

Nuancing national security

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Reaffirming the commitment to national security can be a befitting commemoration of the country's 62nd Independence Day. National security is defined as "the requirement to maintain the survival of the nation-state through the use of economic, military and political power and the exercise of diplomacy". Conventional national security measures include maintaining effective armed forces and intelligence services, implementing civil defence and emergency preparedness measures and investments in critical infrastructure—all of them significantly important. However, security also has another dimension centered on human security as defined by the United Nations, according to which security scopes beyond state security to encompass other dimensions such as economic security, food security, environmental security, personal security and health security. Within Pakistan's context, two other dimensions of security are additionally relevant—energy security and demographic security.

Sustainable state security is dependent on human security. A brief analysis of human security challenges in Pakistan's context can help to underscore the magnitude of the problem and the importance of robust policies and institutions and effective governance in order to deal with these challenges.

First, Pakistan faces many challenges with respect to economic security as a result of a number of domestic and international factors. Despite some economic gains in the last decade, the level of human deprivation and poverty has increased. Several domestic issues—high food inflation, under-performing industrial and business sectors due to the global recession and crippling power shortages; fiscal pressures due to intensification of the war; deteriorating investment climate due to the internal security environment—have created unprecedented pressures on the economy. The global commodity and financial crises have further compounded the situation—in particular, the impact of the latter on trade and constrained resource mobilization options. While some sound macro-economic policies are currently being pursued, to address these challenges, experts are raising concerns about the rationale of others; the expected pressure on Pakistan's import bill and trade balance because of increased import of oil to feed new power generators is notable in this regard.

Secondly, energy is the lifeline of economic development. Pakistan's current 3000 MW shortfall is a stark reminder of institutional and political impediments. The former with respect to the colossal line losses and the latter in relation to politicization of major hydropower projects, given that 85% of the country's estimated 40,000 MW potential remains untapped. Both these issues merit urgent attention. The government therefore needs to act at various levels to ensure energy security. In particular, affordable alternative energy options should be explored, in view of their trenchant nature, green imprint, prospects of off-grid maintenance and potential of delivery through the market.

Thirdly, the importance of water security can hardly be over-emphasized for a country with an agriculture-based economy. Pakistan depends on the Indus River Basin—the backbone of the country's economy and the world's largest contiguous irrigated system—to provide 90 per cent of food production and 25 per cent of GDP. However, this massive infrastructure is deteriorating and is plagued by issues related to diversion of water, competition between the provinces, inefficiencies of use and problems with irrigation and drainage. There is need for action at several levels—to reform to address underlying institutional weaknesses, investments throughout the system in order to rehabilitate critical assets, and an effective diplomatic interven-

tion in relation to the Indus Water Treaty.

Fourthly, food security, which includes dimensions of availability, access and distribution, is of vital importance, given its impact on economic growth, human health and productivity as well as political stability. The food insecurity-poverty nexus is pervasive in Pakistan. The report of the Task Force on Food Security recently set up by the government, has drawn attention to the diversity of responses needed to address the challenge and has underscored the importance of achieving an average agricultural growth rate of at least 4 per cent per annum in the next decade, an equitable system of food procurement, storage and distribution and effective safety net arrangements, in addition to other measures ranging from terms of trade, agriculture credit to institutional capacity for research, as being important in this regard. Effective governance capacity will be critical to implementing these important recommendations.

Energy, water and food security are intertwined with environmental security. Pakistan suffers many conventional environmental threats—water deficits, desertification, deforestation, soil erosion—in addition to the environmental impact of industrial effluents, municipal wastes, agricultural residues, and rampant and outdoor and indoor pollution in the face of poor implementation of the National Environmental Quality Standards. These play havoc with people's health and have also been the subject of progressive public interest litigation concerning protection of the environment in Pakistan, as has been alluded to in these columns on July 25, 2009. The projected impact of climate change, unfortunately, is expected to add to these challenges by adversely impacting the ecosystem—the natural water storage capacity of glaciers and monsoon patterns—adding further to the existing water, food and energy insecurity.

The fifth human security challenge relates to health security and threats from emerging and re-emerging infections and public health emergencies of national and international concern, which can be biological or chemical in nature—terrorism related or accidental. In the last decade, SARS and Avian Flu caused significant social and economic losses. Evidence of virus entrenchment in Pakistan has been documented by the World Health Organization in its report "Human costs of Avian influenza-A (H5N1) in NWFP, Pakistan", where a chain of transmission beginning with poultry-to-human transmission followed by probable human-to-human transmission was luckily unsustained. The current outbreak of the Swine flu pandemic is dangerous as there is no way of predicting virus behaviors. Pakistan must put in place effective mechanisms, to comply with International Health Regulations 2005, to ensure that it is capable of containing these and other related threats.

The sixth security concern relates to demographic security. Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world with a rapidly burgeoning base of the population pyramid. There are two ways of looking at this situation. The abortive version of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II, which was placed in the public domain for stakeholder inputs in 2005-06 envisaged this to be an opportunity and referred to it as the population dividend. However, this dividend in the face of many human and state security threats can also become a dangerous overburden and fall prey to exploitation in extremist hands in a deeply polarized environment.

State and human security dimensions are therefore interrelated. Water and energy insecurity and political and civic instability, all of which are manifestations of poor govern-

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State and human security dimensions are therefore interrelated. Water and energy insecurity and political and civic instability, all of which are manifestations of poor governance, lead to economic and food insecurity; both of these have implications for poverty and deprivation; these in turn have a causal linkage with conflict and violence in a society. That in turn negatively impacts economic and human development and a vicious cycle is established.

Unless we deal with these problems holistically we will not be able to overcome state security challenges, which by itself has acquired many complicated dimensions in recent years. Pakistan's national security institutional arrangements must therefore take all these threats into account.

Pakistan's history of national security institutions is marked by four events. The National Security Council envisaged through the Order 14 of 1985, scrapped by the 8th Amendment; the 1997 Council on Defense and Security, which never convened; the structure proposed by the foreign office in February 1999, which could not come to fruition; and the National Security Council of 2004. Any new national security institutional framework, must pay careful attention to the interconnectedness of state security with economic and other dimensions of human security and ensure appropriate linkages between various domains. Ideally these should be reflected in the terms of reference, substantive functions and composition of the national security framework.

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