

# Security and Development—Implications for Democracy and Governance in India

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“Security and development” might form a summary answer to the question: What is the purpose of the modern state? To keep citizens safe and secure, and to secure for them the rights and conditions that enable a good life, are expectations most citizens have come to have of the state, regardless of the ability and willingness of its agents to deliver either of these. The relationship between security and development is usually sought in the context of conflict, where both take turns as cause and effect, and the discussion of their relationship purports to identify the cause of conflict or an action plan for its aftermath.

A cursory review of academic articles and specialist reports on the Internet prior to writing this working proposal suggests that interest in this issue comes from two quarters. Think-tanks and scholars with an interest in security write primarily about the impact that conflict and insecurity have on development and social welfare. Development failure as a factor creating insecurity, post-conflict reconstruction and what has come to be called “nation-building” in the aftermath of the war in Afghanistan are other questions they study. On the other hand, those who critique traditional ideas of security, call into play issues that are usually part of the development agenda—public health, gender equity, food and livelihood security, for instance. To activists and scholars in the development sector, security is of instrumental value as a guarantor of a life free of violent interruption, but more often it is reduced to coercion and becomes an instrument that facilitates iniquity and underwrites inequitable social relations.

Democratic governance is the lens through which this paper will view the security-development relationship. This paper will highlight and explore facets of this relationship at a remove from the shadow of conflict. The setting for the research is the state of Tamil Nadu, which has been spared the traumas of Partition and largely, of communal riots as well; where a degree of administrative stability has been possible; and which performs well on economic development indicators.

Short case studies, built around library research and select interviews, will contribute to creating the portrait of a three-way interface between developmental goals and their pursuit, the use of the state’s enforcement capacity and the challenges of democratic governance. Each of the following proposed cases represents a particular developmental value or aspiration, each has required some policing and each poses challenges for democratic governance.

- *Curbing female infanticide* In the late 1980s, alarmed by the declining sex ratio in the state, the Tamil Nadu government began partnering with NGOs to campaign against female infanticide. The police were part of that campaign, arresting offenders as they were identified.
- *Kalpakkam and Kudankulam nuclear power plants* Tamil Nadu is home to two nuclear power stations, the second under construction. The generation of electricity is their main purpose, but there have been controversies relating to environment, safety and displacement issues surrounding both plants. Nuclear energy, with its potential military applications, is always a securitized policy issue, and anti-nuclear protests are clearly

seen as posing security threats.

- *Cauvery water-sharing* As an arid, lower-riparian state, dependent on a brief retreating monsoon and water-sharing arrangements, dams and water loom large in the Tamil political agenda. Regular wrangling with both Karnataka and Kerala, results in popular protests, disruption of communication and destruction of property. A federal polity must resolve such conflicts in a manner that is and is seen to be even-handed—a different kind of democratic governance challenge.
- *Kachchatheevu* This small Palk Straits island, equidistant from India and Sri Lanka, was ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974 as part of a delimitation agreement. Since then, there has been a dispute about the traditional rights of Indian fishermen in the area. The dispute has been complicated by the policing of the area against the movement of Sri Lankan Tamil militants. Livelihood issues, sovereignty and border security bestow a critical importance to an otherwise insignificant island.
- *Sri Lankan refugees in Tamil Nadu* For more than two decades, refugees from northern Sri Lanka have found their way to Tamil Nadu's southern coastal districts. They live in camps that are segregated from the mainstream and with restrictions on their mobility. The humanitarian imperative to provide for those who seek protection, anxiety that the camps are a safe haven for militants and local concerns about law and order must all be factored into policy assessments here.

The utility of multiple cases here is not so much to further generalization rather than the contrary—to cast light on complexity, and not of each case but the relationship between security, development and democratic governance. Therefore, in a study envisioned as being approximately 50 single-spaced pages long, each case study will be about 4-5 pages long.

The study will yield a multi-faceted portrait of a complex relationship, in which each element is in fact, as essential as the next. The understanding of 'security,' 'development' and 'democracy' that are brought to the practice of governance alter the nature of their relationship, which rather than fluctuating in a binary mode between being mutually inimical or reinforcing, is likely to simultaneously be both mutually inimical and reinforcing.