank to improve the condition of school education and governance in six Indian States (including Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, and Odisha).The World Bank is supporting this program by providing $ 500 million. STARS program will benefit nearly 10 million teachers and around 250 million students between the age group of 6 and 17 years. 1.5 million Schools will be a part of this program[28].

To achieve the target of 'education for all', the World Bank and the Union government are working together since 1994. Before the STARS program, the World Bank had already invested $ 3 billion in India in education sector. And India has witnessed significant improvement. The number of school-going children has increased from 219 million in 2004-05 to 248 million in 2018-19. But the learning outcomes of students are not satisfactory. The STARS program will address the issue of 'learning Outcomes' and will assist the students to develop skills for the jobs of the future[29].

Super Empowered Individuals such as Bill Gates and M. F. Gates through their foundation i.e. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation are also collaborating with the Indian government in improving the living condition of millions of people living in India. In India, they started their work in 2003 by launching Avahan, a program for preventing the spread of HIV which had estimated to have averted 600,000 fresh infections. Gates Foundation with many other collaborators has assisted the Government of India in eliminating polio, leading India, to be Polio free in 2014. The foundation had signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare under which the foundation will provide managerial, technical and program design assistance for key health initiatives[30].

In India, the foundation is working with partners to enhance the quality of governance in priority states, particularly in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The foundation is working in other states as well to improve the quality of agriculture, sanitation, and it is also working to promote gender equality and digital financial inclusion[31]. Apart from working with the central and the state governments the foundation is also working with the local groups at community level, academic institutions, non-profit organizations, the corporate sectors, and development organizations[32].

In the domain of community security, an important dimension of human security, the Indian government is collaborating with some NSAs. The GOAL (Going Online as Leaders) program is an example of such collaboration, launched by Facebook (now Meta) in partnership with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in May 2020 to empower 5000 youth from tribal communities for next five years[33]. This nine-month program is divided into seven months of mentorship and a two-month internship to gain practical knowledge. This digitally enabled program was relevant during the COVID-19 times as it ignited the competitiveness of India's tribal communities by providing them an opportunity to showcase their creativity using digital platforms[34]. In 2019, a pilot run of the program was done which received an enthusiastic response from the community. The program has also ensured that a structured governing committee is made to monitor and guide the program using its varied experience. According to the ministry of tribal affairs, "It contains people from the government, academia, and industry along with the presence of stalwarts from social organizations such as UNDP, NITI Aayog, FICCI, the art of living, AIIMS Jodhpur, etc. the program, through its wide network of partners aims to ensure optimal reach of the initiative, thereby creating a holistic environment for the growth and development of the tribal community"[35].

In the health sector, the initiative like 'The W.H.O-India Country Cooperation Strategy 2019–2023: A Time of Transition', a jointly developed strategy by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoH&FW) of the Government of India (GOI) and the W.H.O Country Office for India is going to provide a strategic plan for W.H.O to work in tandem with the Government of India towards improving the health of its people and bringing in changes in the health sector[36, 37]. But this kind initiatives are not enough to strengthen the health system in India, for this, a massive overhaul is required which ultimately requires a massive financial investment. The percentage of government hospitals is very low in comparison with the state-of-the-art private

hospitals which are accessible only to some wealthy people. Indian government can collaborate with the non-state actors such as WHO, World Bank, AIIB, and others to address the low quality of public health services and infrastructure shortages effectively to prevent individuals from future pandemics[38].

Conclusion

India, a home to more than 1.21 billion[39] people is going through a transition. Its security concerns are also at flux. As in the words of Ken Booth, an emancipator theorist, the military confrontation including nuclear weapons is now become obsolete as the problem of security has taken a local character[40]. Now, many countries in South Asia including India are not dealing with the problem of territorial security barring the few skirmishes with China at the LAC. But now they are dealing with more serious threats which have both local and transnational character. Recent events of economic recession and the deadly Covid-19 pandemic along with many other internal threats like that of Naxalism, insurgency in North and North-East India, target killings of a particular minority in J&K, the polarization of majority on religious lines, cybercrime, mob lynching, a decline in the water table, pollution, stagflation, unemployment, illiteracy, malnutrition, maladministration and corruption are obstacles in the holistic development of an Individual which is a prerequisite for ensuring Human Security. Some of these obstacles can only be dealt with by the state's intervention but many of them can be dealt effectively by the collaborative efforts of state and Non-State Actors. In the Indian context, only the adoption of democracy is not enough to secure the individual's life. In the real sense the democratic principles must also be followed at the level of security providers. The time has come to involve the non-state actors in the democratic framework so that they can use their potential to secure the individual' life. It is the right time to imply the moral idea of Kant that humans should always be treated only as ends and never as means[41]. It is the security of the individual which should always come first and the states are only tools. And if these tools are not functioning efficiently, then instead of discarding them, we must support them by the non-state actors so that they can function more efficiently. In this paper the rationale behind highlighting the contribution of the NSAs in ensuring human security in India is, by no means to showcase them as a substitute for the state actors but to compensate the shortcomings of the state actors. At the end, most importantly, dependence over the NSAs is by no means can be a threat to the sovereignty of the state as their actions can be regulated by the state actors because these secondary actors are non-sovereign in nature and comes under the jurisdiction of the state from where they are operating[42].

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