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MILITARIZATION IN INDIA

There is widespread belief that militarization is 'not an issue' in India and that in the sub continent, it is Pakistan that is a militarized state. It would be useful to dispel some common myths about militarization in India and South Asia. It is true that while Pakistan has been saddled with direct military regimes and we in India have continuously lauded ourselves on the relative success of our democratic system, the Indian State has militarist responses on a number of issues. These include regions in India like the North East and Kashmir – both of which have been continuously subjected to militarized policies. Whenever the state feels a threat, either from internal or external sources a militarist response is considered the primary option. Thus whether it is the approach to tackling social justice movements or secessionist movements, from Naxalite to Khalistan, the state responds by the use of military methods. The effort is for conflict management through repression. The basic issues of social justice or alienation are not addressed.

Militarization is a phenomenon that has developed and can develop under civilian leadership. It can be practiced in peace times. Civilian structures can be promoters of militarism, even if this is occasional rather than a constant feature. For example, the national chauvinist ideology of religious fundamentalist organizations like the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh, Shiv Sena, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Jamaat-i-Islami and the like promote militarism both within their ranks and as a world view. Sometimes, even civil structures can be promoters of militarism. For instance, sections of the Indian media during times of critical national issues like the Kargil war or the signing of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), termed any dissent as 'anti-national'. The promotion of militarism by a civilian regime was most evident during the May 1998 nuclear tests in Pokhran followed by those in Chagai. The discourse of key ministers displayed crude nationalism couched in patriarchal, militarist language

India is among the largest spenders on defense in the world and a nuclear power seeking to increase its nuclear weapon capability. It has the fourth largest standing army in the world, comprising 1.1 million, and is constantly upgrading its conventional weapons force. This defense spending has escalated over the years reaching US \$16.74 billion for 2004-2005, even more than Russia at \$11.4 billion. India remains 127th out of 174 nations in the Human Development Index cannot provide free elementary education to all children; women's literacy stands at 46% and cannot install a tsunami warning system. I argue that the reason for such a skewed spending perspective is the evolving nationalist militarist discourse in which strategy became security policy. This discourse has led to an exaggerated threat perception and huge defense budgets at the cost of social expenditure. I further argue that this has led to a social militarization of society where militarist values and gender stereo types get reinforced and social exclusions marginalize large parts of society.

Militarism is a belief system that endorses military values in civilian life; believes in the construction of a strong masculinity that is also a necessary component of state power; legitimizes the use of violence as a solution to conflict and dissent; and closely intersects with patriarchy and nationalism. Notions such as national honour, national pride and the ambition of being a great power form the basis of this militarized nationalism in India. Militarization involves the increasing use of military power by states to further their national interests, with the option of using military threats and war as an extension of politics. It implies the growing dominance of militarist values in civilian institutions. Militarization encompasses the process whereby military values, ideology and patterns of behavior dominate social and political systems and influence gender relations, resulting in the militarization of the structural, ideological and behavioral patterns of both state and society.

The National Security Tool for Militarization

Defense policy in India is based on perceived 'national interest' and 'national security' and there has been an attempt to create a national consensus around this issue. India's defense policy is interlinked to the idea of an 'official nationalism' generated by the state rather than by the people. National security is restricted to the security of the state in relation to other states, where state security and national security intersect and have a fixed notion of national territory and of citizenship.¹ The idea of power is tied to military and nuclear capability combined with rising GDP growth. Social and economic disparities, inequalities in gender, caste or privilege are not seen as relevant indicators in this discourse. This formation is to be protected by the ruling elite through a combination of force and consent that combine to create hegemony.² The context of nationalism change in history, and multiple nationalisms contest each other in India's contemporary history. The anti-colonial nationalism based on the demand of people's right to independence changed to one linked to the enterprise of nation building and statehood that was shaped by the first Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and influenced by the experiences of the Indian national movement. This project of India was based on secular, plural foundations and belief in independent development known as 'self reliance.' Foreign relations were to be based on a policy of non alignment that shunned military alliances and looked for solidarity with other Third World countries. Nehru's praxis resonated in different voices as he argued: "Security can be obtained in many ways. The normal plea is that armies protect security. This is only partly true, it is equally true that security is protected by policies."³ Nehru rejected militarism, in keeping with the heritage of the non-violent philosophy of the Indian national movement, but also accepted Realism the dominant Western theory of international relations which argues that since the international political system is anarchic and unregulated by an enforceable code of law, maximal power with military back up is necessary to ensure national interest. Since the national interest of each state is, at one stage or another, divergent and contradictory, states operate in a world where their security and autonomy are constantly threatened by other states. This anarchy leads to a generic relation between states based on a 'balance of power.' Realism is based on a state centric and patriarchal understanding of history, conceptualizes power as an essentially masculine enterprise that was to be backed up by force and meant to assert power over others.

Acceptance of realist doctrines meant that India despite the initial efforts at a non-militarist conceptualization of security could easily slide into a militarist one and it was in this context that Nehru said in 1946: "As long as the world is constituted as it is, every country will have to devise and use the latest devices for its protection."⁴ Two early experiences provided the pressure for a military back up of Indian state power. First, Pakistan backed tribal raiders that entered and captured parts of Kashmir in 1947, and the dispute that led to the stalemate between these two countries, and the later 1962 border

¹ Fred Halliday calls this 'a national territorial totality.' Fred Halliday, "State and Society in International relations: A Second Agenda", *Millennium* 16 (2), 1987 and Achin Vanaik, "Indian Security and the Nuclear Question", *Seminar*, No.444, August, 1996, pp.33-37.

² See Anuradha M. Chenoy, *Militarism and Women in South Asia*, Kali, New Delhi, 2002, p.25.

³ Jawaharlal Nehru, "India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches", (September 1946-April 1961, New Delhi, Government of India, 1961), p.79. See also K. Subrahmanyam, "Nehru's Concept of Defense", (*Indian Institute of Defense Analysis Journal*, Vol.15, No.2, October 1972) and P.S. Jayaramu, "Two Phases of Indian Militarism", in Ranabir Samaddar, "Cannons into Ploughshares, Militarization and Prospects of Peace in South Asia", (*ASBAE /Lancers*, 1995), p.16-29.

⁴ J. Nehru quoted in Perkovich, *India's Nuclear Bomb*, Oxford, New Delhi, 1999 p.14.

war with China provided the empirical justification for the threat perception that led to escalation of defense spending and pressure for nuclear programme, rather than a clear defense policy.

This duality became the basis of India's defense policy known as the 'Nehruvian consensus' that offered the either /or option for going openly nuclear or following a recessed deterrence. The 1965 and 1971 wars with Pakistan, and the break up of Pakistan with the formation of Bangladesh, led to a new ambition in India of becoming a regional power. This glorification of militarist power was evident in the first nuclear test in May 1974 at Pokhran, couched as 'peaceful nuclear explosion' [PNE] in keeping with the duality of nuclear ambiguity. The decision for this test was taken by the then Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, primarily for domestic reasons. No threat or change in security or defense atmosphere was either cited or perceived. It was meant to boost the moral of the nuclear establishment; gave a sense of power to the leadership, and as Perkovich remarks, "thrilled the nation with a sense of prowess."⁵ Ms. Gandhi was praised at that time 'as the only man in her cabinet'. It was in this background that India conceptualized the policy of 'nuclear ambiguity' a term coined by India to initiate nuclear research and development without becoming openly nuclear. This policy was not proposed in the context of any threat perception and Nehru constantly argued that India's foreign policy flowed out of her domestic needs. At the same time, India advocated universal nuclear disarmament and supported the Partial Test Ban Treaty and other initiatives to stop nuclear testing. The Pokhran tests led to a renewed spiral of defense spending, including in Pakistan given its own urges to build a nuclear deterrence; hidden defense expenditures and instability in the sub-continent as internal conflicts took on violent forms.

The Nehruvian consensus was used in variations and diluted ways till the 1980's until its breakdown in the background of several simultaneous changes: the breakup of the Soviet Union was a set back to the comfortable security relationship that India was embedded in since the mid 1950's; Internally, the Indian government (backed by the elite) adopted neo-liberal policies and initiated the structural adjustment programme to privatize and globalize the economy; an engagement with the US, the dominant and only superpower was seen as a necessary strategic step. The official nationalism was now gradually shifting right of centre. At this point, a group of (mostly retired male) bureaucrats and policy analysts began to clamour about the need to rethink national security and establish a national security council and advisors, a position that India never had or felt necessary, despite its earlier history of territorial disputes and wars.⁶ This group lobbied for nuclear tests and rejected the moral positions in external relations in favour of untrammelled militarist power as a necessary component for national security. This view was voiced amongst others by former BJP foreign minister Jaswant Singh: "Standing against the evolution of any strategic doctrine for independent India was Nehru's dislike of militarism."⁷ This critique called for a renewed militarization of security policies based on neo-realist conceptualization of threats combined with great power (or satellite to great power) ambitions for India.

⁵Ibid. p.176.

⁶ Achin Vanaik, Unraveling the Self-image of the Indian Bomb Lobby, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXIX, No.s 46-47, November 20, 2004, p.5006.

⁷ Jaswant Singh, Defending India, Macmillan, New Delhi, 1998, p.44. Also C. Raja Mohan, Crossing the Rubicon, The Shaping of India's New foreign policy, New Delhi, Penguin, Viking, 2003, p.46 who shares a similar view.

Threat Perceptions and Great Power Ambitions

Empirically, four wars and low intensity border conflicts with Pakistan;⁸ the 1962 war with China; and unresolved border disputes have been the constant refrain for increasing defense budgets. The internal conflicts in Kashmir and the Northeast India, the earlier conflict in Punjab over Khalistan (the Sikh movement for secession), and the Maoist (branded 'Naxalite') armed struggles in several states also contribute to militarization. Conflating these threats without a deep analysis of each and the alternate ways possible for resolving each, has greatly contributed to the exaggerated threat perception. We show this through some concrete examples from each of these threats and also by examining the great power ambitions of the Indian political class.

China has been traditionally perceived as a major threat since India lost thousands of kilometers of its territory that were disputed by China in a war in 1962. This was seen as a loss of the 'honour' of the Indian nation and was the basis for a critique of Prime Minister Nehru's foreign policy, as well as India's wavering position on the nuclear programme and increase in defense expenditure. In India and the entire sub-continent, the male is the custodian of 'honour'. This has been unequivocally voiced by the Indian right wing groups as former external affairs minister Jaswant Singh stated: "our convictions about honor and chivalry, or conversely, because of the absence of resolve to finish off the enemy when the opportunity arose, our adversaries routinely got the better of India."⁹ A defeat and erosion of honour unless repaid is seen as a loss of masculinity, and it is from this point that India's search for its lost honour, through a militarist national security was sought.

The status of Sino-Indian relations are: relative quiet on the border for more than 44 years; China has never threatened to use nuclear weapons against India; number of confidence building measures between India and China; many rounds of talks on the border; massive opening of trade between the two and proposals from Russia on a India, China, Russia partnership that have been positively received. The Indian foreign minister Natwar Singh and defense minister Pranab Mukherjee stated that India's relations with China are no longer based on hostility and threat.¹⁰ This however has not led to a re-examination of defense expenditure. There is thus a clear mismatch between the actual Chinese threat and the reality of defense spending.

In both Pakistan and India, the institutions dealing with foreign policy/external security are obviously more insulated from domestic pressures than those institutions dealing with domestic policies. Elective and representative bodies which have some degree of accountability to a wider populace such as parliament, thus have little or no influence in normal (and most) circumstances on the conduct of India-Pakistan relations. This is all the more so because the fundamental character of this relationship has been a strategic hostility which has remained unchanged since the birth of the two as independent countries.

The foundations of India-Pakistan discord lie in their competing and discordant sense of nation and nationalism. Pakistan believes that Kashmir must belong to them because it is a Muslim majority State and that the Partition of India favoured India and thus remains incomplete. India argues that Kashmir is

⁸ These wars and military conflicts are: (i) 1947/48 war in Kashmir (ii) Rann of Kutch clash in April 1962 (iii) 1965 War (iv) 1971 war on East Pakistan (v) Kargil operation and conflict in 1999. India and Pakistan are locked in a conflict over the Siachen Glacier since 1984.

⁹ Jaswant Singh, op. Cit.

¹⁰ The Hindu, January 30, 2005.

an integral part of the Indian secular state. Pakistan has fought India directly in four wars; directly supported local militant insurgency in Punjab (Khalistan movement) and encouraged jihad (holy war) and jihad/ mujahideen warriors in Kashmir. This conflict has cost India over 60,000 lives (including of armed forces) incalculable loss to people and material infrastructure. It has led to gendered abuse of women, violation of human rights, jeopardized development. Kashmir and Jihad have gradually increased the growth of fundamentalist groups in Pakistan, it has helped the Pakistan Army retain its hold over politics and militarize the country. The Kashmir conflict remains the main motive of Pakistan's equally large and unjustifiable defense expenditure. The break up of Pakistan in 1971, and war with India because of the belief that India had supported the national liberation movement in Bangladesh, did not convince the Pakistani national security elite that Islam could not be the basis of consolidating a state.

The Indian response to Pakistan is couched in counter-nationalist and militarist terminology and methodology. The insurgency within Kashmir and alienation of the people only started after 1987, and was in response to the Indian Central Government mishandling going back on the betrayal of the promise of autonomy enshrined in Article 370 of the Indian Constitution; intervening in Kashmiri politics; rigging elections; and lack of development opportunities. Pakistan's support was not the primary cause of the insurgency but enlarged it, and should be treated as such. This insurgency or the 'infiltrators' as the mujahadeen are called, cannot be controlled through traditional, conventional or nuclear war. The only way of curbing this problem is by engaging with the Kashmir people and with Pakistan. India and Pakistan have carried out some confidence building measures and talks after the Shimla Agreement of 1971, like the Lahore and Agra talks, but a resolution remains elusive.

India has far greater conventional superiority and spends four times more on defense than Pakistan. Despite these advantages India carried out nuclear tests in May 1998. India has used the Pakistan threat to arm itself to its teeth and various justifications for this are in vogue. One view is that Pakistan is a 'rogue state' and that as long as it exists it will 'bother' India.¹¹ These strategists advocate increased militarization to be able to crush Pakistan militarily or as an alternate, they argue that competing with India's defense expenditure will lead to the collapse of the Pakistani economy. This extremely short sighted view does not consider arguments even within the narrow strategic framework within which it functions. For example: the issue of Pakistani nationalism or international (especially US) backing of the Pakistan; the underestimation of Pakistan's economic strengths; Pakistan's stated policy, that the disparity of conventional weapons has now been made up by nuclear weapons. Pakistan has thus in the past few years tried to stabilize its defense expenditures. The level of threat from Pakistan needs to be reassessed.

Pakistan and India's relations are embedded in competing nationalisms couched in masculinist terminologies as every threat is couched in terms of the 'other'. For example: After India's nuclear tests former prime minister of Pakistan sent bangles to the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif, to explain his weakness and femininity. In October 2001, when relations were tense, President Musharraf gave a message to the Indian leadership: "We in Pakistan have not worn bangles and we can fight India on our own."¹² Prime Minister Vajpayee replied in a public address: "In Punjab where bangles are popular, people also wear 'Kada' (steel bracelet)."¹³ The two berated each other for being feminine to the extent

¹¹ This view is held especially by those close to the BJP and others who see themselves as advisors to the Indian State like members of the Indian National security advisory Board.

¹² The Tribune, October 23, 2001.

¹³ The Tribune, November 1, 2001.

of wearing bangles and thus incapable of protecting their country or honour. This debate on masculinity trickles down to inter community hostilities, for example, during the Gujarat carnage of Muslims by Hindus in 2001, Bangles were delivered at the doorsteps of those Hindus that did not participate in the rioting.

The ideologies of nationalism that exist and exercise influence in South Asia promote a conception of womanhood which reinforces the view that the family and home is its principal arena, and of woman's role as nurturer, caretaker and sacrificing supporter for those (mostly males) who are supposedly in the forefront of this bilateral confrontation whether this is in directly military or non-military forms. The possibilities of a trans-country feminism which can emphasize the common concerns of Indian and Pakistani women, of Indian and Pakistani families, and by extension, of ordinary Indians and Pakistanis, are greatly limited by the existence of such a hostile general environment that characterizes relations between the two countries.

National security based on exclusionary and gendered identity politics is emphasized by right wing groups in both India and Pakistan. In India the Vishwa Hindu Parishad's (The International Hindu Organization, associated with the BJP) has repeatedly argued "Hindus! If you want to preserve your existence, you should arm yourself with different weapons dear to gods and goddesses" to overcome "weakness, timidity and unmanliness" that "are great sins and bravery and masculinity of great punya - virtue"¹⁴ The very basis of the nation according to the RSS ideologues like Guru Golwalkar is linked to manhood: "Our real national regeneration should start with the moulding of man, instilling in him the strength to overcome human frailties and stand him up as a real symbol of Hindu manhood."¹⁵ Taken from the founders of the RSS this concept is echoed by contemporary strategists, like Jaswant Singh, minister for external affairs in the BJP led government: "India's nationhood being essentially civilizational, a strategic thought to protect its territory has not emerged."¹⁶ When the Bharatiya Janata Party formed the government from 1998-2004, it attempted to translate such dictum into national security practice.

Internal Security

Internal security is cited as a reason for the maintenance of a large force and the Indian military is deployed in areas of internal armed conflicts like Kashmir, North East India, and regions where the Maoist underground groups work. There has been a huge presence of army and paramilitary in each of these conflicts. The privileges and extra-judicial power that they possess are has led to violation of human rights and civil liberties; protracts the conflict as the spiral of violence between the army and the civilians increase, and causes more insecurity rather than strengthening 'national security.'

Though the state is a major actor in the process of militarization and site for its consolidation, but non-state actors are also sites and agencies for militarization. Movements for secession like the LTTE was in Sri Lanka, Lashkar, Harkat ul Ansar, etc, can espouse sectarian ideologies and pursue militarist practices. Many of these movements impose military discipline, are hierarchical, patriarchal, oppress women, and have no place for human rights.

¹⁴ Ghanshyam Shah, Reflections on Gujarat, Seminar, April, 2002, pp. 82-85

¹⁵ Interview with K.S. Sudershan, general secretary of the RSS, Outlook, April 27, 1998.

¹⁶ Jaswant Singh, "What Constitutes National Security in a Changing World Order? India's Strategic Thought", (Centre for the Advanced Study of India, Philadelphia, USA, Occasional Paper No.6, June, 1998). See also Kanti Bajpai, "War Peace and International Politics", Paper in Weather head Centre for International Affairs, (Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies, Massachusetts, 1997).

The militarism of the Indian state has been countered by the militarization of the insurgency and both these have led to a social militarization of these societies, where common sense beliefs, relations between genders and people, and traditions get coloured by militarist values. A deconstruction of these conflicts reveals that these are conflicts for rights and aspirations and that military force has not been successful in dealing with these conflicts. The Maoist (Naxalite) movement in India is most active in the most backward rural and tribal regions of the country. The need here is for negotiations, development and fulfilling human security aspirations. The success of these other alternate and non-militarist methods have proven themselves repeatedly. For example, the current ongoing talks with insurgent groups of Nagaland and the Indian government have led to a sustainable cease fire; have lowered tensions; people and especially women have acknowledged that they feel more secure; the level of violence in civil society has decreased.

Nuclear Nationalism

Reactionary movements which mobilize on the basis of religious identity have generally sought to co-opt nationalist identities or loyalties (religious nationalism) rather than to confront or oppose it in the name of a higher nation-transcending religious loyalty.¹⁷ An attempt to alter centrist nationalism into a militarist Hindu nationalism was made by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led governments where the core organization of the BJP, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) (called the Sangh) sought to give a Hindutva (Hindu fundamentalist) twist to nationalism, making it exclusive to the majority Hindus and linking the national minorities to external threats.¹⁸ The Sangh was always committed to nuclear weapons without ever giving reasons or building a strategy whether nuclear tests were required. Within a few weeks of taking over power BJP Prime Minister Vajpayee initiated nuclear tests in May, 1998. Explaining why these were necessary Vajpayee stated “India needs to regain its lost pride.” And “The BJP alone can undertake the task of leading a reinvigorated, proud India to its rightful place in the comity of nations.”¹⁹ The rhetoric from the BJP and its allies in government resounded with gendered and chauvinist innuendos like “We are no longer eunuchs”.²⁰ Sand from the test site of Pokhran was carried by Hindu fundamentalist organizations like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to remote villages of India as ‘blessed’ land and the BJP science and technology minister stated on CNN ‘Pokhran and all our scientific endeavors have brought glory to India.’²¹ The tests were more signifiers of fundamentalist type religious nationalism than calculated defense policy.

The policy of maintaining a ‘nuclear ambiguity’ or ambivalence and not going openly nuclear had failed and had been used by the Sangh as a shield to make India into an assertive nuclear power. Centrist forces like the Congress and regional parties were trapped into supporting the 1998 decision for nuclear tests because this step was once again couched in terms of national security and interest. The rest of the political spectrum, except for a small peace movement backed by the Left, failed to distinguish between

¹⁷ Chenoy, Anuradha. M. And Achin Vanaik, (1996) “Promoting Peace, Security and conflict Resolution: Altering the Gender Balance in Decision Making Structures”, paper presented at the conference Political Decision making and Conflict Resolution: The Impact of Gender Difference’, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 7-11 October 1996.

¹⁸ Jaswant Singh, *Defending India*, Macmillan, New Delhi, 1998.

¹⁹ A.B. Vajpayee, quoted in Perkovich, p.374.

²⁰ Statement by Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray who had argued that the Hindus were not masculine enough and the bomb had empowered them. Earlier governments that had not carried out nuclear tests were described “as a bunch of eunuchs.” *Asian Age* 24 May, 1998

²¹ CNN, 11 May, 1999, On India’s Nuclear tests.

nationalism and its distorted version of nuclear nationalism. The floodgates for spending on nuclear research were opened but not made transparent, and so the nuclear policy remained closed to debate.

The nuclear tests by India in May 1998, and the subsequent preparations for nuclear bombs and weapons is based on an exaggerating threat perceptions. India had lived with the Chinese bombs and Pakistan's preparation for a bomb under a status of ambiguity i.e. even after the 1974 Pokhran test India was not an open nuclear state. Sino-Indian talks and confidence building measures had been initiated and were moving smoothly. The nature of the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan i.e. low intensity/covert warfare or terrorists crossing into the India could not be controlled by nuclear attacks. The Indian Government had promised a strategic review but did not carry this out.²² The bomb lobby then set about justifying and legitimizing the bomb and asking for higher budgets for defense and the nuclear programme; up gradation/ modernization of weapons and deliberated on the number of bombs needed for security. Journalists close to the BJP were clear on the non-strategic nature of the tests as Swapan Dasgupta of *India Today* wrote: "Vajpayee has released a flood of pent-up energy, generated a mood of heady triumphalism. He has kick-started India's revival of faith in itself. To the west, the five explosions are evidence of Hindu nationalism on a Viagra high. To Indians, it is evidence that there is nothing to fear but fear itself. Pokhran is only tangentially about security. Its significance is emotional. The target isn't China and Pakistan. It is the soul of India."²³ The underlying refrain was that the Indian bomb would return the masculinity, the maleness as an ingredient of great power status.

The argument of the bomb as deterrence to war was the first to collapse, as Pakistan's entry in the Kargil sector (in the Himalayan ranges) and the limited war that followed, showed. In this war the threat to use nuclear missiles was continuously made, putting to risk millions of citizens in the most callous way.²⁴ Deterrence, as Achin Vanaik argued, is an attempt to achieve security by threatening someone else's security, and an attempt to avoid war by preparing to fight it, seeking security by creating insecurity in others. Moreover deterrence can easily breakdown.²⁵

Militarism, Nationalism and Kargil

The Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan reveals the dangers of South Asia as a nuclear flashpoint; the weak logic of realist understanding; the linkages between nationalism, militarism and gender stereotypes; and the exclusions inherent in citizenship. India and Pakistan were engaged in a military confrontation when Pakistan crossed the Line of Control (LOC) at the Kargil Heights in 1999. In this brief war, hundreds were killed on both sides and India spent US\$6.9 million a day, and Pakistan's expenditure was close to this. Kargil was used internally for mobilization of the 1999 elections and the VHP organized 7,500 Kargil Yagnas (religious ceremonies) as part of the militant Hindu nationalist campaign. India secured the status quo in the midst of aggressive and demonstrative patriotism echoed in the press and media as the raw pain of parents of dead soldiers and grief of widows beamed into

²² Many analysts have stated that there is no 'grand strategy' on the basis of which India's nuclear programme or disarmament diplomacy is being executed. Amitabh Matoo, "Does Public Opinion Matter?" Seminar, No.444, August, 1996, p.33.

²³ S. Dasgupta, *India Today*, 25 May, 1998.

²⁴ During the conflict on the Kargil heights, former Prime Minister Vajpayee stated: "We are ready for nuclear war" Pakistan's Prime Minister replied with the same threat, used again by president Musharraf. On the other hand two former Naval chiefs Admiral Nadkarni and Admiral Ramdas, warned against these threats and said that just a handful of people in the country are aware of the horrors of a nuclear bomb.

²⁵ Achin Vanaik, *India's Draft Nuclear Doctrine*, in S. Kothari and Zia Mian, edited, *Out of the Nuclear Shadow*, Lokayan Delhi, 2001, p.292.

homes, keeping the nationalism alive. The 'sacrifice' of the son, the grief of the mother/ widow repeated on a daily basis generated militarism in society as young boys rushed to join the army leading to riots, that were presented as patriotic fervor, covering up the desperate unemployment and insecurity that leads to such actions.

Any criticism or disagreement with the 'supposed' national mood was deliberately interpreted as anti-national, and any call for peace seen as a challenge to nationalism. Films on Kargil, with images of bearded (Islamic looking) villains reinforced militarist messages based on identity politics. The patriotism of the minorities, (particularly the Muslims) which is continuously tested, was once again noted and recorded. The president of the BJP Kushabhau Thakre stated that the leader of the opposition Mrs. Sonia Gandhi should not be allowed to speak on Kargil 'because she is not from India'.²⁶ With these moves, politicians in the Sangh Parivar identified themselves as the macho Hindu nationalists and 'protectors' of the nation.

Conflicts like Kargil reinforce and sharpened identity and gender differences in the power equations of Indian society. The sacrifice and martyrdom of the Hindu male was the subtext of the entire Kargil saga. National security, privileged 'at any cost', rested in the hands of a 'macho state' that provided 'protection'. Masculinity is valued as women and values associated with women like peace are de-valued. Although the role of the woman is not passive during conflict, during Kargil it was a 'given' role, always 'secondary' or supportive. This included nationalist patriotic gestures like giving up of 'personal items' like gold bangles and small money for the 'cause of war'; to the soldiers; encouraging husbands and sons to go to war and become martyrs as Seema, widow of a Kargil soldier, said to the press: "it is an honour to be widow of a valiant soldier."²⁷ Women were part of the war and became the agency for militarizing society. The images of the Kargil conflict stirred up and produced for popular consumption had an emotional substructure of masculinity and its connection to war as a masculine enterprise. The attempt to strengthen nationalist militarism through sentimentality and gender differences that suffused the conflict further enabled the entwining of patriarchy and militarism.

Much after the Kargil episode, there has been an attempt to keep the memory of Kargil alive. This is important because it gives special status to the Army and encourages militarism in civil society. Besides the annual celebration of the Kargil 'victory', roads and schools have been re-named after Kargil and its martyrs. In just one state in India, Himachal Pradesh for instance, the state government formed a special panel of 3 ministers who renamed over 80 educational institutions and over 50 link roads across the state with names of Kargil martyrs.²⁸ Long after the military episode is over, the state is interested in associating nationalism with militarism since this legitimizes militarist methods, justify military expenditure and keep the military machine going.

The Economics of Defense Expenditure

National security obsessions dismiss all arguments on defense versus development. The words of former foreign minister in the BJP government Jaswant Singh reveals this mindset: "reality dictates the primacy of the state-centric perceptions, with the predominance of concerns about sovereign national interest and state influence. This is the inescapable reality: around this reality, India's foreign policy has to

²⁶ Hindustan Times, 12 September, 1999.

²⁷ Hindustan Times, June 23, 1999.

²⁸ Tribune, (Chandigarh, India) 5th July, 1999

structure both its concepts and its conduct in service of our national security.”²⁹ This has been contested by economists who have shown the social costs of such expenditure and the militarization involved.

An argument made every year at the time of the Indian budget is that generally up to 30% of the defense budget goes on salaries.³⁰ Besides this 5.3% goes on research for indigenization of defense production and thus defense acquisitions generally require more than what is budgeted. There is much secrecy in India as to the real defense expenditure. Defense figures in India are put under several heads and budget outlay almost always exceeds the budget figures.³¹ For example in 1998, the budget allocation for defense increased 14.13% over the 1997 budget and the Government blamed this on rise of salaries. This was more than the outlay for health, and education. The following year followed similar patterns. The costs of the nuclear programme were not directly reflected but there was a steep increase of 59% since the earlier budget for the department of Atomic Energy and an increase by 62% for the Department of Space. (The increase in these two Departments was five times higher than outlay for health, education and rural employment.) Despite arguments that nuclear weapons would assist cuts in defense expenditure this has not happened as the yearly rise in Indian defense budgets show.

There is no clear indication about the exact amount being spent on nuclear weapons programmes. A study undertaken by the Ministry of defense in 1985, estimated the cost of creating nuclear weapons in India would be Rs.700 million. Economists estimated that nuclear weapons production in India would cost at least Rs.300 million a year for the next ten years, which is something round half a percent of the GDP per year.³² These additional figures remain secret and are not factored into the defense budgets. There has been no exercise done about the cost benefit analysis on defense related research, on which billions have been spent with very little to show. The defense expenditure in India is clearly irrational and detracts from developmental and social gains. The same amount, Amartya Sen argues could be used for providing elementary education for every child in India.³³ Female literacy in India in 2004 was 46% and 70% of the people live below the poverty line of \$2 a day. Amartya Sen and Dreze argue that the social costs of militarism are very high and detract from government priorities like health and education. Nuclearization and increases in defense expenditure have not yielded to a strategic balance as argued by experts, but in fact to an imbalance, where the scales of this balance are being tipped by either one side or the other and lead to a spiral of insecurity.

Conclusion

Militarism in India is driven by an obsessive national security that is not strictly guided by a clear analysis of security threats but is based on inward and exclusive militarist nationalism that has created a national security state. Right wing forces and their chauvinist nationalism propel militarism internally. These policies privilege values such as physical force and devalue debate and negotiation and thus reinforce gender stereotypes excluding and marginalizing large sections of the population. The values, belief systems and gender relations get militarized in this process. The concept of human security proposed by

²⁹ The Hindustan Times, October 14, 2000.

³⁰ Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India: Development and Participation*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002, Chapter 8 p.293-94.

³¹ The Indian Army has manpower of 1.1 million. Its air force has 35 combat squadrons, 774 combat aircraft and the Indian navy has 100 combat vessels.

³² C. Rammanohar Reddy, *Indo-Pak Defense Spending*, South Asia journal. 2004, <http://www>

³³ Amartya Sen, *India and the Bomb*, in S. Kothari and Zia Mian, edited, *Out of the Nuclear Shadow*, Lokayan Delhi, 2001, p.125

the United Nations is a step forward though not as radical as the concept of people's security that peace movements advocate. Human Security emphasizes that states need to broaden their security paradigm from exclusive focus on the state to an inclusive one that considers rights and entitlements especially of the marginalized.

The Indian women's movement has been engaged in fighting for gender equity, basic rights and survival issues for women. From Sati to women's empowerment and representation they have systematically struggled on all these counts with varying amounts of successes. The tasks for the women's movement remain far from complete and despite the wide agenda that remains to be fulfilled the women's movement needs to engage with other political struggles. Critical amongst these is an involvement with a peace movement. This is because the phenomenon of militarization is increasingly affecting the lives of women, especially in our sub-continent. Women's movements need to question defense budgets and the militarization of civil society and state and for doing this need to deconstruct the basis of national security and the official nationalism that supports such belief systems. National security and defense matters have been exclusive male preserves and perpetuate militarist values and gender stereo types. Women's movements need to challenge the very concept of power that privileges physical force as the basis of power.

There is an urgent need for the de-securitization of the state. The nation-state remains the primary unit of political empowerment for ordinary people through the principle of citizenship as well as to help locate oneself in a culturally distinct way. It is this institution that the women's and other peoples movements seek to transform. The focus of national security should be on an inclusive gendered human security that emphasizes on rights and needs and the concept of a militarized national security must be questioned and replaced. This would necessitate a democratization of policy making and the expansion and protection of human rights. This involves including representatives of women's and peace and social movements when debating defense policies. International law in general, apart from international humanitarian and human rights law in particular, should systematically outlaw war, Weapons of Mass Destruction [including possession by nuclear weapon states], and the use of force in international relations, except in exceptional cases strictly regulated and monitored by international agencies like the UN, International Court of Justice, etc. This alone would ensure security in the right sense of the term. It is thus the task of the women's movement to understand and confront militarization. They will have to demand the feminization of the notion of national security. This in itself presupposes the substantial democratization of the notion of national security. To talk in such a framework of the possibilities of feminizing national security is to talk essentially of gendering the composition of state apparatuses in a more balanced way and by doing so hopefully gendering its policies in a positive way.

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