HUMAN SECURITY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE PEACE PROCESS IN SOUTH ASIA

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Introduction: Peace, A Question of Life and Death

South Asia today stands suspended between the hope of a better life and fear of cataclysmic destruction. The hope emanates from the tremendous human and natural resource potential: the rich diversity of its cultures that flourish within the unifying humanity of its civilization. The fear arises from the fact that South Asia is not only the poorest region in the world but also one in which its citizens live in constant danger of a nuclear holocaust. It can be argued therefore that inter state peace in the region rather than enhanced military capability is the key to national security, indeed human survival. We will propose in this paper that peace between India and Pakistan is necessary not only for sustaining economic growth but is also vital for building pluralistic democracies and thereby sustaining the integrity of both states and societies in the region.

I.   Militarization, Human Security and National Integrity

States in South Asia have primarily pursued 'national security' through the building of the military capability for mass annihilation of each other's citizens. It is not surprising that South Asia is the poorest and yet the most militarized region in the world[1]: It contains almost half the world's poor and yet has the capability, even in a limited nuclear exchange to kill over 100 million people immediately with many hundreds of million more dying subsequently from radiation related illnesses[2].

The arms race between India and Pakistan (with these two countries accounting for 93 percent of total military expenditure in South Asia) is responsible for this cruel irony.

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[1]   See, Mahbub ul Haq, Human Development in South Asia, Oxford University Press, 1997, Karachi

[2]   Newsweek, June 8, 1998, p.17.

India ranked at 142 in terms of per capita income, ranks first in the world in terms of arms imports. Pakistan is not far behind, being ranked 119 in terms of per capita income and tenth in the world in terms of arms imports[3]. These military expenditures whose scale is unprecedented in the developing world are being undertaken in the name of achieving national security in a situation where the majority of the population in South Asia is living below the international poverty line (US$ 2 a day)[4], 46 percent of the children are malnourished[5] and 35 percent of the population is suffering from health deprivation (measured in terms of lack of access to safe water and undernourished population)[6]. The trade-off between military expenditures and the provision of basic services is worth considering. For example a modern submarine with associated support systems costs US $ 300 million which would be enough to provide safe drinking water to 60 million people. These figures put into question the logic of increasing military expenditures as a means of achieving national security.

The deadly nuclear dimension that has since 1998 been added to the India Pakistan arms race, is seen by the respective governments to reinforce national security through a presumed 'deterrence'. In this context it can be argued that there are three defining features of the India Pakistan strategic nuclear environment which imply a high probability of an accidental nuclear war, thereby making nuclear deterrence unstable: (a) The flying time of nuclear missiles between India and Pakistan is less than three minutes. (b) The unresolved Kashmir dispute which fuels tensions between the two countries makes them susceptible to disinformation about each other's intentions. (c) Intra-state social conflicts in each country feed off inter-state tensions.

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[3]   See, Mahbub ul Haq, Human Development in South Asia, op.cit.

[4]   In terms of the international poverty line of US$ 2 a day per person the population living below the poverty line is 80 percent in the case of India, 65 percent in the case of Pakistan, just over 80 percent in the case of Nepal and 50 percent in the case of Sri Lanka. See, Human Development in South Asia 2005, Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Center, Oxford University Press, 2006, figure 3.1, page 51.

[5]   Ibid. Table 4.4, page 70.

[6]   Ibid. Table 4.2, page 68.

Apart from the danger of an accidental nuclear war the current structure of the India Pakistan tension is such that a chance terrorist attack can induce military mobilization and repeatedly bring both countries to a point where the nuclear button could be deliberately pressed by one, then the other side. Consider the elements of the structure: (i) Armed militant groups continue to conduct what they see as a war of liberation in Kashmir. Pakistan's government claims that such groups are not under its control, while it continues to be accused by India of being involved in "cross border terrorism". (ii) When a high profile terrorist attack occurs in India, Pakistan is held responsible as occurred following the outrageous attack on the Indian Parliament (December 2001) and the more recent barbaric train bombings in Bombay (July 2006). In the former case India actually mobilized its military forces in a war like deployment on the India Pakistan border. (iii) In the case of an Indian incursion into Pakistani territory following a chance terrorist attack, if the territorial gains of Indian forces reach an unspecified critical level, Pakistan has already made clear that it will use nuclear weapons to defend itself. At the same time the declared Indian nuclear doctrine involves in response, an all out nuclear attack on Pakistan. As the Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes clarified in December 2002, such an all out nuclear retaliation will occur even if Pakistan drops a nuclear bomb on Indian forces operating within Pakistani territory[7].

These elements of the Pakistan-India problematique, could spark a military confrontation between the two states at any time. Moreover there is a grave danger that given the relative lack of geographic depth in the Pakistan case, a conventional war could very quickly reach the nuclear threshold. That this prospect is terribly real was illustrated on at least three occasions: (i) First, India's Operation Brass Tacks in 1986. This military exercise which was seen by Pakistan as a prelude to an Indian invasion, led to a threat of nuclear war by the then Pakistani Foreign Minister, Mr. Sahibzada Yaqub Khan, given explicitly to his old college mate Mr. I.K. Gujral, the Indian Foreign Minister during a meeting in Delhi. (ii) The second illustration is the Kargil conflict in 1999. It quickly escalated to a mobilization of military forces along the international border, and the danger of an all out war became so grave, that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had to rush

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[7]   Global Security Newswire, December 30, 2002.

to Washington to get President Clinton's support to avoid it. Bruce Reidel[8], who was present during the Nawaz-Clinton meeting, claims the US had information that Pakistan was preparing its nuclear arsenal for possible use. Furthermore, he claims that Clinton actually asked Sharif "if he know how advanced the threat of nuclear war really was?"[9] (iii) After the attack by armed militants on the Indian Parliament, India mobilized its military forces along the international border with Pakistan and tension rose to a point where Pakistan threatened "unconventional" military retaliation if war broke out[10]. Thus the very structure of the India-Pakistan situation suggests that wars between the two countries can now neither be localized nor conventional.

With the stakes of catastrophic destruction as high as they are in the region, any non-zero probability of nuclear war should be unacceptable. Yet, as we have argued above, the defining features of the nuclear environment in South Asia make the probability of an intentional or accidental nuclear war perhaps higher than in any other region of the world.

In contrast to the preoccupation of governments to achieve 'national security' within a paradigm of conflict, the citizens of even adversarial states share a common concern for human security: They seek security from the threat of war, religious extremism, economic deprivation, social injustice and environmental degradation. The bridging of this gap between the preoccupations of state and civil society is necessary for maintaining the social contract that underlies the writ of the state and sustains national integrity. Thus establishing a new framework of lasting peace for the provision of human security to civil society is essential for the stability of states in South Asia.

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[8]   Bruce Reidel was at that time President Clinton's Special Assistant for Near Eastern and South Asia Affairs at the National Security Council.

[9]   See, Bruce Reidel, American Diplomacy and the 1999 Kargil Summit at Blair House, Center for the Advanced Study of India, University of Pennsylvania, 2002.

[10]   President Musharraf was reported to have said that Pakistan was not afraid to use unconventional weapons if attacked according to the daily The Hindu, See, Global Security Newswire, January 7, 2003.

II.   **Human Security, Peace and Pluralistic Democracy**

The dominant threat to both human security and the integrity of state structures in South Asian countries is the threat posed by internal conflicts. These include conflicts arising from religious extremism and ethnic, communal, caste and linguistic sub-nationalism. These conflicts can only be contained by building the institutions for a pluralistic society where not only diverse identities between individuals co-exist but where multiple identities can be maintained by each individual. Thus not only for example, Muslims and Hindus should be able to live in peace but also a particular individual can be a Muslim, a Balochi, a Karachite, a Pakistani, and a South Asian at the same time.

Underlying the cultural diversity in South Asia is the unity of the shared wellsprings of human civilization. It is a unity that is nurtured by its diversity. Thus national integrity is strengthened not by the denial of multiple identities but by creating a democratic polity within which they can blossom. Essential to the building of pluralistic democracies in India and Pakistan respectively is the opening up of new economic and cultural spaces within which the people of the two countries can encounter the 'other' and thereby experience the diversity and richness of the self. In the past, state sponsored mutual demonization has sustained inter-state conflict. Demonization involves a narrowing of the mind and a constriction of the identity that places the self and the other into a mutually exclusive and conflictual dichotomy. Nurturing one's richness requires a human relationship within which the other is experienced as a vital fertilizing force in the growth of the self. Liberating the dynamic of such a human contact between erstwhile 'enemies' could be vital to the re-discovery of the richness of identities and the building of pluralistic democracies in Pakistan and India.

III.   **Human Functioning, Economic Development and Institutions**

Human security in terms of its economic, political and legal dimensions is essentially an element in the institutional framework of society where *human functioning* becomes possible. It is in the creative expression of their sociality and in the apprehending of their spiritual and aesthetic dimension that human beings fulfill themselves. In this context the challenge in South Asia is to seek peace for sustainable economic growth on the one hand

and pursuing a new perspective on economic development on the other. Let us briefly indicate the conceptual framework for examining each of these challenges.

III.1   *Peace and Economic Growth*

The governments in both India and Pakistan have acknowledged that rapid economic growth is essential as much for nation building as it is for strengthening the state. Yet the pursuit of these objectives creates a new interdependence between the two countries. Consider. India with its high GDP growth rate, aspires to become a major global economic power in the foreseeable future. This was explicitly stated by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in his first press conference (4th September 2004) at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi, "….I had then suggested to the Lok Sabha that the emergence of India as a major global power happens to be one such idea whose time has come and I do believe that I have a vision, in which we will all work together to realize that ambitious goal." An examination of India's growth process shows that there are two necessary conditions for sustaining its present high GDP growth and fulfilling the Prime Minister's vision: (a) India's import requirements for oil and industrial raw materials will increase rapidly in the years ahead. It is clear that India will need to import oil, gas and industrial raw materials from Central and West Asia across Pakistan. (b) India's economic growth which has so far been based predominantly on the domestic market, will have to rely increasingly on exports to the rest of the world particularly the large South Asian market. Thus peace with Pakistan is a strategic imperative for India.

In the case of Pakistan a high GDP growth is necessary to combat poverty, which at its present high level is undermining the social fabric and fueling extremist tendencies that threaten both the nation and the state. As President Musharraf pointed out the principal threat to Pakistan's national security is not external but internal[11]. It is apparent that the process of domestic and foreign investment for high GDP growth in Pakistan requires peace and economic cooperation with India. Thus for the first time in Pakistan peace with India has become essential for both national integrity and national security.

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[11]   The Daily Times, September 11, 2004, Lahore.

In recent years South Asian countries, particularly India and Pakistan have shown impressive GDP growth rates yet there is continued evidence of wide spread poverty, lack of access over basic services and growing inequality. The objective of human security would require not only sustaining high GDP growth but restructuring growth so as to achieve greater equity and a faster poverty reduction. Indeed equity is essential not only as an end itself but also as a means of sustaining high GDP growth. The existing elite power structures in South Asian countries exclude a large proportion of the population from high quality education and equitable access over capital, land and labour markets. This severely restricts the base for actualizing the human potential through which entrepreneurship, investment, innovation and productivity increase can occur to sustain economic growth. Thus the challenge of achieving human security for the people of South Asia through economic growth is integrally linked with the challenge of achieving inter-state peace and of providing equitable access to the people over public resources, markets and the institutions of governance.

III.2   *An Alternative Perspective on Economic Development[12]*

Aristotle in his Nicomachean Ethics propounds a relationship between human beings and commodities, which seems strange to contemporary economic theory but may be vital in building a new 21st century perspective on economic development. As indicated earlier, he proposed that it is *human functioning* that gives richness to life and not commodities, which are merely useful[13]. Amartya Sen in his recent work has drawn upon Aristotle's proposition to go beyond the notion of living standards in terms of just income or goods. A.K. Sen proposes the concept of capabilities and entitlements whereby in addition to requiring certain goods and services for oneself one may also *value* one's capability to be *socially useful[14]*. This helps to clarify that the issue of overcoming poverty is not simply 'delivering' a certain quantity of food, but also providing complementary services such as

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[12]   This section is drawn from my earlier paper titled: A Vision for South Asia, Indian Journal of Politics and International Relations (IJPIR), Faculty of the School of International Relations and Politics, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala. (Forthcoming).

[13]   See: Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics, Book I, Section 5, D. Roos (ed.), Oxford University Press, 1980. Cited in A.K. Sen: Hunger and Public Action.

[14]   See: Jean Dreze and A.K. Sen: Hunger and Public Action, Clarendon Paperbacks, Oxford, 1989.

drinking water, sanitation, health care and education. Thus A.K. Sen laid the theoretical basis of what has come to be known in the literature as "human development". Sen argues that food, health care and education constitute entitlements of citizens since they are necessary for actualizing human capabilities.

It can be argued that Sen's capabilities and entitlements formulation is rooted in the premise that our *sociality* is essential to human functioning. If this indeed is the case, then could we not extend the scope of Sen's concept of entitlements to include those institutions that are necessary for the functioning of *human sociality*. These include human security, high quality universities, hospitals, a free press and the entire range of political rights associated with democracy? These rights and institutions are surely necessary for human beings to fulfill the peculiarly human need to function in "a socially useful way". If we could broaden Sen's concept in this way then the measure of "standard of living" in the theory of economic development would include not just goods and services but the whole set of social and political institutions that are necessary for what Aristotle called "human functioning".

It may be time to move out of the narrow confines of a conceptual approach that takes GNP growth within centralized state structures as the emblem of development, the credit worthiness for new loans as a measure of economic health and which regards people as passive recipients of the drops that are supposed to trickle down from such a process. As we glance back at the last six decades of South Asian development experience, we find that affluence of the few has occurred at the expense of the many: generations of poor, mutilated by malnutrition, come into sharp focus. At the same time, the image of once verdant slopes of our northern mountains, and the fertile fields that nestled at their feet, begins to fade: deforestation, salinization and desertification proceed apace to undermine the ability of the next generation to build a better future.

As we now look towards the future, an urgent need is felt today, for a new approach to development. A perspective within which people in their diverse locations can live in peace and acquire control over the decisions that affect their immediate existence; in which the autonomy of communities can be sought from the tentacles of an international

financial system that is serving as a conduit for transferring real resources of the fragile resource base of the poor; a perspective within which new institutions can be established to give equitable access to all citizens over markets, public resources and the basic services of education, health, judiciary and the security of life and livelihood. The functioning of the economy and the conduct of governance ought to be based not on elite power but a broad based participation aimed at equity and justice to sustain life across generations. In short the question is, can we achieve a sustainable relationship between humans, nature and growth?

IV.   **Peace Process**

We have argued that the peace process between India and Pakistan is driven by the aspirations of civil society as much as the imperatives of state power[15]. Yet the *pace* of the dialogue and its *concrete* results depend to an important extent on the bureaucracies of the two countries. It may be useful therefore to locate the issue of mental attitudes or consciousness in the dynamics of the peace process.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh alluded to the role of consciousness in the material forces of history when he remarked that "The gains from peace are immense. However, old attitudes of strife, mistrust and suspicion could lead us to a sub-optimal solution."[16] He went on to say that he is however, willing to make a "new beginning" and any ideas for peace would have his fullest support. This remark signifies a refreshingly new attitude, which jibes well with President Musharraf's statement and earnest attempts to carry forward the peace process through "courage and boldness"[17]. Yet while the Musharraf-Manmohan attitudes may be in harmony, there is dissonance within their

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[15]   See, Akmal Hussain, Taking the Peace Process Forward, Daily Times, September 23, 2004.

[16]   Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made these remarks when he invited some of us in the South Asia Center for Policy Studies for a chat over tea at his house on 30th August 2004. I pointed out to him how great the gains from peace were for both India and Pakistan and how history had placed him and the Pakistani leadership in a position to *make* history by actualizing these potential gains for the people of both countries. He responded with an incisive remark: "The gains from peace are immense. However old attitudes of strife, mistrust and suspicion could lead us to a sub-optimal solution". He went on to say that he is however willing to make a "new beginning" and any ideas for peace would have his fullest support.

[17]   Statement made in New York after the Manmohan-Musharraf meeting in September 2004.

respective power structures. It is this dialectic that will determine the pace and trajectory of the peace process.

It can be argued that the present moment and the future possibilities of the peace process are conditioned by three main factors: (i) This is a watershed moment in the post independence history of the sub-continent because for the first time people in both Pakistan and India predominantly hold the view that their security and material welfare lies in establishing a lasting peace between the two countries. (ii) The governments in both India and Pakistan have grasped that rapid economic growth is essential as much for nation building as it is for strengthening of the state. We have argued that the logical consequence of this position is to recognize the economic and political inter-dependence of India and Pakistan. Therefore peace between the two states ought to become the central foreign policy objective. (iii) Sustaining democracy in India and achieving it in Pakistan requires the nurturing of a pluralistic society where the institutions of both civil society and state, cultivate tolerance and broad based participation in both economic growth and governance. In the past, conflict between the two states has been sustained by a mutual demonization, which has fuelled tendencies in each country towards religious extremism, ethnicity and social violence. It is only through experiencing the shared *human* identity, can the more specific denominations of language, culture and religion be sustained without fratricidal conflict.

We have argued that the economic logic of peace is integrated with the nurturing of a humane consciousness for building stable pluralistic democracies within the independent states of Pakistan and India. It is within this context that the initiation of a composite dialogue for peace acquires meaning. The nature of this dialogue is that the process of resolving political disputes (primarily Kashmir) is to be conducted *simultaneously* with the process of economic cooperation. The sense in which this composite dialogue is a break from the past is that the resolution of one process has not been made conditional on the other. The pace of the two processes will be necessarily different because of their different nature and internal dynamics. Indeed rapid progress on the economic front and the associated building of trust and economic stakes in each other's countries would generate synergy for resolving the political disputes. Three conditions may therefore be

necessary for sustaining the peace process: (a) Concern about the differing pace of the political and economic elements of the composite dialogue should not be translated into placing pre-conditions on the continuation of the dialogue itself. Thus given the asymmetry in the size of the two economies, it would be counter productive for Pakistan to try to leverage the free trade issue for progress on resolution of the Kashmir dispute. Similarly given the mutuality of interests in controlling terrorism, it may be counter productive for India to make the ending of cross border terrorism a condition for progress in the peace process. (b) Both sides should address each other's core concerns in the political dimension, simultaneously and with due flexibility. (For Pakistan, Kashmir, for India, cross border terrorism). (c) Mechanisms should be put into place for ensuring not only that the dialogue is uninterrupted but that it is *uninterruptible*.

The dynamics of the peace process would gain synergy if its confines could be extended beyond the respective bureaucracies to the civil societies of the two countries. Thus a powerful momentum could be added to the peace process and a substantial peace dividend gained if free trade and free travel between the two countries could be initiated. This could lay the basis for joint investment projects in energy, integrated electricity grids, social infrastructure such as health and education, integrated motorway and railway networks across the sub-continent and cooperation in protecting the physical environment[18].

Finally in the context of the question of attitudes, it is noteworthy that states engage in dialogue within the discourse of power. Such power play is often informed by a collective ego, which the interlocutors wield within mindsets of conflict, fear and suspicion. That is why the peace process must be nurtured by a different consciousness, drawn from the shared civilizational heritage of the people on both sides.

Conclusion

If South Asia is to play a leadership role in the new world that is taking shape, then it must undertake specific initiatives within a new policy paradigm for pursuing peace,

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[18]   For a more elaborate discussion of these policy issues, see, Akmal Hussain, A Vision for South Asia, op.cit.

overcoming poverty and protecting the life support systems of the planet. However this requires that governments move out of a mindset that regards an adversarial relationship with a neighbouring country as the emblem of patriotism, affluence of the few at the expense of the many, as the hallmark of development, individual greed as the basis of public action, and mistrust as the basis of inter state relations. We have arrived at the end of the epoch when we could hope to conduct our social, economic and political life on the basis of such a mindset.

This is a historic moment when the people of South Asia have recognized that they have a new tryst with destiny. They are affirming that their security and well being lies not in inter-state conflict but in peace and cooperation[19].

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[19]   Ibid.

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