Abstract: South Asia comprises over one-fifth of the world population and has largest human force with diversified resources. But at the same time 30-40% of its population lives below the poverty line; it has problems of health, education, development, discriminate socio-political culture and state-centric policies. A major portion of the regional states’ GDP is spent on military purchases, debt servicing and non-development expenditures. The problems compounds with internal conflicts, civil wars and insurgencies coupled with external border disputes, conflicts over natural resources and prolonged wars. These problems hamper the regional cooperation in trade, industry and investment; thus marring the human development. The mixture of traditional and non-traditional sources of security makes South Asia a highly underdeveloped region and compels to rethink the focus of regional security paradigm.

The academic debate on South Asian security remained focused on the traditional sources of security in the shape of state-centric policies and military conflicts over intra-state disputes. However, in early 1980s with the changing patterns of global and regional security environment as a result of strategic shifts, information revolution and technological developments, the debate on traditional and non-traditional security paradigm made its inroads into South Asian security calculus. The non-traditional security spheres in the shape of human, social, political and economic issues became important in the academic circles. Theoreticians and practitioners came to realize the importance of
human, social and economic security issues which became to be considered as real indicators of national strength, development, progress and prosperity.

Based on this revised academic approach on security and ground realities of South Asian problems, there is an urgent need and necessity to rethink the South Asian Security. Therefore, this paper endeavors to analyze this debate in the theoretical perspective though historical and contemporary dimensions.

Conceptual Debate over Changing Dimensions of Security

Understanding security is complex because of its elastic nature. The entire twentieth century was devoted to ‘State Security Paradigm’, where the notion of power and force were predominantly present. The inter-state wars, military conflicts, and ‘East-West rivalry dominated the global/regional security environment. And so was the academic/intellectual debate by the ‘realist perspective’. In the traditional sense the concept of security is based on safeguarding the national identity, territorial integrity and independence. Previously there were two approaches vis-à-vis the attainment of security; i.e. peace and power. Lasting peace would provide the security for all, and power to reach a dominating position to acquire security. So, the notions of peace and power were predominantly present. Yet the political thinkers deny the fact that security ranks prominently among the problems facing humanity. Therefore, with the passage of time the definition of security has been broadening beyond its traditional usage. It is expanded in all its aspect, with respect to scope; from national to international and from regional to global levels, and with respect to context; from traditional to non-traditional level. Three are four approaches vis-à-vis the security;

a) **National Security**- according to this approach, the primary concern is well being and survival of a state and use of military is considered as instrumental for survival.

b) **International Security**- this approach recognizes a security dilemma that the security of one state is interconnected with other. This approach was dominant
during the Cold War and collective use of military power is important instrument here.

c) **Regional Security**- this approach is conceptually different from international but the perspective is the same as it is focused on a particular region.

d) **Global Security**- this approach emerges from idealist school of thought, who wants to broaden the concept beyond traditional security to non-traditional security and also want to replace wars through peaceful means. This approach is most debatable nowadays among the western strategic thinkers.

Since the end of Cold War people, especially in the western world, began to think on the lines of non-traditional security but this approach was being ignored in the third world. As Barry Buzan highlighted that in the Post-Cold War the international political system has been divided into two worlds; a zone of peace and zone of conflict. Western states that are in the zone of peace have shifted their focus from military security concerns to much wider, diverse and not easily understandable non-military security concerns. And the countries that lie in the zone of conflict mostly underdeveloped, military threats are still part of security concerns rather non-military. So in this context South Asia falls in the zone of conflict.

The shift in the state centric view of security began to materialize in the beginning of 1990s through following factors;

1. **End of Cold War**- the risk of East-West confrontation disappeared and the world transformed from bipolarity to multi-polarity

2. **Globalization**- caused political and economic interdependence or some considered it as economic hegemony

3. **Information Revolution**- news now has no barriers of time and space

The concept of regional security gave birth to regional institutions, which are primarily economic in character. Such as creation of OSCE (Organization of Security and Co-operation) in
Europe to incorporate economic and environmental issues alongside traditional political/military concerns and democracy/Human rights. It reflected a desire to reduce political and military conflicts through economic interdependence, cooperation and integration. This gave birth to the notions of ‘economic security’ and ‘comprehensive security’.

The notion of comprehensive security leads us to think about the security involving both aspects of threat; military and non-military. Such as, John M. Handley presented a two dimensional framework to approach security that is, actors and power. He further divide actors into state and non-state actors and further power into military and non-military. The notion of comprehensive security refers to the security concerns that have to look into political, economic and socio-cultural dimension of security and it is different from human security that refer to human well being. We also witnessed a ‘diversified security agenda’, which brought ‘non-military risks’ having impact on human beings, livestock and agriculture besides damaging the infrastructural development. In this ‘diversified security agenda’ the non-traditional actors and factors became active, which are;

1. Actors- that are challenging the state structure and international order, such as MNC’s (Multi National Companies) especially in economic arena, TNO’S (Trans-National Organizations) includes terrorism, drugs, arms and human smuggling, and NSA’s (Non-State Actors) in the aftermath of 9-11 challenging the states and political authorities.

2. New factors to exercise power such as, globalization, democratization and privatization. Importantly, these non-military factors are not subject to military discipline.

3. Non-military deaths, poverty, famine, hunger, health issues and natural disasters. 40% of world population is poor living below poverty line(less than $2 per day). Scarcity of food, over population, lack of water, problem of market access and gap between demand and supply. Hunger- its main cause is structural such as sanctions, around 800 million people are hungry and 24,000 die daily because of hunger in the world. Health also
constitutes a security problem especially vis-à-vis economy, diseases such as ‘Aids’, these kinds of diseases when erupt in a youth effect their capacity to contribute in national economy and unhealthy peoples become a burden for economy and effect the state solidarity.

4. Natural Disasters- such as flood, Tsunami, which caused 300,000 deaths and earthquake in the Sub-continent in October 2005, 100,000 lives were lost and on the same way Katrina and Rita in the Autumn of 2005. These forms the non-military deaths.

5. Governance- it is also an issue of human rights and also of political rights of the individuals involving sense of participation, political awareness and education. In this regard three important steps are necessary for legitimate and good governance, free and fair elections, absence of corruption at all levels and approval of the regime at all levels. Violence, instability and socio-political grievances all are outcomes of incompetent governance. There is a contestable view presented by Russet and Brown that war is rare, perhaps non-existent between democracies.8

This highlights the issue of ‘human security’ or non-traditional security threats that are no less important than traditional security today.9 Security becomes threat perception and protection at all levels from individual to state. The concept of traditional security is restricted up to the military arena and is the ability to just defend the border.10 So, over the last few decade the concept of security and threat broadened, in addition to securing borders, peoples, values and institutions we have come to understand the dangers of environmental pollution, transnational terrorism, massive population movements and infection diseases such HIV Aids.11 According to Mahbub ul Haq, human security means; first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, diseases and repression and second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life.12 According to UNDP’s definition ‘human security includes issues such as unchecked population growth, disparities
in economic opportunities, migration pressures, environmental degradation, drug trafficking and international terrorism.\textsuperscript{13}

Many theoreticians have conceptualized these issues but here reference is made of Stephanie G. Neuman who defines ‘national security’ incorporating military, political, social, economic and administrative issues.\textsuperscript{14} The works of Barry Buzan\textsuperscript{15} in the traditional sphere and Mohammad Ayoob’s\textsuperscript{16} in the non-traditional sphere form the basis of this academic debate in the South Asian context.

**Regional Security Situation in South Asia**

South Asian regional security situation is diverse. Seven less developed countries form this diverse region; India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives. The regional security structure is bipolar and Indo-Pakistan rivalry defines regional strategic environment, which are both nuclear powers and fighting with each other since their independence. India is a regional dominant power and all other regional countries are feeling insecure around it. While with respect to human and non-traditional security, the region present a very gloomy picture.

**Traditional Security Perspective**

We can discuss the traditional security environment at three levels; domestic, regional and extra-regional level. Domestic security situation is worse in almost all the regional states because of ethnic and religious diversity. Separatist and identity movements are common in every state. Domestic political instabilities and violent political culture also have regional implications. Sri Lanka, because of ethno-religious diversity is in a state of civil war because of confrontation between Sinhalese and Tamil. Sinhalese constitute 75\% of Sri Lankan population and practice Buddhism, and on the other hand Tamils relate to Hinduism constantly threatening the authorities. War is going on between state and LTTE (Liberation Tigers of
Re-Thinking the South Asian Security

Tamils Eelam) that has caused more than 60,000 deaths and also has impacted the regional politics. In Bangladesh and Nepal, domestic security situation reflects instability and both seems to be on the brink of civil war because of violent domestic political pattern. Clashes in Bangladesh between National Party and Awami League in December 2006, and in Nepal violent protest by the people in favor of democracy in April 2006.

Pakistan reflects political instability because of corrupt and incompetent political system and constant military domination over political arena. It is also confronted with sectarian and ethnic strife, spill over effects of Afghan civil war and terrorism. Further the situations in Sindh, Balochistan and Frontier are violent. Like Pakistan, India presents the same situation, corruption scandals, and unstable governments. And further ethnic, religious and domestic political violence are the main problems. Too many separatist movements are going on in India specially unrest in seven sister states, Kashmir, insurgency in Punjab and most important violence between Hindus and Muslims.

Regionally, South Asia is a highly unpredictable nuclearized region. In President Clinton remarks the most dangerous place on the earth. Although, nuclearization of South Asia and deterrence has minimized the risk of further war and peace has become a strategic compulsion as wars and conflicts for the last 60 years have yielded nothing. The small regional states feel danger to their sovereignty from the Indian belligerent/hostile attitude. There are four key patterns of conflict in the region revolving around India. First, tension between India and Nepal over the issues of borders, trade and transit agreement, migrants and water. Second, tension between India and Bangladesh over the issue of water allocation, illegal migration and insurgency. Third, tension between Sri Lanka and India over the Tamil problem. Fourth and most important is the long standing violent conflict between Pakistan and India over the multiple issues. Both are nuclear powers and have fought three wars. Pakistan always blamed India that its leadership wants
collapse of Pakistan while the Indian leadership blames Pakistan for its efforts to seek fragmentation of India.

Globally, South Asia occupies a central position that is why there are multiple factors and actors that affect its security. Such as, pattern of China, India and Pakistan, Indo-Russian relation and its implications for the regional security environment. The growing US-Israel-India triangle and its regional effects especially with regard to Pakistan, such as US nuclear non-proliferation policy and war against terrorism and the spill over effects of Afghanistan crises. The ideological fall out of Shia-Sunni confrontation and Saudi-Iran links. Then the great powers policies towards the region affect the regional security; the US-Soviet confrontation during the Cold War and currently, the US policy of peace in the sub-continent, particularly a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir problem, nonproliferation, and recognition of India as the dominant regional power with regional responsibilities for peace. Another extra-regional player China is now worried over handing over regional responsibilities of peace to India.

Non-Traditional Security Perspective

South Asia, is facing numerous conflicting challenges vis-à-vis its security, these challenges are not only inter-state and intra-state but also a competition between military and human security. South Asia reflects a miserable picture in the context of non-traditional or human security that requires revision of policies by the regional states. South Asia not only accounts for 1/5th of the world population but also account for (44%) 488 million poor people out of 1.4 billions that constitute half of the world poor. Regional countries which are having problems of governance and political participation, spends around 70-80% on debt serving and defense, 13% on recurring expenditures and only 5-7% on social sector. Moreover, despite having a large working force, facing the problem of human resource development. The real dilemma which the policy makers of this region are now facing is how to maintain balance between military security and human security. This sort of political,
economic, social deprivations and discriminations shape the mindset of the inhabitants of the region and lead to the formation of conflicts and set a stage for terrorism. However, the major security threats in the region are emanating from the non-military sources, especially in the post-Cold War and post-nuclearization of the region, such as, export of extremist ideology, trans-border terrorism, spread of light weapons, growing menace of drug trafficking, trans-national crimes, illegal migration, environmental problems and possible shortage of energy supplies, water and food. These threats not only cause regional conflicts but also provide opportunities to extra-regional forces to intervene in the region.

**Major Non-Traditional Problems of the Region**

South Asia is considered as poorest, illiterate, malnourished and least gender sensitive region of the world but the real dilemma, despite awareness about these problems, is that regional policy makers are still confused whether they spend on people or on arms. For example, India, is considered as 6th military power with nuclear weapons and world’s 10th largest economy, its GDP is growing with 7% and its education system is second largest in the world, but nearly 70% of India’s more than one billion people live in more than 500,000 villages connected largely by dusty tracks, dependent on agriculture and facing enduring shortage of electricity and water. Poverty in the region is endemic and constantly increasing. As discussed, 488 million out of 1.4 billion are poor in the region, more than 80% in India, Bangladesh, and Nepal, 73.6% in Pakistan and 41.6% in Sri Lanka. There is also high level of income inequalities and unequal access to facilities such as health, education and employment. In South Asia governments spend very low on health. It is the only region of the world that spends less than $30 per person on health that reflects a worse situation. Malaria, Tuberculoses and HIV/Aids are the most sever diseases present in the region but the health care system of the region is inequitable and yet to provide same services vis-à-vis health to all.
Environmental security is a principal challenge to the South Asian states. As the relationship between nature and humanity is interdependent, so in this regard there is a dire need to maintain environmental integrity and development. As most of the South Asian population lives in rural areas and river water is a major source of drinking water and irrigation. Rapid increase in population, patterns of agriculture and industrialization, deforestation and soil erosion can harm the environment that can cause migration which is common in South Asia and heightened the risk of insecurity in the region. There is a need to manage the problems threatening environment. The issues involved in environment are numerous, such as, ecosystem disruption, energy problem, population issue, food related problems, economic issues and civil strife. Moreover, economic growth is a major determinant of state power. South Asia with high poverty rate, absence of health and education facilities cannot provide the economic security to its people. For the regional states major problem is how to ensure the economic security to the individuals. Energy constitutes a major problem for all the regional states and there is a possibility that in future it might adopt a dangerous manifestation. Although the regional states have devised numerous policies to meet this emerging challenge but the situation is getting worse and worse. Pakistan and India are looking for a regional gas-pipeline to meet their growing energy demands.

In Nepal, only 40% of its population has access to electricity and in Bangladesh only 30% population has an access to electricity. So in this scenario there is a dire need that policy makers should focus on these problems. As earlier discussed that South Asia is a highly diverse region and divided on the ethnic, religious and sectarian lines. In this scenario ensuring social security with equal status and without discrimination is a challenge for the regional states. The issues of migration, social and ethnic cleansing, and competition among social groups are the major sources of conflicts and social insecurities. On the other hand ensuring political security is equally important for ensuring social security. Political security has two important aspects; first is the issue of competent governance with
participation of common people in political process. In this respect there is severe deficit in this region, as most of the democracies are fragile and the region presents a violent political picture. Secondly, the politico-ideological threats to the security such as threat of terrorism and other cross-region issues such as human, drug and arms trafficking.

### Conclusion

The traditional and non-traditional security matter are equally important in South Asia but the regional states focus more on ‘state centric’ than ‘societal centric’ policies. There are some major factors behind these state centric bias; first the mindsets of the ruling elite due to which they adopt outdated approach and secondly are the expression of false ego, pride and chauvinism that tend to promote sense of insecurity and thirdly is the militarized politics. Now, the region requires having a balanced approach between traditional and non-traditional security issues. The decision makers should adopt multi-dimensional and comprehensive approaches to meet these challenges and should maintain a fine balance between the two sides at the domestic level. The regional level requires collective efforts to meet the non-traditional security challenges and to resolve the traditional inter-state and intra-state conflicts through the forum of SAARC.

And finally there is a need of legitimate governance with comprehensive public participation. However, the resolution of inter-state traditional security challenges of the region is a precondition to divert the attention of the policy makers from traditional to non-traditional paradigm. Homor Dixon rightly argued that severe environmental scarcities often contribute to major civil violence, and countries are more vulnerable to this violence, because large fraction of population depends for their day to day livelihoods on local renewable resources. Moreover, poor countries are often unable to adapt effectively to environmental scarcity because their states are weak, markets inefficient and corrupt, and human capital inadequate.
same situation is emerging in South Asia and in order to avoid it there is a dire need to rethink the South Asian security. South Asia is still moving on a traditional track hence requires adopting new approaches towards the changing dimensions of security. Today the people of South Asia should decide that either they have to fight with each other or with poverty, illiteracy and economic development.

References and Notes

* Paper Presented at the International Conference on Religion, Politics and Society in South Asia, the Punjab University, Lahore, Pakistan, 19 – 20th February 2007.


5 Barry Buzan and Gowhar Rizvi, op. cit.


25 Ibid.


27 Ibid.


31 Ibid.