ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: A SOUTH ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: To say that environmental change and issues are winding up progressively important in the realm of international relations would be an understatement itself. Environment has been one of the vital elements required for the development of the society and economic growth. Demands of the nation-state are met by the utilization of the resources in the environment. Sadly, the global reserves of these resources are becoming scarce and limited due to growing population, overuse and misuse of the resources and most important being climate change. The degradation of the environment has led to a paradigm shift in security. Scholars of International Relations and Security Studies imply that global environmental have ramifications at both regional and international and can lead to conflict. By including environmental security into the security sphere, a change has been ushered which asserts the impact of environmental threats on the socio-economic and human security aspect of a nation. Ecology and economy are two sides of the same coin and have similar causes and effects. One of the most populated regions of the world, South Asia is surrounded by old and new dangers which make the region a ticking time bomb waiting to explode. Environmental security in South Asia doesn't exist. High population has led to resource scarcity and environmental insecurity which in turn has various implications across social, political and economic levels. The tension in the region is further amplified due to uneven resource distribution leading to migration and resource-based conflict in the region, thus having a detrimental effect when it comes to the implementation of environmental security measures in the region. The region faces the imminent danger of spillover effects of environmental degradation as South Asia is one huge interconnected environmental zone.

Keywords: Environmental Security, South Asia, Climate Change, Environment.

Introduction: The effect of environmental degradation and the outcomes of ecological changes are progressively different from the traditional notion of security. Considering the environment a risk to security of an individual, a nation or the world itself has made another motivation in the talk of security studies. The expanding extent of universal security now promptly incorporates environmental corruption, a dangerous atmospheric deviation, and environmental change. These issues have broadened human comprehension of ecological change, struggle and powerlessness and investigated the parts of protection and maintainable advancement in advancing peace, strength and human security[1] and is seen as a definite meaning of environmental security as seen by countless academics and proponents. The significance of understanding environmental security is as follows: Firstly, one needs to comprehend the changes in the speculative improvements of the idea of security. Secondly, one additionally needs to imagine the connection between ecological change and work systems of individuals on the neighborhood level and the more extensive effect of natural changes on a general public. These two measurements help characterize natural issues as imperative elements of security.

The scholastic quality of environmental security and its present position in worldwide security talk to a great extent rely upon the responses to a couple of basic inquiries: Firstly being what is security? Secondly whose security are we talking about? Thirdly what considers being a security issue? Fourthly how security can be achieved? [2]. Environmental security offers a mind boggling connection between the contemporary ecological changes on the planet and environment based dangers and participation.

In respect to is ecological corruption a threat to the security apparatus, the paper contends for a reexamined system of security that incorporates environment as a major determinant. Also the paper clarifies the applied linkages between ecological debasement and security through several perspectives. The paper sets up a connection among environment degradation, danger to life and weakness. This linkage comprehends the connection between ecological degradation and potential clashes. At the end of the paper argues

environmental degradation hampers with individual security and thus is a noteworthy risk to the security of the people and the nation-state.

Understanding Security: With the end of Cold War in 1990, the study of global security included another measurement. New organizations of security i.e. human security, environment security etc. considered that the conventional idea of state-driven security, regularly characterized by military viewpoints, was inadequate to clarify developing dangers. As another option to ordinary comprehension of security undertakings, human security talk consolidated neediness, environment, and intra-state struggle as dangers to a person's life[3]. Thus, the security talk encountered a move from conventional to non-traditional security. The traditionalists, supported by political authenticity, define security in terms of power[4]. This state driven and regular idea of security has been posted by the post-realist security grant. This is the motivation behind the reclassification of the idea of national security since the 1980's through various research plans. Non-traditional security is a huge move from regular thought of security to another worldview of security that incorporates poverty, environment, wellbeing and social precariousness as risk factors[5]. Nontraditional security issues can be external as well as internal. External being ethnic conflict, political instability, global climate issues while internal can be monetary clashes, internal conflict , environmental issues etc. to name a few.

Environment and Security: The writing on ecological security has brought an interdisciplinary viewpoint into security contemplates. Ecological security aims to connect the intelligent flow of the differing human and environmental systems that constitute the contemporary world[6].

Besides, environment as an asset has key noteworthiness for nation-states who manufacture control through common assets like water, oil, gas and different minerals. Expanding state control over environment and natural assets has overflow impacts like corruption of the environment, bringing about undue disasters. These incorporate relocation, high populace growth and human losses. Such disasters have turned out to be genuine security worries for influenced states. Customarily, the traditional comprehension of security does include the environment as an issue of concern which has now changed post-Cold War wherein researchers have included the environment as a vital security concern. Literature talks about the connection between the environment and the economy of a nation as indicated by growing research which says that constant ecological disruptions diminish the financial development of a nation, hampers its social union and destabilizes it political structure[7]. Environmental change lessens monetary opportunities for a nation by causing demographic uprooting within the state and well outside its borders. A startling movement of the populace across international borders causes political strain between nations. Environmental anxiety can likewise make an affected sub-national gathering shift its devotion from the inside to the fringe, expanding potential outcomes of the political issue, causing civil strife and even insurgency[8].

Environmental cataclysms trigger policy decisions that can catalyze a potential clash or disturb a current one. Ecological destruction faced by a nation because of catastrophes, particularly those beginning from past its borders, in the long run hamper regional security and makes bilateral relations sour. As of late ecological difficulties running from contamination, inordinate carbon emanations and quick populace development have prompted expanded shortage of normal assets like water, energy and nourishment[9].

Therefore, it can be said that the environment has likewise been distinguished as a cross-border issue that requires common obligation of concerned nation-states. This transnational character of environmental debasement maintains its connections with global security. In this way, it can be said that the process of linking environment and security is a combination of numerous ideas encompassing environment and security that distinguishes natural changes as a security risk.

Environment Security and International Relations: Freedom from threats that interfere with the survival of an individual[10] is called Security. There are different ways to think what security is and sticking to one of these definitions shouldn't be preached. Instead, different perspectives, concepts, institutions and challenges should be exercised as security is a dynamic area because of the global politics, the rise in technology, world-changing events, growing academic interest and allocation of resources that play a vital role in its evolution[11]. Security is as old as the human society and has different connotations depending upon its time and place in human history[12]. Security was and is an essentially contested concept[13]. Initially, security meant protecting the state from external threat. This proposition went on from WWI to WWII and was further developed by establishing international organizations whose main aim was international security and peace. During the Cold

War security meant having a nuclear deterrence and the tools to manage a crisis in case one took place. Post-Cold War, security had a paradigm shift as there raised the need to include areas such as global warming, the rise of epidemic diseases, environmental degradation, integration of markets at a global level and economically underdeveloped parts of the world. Of the many mentioned issues, environmental security is gaining momentum as many of the issues are reversible but that of climate change and it impacts global security in an irreversible manner. Due to constant environment threats, many scholars and academicians believe there is a need to promote welfare as many environmental issues dictate the global agenda.

There is disagreement over what constitutes to be part of the environment. Providing an answer to such a simple question is a daunting task as any answer would require an explanation. One could say the environment is a land untouched by human activity but then what about the people that reside within say a forest; secondly are natural environment disasters any different than the disasters caused by man. To come up with a meaning for the term 'Environment' is not worthwhile as it is a dynamic concept. Depending upon where people are, there is a multitude of definitions for the environment. Some see the environment as a resource provider for humans (Anthropocentric)[14] while other's see the environment as being a provider of resource for other living beings as well as the human race (Ecocentric)[15]. This distinction that whether the environment is anthropocentric or ecocentric is directly related to the security of a nation. A link was thus established between security and environment which was further strengthened by the rise of various environmental issues. The dialogue on environmental security revolves around two aspects: (i) security from the environment, (ii) security of the environment. The first one means the security of the human race against threats emanating from the environment while the second means the security of the natural environment from man. Many actors emphasize the need to secure the environment as its degradation has a negative impact on human security, which is an anthropocentric viewpoint, and say there is a need for sustainable development in order to avoid environment and human insecurity. However, many disagree and put forward the point that human behavior needs to be curtailed in order to prevent environment degradation and conceptualization of security needs to take place thus promoting an ecocentric viewpoint, making it clear that humans and the environment are inseparable. In order to safeguard human security, environment security should be the foremost priority of the state as man-made changes to the environment will only threaten the human race and to prevent further damage, sustainable and moderate usage of the environment and its resources is to be promoted on an international scale.

Environment security has garnered, due to issues such as increase in population, scarcity of water resources, depletion of groundwater, loss of forests and land for farming, a substantial increase in greenhouse gases, urbanization, rise in sea levels due to glacier melt etc. are seen as a threat to the national security of a nation-state. Environmental security goes hand in hand environmental threats and is seen as the upholding of individual security and prevention of threats and disaster originating from the environment. The core belief of environmental security is to repair the environment for human life support and prevention of environment degradation from human beings[16].

Discourses on the connection between environment and security have been taking place since the 60's and the 70's. Environmental consciousness grew in both the developing and the developed nations as various publications came to the forefront explaining the ill effects man-made substances have on the environment. The movement gained momentum with the growth of various environment based non-governmental organizations like World Wildlife Fund in 1961 and the Greenpeace in 1972; whose main aim was the creating awareness among the mass, promoting research based on the environment, fundraising etc., to name a few. There was also a surge in various summits whose main theme was environmental issues which led to many international agreements being signed. Alongside the international politics community, the academic community to contributed it's fair share in the development of a global environmental security policy by coming up with various publications saying environmental risks should be managed as they are a threat to both national and international security[71].Works such as The Endangered Planet (Richard Falk, 1971), Toward a Politics of Planet Earth (Harold and Margaret Sprout, 1971) and similar works played a critical role in the development of environmental security. In 1983, an article titled as 'Redefining Security' by Richard Ulman proposed the idea that environmental change can cause war. According to Ulman, a threat which hampers with the lives of the people and with the existence of any organization within a nation-state is to be deemed as a national security threat[18]. Thus if the environment is degraded in any form, the economy of a nation-state will decline thereby creating a tear in the social fabric, hence leading to the disruption of the political structure of the nation-state and conflicts both internally and externally[19].

Literature produced by the academic circle has made environmental security an important concept in security studies. At the start of the 21st century, there is a growing perception which says damage to the environment in harmful to both the environment itself and to human security by impairing access to water, food and other natural resources and impeding their access to other social and economic freedom. Environmental security has, therefore, an integral concept of environmental studies and security studies resulting in an increased interaction between various levels of policymakers.

Environmental Security: A South Asian perspective: The impact of global warming is noticeable in nations all around the world. Rise in temperature, agricultural and financial loss, a rise in sea levels, rapid shrinkage in glaciers etc. are some of the many effects caused due to climate change. South Asia is one of the most populated regions of the world and faces a mixture issues ranging territorial disputes to the use of nuclear technology to the ever increasing impact of climate change in the region. Security experts say the region will experience the impact of climate change in the coming decade or so and thereby creating socio-economic problems[20]. South Asia is one of the world's most susceptible region's to climate change and can face conflict over dwindling natural resources in the coming future. Climate change is of great concern for an environmentally sensitive region such as South Asia. Due to climate change, the region has felt an increase in overall temperature, change in rainfall patterns and an increase in floods, droughts and tsunamis. Agriculture is taking a hit due to climate change as rainfall patterns are slowly changing due to which either drought or flooding of the field due to excessive rainfall takes place. Rural population directly faces the impact of climate change as traditional forms of farming are still followed.

To conclude, environmental security in South Asia doesn't exist. Higher population and consumption levels have led to resource scarcity and environmental insecurity which in turn has various implications across social, political and economic levels. These implications have the potential to turn into future conflicts. The tension in the region is further amplified due to uneven resource distribution leading to migration and resource-based conflict in the region. A rise in conflicts is seen to have a detrimental effect when it comes to the implementation of environmental security measures in the region due to lack of control. The region faces the imminent danger of spillover effects of climate change and environmental degradation as South Asia is one huge interconnected environmental zone wherein environmental issues in one state can and will have an impact on one or multiple states. South Asian states have the potential to implement environmental security into their security architecture at local and regional levels and yet they choose not to do so as it can hamper with their development process. Another reason as to why environmental security has not been implemented in the region as it requires initiatives to taken, coordination and cooperation and shouldering the costs associated. Except for India, the remaining nations are more or less unable to carry out the mentioned initiatives and even if India were to implement environmental security directives in South Asia via SAARC, it would be seen as a way for India to exercise its hegemony in the region by others.

Conclusion: The word environment has become a catch phrase and is being heard with a growing recurrence in global gatherings. It has had gained more interest of lately and has transformed into a form to affix it to different subjects. The issue of environment truth is told, gathered steam in 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment. Step by step different parts of nature began springing up and among them; climate change is the latest addition. Climate change got worldwide consideration after the occurrence of many natural disasters which unleashed devastation on mankind thereby making the international community look for solutions as a way to readdress the situation. Many nations are trying to look for common solutions as climate change is of transboundary nature and nobody would be spared.

One of the most populated regions of the world, South Asia is surrounded by old and new dangers. From territorial disputes to the use of nuclear technology; to the presence of many diverse ethnic and religious groups having links to global terror outfits; to the ever increasing impact of climate change, the region is ticking time bomb waiting to explode at the very precise moment. High population growth, an increase in the gap between the rich and the poor and rapid progress in industrialization and urbanization has made South Asia undergo environmental stress in the form of land degradation, water scarcity, deforestation, pollution of air and water and the degradation of various ecosystems and climate change. These problems have become some of the most compelling environmental problems in South Asia. Rising population has created a deficit in the availability of natural resources, misuse and overuse of natural resources has made many abandon their means of livelihood, thereby inducing a large scale cross-border migration throughout the region which will have a profound impact on the economy and the society. Environmental issues prevalent in South Asia include

land degradation, deforestation, water scarcity, air pollution, climate change, improper management of hazardous wastes and natural disasters.

Climate change and environmental security are one of the prominent challenges faced by the world today. As developing countries develop at a fast pace and developed countries feel the urge to maintain their current lifestyle, there is a surge in the use of natural resources to develop and stay developed. But due to an ever increasing awareness towards climate change and the risks posed by it, there has been a paradigm shift wherein the use of renewable and clean sources of energy is emphasized upon. Climate change is taking place at a global level and has become a concern for governments. Climate change has been scientifically proven and has picked momentum post-industrial revolution through the extensive use of fossil fuels, introducing man-made changes to the natural environment, use of technologies and substances that emit greenhouse gases. Though carried out by developed countries, it is the developing countries of South Asia which are facing the impact of climate change. Proper planning and adaptation tools need to be developed in order to mitigate the damage due to climate change. This can only be done through cooperation between governments, initiating proper studies which are of scientific nature, political and public awareness needs to be created.

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