GLOBAL SECURITY AND THE ROLE OF ETHICS AND VALUES

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The world is facing a number of threats to global security. During the cold war, military threats were considered paramount. International security was mostly concerned with state security. However, with the end of the cold war and demise of bipolarity in international relations, a number of serious global threats have arisen. Today's threats are either the result of globalization or have been aggravated by it.

The concept of security has undergone sea change. State security is no longer the only issue. Human security, the concern for the individual, communities, local habitats, ecosystems etc. have become paramount. In the cold war years the absence of war was considered to be peace. Today, the well being of the individual alone can deliver sustainable peace.

What is distressing about the present day situation is that an individual, irrespective of his or her location, feels insecure on account of multiple threats. Threats to security have been globalised while their impact has been localized.   What are these threats that make us feel so insecure. According to the Report of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on "Threats, Challenges and Change", these can be divided into six broad clusters. These are:

- Economic and social threats, including poverty, infectious disease and environmental degradation.
- Inter-State conflict.
- Internal conflict, including civil war, genocide and other large-scale atrocities.
- Nuclear, radiological, chemical and biological weapons.
- Terrorism.
- Transnational organized crime

Translating this into practical issues, one can identify climate change, global financial instability, drugs, human trafficking, HIV/AIDS/Bird Flu, food shortages, competition over scarce resources, cyber-security as some of the global security issues which require urgent attention.

One does not feel safe at home, in the office, at a public place or while traveling or even while surfing the net. Non-state actors are using ideology, propaganda and technology to challenge the mightiest of the powers. Innocents are the canon fodder in the asymmetric warfare between the state and the non-state actors.

Each of these threats can cause large scale deaths, socio-economic disruption, prolonged human misery and massive demoralization. The high level panel called for building a new consensus on "collective security" to deal with these threats. The

burden of these recommendations was the strengthening of the UN system and a higher level of international cooperation. The report also built upon the need for a common criteria, which would justify the use of force in resolving these issues.

It is suggested that most of the global threats we face today are rooted in the deeper issues of ethics and values in international politics. These threats concern the well being of an individual whose identity is rooted in different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the solutions to today's global security problems have to take into account an individual's cultural and socio-economic background.

While the idea of the clash of civilizations as being inevitable has been discounted, the fact is that many of today's problems are rooted in religious and cultural misunderstandings and intolerance. Individuals are deeply moved by their faith and values. Therefore, it makes sense that any solution to their problems should take into account their value systems. Of course, quite often value-systems clash and contradict each other. These contradictions aggravate the problems and make the search for solutions difficult. One way to handle these issues is to look for similarities among different value systems and faiths and build solutions based on these commonalities.

Ethics and values play an important role in the make up of an individual, a community and a nation. Therefore, ethics and values

should play an important role in international relations too. However, this is not the case. Talking about values in the context of international relations is considered a sign of weakness and naiveté. The exploration of the role of ethics and values in politics has been neglected. The Western world has, of course, championed a few universal values like human rights, democracy, free markets etc in international relations. The Western aid to developing countries has been justified in the name of "global governance". The use of force has also been justified through "humanitarian intervention" to prevent genocide. Unfortunately, the conduct of foreign policy on the basis of the Western values has been highly controversial and resulted in avoidable violence. The US' popularity in the non-Western world is at its nadir. The problem is that some of these values are not considered by many societies as universal. Their own value systems are neglected in the Western approach. The West is considered to be too arrogant and insensitive when it champions these values with force. Thus, the problems multiply rather than being resolved.

Even a brief survey of the present day International Relations theories (IRT) and concepts, shows that there is too much focus on realism which has distracted from the question of ethics, morality and values in IR. However, the situation may be changing. Realist theories and their tenets - pursuit of power, balance of power, anarchy in international relations - are being challenged by alternative schools, constructionists, feminists, critical theorists etc.

The over-emphasis on power in international relations has to be reduced. The alternative schools in IR theory emphasise the importance of cultural, social and economic factors in coming to grips with today's problems. Unfortunately, these schools are too narrow and too weak to challenge the dominance of realism in international relations. They often adopt narrow, rather than holistic approaches to international relations.

The nature of global security has changed. However, climate Change,financial instability,trade,food,energy security require different thinking, different responses. There is a need to enquire into the fundamental causes of today's problems. Traditional way of thinking has no answers to these problems. There is no military solution through coercion to any of these problems.

It should be recognized that behind each of the present day problems there are there are questions of ethics and values. These have to be addressed. Present day discourse on the role of ethics and values in international relations is too narrow and rests mostly on Western traditions. This must be enlarged. In IR theory and practice there is urgent need to marry the empirical with the normative. The latter is neglected. Theories have become highly specialized, often unintelligible to politicians, policy-makers, practitioners and lay persons. On the other hand religious discourses are understood even by the most illiterate of persons. Demagogues who preach hate and intolerance are able to reach the common man far more easily than the learned theoreticians.

Specialization is important; but the fragment should not be confused with the whole. What use is a field of enquiry if it does not address pressing questions of the day? Most IR theory appears to be irrelevant to the solutions of today's problems.

Behind the urgent problems of today, there are, inter-alia, issues of ethics and values. The following table illustrates this.

Issue	Ethical issue involved
Climate Change	Exploitation of resources; luxury vs survival; differentiated responsibility; Sustainable development.
Terrorism	Deprivation; clash of civilizations; identity; moral superiority; tolerance; injustice, Inequality.
Poverty	socio-economic inequalities, insensitivity.
Financial Instability	Greed
Disarmament	Morality of nuclear weapons, non-violence
Organised crime, drugs, human trafficking	Greed, utter insensibility
Competition over resources	Selfishness, greed

Way Out:

How should one deal with these issues? There is a need to bring the focus on ethical and moral dimension of today's problems. No doubt, value systems of different people do not always coincide and are quite often are the cause of conflict. Values often breed self-righteousness and moral superiority. However, it needs to be realized that the world's major faiths and civilizations have a lot that is common and acceptable to most. Thus, a study of the world's prominent religions, thought systems, cultures should be done with a view to build a data-base of global ethics which is secular in nature and which appeals to most people.

What could be a possible, common minimum ethical code that can be extracted after such a study. A common sense approach would point to the following common minimum secular values acceptable to most people: peace, truth, tolerance, honesty, non-violence, charity, justice, harmony, parsimony, mutual respect, philanthropy, right conduct, human rights, and compassion, self-restraint, rectitude, forbearance and family values. No right-thinking person can quarrel with this list. These values are found in all religions. They form the basis of our civilization. If these values are imbibed amongst children and youth from the beginning and if these are advocated at the national and international level by politicians, policy-makers, businessmen and other influential people, there will be a beneficial impact on global security situation.

Promotion of value system in politics is easier said than done. However, it is remarkable that there is overwhelming support amongst the common people for value-based politics. They are, however, not organized. The people are fed up with corruption, violence and insecurity. They support value-based politics. Therefore, a movement has to be built to take advantage of people's rejection of valueless politics. A movement for global ethics needs to be built.

So, what should be done? The following suggestions can be considered:

- Adopt a multicultural approach

- Extract universal ethics from the world's religions; traditional knowledge; folk culture and see whether a common minimum can be evolved.

- Promote inter-faith dialogue; dialogue among civilizations.

- Emphasize secular but spiritual values like peace, truth, tolerance, honesty, non-violence, charity, justice, harmony, parsimony, mutual respect, philanthropy, right conduct, human rights, compassion, self-restraint, rectitude, forbearance etc and inculcate them in the youth through family values.

- Bring the study of world religions and spirituality in social sciences, particularly, international relations theory, politics and economics.

- Encourage multi-disciplinary research to promote mutual understanding.

- The issue of ethics and values in international relations should be debated in UN fora extensively. The UN should set up a fund to raise awareness.

No matter how unfashionable it may be to talk about ethics in the resolution of global security issues, it must be done. People like Buddha, Gandhi, Confucius were not afraid of emphasizing the importance ethics and values in daily life. They succeeded in connecting with the ordinary persons. They are still relevant. On the other hand, countless politicians and demagogues have been consigned to oblivion. There is a need to evolve a global ethics code and integrate it with politics.

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