**The other security threats**

BY ALI TAUQEER SHEIK H 2022-01-20

THE formulation of the National Security Policy has made two key contributions to the security discourse. First, it has opened up space for non-military threats to be considered. Many issues can now be framed as legitimately mainstream security concerns. Second, the NSP has lef t the door ajar to view many of the newly recognised non-traditional security threats as transnational. NTS threats can be primarily internal, external or a hybrid of internal and external factors casting a long shadow on internal and external security. The scope for resolving security threats has therefore expanded and the symbiotic relationship between traditional and nontraditional threats has been recognised.  
  
The NSP, however, has not fully grasped the complexity of NTS threats to Pakistan and how they impinge on the country`s internal and external security environment. For example, it has not laid out how poverty and degrading natural resources intersect. No wonder it has not shown any particular concern about growing poverty or collapsing ecosystems. In fact, it uses the word `ecosystems` only for health and technology ecosystems and the word `environment` is used only to refer to the global, security or business environment! The NSP has not recognised how the slow onset of climate change and frequent disaster events are hampering economic development and posing existential threats.  
  
If not these, what else would deserve to be at the heart of the national security preoccupation? While the NSP claims it is citizen-centric and its `core` is economic development aimed at increasing the size of the economic pie, it has not explicitly recognised social, environmental and sustainability concerns that underpin human empowerment and well-being that are essential for internal and external peace and security. It has not offered a credible compass to determine the direction of the journey.  
  
Dr Mehboobul H aq had, several decades ago, argued about the centrality of human development. He had envisioned it as a process of expanding opportunities, improving well-being and livelihoods in order to enrich people`s lives. While he had laid the foundation for linkages between human development, productivity and equity for economic growth, four basic pillars of human development are now univer-sally recognised: equity, productivity, empowerment and sustainability that the NSP has brushed aside. The NSP has not devolved any of these concepts. For the NSP, human development and economic growth are essential for national security but, ironically, they are not seen as the raison d`être of society; rather as fodder for traditional security.  
  
Pakistan faces many complex and multidimensional NTS threats and the list is growing. Most such NTS threats arise primarily from non-military sources requiring political, economic and social responses. Several new factors have come to occupy centre stage including the debt burden and the threat of default or vigilantism nurtured by populist politics.  
  
Traditional and non-traditional security threats in the country emanate from two distinct realms and paradigms: Traditional national security more often than not is a zero-sum game. The wins are defined in absolute, unconditional terms. It is always black or white, with little space for grey. Each side aspires to defeat, if not annihilate, the other in case of an outbreak of hostilities. The need for preparedness often entails an arms race and, in order to reduce tensions, certain confidence-building measures are negotiated or undertaken unilaterally. Further, it aims to isolate the adversary in order to have a favourable balance of power.  
  
In addition to weaponry, technology and intelligence, the NSP aims to converge all elements of national power, something it has not coherently defined but that includes diplomacy, information, military and economic power to achieve optimal outcomes. The India-Pakistan rivalry is a classic case of adversarial ties in the traditional national security debate. During the Cold War, the US had lured the Soviet Union into an unaffordable weapon system upgradation race that would have not been possible without its economic prowess. Instead of letting the cold warriors play with fire, Henry Kissinger initiated a period of détente by building Soviet stakes in the international system as part of US national security policy for better predictability in the system.  
  
Non-traditional security threats do not seek todestroy or defeat the `enemy`, but aspire instead to engage with the adversary for mutual benefit.  
  
Collaborations are sought to devise win-win propositions as is seen these days in the present phase of entangled Sino-American diplomacy under the revised US national security policy. Information and knowledge are shared to devise collaborative or coordinated initiatives and actions. Constructive engagement is aspired to in order to build the stakes of the adversary in continuation of the system.  
  
Détente is used for reducing tension and strengthening economic resilience. The five areas mentioned in the NSP population and migration, health, climate and water, food and gender security as well as the management of Indus basin and its tributaries, early warning systems for floods and drought, groundwater flows, polluted air and water bodies are all by nature transboundary, requiring transboundary negotiated mechanisms.  
  
It is obvious that several NTS threats are transnational and it is beyond Pakistan`s capacity to undertake unilateral remedial measures to counter them.  
  
National solutions are often inadequate, and would essentially require regional and multilateral cooperation. In other words, security can no longer be defined in terms of state security only as in state sovereignty or territorial integrity. Instead, it needs to be defined broadly to also include people and their quality of life, well-being and dignity at the individual, community and societal levels.  
  
Does it mean that traditional and non-traditional security paradigms are mutually exclusive or can they be pursued concurrently? It is clear that human empowerment and economic development cannot be attained without addressing NTS threats.  
  
Addressing these will add to national power and climate resilience. The ultimate objective of the NSP has to be seen as collectively building stakes in prosperity and human empowerment, fulfilment, and dignity. NTS threats can best be met by adopting a `whole of society,` supported by `whole of government`, approach. One can only hope the NSP will help us move in that direction.  The writer is an expert on climate change and development.