

Comment on

“Security and Development: Implications for Democratic Governance in India”

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In her paper “Security and Development: Implications for Democratic Governance in India,” Swarna Rajagopalan argues that security and development are the two key functions of the modern state. These are the main expectations of the citizens regardless whether they are delivered or not. Failure of development leads to growing insecurity. On the other hand she argues that those who critique traditional security paradigms do so by appropriating the developmental agenda. They critique traditional security paradigms from the aspect of non-traditional security or from perspectives of public health, livelihood security, gender equity and issues of food, water and quality of life.

At the beginning the author promises that she will analyze the relationship of security and development through the lens of democratic governance. Her research is located in the state of Tamil Nadu and the issue that she concerns herself with is that of female infanticide. In her original proposal she promised to deal with five different issues but for this paper she concentrated on the campaign against female infanticide. This although completely acceptable clearly makes the paper less challenging than it was initially meant to be. Although if the intention of the author is to problematise the relationship between security, development and democratic governance the author does it to some extent often trying to clarify more than what she problematises. But what she does well is to portray that security and development are not binaries but rather both mutually inimical and reinforcing at the same time.

The paper is divided into two major sections. The first section is entitled *Curbing Female Infanticide* and the next section *Security, Development, Democracy: A Conceptual Exploration*. In the first section the author discusses a number of schemes undertaken by the Tamil Nadu government to curb female infanticide. She discussed the Cradle Baby Scheme and the Girl Child Protection Scheme that the Tamil Nadu Government initiated in 1992. According to the author the critics of these schemes outnumber its supporters. Both the schemes implicitly endorse male child preference. The Cradle Baby scheme allow families that did not want their girl children to give them over to the Government and the GCPS offer families with girl children some financial incentives. However, the 1997-99 scheme of street theatres addressing this problem of female infanticide, according to the author was more successful as it involved both the civil society and the administration.

The author then goes on to define the key terms that she has used in her study. She correctly observes that definitional debates have animated security studies in the last few decades. Traditionalists limit the field to military strategy and foreign policy at the most expanding the concept to include internal security threats and terrorism. A shift came with the publication of Olof Palme’s report on Common Security in 1982. By the end of 1990s there was increasingly the growth of new security thinking. In 1994 the Human Security Report of UNDP characterized this new security paradigm shift. However, to policy makers this new shift remained a hard sell and India’s colonial legacy also compounded this problem where policy makers could only define security in terms of military threat and frontier policy.

In the last section the author says that both development and democracy are derivative ideas for India. The main concern that development theorists faced was how to facilitate development rather than what it constitutes. The two key concepts on which notions of development are based are growth and equity. She says that Amartya Sen revolutionized the notion of development through his demand for "freedom from fear" and "freedom from want". As for democracy it was radically altered through what she terms as the human rights approach. It is through notions of human security and human development that the world has come to accept the merits of democratic governance. But the question remains is it enough?

The paper appears almost like a checklist of interesting ideas. There are a number of interesting leads that the author can follow. However, none of these ideas are pushed to its logical conclusion. This is understandable as this is her first draft. The critique that follows keeps this in cognizance. However, many of the presumptions on which this paper is based might be contested. I am stating these so that theoretical alternatives can be considered:

1. The paper is posited on the presumption that "campaigns against female infanticide were all motivated by some idea of gender equality." (p. 20) This argument can be contested if we consider that what motivated these campaigns were rather patriarchal notions of protection. Then it becomes clear why the programmes did so little to address and change the male child preference of Indian families. The government itself suffers from male child preference as is apparent from its policies. The Indian government has been described as the "mai baap sarkaar" that considers protection as one of its prime functions. However, although there is the rhetoric of equality citizens are hardly ever considered as equals. The author wanted to study the situation of Tamil refugees. Had she done so she would have realized that GOI is moved more through notions of protection than through notions of equity among and of its citizens. In fact even by law different groups of citizens are discriminated. Therefore, until 2004 female members of the household were not allowed to inherit agricultural land. Today large sections of women's lives are still governed by personal laws and women are blatantly discriminated against. Therefore, notions of equity hardly ever inform government actions in fact the GOI has clearly accepted gradations of citizenship where some are more equal than others.
2. The author is extremely critical of the Cradle Baby scheme and rightfully so. She says that the scheme is not at all well thought out and inadequately financed. Once the adoption agencies take over the babies the government stops its supervisory role. However, if one considers that through this scheme at least lives of over 5000 girl children has been saved then one sees the utility of the scheme. If we cannot concede the basic rights of life to the girl child then all else seem immaterial. As for trafficking of children, those of us who have been working on this issue for years know that families are more often than not responsible for selling their child to the traffickers. Often they sell their girl child as "collateral damages" and for the survival of other members. In a country where literacy rate for women is one of the lowest and gender gap one of the highest in Asia what more can one expect. The World Economic Forum places India 113 among 130 countries in terms of gender gap. The morbidity and mortality rate of Indian women is one of the highest in the world. In terms of reproductive rights Indian women, particularly the young adult women, who bear the most number of children have the least

- rights. Making these women responsible for the death of their girl children merely shows the viciousness of the legal system that we follow where the victim is further victimized and the more powerful escape.
3. In the second section the author addresses too many issues without adequately discussing them. In considering the broadening of security policy thinking three dimensions can be identified that needs to be discussed and has not been adequately addressed in this paper. These include security environment, security policy and security thinking. In terms of security or strategic environment it has been transformed by the fall of Soviet Union. The unexpectedness of this change has had deferential effects in the world. The end of cold war does not presume that it has made the world a safer place particularly not for South Asia. In fact now the states have begun to look inwards for the enemy alien with disastrous effects for less developed regions of the world. Though it is true that governments have begun to operate with different security discourses but this should not be exaggerated. Military force has been used to brutal effects in Bosnia and Kosovo, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, Chechnya and Nogorno-Karabakh, Iraq and Kurdistan, Rwanda, Congo and Sudan all through the 1990s and post 2000 when the security discourse was progressively expanding among non-state actors. Therefore an expansion for security thinking among some actors means little for security policy makers.
 4. It is not my intention here to address or even compare the numerous and very different definitions or conceptions of 'development' in the manner of a textbook. These are too well known. For present purposes, it is sufficient to remind ourselves that- at least for even vaguely reflective and reflexive theoreticians and practitioners- definitions are contextual and contingent upon the ideological, epistemological or methodological orientation of their purveyors. In the context of India development has always been elite centric rather than people centric. Not withstanding any notions of Human Development South Asian states find it greatly difficult in embracing the concrete development aspirations of the poor in practice, despite the theoretical sophistication of their leadership. This is apparent from the massive number of displaced due to development.
 5. Although critical of security and development issues the author still retains her faith in good governance and democracy. According to her liberal way of thinking that probably by meeting the standards of democratic governance one can ensure equitable and just rule. I however, would like to urge her to look at it from the angle of what can be termed as problem of democracy. Inability to devise schemes to address questions of female infanticide in an equitable manner does not mean that the Tamil Nadu government was not adequately democratic. Rather keeping in mind what Michael Mann terms as the dark side of democracy one can argue that democracy is essentially based on hierarchy and so it is clearly unable to provide equity and this is a problem of democracy.
 6. I would urge the author not to give up the comparative dimensions of this paper rather I would suggest that she might be more selective. She might look at least the issue of Tamil refugees.
 7. Having said these I repeat knowing the author she must be toying with a number of correctives. There are a lot of interesting insights that she needs to work through.