

The meaning of national security politics essay



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The development of the concept of security in the global scenario is being influenced by the changes in environment. This could be clearly seen in the changes of the nature of security during the world war and the post cold war era. In post cold war era, the emergence of new civil conflicts, large-scale atrocities and even genocide are in incremental rate. As globalization takes shape in the post cold war era, it is strongly believe that it will drag along significant increment in violent crimes, drug trades, transnational terrorism, diseases, environmental degradation and many other aspects of human life. These contemporary security concerns couples with the enduring problems of ethnic violence and inter-state conflicts are now at the forefront of potential and existing threats.

3. 2 CONCEPTUAL MEANING OF SECURITY

Security according to Barry Buzan is an “ under-developed concept” (Hawkesworth and Kogan, Vol. 2[46]). Its status as a controversial political value and its habitual misuse as a rationale for state policies and actions, imply that the concept lacks of the intrinsic meaning. Buzan (1991) explains that one of the reasons behind the slow conceptual development of security can be attributed to the fact that the concept defies simple definition[47]. Another is that power dominates security in the realist school, which has been preeminent in international relations theory. Security has always been interpreted as the natural consequence of effective accumulation and exertion of power.

Security is intrinsically a relational concept. In an objective sense, it measures the absence of threats to acquired values. In a subjective sense,

security measures the absence of fear that such values will be attacked[48]. Lexical definitions of being secure refer to being “ safe against attack, impregnable, reliable ...,” on the contrary, and to being “ untroubled by danger or apprehension” on the other[49]. This definition points to the relational (subjective) nature of the concept of security. One should note that the objective physical condition favorable to one’s secure existence has meaning only when set against the capabilities and intentions of possible adversaries. This also suggests that there can be no absolute definition of security.

3. 3 THE MEANING OF NATIONAL SECURITY

The broadening of the scope of security in the context of the nation-state is a controversial issue. As mentioned, there are scholars who were against the move to broaden the scope and meaning of national security for fear of destroying the analytical utility of the concept. Richard Ullman who initially supported the call to widen the scope of security eventually contradicted his initial proposition and is now engaged in a discourse with the proponents of a broader scope of security. According to Ullman (1995), “ If national security encompasses all serious and urgent threats to a nation state and its citizens, we will eventually find ourselves using a different term when we wish to make clear that our subject is the threats that might be posed by the military force of other states”[50].

In the same article, he said that the “ war problem” in security is conceptually distinct from other concerns like environmental degradation or urban violence, which are better categorized as threats to well-being. The

problem of defining national security springs from the fact that the meaning of security itself is ambiguous. More importantly, if one uses the state as the referent, as the term national security suggests, he will then encounter the problem of who defines national interests or set the national security agenda of the state. Some scholars define security or national security as “ the protection and enhancement of values that the authoritative decision makers deem vital for the survival and well-being of the community”[51]. However, this definition of security carries with it the problems that were discussed in the previous section. Although it is true that the regime aggregates the interests of the people, to define security or national security along this line or define security from perspective of the regime is unwarranted. If one agrees that the regime is both a source of threats and a producer of insecurity, then the concept must not be defined only from this perspective. The values that the authoritative decision makers seek to protect and enhance, which are deemed necessary for the well-being of the community, often do not constitute the national security or interests of the state. Hence, they are better labeled as the national security agenda.

National security is a condition open to the assessment and evaluation of both the regime and the people. Whether or not the national security agenda represents the state’s national interests is another case in point. The definition of national security interest is relative to the one defining it. On the other hand, the national security agenda can be defined objectively and easily inferred from the national security policies of the government.

National Security is better defined as “ the condition wherein the people’s way of life and institutions, their territorial integrity and sovereignty

including their well-being are protected and enhanced”[52]. This definition captures the essence of the “ state” as composed of the people and the regime. It talks about two concerns, that of the people’s interest (well being) and that of the regime (sovereignty).

3. 4 PILLARS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

National Security rests on several pillars: social cohesion and solidarity, economic prosperity and stability, political unity and stability. Genuine security cannot be achieved if any of these pillars are absent[53]. The degree of security, which a country enjoys, depends ultimately on the strength of the pillars of national security. A country cannot be secure when one of its national security pillars is tenuous. These three pillars of security are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, they must be built simultaneously. The responsibility of building these pillars rest on the people and the government/regime. The government leads the people while the people provide support to the government. By analogy, the government serves as the equipment or machinery for building the pillars while the people serve as the laborers, who use the equipment in building the foundations of national security.

Social Cohesion and Stability

Peaceful and harmonious co-existence among the people, regardless of social and cultural differences, is a foundation of national security[54]. This is achieved when people observe mutual respect for their values and beliefs.

People must also offer cooperation and mutual support. Social cohesion allows consensus building necessary for effective decision-making. With

social cohesion, the choices, decisions, and the consequent actions that government undertakes based on the concerns of the people become effective and persist despite challenges from the outside. Social cohesion embraces concepts such as moral spiritual consensus and cultural cohesiveness.

Economic Prosperity and Stability

Economic prosperity enhances the well being of the people. Without economic prosperity, the aspirations of the people to live a decent life cannot be attained. It is only when the country enjoys economic prosperity that people can live with dignity. It is a key element in augmenting national power, prestige, and influence. The development and sustenance of diplomatic and military power heavily depends on this. Economic prosperity embraces concepts such as ecological balance and sustainable development[55].

Political Unity and Stability

Political unity means that there is cooperation among the different branches of government. It exists when those who exercise legitimate authority and political power act in concert toward the attainment common goals. When the political leadership is divided, the people are caught in a quandary as to which among those who exercise legitimate authority and political power should they support[56]. This puts the people in a dilemma where they have reservations and doubts on the policies and actions that the government undertakes. Public support is therefore essential to the government's success in meeting security challenges.

The social, economic, and political aspects are permanent elements of national security foundations. The customs, traditions, laws, policies shall determine their respective status and quality, and strategies adopted by the government. The three pillars shall be created and shall operate within the context of the prevailing politico-legal organizing ideology of the state. It should be noted that no single pillar could guarantee security on its own.

3. 5 THE DYNAMICS OF THE FOUNDATIONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

The pillars of national security are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Social cohesion affects economic prosperity and stability. Social divisions and strife (e. g., sectoral or ethno-linguistic conflicts) could retard the nation's economic development activities. For instance, policy disagreements between the government and the private sector could eventually affect the welfare of the people and the nation's income. Economic prosperity or the level of development of the nation's economy and the peoples' sense of security has a positive correlation. Citizens of developed countries certainly feel more secure than those of underdeveloped countries. Economic development and prosperity are perhaps the ultimate objective a nation seeks to achieve. Economic development affects social cohesion[57]. When there is only a small pie available to be divided for the people, equal distribution will create a situation where each of the recipients get a small piece not sufficient for his needs. However, unequal distribution will leave others with little or no piece at all. Both situations leave the people dissatisfied.

From Indonesia's experience, economic instability can undermine the legitimacy of the regime. Barely ten months after the July 2, 1997 financial

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crisis hit Thailand, the regime of President Suharto was toppled. Although Indonesia is a relatively rich country in terms of natural resources and has achieved a relatively high economic growth prior the financial crisis, economic instability made the Suharto regime unpopular, which led to its demise[58].

Economic growth, once attained, does not automatically translate and ensure security. When the fruits of economic growth are not equitably distributed within domestic society, the threat of social unrest remains. Inequity or the rising inequality in the distribution of economic gains creates social divisions that could lead to violence and social anarchy. Political unity refers to a united leadership. Unity among the political leaders from the different branches of government facilitates fast and effective implementation of policies and programs, which are requisites of a secure nation. It allows government to take firm and decisive steps in addressing the different challenges that the nation faces. It also facilitates the quick delivery of services needed by the people. Each of the pillars of national security has to be stable and solid. Social cohesion, economic prosperity, and political unity if not stable and solid will not lead to genuine security. Thus, once these pillars have been built, they have to be maintained, protected, and enhanced. These are the basic responsibilities of a state.

3. 6 BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS OF NATIONAL SECURITY

The different pillars of national security are not intrinsic to every nation. They have to be built. The responsibility of building the foundations of national security ultimately rests on the people as its ultimate beneficiary,

and the duly constituted government, which shall exercise authority delegated to it by the people[59]. The regime shall lead the people towards the attainment of national security by formulating appropriate policies and strategies, and laws conducive to the enhancement and protection of national security interests. The people on the other hand, shall support the government in its security engagements. The government, through the different agencies and instrumentalities, has the responsibility of formulating appropriate policies, as well as strategies, which will pave way to the realization of the aspirations of the people.

3. 7 DIPLOMACY AND MILITARY

Security is a condition or state of affairs, which can be created or attained using the different political instruments such as diplomacy and military. In the literature, three conventional instruments of national power have been identified: economic, politico-diplomatic, and military instruments[60]. The economic instrument refers to the use of economic rewards and/or penalties to influence the policies of government leaders or states. This is done through Aid, Trade Preference Status, Trade Embargo, etc. The diplomatic instrument consists of the activities of a country's diplomats to convince another party or state to comply with the desired policy preferences of the former. The military instrument refers to the outright use or employment of force to get states to comply with the desired policies.

In this framework, the instruments of national power include only diplomacy and military. Economic strength is not included in the list. The economic aspect or the level of economic development is identified as a foundation

and not as an instrument for the pursuit of national security interests and objectives. The reason being is that economic strength, as an instrument, finds expression in diplomacy (economic punishment or rewards) and a sophisticated military. Japan and the US are both economically prosperous countries, yet their abilities to influence the policies of other states differ.

Diplomacy is commonly understood as belonging only to the realm of foreign relations. This is understandable since, in most cases, diplomacy finds its utility in the conduct of international relations. Under this framework, diplomacy is broadly defined as a means to shape the security environment by influencing policies and/or behavior of political actors, state and non-state actors alike, through an act of persuasion[61]. This definition extends to actors in the domestic arena and is not limited to international relations. This broader definition of diplomacy does not mean that all acts of persuasion are diplomatic acts. Diplomacy applies only to political entities or groups[62].

Interstate diplomacy and intrastate diplomacy have the same purpose and utility. The only difference between the two is that in the interstate diplomacy parties involved have mutual acknowledgement of their sovereignties while the opposite is true in the intrastate diplomacy. Example is the peace engagement the Philippine government had with the MNLF and the current peace engagement of the government with the MILF.

Diplomacy in international relations is an act of one sovereign nation to influence the behaviors or policies of another sovereign nation by means of persuasion. Diplomacy is defined as such a process because one state (object of persuasion) is not subject to the laws the other (persuading state)

[63]. Thus, the former cannot be compelled to behave according to the latter's desire. In most cases, persuasion is a function of economic punishment or reward. Thus, effective diplomacy must be back up by economic rewards or economic punishment. This is one reason why the economic aspect is treated as foundation and not as instrument.

Military instrument, like diplomacy is a function of economic development. Government's capability to acquire sophisticated military arsenal and build a strong and capable armed force depends on the country's economic status. The modernization of the nation's armed force requires the backing of its economic and technological forces, and the modernization level of national defense can only be improved gradually along with the enhancement of the country's economic strength. Further, a capable armed force complements diplomacy. Often, when one carries a big stick, there is little room for discussion.

The effectiveness of military and diplomatic instruments depends heavily on the state's economic status. The question of when, how, and against whom these instruments will be used is a matter of choice of the people, as articulated by the government. Political unity and social cohesion, therefore, affects the manner, timing, and the object of the political instruments. The strength and effectiveness of the instruments depends on the strength and stability of the foundations of national security.

3. 8 NATIONAL SECURITY INSTRUMENTS AND NATIONAL SECURITY FOUNDATION

The elements of national power include social, politico-diplomatic, economic, and military aspects. Accordingly, national unity (consisting of social cohesion and political unity and solidarity), economic solidarity and strength, diplomatic and military strength and capability of the state are all identified in the literature as instruments, which the state may use in pursuing its national security objectives or interests[64]. Thus it is deemed necessary to separate social cohesion, political unity, solidarity, and economic strength from the list of instruments. Although all of these are instrumental in the state's successes or failures in pursuing national interests, it is important that they be distinguished, based on the functions they support.

One reason is that the social, political, and economic aspects of security are often developed over a long period. Little can be done, at least in the short run, when the state's reserves of raw materials, socio-political structure, and other initiatives require the formulation of a range of policy instruments that are not normally available. This distinction between the foundations and instruments of national security is perhaps best explained by the words of Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad when he defined security as follows, " Security is not just a matter of military capability. National security is inseparable from political stability, economic success, and social harmony. Without these all the guns in the world cannot prevent a country from being overcome by its enemies, whose ambitions can sometimes be fulfilled without firing a single shot[65]". Political, economy and social stabilities are thus, contributors and essentials to achieve security.

3. 9 SUMMARY

In summary, in the literature, the people and the state are the only identified two distinct referents of security. This divide between the people and state is unwarranted. As it is, the people are an essential element of the state and that there are two organic/living components of the state: government and the people. The regime exercises authority over the people according to the political-legal ideology adopted by the state.

However, there is an analytical utility in distinguishing the regime from the state. The usual equation of the regime with the state makes analysis difficult and the conclusions based on this analysis are often contestable. Sometimes, identified threats to state security are actually threats not to the state but only to the regime. Similarly, the interest of the regime is not equivalent to the interest of the state and the latter's interests may in fact serve as threats to the security of the people.

National interests composed of the people's and the regime's interests shall be the responsibility of the state (people and government)[66]. In the realm of international relations, the state shall be the key actor (state is represented by the government). Although he acknowledges the existence of non-state groupings (i. e., multi-national companies and non-government organizations), he believes that the government remains the final arbiter on the demands of these groupings. The interests of these groups shall be included in the aggregation process and shall be included in the security agenda of the state.