Nontraditional Security Diplomacy: An Ultimate Option for South Asia

Dr. Imran Ali Sandano

Abstract

Nontraditional security (NTS) issues like climate degradation, transnational crime, public health epidemics, terrorism - extremism, natural disasters, energy crisis, economic crisis, drugs trafficking, illegal migration, cybercrimes, maritime piracy, money laundering, and nuclear proliferation, have opened a new debate in international security and international relations. These issues are diverse and interconnected which cannot be tackled by any single entity, government, organization, and strategy. Due to disagreement and traditional hostility South Asian countries have become the hub of such NTS issues. Their diplomatic relations on NTS issues may open new options for regional integrity and stability. In this regard, this study proposes a new diplomatic approach to "Nontraditional Security Diplomacy." It demonstrates that how NTS issues become the element of diplomatic schema and on priority basis get a positive altitude. It also clarifies the connection between traditional and nontraditional security within South Asian regions, and evaluates the ways in which regional countries may collaborate on NTS issues. This study also argues that positive security can be a potential variable for NTS diplomacy to discourage negative security in the region and becomes a useful option to develop peaceful and durable diplomatic relations within regional states.

Keywords: Nontraditional security, NTS diplomacy, positive security, negative security, South Asia.

Introduction

After the end of the Cold War, in order to meet the challenges of nontraditional security, security research was bound to go beyond the scope of military security studies, strategic studies and peace studies (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). In this regard, nontraditional security studies (NTSS) flourished and established its edge in international arena. Unfortunately, academicians and research scholars have established their own way to explain it, which has created confusion about its definition. Despite various opposing observations, NTSS attained boost, especially in the perspective of human security. Divergent visions on NTSS have brought series of broad and narrow concepts, however, NTSS experts are consistent on its scope and rationality (Kisters' kyj, 1996). It is merely a combination of different school of thoughts which have come under the academic debate of traditional international security. The constructivist security studies, post-colonialist security studies, human security studies, critical security studies, feminist security studies, Copenhagen school and poststructuralist security studies are the prominent academic concepts where NTSS stands.

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Nontraditional security (NTS) challenges are multidimensional but its diplomatic approach has potential to intensify human security. Unfortunately, the prospective of human security is creating confusion in the South Asian countries, because they have not develop good cordial relationship and believe that it may harm their national integrity and security. Obviously, it does not mean that the scholarship of NTS is against the sovereignty of state and national security. The sovereign state endures a dynamic and perhaps the most significant actor regarding questions like: who gives security and by what process. Nevertheless this proposal is unable to get along with the understanding that, it is a state which is facing NTS challenges and becoming more important to work hand in hand with other states, civil societies and non-governmental organizations. Actually, in some particular areas like humanitarian crises and natural disasters non-governmental organizations are performing very important role. Besides, NTS threats have become the substantial trauma to the all susceptible groups and individuals.

Thus, the state is no more a single referent object of security because the changing dynamics of security have produced new referent objects, like individuals, communities, groups and some NTS issues such as environmental system (Buzan, Wæver, & De Wilde, 1998). NTS challenges are directly or indirectly affecting individuals, communities and groups in such a manner that they are becoming the center of security concerns. Therefore, one may go beyond the national boundaries to help those individuals and groups which are at risk due to these challenges.

This paper proposes a new diplomatic approach of 'NTS diplomacy.' It is all about security and security cooperation which contains more functional cooperation. NTS challenges have opened new fronts to tackle; it is increasingly occupying the resources and time of national and international security experts. The NTS challenges are irregular and difficult to tackle. These issues are diverse and interconnected which cannot be tackled by any single concept, strategy, government or organization. The seriousness of the problem indicates that the NTS scholarship can act as a diplomatic channel to develop and strengthen the cooperation in the areas of NTS challenges so as to improve bilateral and multilateral relations and political stability. NTS diplomacy is completely in contradiction to traditional diplomatic scholarship and it has more significant implications for South Asian states. It emphasizes on mutual cooperation, because the characteristics of NTS threats are more transnational, hidden and complex.

Theoretical Framework

In terms of globalization dynamics, the notion of human security has somehow accelerated and increased the new options for peaceful relations in rapidly changing socio-economic conditions in the world. At this juncture, the new options (economic, social, environmental, energy, communicable diseases, illegal immigration and terrorism) have been placed very high in the diplomatic strokes of many countries. With these new characteristics NTS practices and endeavors expanded beyond already

existing boundaries. Despite the interdependence among the states, there is a mixed response of diplomatic collaboration on NTS challenges.

NTS diplomacy demonstrates that how NTS challenges become the element of diplomatic schema and on priority basis get a positive altitude. It is essential to clarify the concept of security inflated by Barry Buzan, De Wilde and Waever (1998) fiercely explained that how particular problems become the referent of security policy and analysis. An actor explains an issue or a phenomenon as something outstanding that is pertinently intimidating a particular referent objective. The main argument is that dealing crises beyond the general diplomatic procedure needs a keen attention. The 'speech-acts' have been used as the successful tool for the securitization moves and political actors generally perform this act, but it depends on the audience whether it accepts and approves the sensitivity of that threat (Buzan et al., 1998). According to this explanation, security is a prejudiced value and in fact is a creation of communication dealings. Caballero Anthony (2006) raised a valid point that "why securitization occurs and how it takes place" (Anthony et al., 2006). In their study Acharya Anthony, M. Caballero and R. Emmers (2006) raise some questions about the intentions and motives of securitizing actors and its impacts on the securitization of diplomatic outcomes. It is a reality that certain individuals or social groups are unable to raise their concerns in diplomatic practices; it indicates that securitization may possibly not take place, despite intentional possible threats to communities and individuals. The securitization approach springs new wave of thinking in the minds of the policy makers of any state to raise their nontraditional security concerns in diplomatic practices.

On the other hand, positive security is also a significant scholarship of post-Cold War, which is more suitable for the diplomatic relationships. This concept was operationalized by United States under the domain of democratic peace theory. The concept clearly interprets that democratic states should focus on the improvement of the welfare of their citizens and the domestic societies are the strong pillars of security. The theory can appropriately be operationalized in the South Asia with the comparison of negative security.

The idea of negative security can be comprehended as 'security from' (a threat) and positive security as 'security to' (Gjørv, 2012) in this perspective the negative and positive difference reveals the idea of Isaiah Berlin (1958), who coined the concept of negative and positive freedom that is "freedom from, and freedom to" which is a good role-model to understand the security. The negative security is generally related to the concept of "traditional security", which is originated by the concept of state and military issues. The work of Bill McSweeney (1999) and Paul Roe (2008) are worth mentioning here, that the idea of positive security elucidates the major gaps which have not been elucidated by the notion of negative security. It invokes many questions, like how and by whom the security is produced and what are the bases of information that comprehend the security. The 'whom' factor can be notified as

'actors', it can be divided into three variables, firstly 'how' to practice security, secondly, 'where' to practice the context of security and thirdly, 'why' to practice the values of security.

McSweeney (1999) and Roe (2008) have worked a lot and significantly build the concept of positive security. McSweeney (1999) is of the view that positive security mainly focuses on human needs and gives the comfort to the human beings. He explains that "It is the human sense of security, embodied in the primal relationship; it carries a profound message for our understanding of international security and security policy" (McSweeney, 1999). His analysis provides ground for the periphery of ontological security. In simple words the lessening of turmoil and giving relief to communities and individuals is positive security. One can describe that McSweeney's concept of positive security is a complete reflection of human security.

Paul Roe (2008) contributed brilliantly as well; he argues that the notion of positive security is beyond the needs of only individuals, it supposed to be applied at the state level. He claims that the operationalization of positive security requires the ethics of justice. He seems to be disagreeing with the concept of McSweeney (1999) and argues that only the ontological security is not sufficient. Roe (2008) believes that the notion of positive security can work on both aspects, firstly it is the relationship with enemy and secondly it is to fight the threats; till both the aspects are not clouded the positive security that will remain under the terrain of negative security.

The intellectual exertion of McSweeney (1999) and Roe (2008) reveals the significance of multi-actor point of view but primarily both focused on individuals and state level. McSweeney (1999) advocates the individuals care under the human security approach to positive security while the Roe (2008) makes an indefinite connection between individuals and state. He strongly argues that the two levels promote human security, in this way the states automatically interweaves the security interests of both; individuals and state. The concept of positive security is providing a platform for South Asian states to overcome their historical tendency of diplomatic relations and makes an indefinite connection to wage multiple NTS challenges.

The negative security comes under the posture of realism in the international relations, which is often known as traditional security. While the positive security rejects the traditional concept and advocates that the security does not solely come under the sphere of the use of forces. Rather it is about to produce security to the humans from threats. The operationalization of positive security notion would be the role model. It shares common literature with the concept of human society that recognizes communities and individuals as security players. And the players endeavor to search for safety and security, not only to cope with the threats but also to develop capabilities. No state can bypass them (individuals and communities) in the sphere of safety and security, these security practices are usually considered to be contradicting to the states, because states mainly use the force as their prime tool for security. The positive security provides many ways to enhance capacities to avoid threats of direct

confrontation between South Asian states. In such scenario, the issues like development and humanitarian aid, education, environment, economic, health and other social problems can get a hold on development (Hough, 2014).

In the positive security perspective, NTS diplomacy provides more opportunities to diplomats for policy coordination and more direct negotiations and discourses. Intensified interactions facilitate the diplomats to excavate mutual understanding and give more motivation to deal with NTS challenges. It has also important effects on the relevant 'referent objects' of security, especially individuals, society and NTS challenges. NTS diplomacy offers leeway to exchanges activities between state and non-state actors, government and nongovernment organizations to solve NTS challenges. It also motivates to draw benefits from multilateral diplomatic relations to secure exact interests, which is need of the day.

NTS Diplomacy and South Asia

Since last six decades and so, South Asian states have been embroiled in wars, conflicts and disagreements. Due to their massive attention to traditional hostility, the region has become the hub of many NTS issues. The historical enmity and trust deficit never allowed this region to pursue healthy diplomatic peace process. While the NTS challenges have never remained the main priority of their diplomatic sphere, but whenever they took any initiative for resolving NTS issues, they were often hindered by traditional thinking. This sort of attitude has even hindered the approaches of NTS diplomacy and negative security continues to precedence. People of this region are unaware that they are the actual victims of historical enmity and disagreements of their own governments.

Despite having regional organization – South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – and multiple memorandums of understandings between all regional states, South Asian states have not come to any comprehensive diplomatic mechanism to fight against common NTS challenges (Xiaofeng & Sandano, 2017). In such a situation, NTS diplomacy can be employed to seek the security cooperation between all regional states. In the general perspective, it may help to find out, how NTS diplomacy can be taken up to build healthy and sustainable environment for the region.

Many intellectuals and policy makers have given different concepts of diplomacy on different occasions. Whenever policy makers or representatives of the regional states met and discussed any specific issue related to trade, energy, environment, health and cyber threats; they occasionally termed it as 'economic or trade diplomacy', 'energy diplomacy', 'climate diplomacy', 'environmental diplomacy', 'water diplomacy', 'disaster diplomacy', 'health diplomacy', 'cyber diplomacy' and 'anti-terrorism diplomacy'. And often these terms have separately been elaborated as concepts to normalize the ambiguous relationships. This study claims that the term NTS diplomacy is a core of all other termed approaches (see figure 1).

Figure 1 NTS Diplomacy covers all separated approaches

Some regional states have individually used diplomatic channels on NTS challenges and made conclusion in some of areas. While NTS diplomacy gives a multiple options to stakeholders to rethink and solve their NTS issues. These options include shaved interests (such as avoiding war), compromise (or the theory that half loaf is better than none) or barter system, in which each side extends trade concession to other over. One should keep in mind that NTS challenges are not new, but due to some historical and ideological differences, states only focused their traditional challenges, therefore, other issues remained in lowest ebb and NTS issues have always remained out of focus in the diplomatic sphere (see figure 2).

**Figure 2** NTS issues are out diplomatic sphere and dealt separately
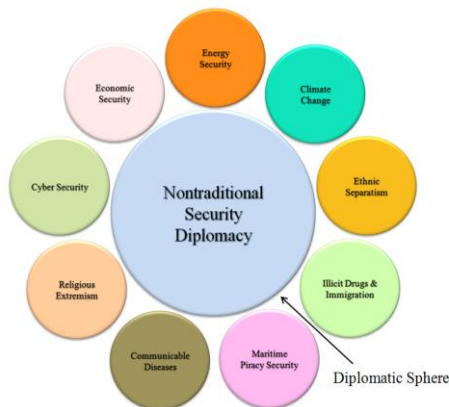
There is a desperate need to bring all NTS issues to a single diplomatic sphere of 'NTS diplomacy' for reaching long term cordial relationship and in order to fight

these issues (see figure 3). Unfortunately states of this region are still following their traditional diplomatic approaches to solve NTS issues. But NTS diplomacy advocates that if a state doesn't agree on a unanimous approach, some other points should be discussed to attain positive results. This practice will resolve the alarming NTS challenges and draw a collective and mutual cooperation between all regional states that finally will create an environment of peaceful understanding.

Figure 3: NTS issues are under single sphere of NTS Diplomacy
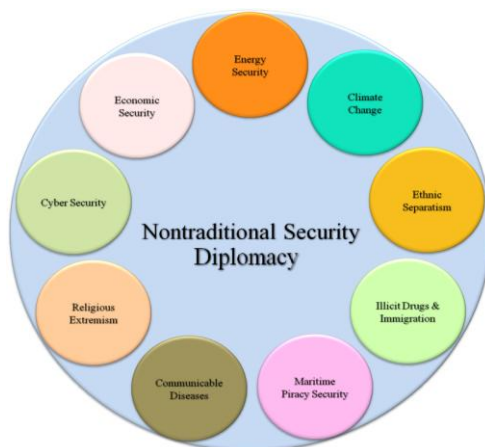
South Asian nations have always formulated the foreign policy on the basis of traditional security. Nontraditional security has not gained much attention in diplomatic orbit. The development in traditional security at a large scale may save the sovereignty of a country, but the development of NTS diplomacy can save the millions of people. The changing dimension of security studies springs a new wave of thinking in the minds of the policy makers which can increase their NTS concerns in diplomatic practices. In the past, rhetoric of politicians and representatives of South Asian states spread hatred amongst the people, but their rhetoric otherwise can be a successful tool to normalize hostile relations and battle against NTS threats.

Conclusion

The similarities of NTS challenges within the region demonstrate that all states are no more a single referent object of security because the changing dynamics of security have produced new referent objects. While NTS diplomacy applies new trend of security – what we call positive security – which contains more functional cooperation. It can provide solid structure to reformulate diplomatic relations with the changing regional political environment and challenges.

For the peace and stability in the region, the NTS diplomacy can play a vital role to fight against NTS challenges and pave the way to develop such capacities which are helpful in avoiding threats of direct confrontation between regional states. This

positive development can make the public of the region to revisit their strident opinions which ultimately helps them to decrease the aspect of security from (a threat) in its foreign policy. Similarly, NTS diplomacy can help all regional states to initiate positive security for cooperation, which will ultimately show the result in traditional security relations.

It is high time for the regional countries to revisit their stance before policy formulation. They should decide either they are willing to fight the real enemy (NTS threats) or to keep their traditional enmity, which is leading all countries to the bottomless wholes of destruction. The practice of NTS diplomacy may resolve the alarming NTS issues and draw a common cooperation that ultimately can create common understanding to resolve all the traditional issues. Their normalized relations can set a precedent for all regional states and can open new possibilities of cooperation and development.

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