

# Conceptual Analysis of National Security

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## *Abstract*

In common parlance, security is considered as a feeling of being secure, protected or safe against potential harm or any coercive threat. Traditionally, security is perceived as national security and that is too in monoscopic vision of military security. Contrary to aforesaid school of thought, a second school of thought advocates a wider concept of security. The second thought of school called 'wider' believes in a broad concept of security which brings new dimensions to the concept. They are strongly suggesting horizontal and vertical expansion of the security concept. Thus, the new thought of school turns in favor of positive security by expanding the concept horizontally and vertically. The vertical expansion includes individual, societal, nation and international dimension and horizontal expansion includes various other dimensions like economic, societal, psychological, environmental and many more. This paper is an attempt to analyze the concept of security with greater emphasis on national security in traditional and modern context of thoughts. Keywords: Security, National Security, Sovereignty, Traditional Approach, Modern Approach, Military

## *Introduction*

Security is the immanent to the life of individual, society and a nation. From the beginning of the human civilization, security has been fundamental element of the social life. In fact, the journey from animal or noble savage human to a civilized human is the journey of exploring security and more security. The lonely human life was full of insecurity; in fact the existence of one's life was on the mercy of other insecure humans. Thus, humans organized themselves into groups to get rid of insecurity and feel more secure, however, insecurity was still there; from outside, from similar groups. Thus, the need of security can be attributed to the origin of the social life. However, there were other reasons also which significantly contributed to the evolution of human as a social animal but security can be said as a primary reason behind the evolution of society.

These groups were organized further in villages and in tribal communities. At some point of time in the history, these smaller clusters of villages united and formed a larger unit which was political in nature with an authority. There are several theories of origin of state in political discourse and literature. But one common factor can be derived from all those theories is that they all have inherent factor of 'security' that legitimates the origin of state. By putting all things together in a simple context in words of Aristotle the state "comes to be for the sake of life, and exists for the sake of the good life" and a 'good life' cannot be envisioned without the environment of security.

## *Defining the Concept of Security*

Similar to other political concepts, the concept of security is also defined in contested manner and in different context. The origin of term "security" can be traced in French and Latin language. It is assumed that the word derived from French word *sécurité* or Latin *securitas*. In almost all dictionaries and encyclopedias, the term "security" defined as freedom from threats of fear, danger and deprivation.

Buzan said, "Security is pursuit of freedom from threats".<sup>1</sup> Antom Grizald defined the security as "A conscious human endeavor to establish the state of security through social activity organized into an adequate system". He described the security as basic pre condition for the living organism. In his words, "From the evolutionary view point, security is embedded as a biological mechanism, as the tendency of an organism to survival, as an adaptation of the organism to the menace coming from the environment. Biologically speaking, security is the basic precondition for the operation of the basic life function (eating, human reproduction)."<sup>2</sup>

After World War II and during the era of cold war, the concept of security was predominately perceived as National Security and it was confined to the endeavor of elimination of military threats. During the era of Cold War, Nationalism was on the higher side, therefore, governments were obtaining absolute powers by highlighting military threats from other countries. In this scenario, individual security was dominated or eliminated to some degree by the National Security. In 1991, Barry Buzan expanded the security concept; he argued three levels of security analysis- Individual level (Human Security), National Level (National Security) and International Level (Global Security).<sup>3</sup>

There are two confronting schools of thoughts- Traditionalist and Wideners or Non Traditionalist with respect to defining the security. Traditionalists are basically realist in their approach and particularly focused to the security of state by means of military force. This school of thought evolved during the era of cold war and defined the security in context of state security. Traditionalist approach is explicitly visible in the security concept of Stephen Walt. He completely narrowed down the security studies as “the studies of the threat, use, and control of military force”<sup>4</sup> His approach was confined to the war strategy and was focused on the elimination of military threats.

The second school of thought called “widener” or “Non traditionalist” expended the dimension of security in both directions horizontally and vertically. Barry Buzan has systematically described the Horizontal and vertical dimension of security. Buzan criticized and challenged the conventional wisdom of security which was exclusively confined to the state and predominately focused on the military strategies. He argued that horizontally, the security concept must be included other issues like economic, societal and environmental and vertically, it should include Individual, social and humanity (as a whole) along with National and International security.

### *National Security*

There are four essential basic elements of state-Population, Government, Geographical territory and Sovereignty. Therefore, the existence of a state in stable condition is proportional to the stability of these four basic elements. However, it is debatable that which of these four one is comparatively more important for the existence of the state. Unanimously, it is assumed that ‘sovereignty’ is the important one. From this fact, it can be said that protecting the sovereignty is first priority of a state to remain alive with geographical integrity. The world has witnessed two world wars and they can be explained in the context of preserving, protecting and expanding the physical boundaries of sovereign state. A conclusive argument can be made as that commonly, the concept of National Security is closely linked to the protection of four basic element of state.

The above mentioned perspective of National security is predominately belongs to the Old Traditionalist school of thoughts, basically realist in approach and defines the National Security in the sense of protection of its physical integrity and sovereignty. Some scholars opined that National Security is indeed, maintenance and protection of National Interests which originate from core principles, value, independency and physical integrity, social and economic protection. It implies that National Security essentially involves the protection, maintenance and enhancement of National Interests.

The Traditionalist approach was particularly challenged by the process of globalization. In 1970s and 1980s, the bedrock of Traditionalist approach- Sovereignty of Nation State- itself was challenged. The Traditionalist thought of National Security-exclusive and supreme right over its territory, people and natural resources- began to circumscribed or loosen due to the process of globalization and emergence of multilateral agreements like Montreal Protocol (1987), UNFCCC (1992), GATT (1994) and WTO (1995). The boundaries of individual states were disappearing and the entire world was moving towards a higher level of unification. In that scenario, the concept of sovereign state and thus classical concept of National Security went under horizontal and vertical expansion or widening.

The new, contemporary school of thought (widener) argued that the concept of National Security should be seen in a wider context, especially in nonmilitary aspects. Joseph J. Romm described two particular periods which underscored the need of redefining the National Security in border context. In 1970s “which saw the US failure in Vietnam, rising inflation, the growing economic strength of Europe and Japan and the first oil shock” compelled scholars to revisit the National Security concept in the light of contemporary circumstances.<sup>5</sup> Many scholars namely, Maxwell Taylor, Lester Brown, Mcnamara, Nwolise recognized non military aspects like economic crisis, unemployment, hunger, poverty as greater threats to the National Security. Lester Brown discussed the “energy crisis as economic threat to security” along with inflation and migration and threat of climate change. By 1980, the temperature of Cold War began to decrease and

scholars like Jessica Tuchman Mathews further suggested expansion of National security to include issues of resource, environment and demography.<sup>6</sup>

The phrase 'National Security' first officially can be traced in 1945, when the US Navy Secretary said, "Our national security can only be assumed on a very broad and comprehensive front". Afterword, it had been widely used in the US administration to justify the government military actions. In 1950, Harold Lasswell described the 'National Security' as a "coordinated handling of arms, diplomacy, information and economies". In 1962, Arnold Wolfers wrote the essay "National Security as an Ambiguous Symbol" and described the various approaches to national security.<sup>7</sup>

During the World War II and Cold war era, the term 'National Security' was generally echoed in term a call for protecting the physical integrity and sovereignty of the state in context of external military threat. It was the Traditionalist, who referred the National Security as the sovereign nation state in the sense of its physical integrity. Arnold Wolfer rightly described National Security as an ambiguous term as determining the threats to the national security is a subjective perspective. Barry Buzan also unescorted the ambiguity of the concept, he argued that ambiguity in defining the national security is particularly in interest of political and military elites because they can use the undefined national security to maximize their power, influence and control by setting aside other domestic affairs by invoking the national security issue.<sup>8</sup> Some definitions from Traditionalist view point as:

- Walter Lippmann, "A nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interest to avoid war, and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war."<sup>9</sup>
- Arnold Wolfer, "Security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, he absence of fear that such values will be attacked."<sup>10</sup>
- Maniruzzaman, "National security as the protection and preservation of the minimum core values of any nation's political independence and territorial integrity."<sup>11</sup>
- International Encyclopedia of Social Science (1968), "The ability of nation to protect its internal values from external threats."<sup>12</sup>

Most of the traditional definitions are focused to the territorial and sovereign security of the state in context of external military threat. By beginning of 1970, Changing world dynamics and emergence of new economic issues in the international era propelled some scholars to see the concept of National Security beyond the traditional boundaries of national territory. Vojin Dimitijevic stated five features, he considered as pillars of National Security as:

- Existence of the state as a political Community;
- Territorial integrity (As basic right of state)
- Political Independence
- Quality of life
- Securing 'vital interest' of state in state's security policy<sup>13</sup>

Another Scholar, Mario Nobilo, who defined the national Security in modern international relations as:-

"An intricate interaction between political, economic, military, ideological, legal, social and other internal and external social factors through which individual states attempt to ensure acceptable provisions to maintain their sovereignty, territorial integrity, the physical survival of its population, political independence and possibilities for a balanced and rapid social development on an equal footing."<sup>14</sup>

The social aspect and mass issues are captured in the widener's concept of National Security. Nwoliise rightly pointed out that "Any society that seeks to attain adequate military security against the background of acute paucity of food, population explosion, low level of production, low per capital income, low technological development, inadequate and insufficient public utilities and chronic problem of unemployment has a false sense of security".<sup>15</sup> Amin Hewedy defined the National security as an activity to protect identity, existence and interests in the range of social capabilities.<sup>16</sup>

It can be seen that the new school of thought, "widener" have more emphasis on social constructivism and significant attention towards individual deprivation from the basic human needs. Richard Ullman described both the dimension of National Security as "A threat to national security is an action or sequence of events that

(A) "Threatens drastically and over a relatively brief span of time to degrade the quality of life for the inhabitants of a state," or

(B) "Threatens significantly to narrow the range of policy choices available to the government of state or to private non governmental entities (personal, groups, corporation) within the state."<sup>17</sup>

Further, the concept of National security expanded with the inclusion of 'energy security' and 'economic security'. Lester Brown, in his paper wrote, "Since the World War II, the concept of national security has

acquired an overwhelmingly military character, rooted in the assumption that the principle threat to security comes from other nations. Commonly veiled in security, consideration of military threat has become so dominant that the new threats to the security of nations-threats with which military forces cannot cope-are being ignored.”<sup>18</sup>

She further wrote that “The new sources of danger arise from oil depletion, soil erosion, land degradation, shrinking forests, deteriorating grassland, and climate alterations. These developments, affecting the natural resources and systems on which the economy depends, threaten not only national economic and political security, but the stability of international economy itself.”<sup>19</sup> Brown also identified the GHG effects or global warming as a severe potential threat to the national security.

Jessica Tuchnan Mathews, another scholar pointed out new challenges that were posing threats to the national security. She wrote, “Global developments now suggest the need for another analogous, bordering definition of National Security to include resources, environmental and demographic issues.”<sup>20</sup>

She pointed out that increasing population-mostly centered in the developing countries- make new addition to the population living in poverty and strain on the natural resources. The relation between level of population and resource base is complex in nature. Large population leads to the higher fossil fuel consumption and more release of GHG emission in the atmosphere. Consequences are clear, environmental imbalance and change in climate. The manifestation of climate change is visible in natural disasters like flood, drought, acid rain and change in rain fall pattern. Thus, she summarized that resource, environment and demographic issues are interrelated and poised as new threats to the national security.<sup>21</sup>

She further explained that the nature of environment is interdependent and hence the new political and diplomatic cooperation and constrain can emerge and reshape the traditional foreign policy, decisively. Thus, National Security-prime objective of foreign policy- is now expanded to the environmental security and consequences of environmental degradation, more specifically; consequences of climate change are regarded as threats to the National Security.<sup>22</sup>

In 2001, a Group of Minister (GoM) was constituted after Kargil conflict (1999) between India and Pakistan to analyze loopholes in security preparation. The GoM described the National Security as “A function of country’s external environment and the internal situation, as well as their interplay with each other”<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

After extracting the different approaches and perspective, conclusion can be drawn that the concept of National Security as “The measurable state of the capability of a nation to overcome the multi-dimensional threats to the apparent well-being of its people and its survival as a nation-state at any given time, by balancing all instruments of state policy through governance, that can be indexed by computation, empirically or otherwise, and is extendable to global security by variables external to it.” Therefore the concept of National Security has now more vibrant color of positivity with its traditional texture of military security.

<sup>1</sup> Buzan, B. “People, states and fear: An Agenda for security Analysis in the Post-Cold War Era”, 1991, Brighton: Weatsheaf

<sup>2</sup> Anton Grizold, “The concept of National Security in the Contemporary World” in International Journal on World Peace, Vol.11, No. 3, September 1994, pp.37-53. Available at <www.jstor.org/stable/20751984>

<sup>3</sup> Barry Buzan, supra note 1.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “The Search for Science of Strategy”, International Security, 1987, pp. 159-164

<sup>5</sup> Joseph J.Romm, “Defining National Security: The Non Military Aspects”, Council on Foreign Relation Press, US, 1993, ISBN-0-87609-135-4, p.2

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp.6-7

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.pp.6-7

<sup>8</sup> Barry Buzan, “People , States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relation”, University Press, North Carolina University, US, 1983, p.4

<sup>9</sup> Walter Lippmann, “U.S. Foreign Policy”, Hamish Hamilton Publication, London, 1944, p.27

<sup>10</sup> Arnold Wolfer quoted by Joseph J.Romm, “Defining National Security: The Non Military Aspects”, Council on Foreign Relation Press, US, 1993, ISBN-0-87609-135-4, p.5

<sup>11</sup> T.Maniruzzaman, “The Security of Small States in the World” in Canderra Papers on Strategy and Defense, No 25.1982.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted by Joseph J.Romm, “Defining National Security: The Non Military Aspects”, Council on Foreign Relation Press, US, 1993, ISBN-0-87609-135-4, p.5

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- <sup>20</sup> Jessica Tuchman Mathews, "Redefining Security" in journal "Foreign Affairs", Vol.68, No.2, 1989, pp. 162-177. Retrieved from <www.jstor.org/stable/20043906>
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>22</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>23</sup> Prabhakaran Paleri, "National Security: Imperatives and Challenges", Tata McGraw-Hill Education, 2008, ISBN-007065686X, 9780070656864. P.54

