



Consultative Meeting

A REPORT

Calcutta Research Group
6 April 2024, Kolkata.



CONSULTATIVE MEETING

ON

SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND VULNERABLE
POPULATIONS OF SOUTH ASIA

A REPORT

CALCUTTA RESEARCH GROUP

WITH SUPPORT FROM

THE FUND FOR GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS

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PROGRAMME SCHEDULE

SECURITY, VULNERABLE POPULATIONS, AND JUSTICE

A CONSULTATIVE MEETING

BY

CALCUTTA RESEARCH GROUP (CRG)

6 April 2024

Venue: Hotel Monotel, Kolkata.

I: INAUGURAL SESSION

9.00-9.30am:

- Tea & Registration

9.30-10.00am: Introduction- Macro Security and Micro Insecurities

Chair: Paula Banerjee, *Asian Institute of Technology* & CRG.

- Ranabir Samaddar, *Distinguished Chair in Migration and Forced Migration Studies*, CRG.
- Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, *Rabindra Bharati University* & CRG.

SESSION II: LAW & SECURITY- JURIDICAL ISSUES TO SECURITY OF LIFE

10.00-11.00am: Discussion:

Chair: Samir Kumar Das, *Calcutta University* & CRG.

- Kalpanna Kannabiran, *Eminent Sociologist, and Jurist, Council for Social Development* & CRG.
- Ritam Sengupta, *O.P. Jindal Global University*.
- Sahana Basavapatna, *Trial Court, Bangalore* & CRG.

TEA BREAK: 11.00-11.30am

SESSION III: ISSUES OF GENDER SECURITY

11.30-1.30pm: Discussion:

Chair: KalpannaKannabiran.

- Anjuman Ara Begum, *Assam Royal Global University* & CRG.
- Sumona Dasgupta, *Expert in Peace & Conflict Studies*, CRG.
- Paula Banerjee.

LUNCH BREAK: 1.30-2.30pm

SESSION IV: ISSUES OF HUMAN SECURITY

2.30-4.00pm: Discussion:

Chair: Samata Biswas, *Sanskrit College and University & CRG.*

- **Babloo Loitangbam**, *Lawyer & Human Rights Activist*
- **Saurabh Bhattacharjee**, *National Law School of India University.*
- **Sucharita Sengupta**, *Researcher, CRG.*
- **Rajat Roy**, *Eminent Journalist & CRG.*

TEA BREAK: 4.00-4.30pm.

SESSION V: GEOPOLITICS, MARGINAL AREAS, AND THE ISSUE OF SECURITY

4.30-5.30pm:

Chair: Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury.

- **Shibashis Chatterjee**, *Jadavpur University.*
- **Samir Kumar Das.**
- **Ibrahim Wani**, *Kashmir University.*

SESSION VI: DIALOGUES AND NETWORK – SECURITY, PEACE & JUSTICE

5.30-6.30PM:

Chair & Concluding Remarks: Ranabir Samaddar.

- **Discussion Initiated by Samata Biswas.**
- **Vote of Thanks.**

**This schedule is tentative and subject to last minute modifications*

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

CONSULTATIVE MEETING

SECURITY, JUSTICE, AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS OF SOUTH ASIA

6 APRIL 2024, HOTEL MONOTEL, KOLKATA.

As part of the Research Programme on *Security, Justice, and Vulnerable Populations of South Asia*, a **One-day Consultative Meeting** was organised by the *Calcutta Research Group* with support from *Global Fund for Human Rights*. The Meeting was thematically divided into six sections. A brief report of the day long proceedings is given below.

SESSION I: INTRODUCTION – MACRO SECURITY AND MICRO INSECURITIES

The meeting commenced with an inaugural session, chaired by **Paula Banerjee**. The inaugural session set the ball rolling by explaining how the concept of *security* is conceptualised at the said research programme. The session panellists were **Ranabir Samaddar** and **Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury**, who introduced the theme and objectives of the meeting. Samaddar gave a brief history to how this research programme on security was conceived besides wondering aloud how we can expand our understanding of various forms of security. He also reflected upon the operationalisation of the idea of security in the context of India. It was highlighted that CRG has taken an active role in organising discussions gearing around the theme in the past. It had emerged as a peace group that thrived on discussions gearing around security, peace, and democracy. Basu Ray Chaudhury added to the discussion by elucidating the ways in which they have engaged with the concept of security in this programme. He also briefed about the various themes as enlisted in the schedule above. The daylong meeting was meant for a brainstorming on the broad theme and to think through the road map ahead. The sessions were aimed to discuss the various sub-themes which would be part of the broader framework.

The main discussion points that Samaddar and Basu Ray Chaudhury threw open with in the inaugural session are summarised below:



Picture 1: Inaugural Session

The inaugural session primarily underscored the differences between micro and macro insecurity: the relational difference, divergence and points of assimilation between the two and whether these can be looked at without taking into cognisance the inter-relation of the micro with the macro and vice versa. The Covid 19 pandemic, for example, was thought to be a game changer in addressing the issues of security and protection of migrant lives considering the globality of the effect of the pandemic, yet it failed to move beyond its temporal facilities of structural protection, with certain facilities opening up for the middle classes but not for everyone else. The pandemic has exposed the micro-vulnerabilities which have been growing at an alarming rate for quite some time now and migrants and refugees who are anyway the most vulnerable are now facing an incremental increase in vulnerabilities in the post-pandemic times. It is due to the fact that whole notions and structures of humanitarian philosophy that guide the protection mechanisms globally, is slowly being replaced by ideas of capitalist development especially those formulated by the Global North that reinforces establishments like state by way of defining what development is. This pushes the already vulnerable to and sometimes beyond the margins. It is not displacement or migration that leads to vulnerability but accentuates the already precarious situations in its cause and consequence thus raising the questions: Who is to be or needs to be secured? Whether this security is the same as desired by those in need of security or broadly what is the people's notion of insecurity? In order to understand the plenitude in the notions of security it is important to map the traditional vulnerabilities of different groups of population as well as the rise of new vulnerabilities like data security that amplifies other vulnerabilities. The traditional ideas of inclusivity, care, protection are being increasingly replaced by intolerance of people entering into terrains of vulnerability marked by retreat of welfare state, rise of neoliberal economies that has led to different new kinds of vulnerabilities like energy security, climate change, etc. Discussions of

security have now left the domain of critical analysis of security from its geo-political notion of the act securing the borders and has become more extensive by trying to include every detail of life that needs to be secured i.e., a holistic approach is broadening the scope of security. The question that unfolds is: How is macro-security of the nation related to micro-insecurity of different groups of population in any country? The ways in which government policies produce inequality and impact rights, entitlements and welfare benefits finally impacting the questions of who belongs and where does one belong in the end, is beyond the conscripted notion of citizenship. There has been increasing tendencies of judicialisation of administration and executive powers curbing the free expression of opinion. Samaddar referred to Foucault's lectures on *Security, Territory, and Population* (Lectures at the College De France, 1977-78) critiquing the early literatures on security and liberty. He said that the state develops by linking our anxieties and expectations of secured liberties. If we take the usual discourse of human rights in addressing the idea of security then it might fail to answer why we cannot have an unqualified journey of liberty or people respond differently to different forms of governmentality. It is therefore a need to resolutely understand that the world is not absolute and there will be scope of restoration of peace and the relation in international order among neighbours—one has to remember that a nation cannot choose its neighbours- and the quality of democracy is interlinked. Expanding the idea of security also depends on how one can reimagine the politics of the South or is there a Southern idea of security or is geopolitics fated to be left as a subject matter of international relations or is there something that is palpable to the politics of the South?

What was there in the politics of the 50's, 60's or 70's decades that at least allowed the politics to find and make forays into the ways of achieving peace, combining in many ways the early democratic nationalist values of jurisprudence, forming a multiracial multi-ethnic community. One can thus notice that it is imperative that whether traditional or non-traditional, security always functions within the ambit of state mechanisms, impacting the politics and democratic structures of governmentality. Question remains how macro security of the country relates to micro securities—something that the sub themes planned for the meeting should be addressing. Question of citizenship too is important in this context. In this context it is also necessary to look into the roles and functions of the two Global Compacts on Refugees and safe and orderly migration and assessment of its impact on security of migrants especially migrant labour in South and Southeast Asia vis-a-vis its role in safeguarding the non-traditional securities in South Asia, like food, energy security etc. Security related to work as informalisation and platformisation of labour is also ruling the roost. At the same time, the question of security of labour, specially, migrant labour in South and Southeast Asia is crucial to consider. Developing structures of security embodies righteousness that is justified by the state that protects civil liberties. But why is then common life is becoming more and more precarious? How do we then expand and recover other meanings of security? It is thus necessary to see how the historical development of security has developed both inclusively and exclusively at the same time. There is clearly a dynamic in the operationalisation of the idea of security. For example, the security of the nation is to be strengthened and the result brings more insecurity to people. If one looks back to the

decades of 60's and 70's, one can see that the assumptions or anxieties or thoughts with security were parallel to the thoughts of increasing liberties which developed autonomously.

Paula Banerjee offered her comments by saying the dichotomy between traditional and non-traditional security is baffling, because how can resources like land or water be part of non-traditional security? This itself reflects on the questionable paradigm of security.



Picture 2: Inaugural Session

SESSION II: LAW & SECURITY- JURIDICAL ISSUES TO SECURITY OF LIFE

The session with three panellists was chaired by **Samir Kumar Das** who set the tone of the session by enquiring whether law is a necessary prerequisite to ensure security of life? And does this security come at the cost of security of many lives? He invited the three panellists to make their comments on the subtheme law and security.



Picture 3: Second Session

Kalpana Kannabiran in her elaborate talk discussed the idea of constitution-as-commons, as one that frames our discussion as citizens of the constitution in the present times. In this context, she focussed upon the contours of this possibility, not just in India, but through the Indian experience, for a more holistic, international, intersectional, and most importantly a pluriversal understanding, without detracting from the fact that justice is always rooted spatially. Law is not a monolith: there are plural, diverse characters of law. It may be enabling and constricting at the same time. The question arises if the law can accommodate the desires of the society in a particular context. The elaboration of the constitution-as-commons draws on the experience of intersecting ‘borderlands’—caste, gender, ethnicity, religion, territory, among others—as providing the lens through which a framework of justice may be imagined. There is another problem to reckon with: how to secure personal liberty while resisting procedure established by law? There has been establishmentarian interpretation of constitution in many situations like abrogation of article 370 which was criticised as the death of the constitution but still, the oughtness of the article still exists. This oughtness breeds from the desires of the society. Thus, Kannabiran reinforced the point that we need to visualise the constitution as common, which means that we possess the constitution as common. It is not the sole possession of legal jurists. Insecurity often breeds from the cultural politics of care. It is productive to understand the rejection of violent regimes of rule (including the use of the law to subjugate) through the lens of the politics of care, as it helps draw together both the basis of the forging of solidarity across location to achieve a unity of purpose and actively engaging to alleviate suffering (individual and social), restore dignity through interrogating social humiliation, and heal trauma induced by regimes of maiming. Resistance, especially collective resistance, in this context is the quintessential expression of the politics of

care and is culturally and historically rooted contexts even while lessons may be imparted and imbibed cross-culturally.

Ritam Sengupta spoke of the new digital regime in India, in which context he mentioned the Digital Data Protection Act. He referred to the relationship between law and technology. Explaining the context, he pointed out that over the last few decades, India has increasingly registered some amount of growth in Information Technology—related commerce, services and production as well as displayed a marked tendency to shift the process of governance onto the affordances of digital technology. These acts simultaneously identify and segregate some kinds of people, especially from weaker sections. These laws provide a sense of security to some while rendering others more insecure. This has meant that the question of security has now become replotted along the critical axis of digital mediation. The question of digital security has however been a matter of constant paradox, particularly when we consider who or what has been the subject of the at times confounding pursuit of security in this region. The law's clause of 'permission' subjects citizens to allow collection of their data and links the same with the concept of national security. At the same time, the law exempts businesses from respecting the data privacy clause in their first 5 years of commencement. The nation-state as the founding concern in matters of 'national security' has markedly gained ground as a delicate territorial compact to be protected from the ingress of various foreign interference, obstruction, and attacks in the virtualised realm of the world wide web and in case of critical national infrastructure. Thus at least since the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, there has been a clear scaling up of the technical abilities of the state to monitor, control and even launch counter-attacks in the virtual realm. At least notionally, the concerned technical safeguards are also exercised or overlaid over matters of everyday digital existences of Indian citizens like in the case of Aadhar, UPI and the like. At the same time, arguably, the protection in the same digital realm as available to the citizen - the fundamental constituent of the territorial unit of the nation-state - has gradually waned even as his/her/their lives have become even more implicated in the mediation of the digital. Thus, leaks of private data, commercial frauds, identity thefts, and mal-use of identification technology towards violent ends of exclusion and persecution have become only too common. The state and the citizens at times seem to have almost competing interests in the matter of digital security. Very often these interests are posed across the interface of privacy. Privacy is at once seemingly constitutive of the social contract while being only too easily compromised at the altar of state reason. Keeping this in mind, a reconsideration of the issue of digital security at such a juncture as we live through in contemporary India, is only partially an issue of technology. The ever-shifting, yet critical parameter of law might be another index against which the question of digital security can be interrogated. The difficulties encountered in enacting a law for Data Protection and privacy in India is an obvious symptom of the tricky yet essential involvement of law in matters of digital security (and insecurities). We need to consider if the interaction of technology and law can broaden the definitions of security in a way in which the unavoidably digital existence of Indian citizens can be emboldened.



Picture 4: Second Session

Sahana Basavapatna spoke of the context of refugee law and its adhocism in India. She argued that in the context of refugee policies, ‘administrative adhocism exists’. The recent Constitutional Amendment ACT in India and the Rohingyas issue underline how the Indian state treats people migrating to India differently. The CAA is a very telling example of how new categories are being created. The migrants and refugees are treated under CAA law in different ways. The interesting question is how CAA laws grant citizenship and how asylum seekers are granted the same. Some of the obstacles in granting citizenship are poverty and suspicion in the minds of local authorities. There is a sketchy system in place which determines how rules will work. The functioning of courts and bureaucracies in the case of deportation of refugees demonstrates what actors participate in the performance of the constitution. Administration may work in ways that defeat the whole purpose of progressive judgments. As examples, she pointed out to the Rohingya instances in India- on the process through which we can understand the insecurities faced by refugees like the Rohingya in India. 2015 saw quite a few Rohingyas in India protesting in the capital city Delhi on the issue of Refugee status determination. This also happens because of a lack of communication between different wings of the state. This confusion creates space for insecurity. This also leaves things at the whims and fancies of the administrative officials. Hence, the court’s action may not help the insecure. At times, different High Courts can also act differently. Referring to Kannabiran’s talk, Basavapatna said it will be interesting to see how refugees like the Rohingya find space if we think of the constitution as commons. She also mentioned in this context how trial courts are lot more open when it comes to delivering judgements on refugee incarceration under the foreigner’s act. She concluded by asking how do we understand the insecurities thus faced by various refugee and migrant communities in India, especially the ones who are part of the informal economy? This aspect needs to be considered from the perspective of security.

The chair remarked that the constitution should be seen as a performance and that there is no apparent binary between national security and other kinds of security. The session led to some interesting questions and comments for example, Ranabir Samaddar reflected on the question of thinking the constitution as commons. Referring to Ritam Sengupta's intervention, Samaddar also mentioned, territory is linked to with security while population with protection. However, in the new liberal times, flows across borders have attained a mixed characteristic. In this context, how do we understand concepts like security and protection? —it is necessary to push this point. Why is it that in liberal times, the question of security has become so important?

SESSION III: ISSUES OF GENDER SECURITY

The session was chaired by **Kalpana Kannabiran**. The opening comments of the Chair emphasised Gender Security as an important aspect for vulnerable communities all over South Asia. She pointed out the dichotomies of traditional and non-traditional securities, especially in the case of vulnerable gendered populations. The three panellists presented their comments after the opening comments of the chair.

Anjuman Ara Begum began by asking whether a study on security is possible without studying insecurities. She spoke of gender insecurities that emanated during the colonial period. Tribal communities from different states (especially from Bihar and Orissa) and Bengalis from the eastern part of Bengal migrated as plantation or agricultural labourers and they started living in the Tea Garden areas and lower parts of Assam. The first instance of insecurity came with the difference in language between the migrants and the indigenous Assamese population. Capturing the fertile land areas (chars) on the river have intensified the complications. Women living in char areas in addition to the traditional layers of discrimination, also face ecological vulnerabilities. Climate change, perennial flood condition, river erosion in Assam leads to ecological vulnerability where women are disproportionately affected. The Covid 19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have added further misery to these challenges. Traditional livelihoods are on hold during flood and very limited options of livelihood are available leading to lack of financial independence for women. Security of migration practices is abysmal. Men and women migrating to other parts of the state/country in search of work are often branded as 'suspected foreigners' and are harassed by vigilante groups as well as by the state agencies. Despite different initiatives of social assimilation, these difficulties have led to adverse feelings towards the migrants, which ended up with several clashes. Women and children among migrants have faced a major crisis since colonial times. The speaker pointed out the contests related to the citizenship question of vulnerability and insecurity. The initial register of citizens prepared in 1951 excluded 1.9 million people due to speaking languages apart from Assamese. This predecessor of the newly popularised NRC created a division regarding ethnic and religious background. According to recent statistics, 6.3 million people were found in transit camps because of lack of sufficient documents. The speaker also reiterated that in Assam women and children belonging to minority groups have been most affected by the state's policy to detect 'foreigners' when their legal status as citizens is 'suspected' by the state and they are often declared 'alien' by the authorities, landing in detention camps/centers. At least 60%

of them suffered from problems with their citizenship. The state authorities refused to accept certificates from the local body representatives for the registration of birth and death, which has been a tradition for years. According to the 2011 Census, 86% of Assam's population lives in rural areas, with the female literacy rate in rural areas being 63%. Low education enhances multiple layers of vulnerabilities. Judiciary including 'foreigner's detection machineries are reluctant to acknowledge women's unequal status in the society rendering many women to virtual stateless. Most court judgments are in favour of preparing detention camps, which increased the vulnerability of the women and children staying at the camps. There are enormous legal, political, and organisational barriers to gender security, which are generally experienced by women, and it starts with social notion of gender division of labour and the social gender roles of 'men as bread winners and women as caretaker'. This leads to exclusion of women from education, livelihood, free movement, broader politics, and public sphere. Additionally, state's citizenship contestation exposes them to further multiple layers vulnerabilities. Citing reference from Momiron Nessa's incident, she concluded by stating, deprivation from accessing proper justice has resulted in growing insecurity, and state-supported agencies have not cared to solve the problem.



Picture 5: Third Session

Sumona Dasgupta opened her discussion by reflecting on how to make war safe for women. To elucidate, she spoke of women's role in prevention and resolution of conflicts and in relation to this, the landmark Resolution 1325, adopted by the Security Council on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace

and security. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and young girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. Dasgupta argued, as women are generally the severest victims of any armed conflict, they should be involved in security practices also. However, in most cases, so far as practical implementation of the 1325 Resolution is concerned, states have been reluctant in involving women in the peace processes, dialogues, and negotiations. Gender relations get affected during a conflict situation where in the safety and security of women get also compromised. A resolution as that of the 1325 helps in these situations as it enhances and gives primacy to the role of women. Having said that, it needs to be mentioned that although women activists from the Global South played a crucial role in passing the agenda, the resolution hardly included their concerns and made specific changes to suit the global north. As a result, there are a few issues that need to be flagged. There is no doubt that following 1325 and its sister resolutions, humanitarian law has been strengthened as civil wars are not going to disappear overnight and humanitarian law does give a level of protection during times of armed conflict to civilians including women. However, an overemphasis solely on humanitarian law means that the focus shifts on 'how to make war safe for women' (the protection aspect) rather than participation, or conversations gearing around the structural causes of war and armed conflict which is closely linked to issues of social justice. Dasgupta continued that the challenge is that a militarised peace and security agenda which is what we have today does not uphold women's social and economic rights and ignores the political economy of armed conflicts. How do we address the irony of the powerful states including ones with Feminist foreign policies all contributing to the arms trade, importing huge amounts of arms creating the conditions for armed conflict but talking about how to protect women in times of war? In the global south, women have taken active role in peace processes. Despite assertions made by experts from the Global South to emphasise on the question of 'security' instead of peace-making processes, the leaders of the Global North have continued with their agenda. As a result, humanitarian laws have become more robust. Dasgupta questioned the policy of the increased emphasis on making Humanitarian Laws. According to her, a WPS agenda must acknowledge that war and peace do not occupy two ends of the spectrum and that the slow violence during apparent peacetime as well as the sexual violence during armed conflicts take place along a war and peace continuum. Therefore, security, peace and social justice questions have been compromised. She gave instances of Gaza and conflicts within the countries in South Asia where women are victimised during times of apparent peace. These victimisations also created a sense of insecurity at the micro level, which renders women vulnerable. War and Peace-making processes therefore should not be seen as two ends of the spectrum. The WPS agenda needs to engage with conditions of social justice if it must be relevant to the lives of millions of women across the globe.



Picture 6: Third Session.

Paula Banerjee picked up from the point initiated by Sumona Dasgupta on whether war is safe for women or not. She also referred to Resolution 1325, where the word protection has been mentioned several times. Along with protection, 'prevention' is also one of the key points of the resolution, however, Peace would not be possible without considering displaced women. In this context she mentioned the dynamics of securitisation of borders citing instances of her across Bengal-Bangladesh borders and India's northeast. She said that decades after border delineation and amalgamation by the colonialists, South Asia is still grappling with the debilitating impacts of border formations through violence. These borders are at times immutable and at other times a project in the making which is never to be definitively complete as they are zones of porosity and rampant flows. They are markers of conflicting identities, resulting in question of belonging and not belonging, citizenship and statelessness, spaces of security and insecurities, the migrants and those who were left behind. South Asia is born out of colonial borderlines, which on one hand partitioned multiple homelands and nations into distinct states; and on the other hand, amalgamated distinctly different ethnicities, religion and other identities into single states igniting an intractable politics with contestations over belonging and not belonging that has bred tremendous instabilities and insecurities. The Bengal-Bangladesh borderland remains as a space of contests based on cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious and gendered divisions. As much as the post-colonial state strives to make these borders secure the more insecure it becomes. Security is a deeply gendered phenomenon and therefore these zones of security or borderlands are often transformed into spaces of extreme gendered insecurities both for men and women. Violence against men in the borderlands has many examples but none is starker than that of shooting to kill young men for 'smuggling' cattle. As for insecure manifestations of women and their sexuality, because women are always considered as sexual beings; it abounds. The phenomena of borders lead to challenges and transgressions and nothing

is more challenging for any security apparatus than trafficking across borders. Trafficking always brings in issues of femininity and sexuality. Evidence suggests that many men are trafficked across borders but what captures popular imaginations is trafficking for sex. Inevitably here the women are considered as victims. It is true that trafficking leads to victimisation of women but one should not think that trafficking completely deprives women of their agency. There are many women whose alternatives are so desperate that for them the choice to be trafficked might be a transactional decision. These decisions can often spiral out of control and lead to tremendous violence for both men and women who are trying to escape a situation of stark deprivation. In this day of constant discourse of safe migration and decent jobs therefore, why migration across the Bengal-Bangladesh borderland is so gender insensitive and unsafe is a question that needs to be addressed. Before the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Bangladesh and West Bengal were already growing hubs for human trafficking. The specter of trafficking discursively made women the quintessential victim once again in our considerations of security. She concluded by stating, the post-colonial state to make borderlands more secure, securitises it by allowing women to ‘man’ the borders. This is perhaps considered as modern. However, this modernity is achieved at the cost of sacrificing protection for the marginalised, who are often but not always women. These women are in a terrain that is historically violent, ecologically fragile with no notion of ‘decent’ work. In such a situation of injustice and vulnerability perhaps there has to be more robust rethinking on the paradigm of security itself.



Picture 7: Third Session.

The chair summed up the session by pointing out that all the three presentations raised concerns about the idea of insecurity, where the role of the state or the majority is to locate their enemy within. Race was also

implicit in all the three presentations—that the question of race cannot be submerged. The targets on a particular group or a particular section of women belonging to a minority race or religion could be one of the easiest targets. Talking of peace could only be possible by studying the thin or overlapped binaries of security and insecurity. Ranabir Samaddar posed a general query on method that emanated from this and the preceding sessions—which is, why do we think of communities or people while thinking of ‘insecurity’. He also pointed out that there is no clear definition of justice but there are prevalent instances of injustices. Therefore, one can think of the method here as beginning with the negative is indicated in most of the morning sessions.

Session IV: Issues of Human Security

The second half of the day started with this session focusing upon various facets of human security and was chaired by **Samata Biswas**.

Babloo Loitangbam began by briefing his journey as a human rights activist in Northeast India. One of their early tasks was to document extreme painful experiences of victims of conflict and militarisation like rape, torture. In his early days of activism when the UN Special Rapporteur on Extra judicial summary and arbitrary execution visited India in 2012, they had handed over a list of some 1528 cases of civilians killed because of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) but no proceedings were done. After a lot of scrutiny, a landmark judgement was passed in 2016 by Justice Nupur where he clearly stated that in the case of a civilian death, even if it is under the AFSPA, FIR should be registered, and proper judicial investigation should take place abiding by the course of law. While the judgement talks of basic human rights, this was simply nonexistent in the Northeast since 1958. This is a glaring instance when in the pretext of national (macro) security, the most fundamental security of right to life of certain sections of populations, specially living on the periphery, get jeopardized. A genuine national security should emerge from the security of its citizens. Loitangbam pointed out this judgement did wonders in Manipur because violence is a cyclic process. Once the state reduced its usage of the special arms force, automatically entire situation too calmed down. He argued, when people are pushed to a corner, incidents of insurgency and conflict surge, espousing a circle of insecurities. He also talked of the challenges of cross border migration into the Northeast. Here also, border securitisation focuses more on securing state borders than considering security of the people compelled to cross the borders. For instance, there are talks of fencing the borders, which is not a great idea as this would require dividing villages on the borders affecting in turn civilian lives. In Mizoram, there are 40,000 Myanmar nationals from the Chin community. The government of Mizoram has taken a praiseworthy step in this regard of providing them with shelter, irrespective of what the national policies are in this context. The push back has worsened since January 2023, according to the speaker. Mass arrests took place under the Foreigners Act. The position of the government of Manipur in this regard is in sync with the central power disposition. The step of ‘push back’ however is a violation of the international refugee conventions and the principle of non-refoulment, Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Even though India is not a signatory of the international refugee laws, it is a part of the

UDHR. The third issue flagged by Loitangbam is the kind of ethnic violence that Manipur has been experiencing of late regarding the Kukis and Meiteis. This is a unique situation in independent India when two communities are completely divided between each other. There are excessive violent conflicts resulting out of the divergences. Even after one year of these conflicts, no comprehensive step has been taken by the authorities to mitigate the situation. At least 60,000 people are displaced in Manipur as a result and the violence is still continuing. Loitangbam concluded with a very interesting argument which is, the tendency of humans is to empathise with their communities in a conflict situation to the extent of rationalising violence by demonising the other. This however yields disastrous results for the future of the communities in question. Both the leadership and local media thus need to be careful in the kinds of narratives being circulated, in turn fueling the conflict situation. Peace builders too have an important role to play in this context as they need to put in perspectives narratives of both the communities in question considering political and economic factors that fuel ethnic conflicts, in order to render justice, instead of rationalising violence and its retaliations.

Saurabh Bhattacharjee first went on to defining the meaning of Human Security which has played an instrumental role in redefining the concept of security beyond state-centric traditional understanding of security. He referred to the Report of the UN Commission on Human Security (2003) that defines Human security as protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms—freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one's own behalf. Later it was also endorsed in a UN General Assembly resolution in 2012. However, the concept of Human Security has emerged in an era of paradox, in the post 9/11 world (September 11 attack in the United States) when re-securitisation was emphasised in international relations and in the overall protection of refugees and migrants. Human Security as a concept also emerged in an era of neo liberalism when traditional models of social protection had collapsed or have been diluted. Against this backdrop, Bhattacharjee tried to make sense of Human Security through a few parameters and social protection legislations and talked about operationalising it more substantially through legal terms. The other aspect that he touched upon in the presentation was to locate possible avenues within Indian labour laws in social security and welfare laws. Within this, one could refer to the international laws for refugees which has often been critiqued for its euro centrality. Bhattacharjee argued that not only Eurocentricity, but the scope of the refugee conventions are also very weak so far as social protection and social and economic rights of refugees are concerned. In comparison, in international human rights law, there are several other instruments like the Child's rights committee or CEDAW committee speak of how rights that are recognised by the likes of the UDHR cannot be only limited to citizens and should extend to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as well. He also mentioned in the context that absence of clarity in the existing structure of international human rights laws is a concern that lawyers like the speakers shares. As far as migrant labour is concerned, the international labour laws are quite extensive, but they too are marked by weak enforcement structures. As a result, the

ground implementation of these laws has remained weak including in India. The speaker mentioned Article 21 of the Indian constitution in this reference—'Protection of Life and Personal Liberty'—that has become the fulcrum of several social and economic rights in the ways in which Indian courts have read Article 21. This right is not only limited to citizens but every person living within the Indian territory. There is thus need, to reclaim the space made available by Article 21 so far as other rights are concerned like the right to food, health care, social security, and work to argue that every forced migrant in India too has the constitutional entitlement to receive the basics in order to live a dignified life. Labour laws on the other hand despite their weaknesses do not limit themselves only to citizens. Another aspect that needs to be considered with this is that not only refugees but even for informal migrant workers in India, social protection remains weak. Similarly Contract Labour law is also limited by its coverage. Bhattacharjee went on to give a few instances of this. He also referred to the weak operational aspect of the food security laws mentioning the debate around 'One Nation, One Ration Card'. Therefore, not only refugees but actual benefits of these legislations like the food security act remains elusive. He concluded that not only statutory space for protection of refugees should be talked about when it comes to human security, but also all forms of labour and vulnerable groups must be covered by social welfare laws and social protection laws. A holistic approach is needed moving beyond categories of people.

Sucharita Sengupta brought in the question of Human Security so far as international refugee conventions like the Global Compact of Refugees (GCR) and Migrants (GCM) are concerned. Like the previous speaker, she too talked about the operationalisation of these rights in ground reality especially in the South Asian context like India. She asked, what does the Global Compact for 'Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration' (GCM, 2018) imply for vulnerable groups of population like migrants and refugees? Although the GCM focusses explicitly on migrants, it was conceived in tandem with the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR). Thus, reading them in dialogue with each other gives a comprehensive picture of the protection mechanisms as enshrined in the global compacts. Despite the positive aspect of the GCM in highlighting migration to be natural and giving emphasis on security of refugees and migrants, there are certain paradoxes of these soft laws that limit their applicability. Sengupta explored some of these positives and problems. She began by sketching a brief background to the framing of the GCM that she argued is important in comprehending the specific context and applicability of the conventions. 2015 was a landmark year when international migration in Europe was recognised as a crisis. The same year is also known for visibility of boat migrants sailing in precarity from Bangladesh to Southeast Asia in search of economic opportunities, of migrants ending up in border detention camps, or as bonded labour or/and perishing in the sea, giving rise to critical questions surrounding global migration. Migration increasingly got recognised as complex and 'nontraditional threat to security' in the national security paradigm of countries across borders, like the United States and Philippines. This paved the way for several global platforms by the United Nations like the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016, in continuation with its previous dialogues (2006, 2007, 2013) on developing an international framework of migration, securitizing lives of migrants. She mentioned although the New York Declaration that refugees and migrants are

governed by separate legal frameworks, both are governed by the principles of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The declaration recognises the fact that often refugees and migrants share similar kinds of vulnerabilities and get entrapped in large movements. The term large movements as manifested in the declaration does not talk about the regular flow of migrants but movements that involve ‘mixed flows of people’, whether refugees or migrants, who move for different reasons but might use similar routes or as some instances of 2015 depict, they might also be moving together, for example the mix flow of Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi economic migrants from Bangladesh to Southeast Asian countries. Both the global compacts that were framed on the foundation of the Declaration, as notes the official document of UNHCR, are complimentary international cooperation frameworks that fulfil the mandates laid out in the New York Declaration and recognise that migrants and refugees might face many common challenges and similar vulnerabilities. The distinction between migrants and refugees are both challenged and reaffirmed through the compacts evincing one of the several paradoxes of the compacts. While the two categories are discussed in similar and parallel ways, they eventually are represented in several texts, which limits the flexibility of categories. The issue of human security becomes pertinent in this context. She concluded by way of pointing out a few weaknesses of the global compacts. Five years since its inception, it thus becomes necessary to assess the merits of the compacts—while the positive aspect is to empower migrants and refugees, there are multiple problems like the muting of politics in the compacts. The compacts are silent so far as politics surrounding migration among states is concerned jeopardising security of the people.



Picture 8: Fourth Session.

Rajat Roy geared his talk around a key aspect of human security, which is that of land. In a discussion on security, a discussion surrounding lands become pertinent as losing land right leads to palpable insecurity. He began by referring to a short story ‘How Much Land Does a Man Need?’ Land grabbing has continued

from the colonial to the post-colonial times in South Asia, and India. Although there are ample laws to securitise borders, one tends to forget that borders are fluid and not constant. Borders exist not only to protect territories but to also grab more lands. He gave a few instances of the shifting borders and landscapes within India like Sikkim. There are disputes over land in many parts of the country like Kashmir, Ladakh, etc. While there are also laws to protect people, question arises on which people, who are being protected, against whom? Many vulnerable sections of the population have been deprived of land for ages. Since 1947, the poorest sections of the rural population have been systematically dispossessed of their land and denied their access to water to the extent that they have been forced to migrate elsewhere in search of work and livelihood. Tribal people, some of whom are forest dwellers, thereby dependent on the forest products, are the worst victims. Even the relatively new Forest Right Act (2006) and the existence of Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Area Act (PESA 1996) would not come to their help to protect their empowerment as other wings of the State would aggressively push them away from their traditional dwelling places for 'development' purposes, viz. opening of mines, construction of steel plants, hydel projects, etc. Land grabbing or acquisition has most often affected the most vulnerable sections of people. Also, for the facilitation of transportation of the raw materials and finished products, highways and rail roads are built by taking further land, thus causing further deprivation of the vulnerable sections of the rural population. Scholars like Walter Fernandes have shown in more detail how the Land Question is central to the question of insecurity of the vulnerable sections of the rural population. It was during the Naxalite uprisings in the 1960-70s that the land question was brought out explicitly in public discourse. Later, it continued to simmer in the form of Maoist movement. The expert groups formed by the government (e.g. by Planning Commission, the report of which was submitted in 2008) studied the issue and recommended measures. The government took various measures to offset the crisis that was fast alienating the rural poor and marginalised sections from the mainstream. Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF 2006 -2014). Tribal Development Fund (TDF, NABARD, 2003-04 and continuing) etc. He also gave instance of New Town-Rajarhat which is a satellite township near Kolkata. This area was once a huge stretch of marsh land owned by peasants and fishermen but is now under the control of the state, builders, and corporates. Lands here have been bought for meagre charges. In the name of developing those popular resistance affected areas, the state spent huge sum to beef up its security system, while paying little attention to the problems of acute poverty, illiteracy, and poor health infrastructure in those areas. Thus, the State's response was basically security centric to that problem of growing marginalisation, landlessness and poverty in those areas affecting a huge mass of people. As a result, there have been sporadic resistances. On the face of such resistances, the state had to retreat a bit. They had to scrap off the more than two century old Land Acquisition Act, 1893. It was substituted by a new law, The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation. The land question thus remains central to a discussion surrounding security and justice.

The chair made a few observations while summing up the four presentations. She connected all four presentations in referring to the rhetoric of national security that create increasingly precarious situations

that undermine human security but undermining of human security itself goes on to create situations that come in the way of national security. This is cyclicity of security concerns. She also mentioned how the fallacies of a neo liberal regime and corporate bias have figured in all the presentations. Creation and solidification of borders to have been a binding point of the presentations. The session drew a few comments and questions. Suma Talukdar pointed out an example of how economic concerns and corporate bias operate in the UN Security Council as well. Samir Kumar Das in the context of Northeast, noted how a human rights discourse came into being in the face of ethnic exclusivity and whether such discourse could lead us to rethink the western origins of the HR discourse. He also dwelled on the land question as to whether land can be seen as an object of governmentality instead of seeing it as a mere object.

Session V: Geopolitics, Marginal Areas, And the Issue of Security

The fifth session of the day was chaired by **Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury** who invited the three panelists of the session to offer their points on the above-mentioned subtheme.



Picture 9: Fifth Session.

Ibrahim Wani elaborated on the macro-security paradigms, especially in borderlands and peripheries, drawing reference from Kashmir, where the emphasis is on securing the borders, and on countering insurgency. He noted that peripheries or borderlands in India, like Kashmir, are placed in macro-security paradigms where the emphasis is on securing the borders, and on countering insurgency and dissent. Political projects to assert normalcy and development in such regions exist through suspensions of democratic processes, emergency measures, and surveillance and censorship. Such projects interweave closely with processes linked to governance, development, urbanisation, migration, etc., creating a variety of micro-insecurities, particularly for informal sector workers, including migrant workers. These regions

also experience frequent crises, linked not only to periodic escalations of violence, but also frequent disasters including floods, earthquakes, landslides, etc., creating complex and intersecting vulnerabilities for the people. At the same time, the normalcy asserting political projects work towards making such vulnerabilities opaque. As a first step, the task is to make such vulnerabilities visible. Wani threw light on surveillance, advocacy, journalistic or humanistic stories with political detainees, along with instances of service termination, together with modulation and limitations on expression of thoughts and speech in seminars and meetings. Wani underscored conversations on verification of documents, police census, and security issues that teachers from the Kashmir valley were faced with. In such contexts, many people may have strong perceptions of denial of justice and rights. Despite some exceptional cases where human rights have been upheld, there is a checkered history vis-à-vis justice delivery mechanisms and extra-judicial practices. In Kashmir, mainstream political parties have also made appeals for release of political detainees, and resumption of electoral and democratic processes in the region. This is to be situated in a place where the focus on counter-insurgency has largely succeeded in effecting a pronounced reduction of insurgent violence and near disappearance of public protest. Speaking of perceptions of denial of justice and rights, the presentation contemplated justice delivery mechanisms and extra-judicial practices, and reintroduction of terms such as ‘reconciliation’ in public discourses. The developmental and tunnel projects in the ecologically sensitive areas between Sonmarg and Kargil in Kashmir, raises alarm of landslides, with impacts on local communities. The speaker focused on two broad questions: firstly, how does one engage with vulnerable population for reconciliation and protection? and secondly, how does one engage with peace building? One of the considerations, Wani asserted, could be the involvement of vulnerable groups and beneficiaries of social and welfare schemes in legal discussion; along with the engagement of civil society organisations in advocacy—a practice that could be important for Kashmir and India’s Northeast.



Picture 10: Fifth Session.

Samir Kumar Das stated writings on India's geopolitics in general and in the Northeast in particular shuttles between two extremes. On the one hand, India's Northeast is believed to have given itself to 'a spatial way of thinking that arranges different actors, elements and locations simultaneously on a global chessboard'. On the other hand, the region is viewed as the site of production of 'alternative narratives that frame history and define power in ways that are not predicated upon the wealth of nations, their military strengths, or the command of languages, ideological or cultural control. In this context, he cited a few instances. Das began with an account of a punitive raid in the Mishmi Hills conducted in the early 1910s. He elaborated that the Mishmis inhabit a contiguous area that spreads across the border with Arunachal Pradesh on one side and China on the other, separated by a line apparently drawn for governing geopolitics and not for stable administration in the area. Referring to the late 1980s, Das spoke of the practice of exchange of greetings and tributes across the border and observed that the Mishmis moved across the border without much resistance. The Sela Tunnel in Arunachal Pradesh that connects Tezpur and Tawang through an all-weather road, not only reduces the journey time by an hour but also helps with the movement of heavy security logistics while keeping the army and artillery movement safe from visibility, considering the Chinese side. Das mentioned in this context, India's foreign policy in general and Sino-Indian relations are believed to have been scripted in the Cold War Geopolitics. But that the Mishmis could move across the Sino-Indian Line of Actual Control reportedly with the knowledge of the security personnel of India speaks of a new technology of governing security in the region. The micro game of the Mishmis and the macro game of Indian security are folded into each other. For defence and safety reasons many villagers had left the region and got away to the mainland, and therefore infrastructure such as tunnels and roads also came up as ways of repopulating such lesser accessible areas. The Mishmis, earlier living in considerable numbers in the upper Dirang region, today hold a small percentage of the population of Arunachal, perhaps in their outlook of not being placed under the radar of surveillance (at times suspected as the 'other') as they make a living out of hunting in the local environment. In the context of the region being considered as a site of production of alternative narratives that frame history, define power, ideology, affirm culture and control, it is important to understand the in-between of how the 'alternative narratives' are governed and the outcomes.

Shibashis Chatterjee drew attention to the studying of geopolitics mostly construed as 'northern geopolitics'. In the backdrop of existential threats such as climate crisis and pandemic that pose unparalleled challenges to humanity, it becomes domineering to analyse the interconnectedness of economic, geopolitical, and social dimensions, rather than bearing them as separate aspects. Speaking of three underlying logics that shape the contemporary international order with a complex interplay between geo-economics and geopolitics, Chatterjee went on and explained, firstly, the logic of order, where the tension between liberal economic policies and protectionist tendencies is evident, with economic instruments increasingly serving geopolitical interests; secondly, the logic of control that highlights the state's regulatory responses to economic crises, leading to nationalist and protectionist measures and finally, the logic of exceptionalism, exemplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasised the balance between rule-

breaking and rulemaking to address unforeseen challenges while maintaining legitimacy. The resurgence of the state in this context is notable, as it reasserts its regulatory role to address societal vulnerabilities and gaps in governance, thus, underlining the importance of sovereignty in effective governance and crisis management. Ultimately, these developments blur the lines between geopolitics, geo-economics, and political theory, shaping the social structures and dynamics of existence across time and space. Chatterjee recapitulated that in cognitive recognition it is equally important to distinguish between protection and security, with more reflection on the use of the terms care and vulnerability, which are less heard of in discourses. The speaker critically analysed the concept of security and burdens of security, raising the question of *whose security*, how security may be defined, and whether the term security can be replaced with development and securitisation. He dwelled on the use of the term security instead of care or protection and also questioned the appropriateness of these terms which are more appropriate? He noted that existentialism and possession, demography, identity, and ideas of security are often shaped by international orders and argued that given the geopolitics of North and South, the idea of security and breaches of law and order should be carefully engaged with.



Picture eleven: Fifth Session.

Ranabir Samaddar while referring to Ibrahim Wani's presentation, cited the examples of Beirut, Palestine, in the context of the several dimensions of engaging with vulnerable population. He added that looking into the histories, chronicles, population in geopolitics and analyses of the past and present of conflict-ridden cities, in terms of mobility, security, would be interesting aspects. Saurabh Bhattacharjee drew reference to Chimni's work and asserted that the use of the term 'human security' also engages with development. Ritam Sengupta flagged the idea of social security and securitisation of assets as one of the

ways of working through the project. Sumona DasGupta mentioned that in a way securitisation also means drawing attention to a specific issue, referring to land politics, ethnic conflicts in Assam, Manipur.

Session VI: Dialogues and Network – Security, Peace & Justice

The final and concluding session of the day was an open session of discussion that was led by Samata Biswas, and chaired by Ranabir Samaddar.

Biswas presented a few key points beginning her discussion with the formation of the Calcutta Research Group, precisely from a network—Pakistan India People’s Forum for Peace and Democracy in 1996—a forum of what is today called, peacebuilders, or peacemakers, then, peace activists—helped bring together researchers, teachers, trade unionists and others, based in Calcutta, together, to form CRG. CRG’s work, over the last 27 years, have been shaped by the pressing questions of the day—sustained, however, by networks built and strengthened across these years. In this reference, she recapitulated her own experience of building network as part of her association with CRG over the last few years. The experience of working with varied networks were different. Reminiscing about her experience, she noted that networking, in some cases involved money—funding to travel and to meet, while others could operate with some amount of institutional backing but given the increased securitisation and suspicion in all the South Asian nations now, and the contentious nature of the work, networking itself could be termed as vulnerable work, often making the network members feel insecure about sharing virtual space, being part of the same WhatsApp group or webinar—and even receiving one too many emails from another country. This, coupled with the nature of work all these networks have been interested in, work that can be given many different shades depending on the interlocutor’s position, networking itself turns into a security concern.



Picture 12: Sixth Session.

Biswas notes, it can be assumed that a network on human security will also alleviate new vulnerabilities and resultant insecurities. However, the lens of justice and vulnerability, when brought to bear upon the question of human security, would /should show that state mechanisms are inadequate, even complicit in the creation of new vulnerabilities in the neoliberal world, and therefore giving rise to new insecurities. A peace audit of postcolonial societies in South Asia can only be undertaken socially—by mapping the top-down approaches to national security and securitisation measures with the micro, local, specific yet generalised constructions and pockets of vulnerabilities produced at the intersection of the virtual and the real, the digital and the embodied, the regional and the transnational. Biswas pondered on the nature of such networks and the actors who would be associated. In a more particular sense, the network members should be able to address the more traditional questions of security without losing sight of the vulnerabilities (as opposed to threats) that securitisation discourses produce. Biswas concluded by arguing that a network focused on human security is always already vulnerable working against the imperatives of neoliberal capital, in postcolonial societies fraught with fissures along gender, caste, religion, ethnicity and class—against the logic of militarisation and for peace. An interdisciplinary network of actors would be uniquely placed to carry out an evolving peace audit, to make recommendations to each other (and if necessary, develop policy proposals), to learn from and share the best practices, beyond legalistic and juridical frameworks. Syncretic and traditional cultures of tolerance and cohabitation, of connectedness and flows—not undermined by the logic of governmentality, beyond strict boundaries theory versus praxis, would enable the network to work towards peace and justice, as key components of human security.



Picture 13: Sixth Session.

In the comments that followed, attendees reflected upon both the positive aspects and limits to networking. Kalpana Kannabiran referred to the politics of funding that is inherently tied with the constituents of a

particular network. The constituent of a network takes call on which kinds of funding to go for. Unless we understand this part, it is futile to address the question of funding. Ranabir Samaddar agreed with Biswas on the inherent vulnerability of networks. He also talked about the importance of Kannabiran's point on funding and mentioned, applications for foreign fundings get more merit when proposals talk about building networks. Networks grow from struggles. In this reference, Samaddar mentioned the 12 July Committee in West Bengal, India, which was also a network of all mercantile organisations aligning with left parties that was built in fighting for civil liberties and democratic rights in West Bengal. He also spoke of the element of trust in relation to networks that was reinforced by Samir Kumar Das who spoke of digital networks and in person networks. In digital networks there is no responsibility of knowing each other. There are a few positive aspects of in person networks, for instance, organising peace and policy dialogues that CRG has been instrumental in organising for decades. CRG's initiatives of having peace dialogues in the Northeast have been successful. However, in contrast, Das opined that digital networks come with a certain life span and are low on trust issues, that is, it is easier to infiltrate these networks than the ones that are in person. Thus, digital networks might not be enough to build durable trust.

As way of concluding the session, Ranabir Samaddar put forth a few points on the plan:

- 1) To have a workshop on the global compacts, on safe and secure migration.
- 2) To produce small briefs following the provisional template of themes that this meeting has highlighted, with the hope that these will lead to broader discussions.
- 3) To organise fruitful discussions on food security, climate security, and most importantly land security. What does security of land mean to farmers?
- 4) To hold public lectures in Kolkata, or Bangalore, or Hyderabad.

The day concluded with Vote of Thanks, by Sucharita Sengupta.



Picture 14: The Attendees.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

1. Anjuman Ara Begum, Assam Royal Global University, India.
2. Ashok Kumar Giri, Calcutta Research Group, India.
3. Babloo Loitongbam, Lawyer &. Human Rights Activist, India.
4. Chandrima S. Bhattacharya, The Telegraph, India.
5. Ibrahim Wani, Kashmir University, India.
6. Kalpana Kannabiran, Council for Social Development, India.
7. Nilanjan Hajra, Internet and Mobile Association of India.
8. ParthaPratim Sarkar, Calcutta Research Group, India.
9. Paula Banerjee, Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand.
10. Prasanta Ray, Emeritus Professor in Sociology, Presidency University, India.
11. Rahul Yaduka, B.R.Ambedkar University, India.
12. Rajat Kanti Sur, Calcutta Research Group, India.
13. Rajat Roy, Eminent Journalist, India,
14. Ranabir Samaddar, Calcutta Research Group, India.
15. Ritam Sengupta, O.P. Jindal Global University, India.
16. Rituparna Dutta, Calcutta Research Group, India.
17. Ruchira Goswami, National University of Juridical Sciences, India.
18. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Rabindra Bharati University, India.
19. Sahana Basavapatna, Trial Court, India.
20. Samaresh Guchhait, Calcutta Research Group, India.
21. Samata Biswas, The Sanskrit College and University, India.
22. Samir Kumar Das, Calcutta University, India.

23. Saurabh Bhattacharjee, National Law School, India.
24. Shatabdi Das, Calcutta Research Group, India.
25. Shibashis Chatterjee, Jadavpur University, India.
26. Shuma Talukdar, Lawyer, India.
27. Shymalendu Majumdar, Calcutta Research Group, India.
28. Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty, Eminent Historian, India.
29. Subhashree Rout, Calcutta Research Group, India.
30. Sucharita Sengupta, Calcutta Research Group, India.
31. Sumona Dasgupta, Expert in Peace and Conflict Studies, India.

Gender Security, Citizenship Challenges and Vulnerabilities in Assam

Anjuman Ara Begum

“Citizenship is the right to have rights”, was famously claimed by political scientist Hannah Arendt. Indian constitution guarantees equal rights to men and women as citizens. However, women’s experience of these is unequal due to social power relation between men and women. In Assam, a large number of people including women and children belonging to minority groups are affected by the state’s policy to detect ‘foreigners’ in which their legal status as citizen is ‘suspected’ by the state and are often declared alien by the authorities and landed in detention camps. Women living in char areas in addition to the traditional layers of discrimination, also face ecological vulnerabilities. Climate change, perennial flood condition, river erosion in Assam leads to ecological vulnerability where women are disproportionately affected. Change of rain pattern has forced farmers to convert into small business men and migrant workers leaving women at home to look after the ‘family’. Covid 19 and subsequent lockdown added further misery to these challenges. Traditional livelihood is on hold during flood and very limited options of livelihood leading to lack of financial independence specially for women. Security of migration practices are abysmal. Men and women migrating to other parts of the state/country in search of work are often branded as ‘suspected foreigners’ and are harassed by the vigilante groups as well as by the state agencies like police.

In 2019, an upgraded process of National Register of Citizens (NRC), which is a list maintained by the Government of India (GOI), containing the identity and relevant information of people who are considered ‘genuinely’ Indian, has so far excluded more than 1.9 million people, essentially rendering them virtual stateless. In the processes of defending their citizenship status, women are disproportionately affected. Women were left behind in the ‘family tree verification’ process due to the initial rejection of gram panchayat certificates- among other factors, mostly affected women who had married and changed residence. The social and political discrimination impact on women is exacerbated on the status of women living in poverty belonging from marginalized and oppressed communities. According to the 2011 Census, 86% of Assam’s population lives in rural areas, with the female literacy rate in rural areas being 63%. Low education enhances multiple layers of vulnerabilities. Judiciary including ‘foreigner’s detection machineries are reluctant to acknowledge women’s unequal status in the society rendering a large number of women to virtual stateless. There are enormous legal, political, and organizational barriers to gender security, which are generally experienced by women and it starts with social notion of gender division of labour and the social gender roles of ‘men as bread winners and women as caretaker’. This leads to exclusion of women from education, livelihood, free movement, broader politics and public sphere. Additionally, state’s citizenship contestation exposes them to further multiple layers vulnerabilities. Citizenship proof requires an enormous amount of documentation which is impossible for women who grow facing discrimination since birth.

Complex Vulnerabilities in Crises Hotspots and Possibilities of Mitigation

Ibrahim Wani

Themes:

- Intersections of civilian and traditional spheres of insecurity
- Broadening the dialogues on Security, Peace, and Justice

Peripheries or borderlands in India, like Kashmir, are placed in macro-security paradigms where the emphasis is on securing the borders, and on countering insurgency and dissent. Political projects to assert normalcy and development in such regions exist through suspensions of democratic processes, emergency measures, and surveillance and censorship. Such projects interweave closely with processes linked to governance, development, urbanization, migration, etc., creating a variety of micro-insecurities, particularly for informal sector workers, including migrant workers. These regions also experience frequent crises, linked not only to periodic escalations of violence, but also frequent disasters including floods, earthquakes, landslides, etc., creating complex and intersecting vulnerabilities for the people. At the same time, the normalcy asserting political projects work towards making such vulnerabilities opaque. As a first step, the task is to make such vulnerabilities visible. In such contexts, many people may have strong perceptions of denial of justice and rights. Despite some exceptional cases where human rights have been upheld, there is a checkered history vis-à-vis justice delivery mechanisms and extra-judicial practices. In Kashmir, mainstream political parties have also made appeals for release of political detainees, and resumption of electoral and democratic processes in the region. In such a context, what is the traction of terms like truth and reconciliation, which are re-introduced into public discourse. This is to be situated in a place where the focus on counter-insurgency has largely succeeded in effecting a pronounced reduction of insurgent violence and near disappearance of public protest.

Civil society organizations operate under a variety of factors, ranging from the changing priorities of donors, to changing vocabularies and contexts. There is also a disengagement from issues linked to peace-building. Contextual factors include legal issues, censorship, surveillance, etc. In such a situation, what are the ways to revive engagements with communities and identify peace-making capacities. These include expanding the domains for peace-making, reviews of earlier work, focus on do-no harm approaches, and identifications of new themes and spaces for sustained work.

Signposting New Possibilities for Constitutional Interpretation: An Approach to understanding vulnerabilities and questions of justice

Kalpana Kannabiran

- The idea of the constitution-as-commons, as one that frames our discussion as citizens of the constitution in the present time. This framing is temporally and spatially rooted. The Constitution of India provides a normative ethical framework for citizenship and shared humanity. Quite apart from its ‘uses’ in delineating justiciable rights, territories, obligations and duties, it encapsulates a convivial utopia – a just future that guarantees dignity, self-respect, autonomy and solidarity while being mindful of difference, discrimination and structural violence, that must be eliminated. Dignity and shared humanity lie at the core of the ‘constitution-as-commons’ in this scheme.
- This idea of the ‘constitution-as-commons’ helps in bridging different pathways to imagine an idea of justice. It is important, theoretically and politically, to trace the contours of this possibility – not just for India, but through the Indian experience for a more holistic, international, intersectional, pluriversal understanding, without detracting from the fact that justice is always spatially rooted. The elaboration of the constitution-as-commons draws on the experience of intersecting ‘borderlands’ (Anzaldúa 1987) – caste, gender, ethnicity, religion, territory, among others – as providing the lens through which a framework of justice may be imagined.
- The debates on the commons and its contestations must guide us in our attempt to mobilise it for a radical departure in our understanding of the constitution. The grounds for discrimination (direct and analogous) set out for instance in (and through) Articles 15 and 17 of the Indian constitution point in the direction of different and distinctive articulations/sites of the constitution-as-commons pointing to ‘the complex interactions between differently situated individuals engaged in collective action’, and differently situated collectivities that are threaded together by practices of conviviality either in its practice or its breach (which is red flagged by the convivial constitution). As Amita Baviskar argues, ‘contemporary meanings of the commons draw upon local histories of domination, resistance and compromise, as they are informed by trans-local processes. These histories of contention provide the context of how communities come to be imagined in relation to the commons.’ It is necessary to remove the constitution from its enclosure in courtly habitations and ‘migrate’ it towards symbolic action, collective mobilization, strategic litigation, parliamentary processes, political praxes and literary performance. This will help us set up a conversation between articulations around the commons (resources, knowledge and usufruct), conviviality (whether robust or ‘thin’), and a deliberative, transformational and insurgent constitutionalism. By this token, we might also account in critical measure for interweaving layers of intersecting wrongs that constitute the Hindu majoritarian present in India.
- Why is it necessary for us to focus on convivialities and utopias in India today? Why do we need to think of recuperation?
- The politics of maiming drawing from Jasbir Puar’s work in the context of Palestine may be expanded in the context of contemporary India. I raise questions to do with post-truth regimes, economic violence, sexual violence, and pandemic (mis) governance – within the larger context of Hindu majoritarianism. I point to the clusters around which impunity – state and civic impunity – fold the secular into the majoritarian religious nationalist as the only expression of the ‘sacral’ narrowly defined through homogenized denominational identities. The passage of the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019, the National Register of Citizens and the National Population Register that introduced denominational criteria for classifying citizen and outsider provide the context.
- We could examine the politics of maiming in contemporary India in four parts (at least) – (a) Theocratic frameworks of rule; (b) The economy; (c) Sexual violence; (d) The carceral majoritarian state.

- The Cultural Politics of Care: It is productive to understand the rejection of violent regimes of rule (including the use of the law to subjugate) through the lens of the politics of care, as it helps draw together both the basis of the forging of solidarity across location to achieve a unity of purpose and actively engaging to alleviate suffering (individual and social), restore dignity through interrogating social humiliation, and heal trauma induced by regimes of maiming. Resistance, especially collective resistance, in this context is the quintessential expression of the politics of care and is culturally and historically rooted in particular contexts even while lessons may be imparted and imbibed cross-culturally. This may be specifically discussed in the context of theocratic frameworks in post truth regimes of rule that inflict deep harms through erasure and bulldozers; economic violence that is its own justification disregarding the large-scale suffering and death it directly causes; state and civic impunity in cases of sexual violence and political protest. The polarizing of ethnic identities and the weaponizing of communities pitting them against each other through a proliferating politics of hate – as we see in Manipur, as also questions of ecological violence and environmental nationalism, among others. The arguments assembled here may be extended to other comparable situations.

Gendered dynamics of border Security: A short note on Gender and Security in the Bengal-Bangladesh borderlands.

Paula Banerjee

Decades after border delineation and amalgamation by the colonialists, South Asia is still grappling with the debilitating impacts of border formations through violence. These borders are at times immutable and at other times a project in the making which is never to be definitively complete as they are zones of porosity and rampant flows. They are markers of conflicting identities, resulting in question of belonging and not belonging, citizenship and statelessness, spaces of security and insecurities, the migrants and those who were left behind. South Asia is born out of colonial borderlines, which on one hand partitioned multiple homelands and nations into distinct states; and on the other hand, amalgamated distinctly different ethnicities, religion and other identities into single states igniting an intractable politics with contestations over belonging and not belonging that has bred tremendous instabilities and insecurities. On this premise, this paper hopes to examine the dynamics of flawed decolonization and post-colonial developments and how that transformed borderlands such as the Bengal-Bangladesh borderland into a space of contests based on cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious and gendered divisions. As much as the post-colonial state strives to make these borders secure the more insecure it becomes. Security is a deeply gendered phenomenon and therefore these zones of security or borderlands are often transformed into spaces of extreme gendered insecurities both for men and women. Violence against men in the borderlands has many examples but none is starker than that of shooting to kill young men for “smuggling” cattle. As for insecure manifestations of women and their sexuality, because women are always considered as sexual beings; it abounds. The phenomena of borders lead to challenges and transgressions and nothing is more challenging for any security apparatus than trafficking across borders. Trafficking always brings in issues of femininity and sexuality. Evidence suggests that many men are trafficked across borders but what captures popular imaginations is trafficking for sex. Inevitably here the women are considered as victims. It is true that trafficking leads to victimisation of women but one should not think that trafficking completely deprives women of their agency. There are many women whose alternatives are so desperate that for them the choice to be trafficked might be a transactional decision. These decisions can often spiral out of control and lead to tremendous violence for both men and women who are trying to escape a situation of stark deprivation. In this day of constant discourse of safe migration and decent jobs therefore why migration across the Bengal-Bangladesh borderland is so gender insensitive and unsafe is a question that needs to be addressed. In 2018 an article published in the *Sunday Guardian* perhaps shocked the South Asian sentiments when it announced that, “Bengal, new epicentre of human trafficking.”¹ This brought attention back to trafficking and victimisation of women as the article went on to describe the desperate situation of girls and barely teenagers who were being trafficked. Then all considerations were over shadowed by the primal fear of the pandemic. This was followed by horrific sights of the returnees, both men and women. Fear of these returnees was compounded by predictions that the pandemic will increase trafficking across the border. Patrick Motsyn from BRAC, UK, wrote in the *Daily Star* that: Before the onset of the pandemic in 2020, Bangladesh and West Bengal were already growing hubs for human trafficking. West Bengal accounted for some 55 percent of reported cases of trafficking in India in 2016, and over 50,000 Bangladeshi children and women are trafficked to India every year, largely into West Bengal, primarily for sexual exploitation. In addition, the Bangladesh-India border is 4,000-km long and often unfenced. This situation is likely to be

¹ Taru, “Bengal new epicentre of human trafficking.” *The Sunday Guardian*, 14 January 2018, <https://sundayguardianlive.com/news/12400-bengal-new-epicentre-human-trafficking> accessed on 15 March 2023.

worsened by the pandemic.² These predictions are yet to me justified but the specter of trafficking discursively made women the quintessential victim once again in our considerations of security. Concern to secure the border and manage its porosity was again a factor to intensify insecurity. In May 2022, a news item caught many eyes where it announced that a platoon of women constables called *Mahila Praharis*, were guarding the border outpost from a boat. The newspaper reporting this stated that in a statement issued from the BSF's South Bengal Frontier headquarters emphasised that: "This is the first time in the history of BSF that a platoon of Mahila Praharis (women constables) has been deployed for border patrolling and operation of a floating BOP in difficult terrain like the Sundarbans. Their deployment will be especially helpful in preventing smuggling by women smugglers".³ In an effort to securitise the border and perhaps to make it more sensitive for the state to arrive in the 21st century the state deployed women security forces. But their deployment was not to protect victims of trafficking that so captures the popular imagination but to apprehend female transgressors. The post-colonial state to make borderlands more secure securitises it by allowing women to "man" the borders. This is perhaps considered as modern. However, this modernity is achieved at the cost of sacrificing protection for the marginalised, who are often but not always women. These women are in a terrain that is historically violent, ecologically fragile with no notion of "decent" work. In such a situation of injustice and vulnerability perhaps there has to be more robust rethinking on the paradigm of security itself.

² Patrick Mostyn, "Future impacts of Covid-19: Human trafficking on India-Bangladesh border," *The Daily Star*, 9 July 2021, <https://www.thedailystar.net/views/opinion/news/future-impacts-covid-19-human-trafficking-india-bangladesh-border-2125521> accessed on 15 September 2022.

³ Neha Banka, "Making BSF history, a platoon of women constables is patrolling the border aboard a floating outpost deep inside the Sundarbans." in *The Indian Express*, 21 December 2022, <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/kolkata/indo-bangladesh-border-floating-border-outpost-women-constables-8337078/> accessed on 10 March 2024.

Strangled by Care: Life in Koshi Diyara

Rahul Yaduka

Rivers have been at the forefront of colonial and post-colonial state attacks to entrench governmentality by ensuring land revenue and developing infrastructure to enable mobility. This was predicated upon a need to delineate land from water and control seasonal inundation in fluvial ecologies. The dominant technology to achieve these objectives has been embankments that constrict the river to free up the adjacent land. Interestingly, despite the official stance of adequate rehabilitation being given to people whose land remains trapped within the embankments, riverine islands remain densely populated geographies. Since mega hydraulic interventions like embankments are based upon the reductionist ontology, they bring about some definite transformations in the ecological backdrop of the region and people's lives in terms of intensifying floods, land erosion, and loss of livelihood. Here, seasonal circular migration of the male members of the household is vital in keeping the family afloat. The state's 'care' in terms of disaster relief operations in the context of a state-induced disaster through development only ends up entrenching the Janus-faced identity of the sovereign. This duality is instantiated by the treatment of riverine communities by the state, which is designated as 'anti-social elements' and living in the 'wrong place', which is technically inundated by the river. This paper aims to unearth the state-community interactions in a fluvial ecology through the lens of the biopolitics of disasters. This study is critical as it brings back the material setting of the region while engaging with issues about power. In a fluvial ecology, land and water form an everchanging matrix that state-led structural interventions can tweak. In the case of the Lower Koshi Region, where the fieldwork for this paper has been conducted, the statist interventions have been done in the name of caring for the flood-prone communities, which, in effect, have redistributed the vulnerabilities hitherto spread over a larger space and population and have confined the same to the population trapped within the embankments. As a result, the lives of the people trapped within the embankments have become more precarious, as they live under the shadow of floods, land erosion, and erosion of livelihood opportunities. Added to this are the incipient fears of climate change, which have the potential to catalyse the hydrology and geomorphology of the upper Koshi region with definite yet uncertain implications for flood, sedimentation and erosion patterns downstream. The intensification of the impacts of floods now provides a situation for the state to bolster its caring face. In this spirit, it undertakes disaster relief operations. Incidentally, the community's people are also internally fragmented, with the community simultaneously harbouring plural views regarding the dominant flood paradigm. Not all are affected equally and similarly by the floods and its associated effects. Much depends on the location and alignment of the interventions. Hence, people located differently from the structures resist or demand the structures. This internal fragmentation of the community provides an entry point for the state to entrench further its logic of controlling the river, caring for its people and punishing those who resist.

The Land Question

Rajat Roy

The question of insecurity of the vulnerable population is intrinsically linked with the question of their Right to Land. Since 1947, the poorest sections of the rural population have been systematically dispossessed of their land, and denied their access to water to the extent that they have been forced to migrate elsewhere in search of work and livelihood. The tribal people, those among them are forest dwellers, thereby dependent on the forest products, are worst victims. Even the relatively new Forest Right Act (2006) and the existence of Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Area Act (PESA 1996) would not come to their help to protect their empowerment as other wings of the State would aggressively push them away from their traditional dwelling places for the 'development' purposes, viz. opening of mines, construction of Steel Plants, Hydel projects etc. Also, for the facilitation of transportation of the raw materials and finished products, highways and rail roads are built by taking further land, thus causing further deprivation of the vulnerable sections of the rural population. The Land Question is central to the question of insecurity of the vulnerable sections of the rural population. In the 1960-1970, the Naxalite uprising perhaps first brought the issue forcefully to the foreground of national political arena. Later on, it continued to simmer in the form of Maoist movement. The expert groups formed by the government (e.g. by Planning Commission, the report of which was submitted in 2008) studied the issue and recommended measures. The government took various measures to offset the crisis that was fast alienating the rural poor and marginalised sections from the mainstream. Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF 2006 -2014). Tribal Development Fund (TDF, NABARD, 2003-04 and continuing) etc. Also, the introduction of Right to Work Act that ushered in MGNREGA (100 days' work), Right to Education and Right to Food were done to give a holistic approach to provide the deprived and marginalised population succour.

However, a quick appraisal would show that all these "pro-people" measures were not enough in this neo-liberalised economic society, where the nexus between State and the Corporate world had worked overtime to grab the forest land and land belonging to the tribal and other vulnerable people in the name of development. Their initiative for rapid industrialisation resulted in a Great Land Grab movement, that became known by the name Special Economic Zone (SEZ). In the name of developing those popular resistance affected areas, the State spent huge sum to beef up its security system, while paying little attention to the problems of acute poverty, illiteracy and poor health infrastructure in those areas. Thus, the State's response was basically security centric to that problem of growing marginalisation, landlessness and poverty in those areas affecting a huge mass of people. As a reaction to that, sporadic resistance was put up by the rural poor, that was spread across the country. Singur, Nandigram, Dadri, Khammam, Kalinga Nagar are some of the instances of that movement. On the face of that resistance, the State retreated a bit. They had to scrap off the more than two century old Land Acquisition Act, 1893. It was substituted by a new law; The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (known as R & R Act) which came into force after 1 January, 2014. Even that also left much to be desired. A careful scrutiny of the provisions of this act shows a pronounced bias towards the corporate world.

In short, it must be said that in absence of an equitable policy on the Land issue, the vulnerable sections of the society would continue to remain marginalised both socially and economically. Till that is addressed, the question of Security and Justice will continue to elude them.

The Subject and Paradoxes of Digital Security

Ritam Sengupta

Over the last few decades India has increasingly registered some amount of growth in Information Technology-related commerce, services and production as well as displayed a marked tendency to shift the process of governance onto the affordances of digital technology. This has meant that the question of security has now become replotted along the critical axis of digital mediation. The question of digital security has however been a matter of constant paradox, particularly when we consider who or what has been the subject of the at times confounding pursuit of security in this region. The nation-state as the founding concern in matters of 'national security' has markedly gained ground as a delicate territorial compact to be protected from the ingress of various foreign interference, obstruction, and attacks in the virtualised realm of the world wide web and in case of critical national infrastructure. Thus at least since the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, there has been a clear scaling up of the technical abilities of the state to monitor, control and even launch counter-attacks in the virtual realm. At least notionally, the concerned technical safeguards are also exercised or overlaid over matters of everyday digital existences of Indian citizens like in the case of Aadhar, UPI and the like.

At the same time, arguably, the protection in the same digital realm as available to the citizen - the fundamental constituent of the territorial unit of the nation-state - has gradually waned even as his/her/their lives have become even more implicated in the mediation of the digital. Thus, leaks of private data, commercial frauds, identity thefts, and mal-use of identification technology towards violent ends of exclusion and persecution have become only too common.

The state and the citizens at times seem to have almost competing interests in the matter of digital security. Very often these interests are posed across the interface of privacy. Privacy is at once seemingly constitutive of the social contract while being only too easily compromised at the altar of state reason. Keeping this in mind, a reconsideration of the issue of digital security at such a conjuncture as we live through in contemporary India, is only partially an issue of technology. The ever-shifting, yet critical parameter of law might be another index against which the question of digital security can be interrogated. The difficulties encountered in enacting a law for Data Protection and privacy in India is an obvious symptom of the tricky yet essential involvement of law in matters of digital security (and insecurities). We need to consider if the interaction of technology and law can broaden the definitions of security in a way in which the unavoidably digital existence of Indian citizens can be emboldened.

Why most networks are doomed to fail but we should still be building them?

Or, a vulnerable network for securities.

Samata Biswas

CRG began with the Calcutta conference of Pakistan India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy in 1996—the Forum, a network of what is today called, peacebuilders, or peacemakers, then, peace activists—helped bring together researchers, teachers, trade unionists and others, based in Calcutta, together, to form CRG. CRG's work, over the last 27 years, have been shaped by the pressing questions of the day—sustained, however, by networks built and strengthened across these years. In my ten years', or a bit longer, association with CRG, I have been part of this network—which has also, gone on to create others, with specifications and specializations. I will not try to define what a network is, but instead, try to imagine and perhaps, in places, reimagine, the vulnerabilities that a network invested in human security must negotiate to frame/ form itself. My concerns and contribution stem from

1. the last three years of building and sustaining something called the South Asia Network for Communication, Displacement and Migration, in short, the SAN-CDM—an interdisciplinary voluntary network of media persons, activists and community members invested in migration and forced migration in South Asia.
2. This, along with many hours spent on GPPAC South Asia network and SANDD (South Asia Network for Development and Displacement), where collaboration across national boundaries, with special emphasis on resource, knowledge and expertise sharing, applying for funds jointly and facilitating a region-wide understanding of the South Asian situation, with respect to migration, displacement and peace.
3. A fourth relevant exercise was the relatively unsuccessful attempt at collaborating with the member of the Migrant Workers' Solidarity Network—a transnational network of activists and individuals interested in the wellbeing and political mobilization of migrant workers, formed during the Covid 19 lockdown in India.
4. Between 2020 and 2023, we developed a teachers' network—comprising teachers across India, from different interdisciplinary locations, interested in teaching and developing syllabi related to migration and forced migration—we worked together to identify key areas, develop readings and research questions, and continue interact with each other in questions of pedagogy, from school to university levels.

The experience of working with each of these networks were different. Some involved, needed, money—funding to travel and to meet, while others could operate with some amount of institutional backing. In my earlier rendering of this note, I had reflected extensively on what happens to the prospects of a network if its funding is controlled by the global north, with their specific political and cultural expectations, with sometimes, insistence on setting the agenda, often at odds with South Asian/ local requirements. But, that is a discussion for another time, Instead, I want to think a bit about how the question of security plays out in the case of South Asian/ international networks. Given the increased securitization and suspicion in all the South Asian nations, and the contentious nature of the work that we did, --networking itself could be termed as vulnerable work, often making the network members feel insecure about sharing virtual space, being part of the same WhatsApp group or webinar—and even receiving one too many emails from another country. This, coupled with the nature of work all these networks have been interested in, work that can be given many different shades depending on the interlocutor's position, networking has often, to member, been a security concern. This is not unique to a network, but is, if I may be so bold as to state, characteristic of the development of security as something of special interest to nations, and, often historically, at odds with contemporary concerns with human security. Several of the networks I mention above, have seen this dichotomy play itself out in their very constitution.

5. A network then, is always already vulnerable. So, should we be building yet another?
6. With Israel's war on Palestine, I found myself part of yet another WhatsApp group, standing in for an informal network, connecting women across South Asia who are interested in peace and are, in some cases, peacebuilders--Women and Peace, South Asia—which stopped working almost as soon as it was formed, due to a sharp division of opinions over a joint statement asking for peace in Palestine. Some considered the statement to not be strong enough, the others, too risqué. This, adds a third dimension to what I understand to be the insecurities of any network.

We can assume that a network concentrated on human security, with its attendant interests in understanding, and thereby alleviating new vulnerabilities and resultant insecurities in an increasingly securitized (think tightening of border control, militarization and surveillance of public and private spaces, tracking of digital footprints by big data and bigger brothers, omnipresent rhetoric around national security with the drawing of multiple borders and barricades around residences, communities and neighbourhoods), will also need to tackle/ question/ handle/ understand the above mentioned. However, the lens of justice and vulnerability, when brought to bear upon the question of human security, would /should show—state mechanisms are inadequate, nay, complicit in the creation of new vulnerabilities in the neoliberal world, and therefore, new insecurities. A peace audit of postcolonial societies in South Asia can only be undertaken socially—by mapping the top-down approaches to national security and securitization measures with the micro, local, specific yet generalized constructions and pockets of vulnerabilities produced at the intersection of the virtual and the real, the digital and the embodied, the regional and the transnational. Who can be the actors/ workers in this proposed network? At the broadest sense, they are individuals/ actors/ organizations invested in reconfiguring the social—the social which has allowed/ been created by new forms of insecurities. But in a more particular, and if you will, narrower sense, the network members would be able to address the more traditional/ realpolitik-al questions of security without losing sight of the vulnerabilities (as opposed to threats) that securitization discourses produce. Individuals and organizations interested/ invested in human security, working in the fields of ensuring rights to life, health and liberty, as well as in the fields of digital security and digital rights, with migrants and refugees—in camps, borderlands, during and after conflicts, concerned with transitional justice, in the fields of gender justice and democracy.

A network focused on human security is always already vulnerable—working against the imperatives of neoliberal capital, in postcolonial societies fraught with fissures along gender, caste, religion, ethnicity and class—against the logic of militarization and for peace. An interdisciplinary network of actors would be uniquely placed to carry out an evolving peace audit, to make recommendations to each other (and if necessary, develop policy proposals), to learn from and share best practices, beyond legalistic and juridical frameworks. Syncretic and traditional cultures of tolerance and cohabitation, of connectedness and flows—not undermined by the logic of governmentality, beyond strict boundaries theory versus praxis, would enable the network to work towards peace and justice, as key components of human security. Since much of my time over the last two years has been spent on the South Asia Network for Communication, Displacement and Migration, the SAN-CDM, I want to talk a bit about the question of security in media, especially in relation to conflict and consequent displacement. We have, I am sure, all been witnessing with increasing panic the war on Palestine—made visible through the work of innumerable journalists, and increasingly, residents and displaced persons in Gaza, through Instagram, TikTok and twitter posts. At the same time, as of yesterday the Committee to Protect Journalists or CPJ reported that 95 journalists and media workers were among the 34000 Palestinian deaths in Gaza and West Bank, since October 2023. There is little to doubt that these deaths are a direct fallout of the very conflict that the reporters aim to report on—and that this is not something limited to Gaza alone, We spoke to Gulali Najeed of the Afghan Times, she told us about the numerous women journalists who have been imprisoned or hanged for working, since 2022, Bashana Abeyawardane pointed at the forced disappearance of journalists by the Sri Lankan state every time the journalist reported against the government during or after the civil war, while

Patricia Mukhim of the Shillong Times, read out sections from threatening letters from militant groups demanding immediate publication—publication that will definitely bring about swift reprisal from the government. The Digital Security Act in Bangladesh and its new avatar, the Cyber Security Act, and the amendments to the IT Act in India—make the work of reporting—on issues that are critical to the ruling dispensation—increasingly risky—in the name of national security.

Governing Geopolitics: A Study of the Security Problematic in India's Northeast

Samir Kumar Das

1. We will focus on - (a) an account of a punitive raid that happened in early 1910s (b) an anecdote alluding to an incident of the early 1990s; and (c) a recently reported news item dated 9 March 2024.
2. The first is an account of a punitive raid to the Mishmi Hills conducted in the early 1910s. Mishmis inhabit a contiguous area that spreads across Arunachal Pradesh on one side and China on the other separated by McMahon Line drawn in 1914.
3. It was clear that the colonial objective was not to establish any stable administration there. While much of geopolitics during Mackinder's time was driven by the civilizational mission of Europe, the art of governing geopolitics forced the colonial authorities to appreciate the limits.
4. It was in the late 1980s that I met the headman of a village who took pride in telling me that his village would pay annual tribute to their chief from Tibet on the other side of the border.
5. India's foreign policy in general and Sino-Indian relations in particular are believed to have been scripted in the Cold War Geopolitics. But that the Mishmis could move across the Sino-Indian Line of Actual Control reportedly with the knowledge of the security personnel of India speaks of a new technology of governing security in the region. The micro game of the Mishmis and the macro game of Indian security are folded in each other.
6. On 9 March 2024, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India inaugurated the Sela Tunnel built at a cost of 825 crores and at an altitude of 13000 feet. This (a) connects Tezpur and Tawang through an all-weather road (incidentally much of this road used to remain closed due to heavy snow and Tawang being next to the Sino-Indian Actual Line of Control); (b) reduces the journey time by an hour and (c) makes the movement of heavy security logistics (like Bofors guns, T-90, and Vajra Howitzers etc.) possible, and (d) keeps the army and artillery movement invisible from the Chinese side. This was not the only of its kind.
7. The infrastructure is being built with the twin objective of repopulating the district (as many of the villagers left the area because of poor connectivity) as a means of defense and thwarting any forward move of the Chinese forces.
8. Instead of coming back, the villagers are 'escaping' into the mainland.
9. Writings on India's geopolitics in general and in the Northeast in particular shuttles between two extremes. On the one hand, India's Northeast is believed to have given itself to 'a spatial way of thinking that arranges different actors, elements and locations simultaneously on a global chessboard'. On the other hand, the region is viewed as the site of production of 'alternative narratives that frame history and define power in ways that are not predicated upon the wealth of nations, their military strengths, or the command of languages, ideological or cultural control.' The paper seeks to understand the intermediate layer between the two extremes to see how the 'alternative narratives' are governed and with what effects.

Operationalising Human Security for Migrants: Social Protection as a Continuum; Understanding Human Security

Saurabh Bhattacharjee

- Report of the UN Commission on Human Security (2003),
 - Human security means protecting vital freedoms. It means protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and situations, building on their strengths and aspirations. It also means creating systems that give people the building blocks of survival, dignity and livelihood. Human security connects different types of freedoms – freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to take action on one’s own behalf.
- UN General Assembly resolution 66/290 (2012)
 - “Human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.”

Human Security and Migration

- Human Security as a driver of migration
- The challenge of ensuring human security for migrants
- Juxtaposing human security for migrants against securitisation of migration and singling out of migration as a threat to national security

Operationalising Human Security for Migrants Through the International Legal Order

- Interplay between Refugee Convention and International Human Rights Law Instruments
- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families 1990
- International Labour Organisation Standards on Migrant Rights
 - Limitations of the existing international law on social protection for refugees and migrants
 - Impact of neoliberalism on social rights
- Interrogating the scope for social security and protection under the Global Compact of Refugees

Social Protection for Migrants in Indian Labour and Social Security Laws

- Scope for coverage of migrants and refugees in social security labour laws
- Inadequacy of Inter-state Migrant Workers Act and Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition Act
- Food security laws and coverage of refugees and migrants
- Judicial Intervention

Understanding human security for refugees and migrants as a continuum

The three logics of the current (in)security order: some reflections

Shibashis Chatterjee

Geo-economics is never an isolated phenomenon; it fundamentally relies on the prevailing political and military dynamics worldwide. With the transition from a US-dominated unipolar system to an increasingly unpredictable multipolar order, the associated risks have escalated significantly. Both China and Russia, as revisionist powers, challenge the legitimacy of the Western-led international order. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Israel's war in Palestine, and China's assertive actions in the Asia Pacific region are ominous signs for global stability. The established institutional framework and the norms of legitimation of the post-World War II are under considerable strain, with the waning influence of the US and the EU, contested normative goals, rising exclusionary politics, and increasing conflicts globally. Moreover, existential threats such as the climate crisis and pandemics pose unprecedented challenges to humanity. In this intricate landscape, it becomes imperative to analyse the economic, geopolitical, and social dimensions not in isolation but as interconnected elements. This paper examines the contemporary international order as a complex interplay between geo-economics and geopolitics. It identifies three underlying logics shaping this order. Firstly, there's the logic of order, where the tension between liberal economic policies and protectionist tendencies is evident, with economic instruments increasingly serving geopolitical interests. Secondly, the logic of control highlights the state's regulatory responses to economic crises, leading to nationalist and protectionist measures. Finally, the logic of exceptionalism, exemplified during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscores the balance between rule-breaking and rule-making to address unforeseen challenges while maintaining legitimacy. The resurgence of the state in this context is notable, as it reasserts its regulatory role to address societal vulnerabilities and gaps in governance. This trend towards a more interventionist state underscores the importance of sovereignty in effective governance and crisis management. Ultimately, these developments blur the lines between geopolitics, geo-economics, and political theory, shaping the social structures and dynamics of existence across time and space.

Promises and paradoxes of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Secure Migration

Sucharita Sengupta

‘Security’ is a term that is often used (and abused) in delineating the relationship between the state and its subjects. Indexing the notion of security on the conceptual dyad of ‘justice’ and ‘protection’, this note argues there is need to examine international conventions like the global compacts, that vow to “securitise” lives of migrants, either corroborating or in discordance of ground realities in the context of South Asia. What does the ‘Global Compact for “Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration”’ (GCM) imply for vulnerable groups of population like migrants and refugees? Although the GCM focusses explicitly on migrants, it was conceived in tandem with the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR), thus reading them in dialogue with each other gives a comprehensive picture of the protection mechanisms as enshrined in the global compacts. There is a particular context to the framing of the global compacts in 2018. 2015 was a landmark year when international migration in Europe was recognised as a crisis. The same year is also known for visibility of boat migrants sailing in precarity from Bangladesh to Southeast Asia in search of economic opportunities, of migrants ending up in border detention camps, or as bonded labour or/and perishing in the sea, giving rise to critical questions surrounding global migration. Migration increasingly got recognised as complex and ‘nontraditional threat to security’ in the national security paradigm of countries across borders, like the United States and Philippines⁴. This paved the way for several global platforms by the United Nations like the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants in 2016, in continuation with its previous dialogues (2006, 2007, 2013) on developing an international framework of migration, securitizing lives of migrants.

The New Year Declaration affirms although refugees and migrants are governed by separate legal frameworks, both are governed by the principles of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The declaration recognises the fact that often refugees and migrants share similar kinds of vulnerabilities and get entrapped in “large movements”. The term large movements as manifested in the declaration does not talk about the regular flow of migrants but movements that involve “mixed flows of people”, whether refugees or migrants, who move for different reasons but might use similar routes or as some instances of 2015 depict, they might also be moving together⁵, for example the mix flow of Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi economic migrants from Bangladesh to Southeast Asian countries. Large movements of refugees and migrants have political, economic, social, and humanitarian ramifications across borders. The New Year declaration recognised that these are “global phenomena that call for global approaches and global solution”⁶. Thus, the global compacts were conceived and adopted, both for “Safe, Orderly and Regular” migration in July 2018 followed by one for Refugees in December 2018. Both these global compacts, as notes the official document of UNHCR, are complimentary international cooperation frameworks that fulfil the mandates laid out in the New York Declaration and recognise migrants and refugees might face many common challenges and similar vulnerabilities. It was also flagged that only refugees are entitled to specific international protection and thus the two global compacts were kept separate. The distinction between migrants and refugees are both challenged and reaffirmed through the compacts evincing one of the several paradoxes of the compacts. While the two categories are discussed in

⁴ “Global Compact for Migration: Positions and Progress and India’s View”, Indian Council of World Affairs, 30 November 2023, Sapu House, New Delhi, https://www.icwa.in/show_content.php?lang=1&level=3&ls_id=10216&lid=6515

⁵ “New year declaration for Human Rights” 3 October 2016 <https://globalcompactrefugees.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/New%20York%20Declaration%20for%20Refugees%20and%20Migrants.pdf>

⁶ Same as note 2.

similar and parallel ways, they eventually are represented in several texts, which limits the flexibility of categories. For example, the West Bengal-Bangladesh borderlands is known to be a zone of habitual migration since the Indian partition of 1947. Flows across the borders operate within a formal-informal setting but more than often, migrants crossing over without valid documents get termed as “illegal” and are incarcerated under the foreigners’ act. Trafficked victims too get criminalised. It is thus important to inquire how to transcend traditional nodes of security and explore other conceptions of security that will accommodate protection for vulnerable communities like refugees, internally displaced persons, and migrants. These populations are not only excluded from dominant accounts of security but often are considered as threats to establishing security of a nation, thus judged as ‘criminals’ and relegated to the margins. The issue of human security becomes pertinent in this context. The concept of ‘human security’ although was academically introduced as late as the mid-90s, it can be used to ask questions that are as old as social sciences themselves⁷. Questions to do with security and insecurity date back to frictions arising from the times of the industrial revolution in the 19th century and the world wars that eventually shaped societies as well as grand theories of the time. Marx for instance famously spoke of alienation under capitalism⁸. While every society has its own ways of dealing with questions of human security, capitalism can create new forms of social vulnerabilities and insecurities⁹. It has been instrumental in uprooting people and bringing them in contact with new ‘others’ creating new fault lines of racial and gendered discriminations. Retreat of welfare states that thrived on inclusivity, care, and protection of subjects have made way for neo liberal economies exacerbating intolerance and new forms of vulnerabilities. Rule of law is often misused unabashedly by states to deploy power and violence on civilians. Expressions such as ‘law and order’, and ‘state security’ enable the state to exhibit power without discretion. In a bid to check this valorisation of power, the UDHR ensuring human rights came into being in 1948¹⁰ upon which rests the global compact. Out of 193 member states, 164 countries have so far adopted the global compacts while countries like the USA have already withdrawn from the negotiations arguing the contracts breach state sovereignty, indicating already existing disagreements among member states regarding the compacts. Five years since its inception it thus becomes necessary to assess the merits of the compacts- while the positive aspect is to empower migrants and refugees, there are multiple problems like the muting of politics in the compacts. The compacts are silent so far as politics surrounding migration among states is concerned jeopardising security of the people.

Secondly, one of the clauses of the global compact for safe and orderly migration proclaims migration should never be an act of desperation and state must share responsibilities conditions that ensure communities and individuals to live in safety and dignity in their own countries. This presupposition too is not without problem- for example how do we draw the line between desperation and volition when we think of people like the Rohingya who merge categories, being at the same time refugees, stateless and on contexts economic migrants? What is the scope of protection of the GCM and GCR in this context for undocumented migrants? The GCM states that member States shall promote legal channels for migration, and, to this end, it encourages the identification of specific political goals and good practices. However, the role of States remains vague. Simultaneously, the GCM prioritises the prevention of “irregular” migration.

⁷ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, Ellen Ball and Oscar Salemink (eds) *A World of Insecurity: Anthropological Perspectives on Human Security* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.3.

⁸ *A World of Insecurity*, p.3.

⁹ *A World of Insecurity*, pp 4- 18.

¹⁰ K.G. Kannabiran, *The Wages of Impunity*, ‘The Saga of Impunity’ (Hyderabad: Orient Longmand, 2004) Pp.2-3.

This step might lead reinforcing of borders, encouraging states to securitise borders, at the altar of people crossing the borders.

Third, data and documentation of migrants has been conceived as a precondition of protection by the global compacts- this however adds to the existing vulnerabilities of migrants and refugees especially stateless refugees that lack avenues and resources of documentation. For instance, the biometric process in the Rohingya refugee camps of Bangladesh propagates their insecurity further. In a recent article the UNHCR states human security of the refugees is their primary for the Bangladesh camps¹¹. It claims that lack of security has led the Rohingya to escape in perilous journeys, however there is no legitimate steps indicated that can ensure this security.

The GCM aims for sustainable development of migrants by 2030. Taking a cue from the 'Kolkata Declaration' adopted in 2018 by the Calcutta Research Group after a conference on "the state of the Global Protection System for Refugees and Migrants" in November 2018, this brief note reflects on the contrast between the global compacts and the global realities of the day and call for increased efforts in evaluating the South Asian scenario in ensuring safety, dignity, and protection of migrants, inviting more dialogues at multiple levels- state, regional, civil society and within cities¹². What should thus constitute the global compact is of immense importance as without initiating such an assurance and enabling multilateral dialogue between the concerned states in South Asia, to securitise the lives of civilians first, no new mechanisms can work effectively. The entire process of the Global Compact on Refugees and for safe, orderly and Regular Migration thus necessitates a reflection on the old approaches to refugee protection. The crucial point is that the global community should put more emphasis on strengthening refugee protection in an era of increased migration¹³.

¹¹ "The 'Night Government' Expands its Violent Reach in Rohingya Camps, The New York Times, 30 March 2024.

¹² "Kolkata Declaration 2018, Protection of Refugees and Migrants." (Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata., November 30, 2018).

¹³ Ranabir Samaddar, "Promises and Paradoxes of a Global Gaze," Module Note, *Module Note A*, 2018.

The Women Peace and Security Agenda: Expanding the Frontiers

Sumona Dasgupta

The much written about landmark resolution 1325 adopted by the Security Council on October 31, 2000 reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. It may be noted that the language of protection as well as participation of women runs through the script of 1325.

Two things can be noted about the WPS agenda enshrined in 1325 plus (there are nine sister resolutions of 1325). First despite the fact that both protection and participation were the pillars of the original WPS agenda, protection has scored over participation with many more sister resolutions of 1325 explicitly addressing this pillar such as resolutions 1820, 1888, 1960, 2467. Second (and this is linked) despite the fact that resolution 1325 was informed by the lived experiences of women from across the world such as Rwanda for example it has for all practical purposes been hijacked by the global north to highlight the protection and security domain at the cost of the peace and participation domain. Feminists from the global south have pointed out that what we have today is what Radhika Coomaraswamy calls the securitization of the agenda rather than an emphasis on women building peace. Feminists from the global south have expressed the apprehension that WPS is all about the S and not about the P.

There is no doubt that following 1325 and its sister resolutions humanitarian law has been strengthened – and this is important – as civil wars are not going to disappear overnight and humanitarian law does give a level of protection during times of armed conflict to civilians including women. However, an overemphasis solely on humanitarian law means that the focus shifts on “how to make war safe for women” (the protection aspect) rather than start a conversation about structural causes of war and armed conflict which is closely linked to issues of social justice. The challenge is that a militarized peace and security agenda which is what we have today does not uphold women’s social and economic rights and ignores the political economy of armed conflicts. How do we address the irony of the powerful states including ones with Feminist foreign policies all contributing to the arms trade, importing huge amounts of arms creating the conditions for armed conflict but talking about how to protect women in times of war. We in the global south know only too well that there can be a peacetime war going on even in times of apparent peace and economists like Amartya Sen have researched extensively into the slow violence of starvation deaths and famines in Bengal during British rule in India. The WPS agenda cannot be delinked from these situations in contemporary times. This slow violence of deliberately starving the population and creating famine condition is also something we see in situations of armed conflict today – Gaza being the most obvious example. Are we going to talk about how to make the war safe for the women of Gaza as per the manner in which the WPS seems to be currently couched or are we going to talk about the structural and systemic causes of this war that continues to play out.

A WPS agenda has to acknowledge that war and peace do not occupy two ends of the spectrum and that the slow violence during apparent peacetime as well as the sexual violence during armed conflicts take place along a war and peace continuum. The WPS agenda has to engage with the conditions of social justice if it has to be relevant to the lives of millions of women across the globe. The links between SDG 5 and 16 provides the pathway to expanding the WPS agenda to make it relevant in today’s world.

