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Violence, Terrorism and Human Security in South Asia

Ajay Darshan Behera

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South Asia Human Security Series

South Asia Human Security Series is the product of a three-year regional collaborative research project titled, *Human Security in South Asia: Discourse, Practice and Policy Proposition* conducted by BIISS under the aegis of the Ford Foundation, New Delhi, 2003-06. The aim of the project has been to provide an understanding of the prevailing discourses and practices on human security in South Asia as well as to generate inputs for policy making at regional and national levels. Five individual country papers on Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and five thematic areas: (a) Constructing a Human Security Index for South Asia; (b) Violence, Terrorism and Human Security; (c) Ethnicity and Human Security; (d) Gender and Human Security; (e) Marginalization and Human Security – were covered. The outcome is the present series.

The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS)

The Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIISS) is an autonomous research organization under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh. The Institute was founded in 1978 to undertake research and promote deliberation on foreign policy, security and development. The Institute published regularly a quarterly Journal, *BIISS Journal,* organizes seminars/ conferences and undertakes research projects. More about the Institute at: www.biiss.org

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Preface

This study is a product of a collaborative research project of the BIISS and Ford foundation on Human Security in South Asia: Discourse, Practice and Policy Proposition. When I was invited by the BIISS to be part of this project and undertake a study on "Terrorism, Violence and Human Security in South Asia", I eagerly accepted the offer. It was an enormous challenge and one doubted whether one would be able to do justice to the study. Nevertheless, the study excited me for several reasons.

Despite, South Asia being one of the most violence-prone regions in the world and more recently the growth in terrorist violence—this phenomenon has not received much scholarly attention. I can hardly recall a work, which is conceptually and theoretically sound on these issues in the context of South Asia. The reasons for this may be many. One, the diversity in the nature and causes of violence inhibits scholars from broadening their canvas. We do have a range of scholarly work on problems faced by individual countries. Second, the issue of domestic violence and studying it is fused with nationalist rhetoric and individual scholars from South Asia are supposed to have limited understanding of this problem in their neighbouring countries. This attitude has not helped the growth of South Asian Scholarship on the subject.

In the last several years, I have had the opportunity to address the subject of armed conflicts in South Asia from several perspectives. I eagerly took up this study, as it would provide me a new framework to look at the issue of political violence. A framework that makes violence and what it means to people central to the security discourse seemed to me a far more appropriate framework to study security. The field of security studies has been making rapid advances with an array of new terminologies and concepts that at times are perplexing and confusing. Conceptual soundness is constantly being sacrificed at the altar of political correctness. It has become fashionable or maybe expedient to implant security discourses developed in the West in the Third World setting. Many cannot be blamed, as they think of security in terms of a

common good. No one can have a disagreement with the objectives of such discourse-building.

My problem with that discourse-building is the implications of this for the Third World states. The discourses on security de-emphasise the state and its sovereignty. This has been unsettling for the Third World states, which are still in various stages of nation-building and state-formation. Their primary security challenge in most cases has been the management of internal political violence. Now with the neo-liberal agenda the grip of the state over society is loosening. The challenges to manage violence in society have become much more complex. It is this link between the state, society and violence that has interested me so much. By undertaking this study, I got the opportunity to interrogate the conceptual and theoretical premises of human security, which has placed violence as a central focus of security. The more I look at these issues, particularly now in the context of globalisation, I realise that the state cannot be divorced from security. The Third World state, in fact, needs to strengthen to achieve the laudable objectives of human security.

The views expressed in this study and the conclusions are mine. I am responsible for the weaknesses in this study. I am sure the last word on this subject has not been said. This study in no way reflects the views of the sponsor. I wish to thank the project Director, Dr. Abdur Rob Khan and the Associate Project Director, Mr. A. K. M Abdus Sabur, for having reposed faith in me to conduct the study, encouraged and facilitated the study at various stages. I would like to thank the panel of experts Dr. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, from the Islamabad Peace Research Institute and Prof. Emdadul Haque, from Chittagong University for having contributed to a substantial improvement in the drafts. I would like to thank Prof. Mahendra Lama for providing me inputs at various stages of this study. Many participants in the various meetings of the human security project have contributed to the final shape of this study and I wish to thank all of them. I would like to thank the library staff of the Centre for Strategic and Regional Studies, University of Jammu, Jammu, the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi and the Academy of Third World Studies at the Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. Special thanks to Dr. Paul Evans, Chairman of the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada who made available important documents at a critical juncture. A large number of friends, colleagues and teachers have over the years offered support

and inspired in numerous ways. It would be impossible to name them here but I would like to gratefully acknowledge their contribution. Lastly, I wish to convey my deep appreciation of the encouragement and support that I always receive from my wife Navnita. This has always been taken for granted and I know she has borne with it in the past and she will bear with me in the future. Finally, a word of apology to my daughter Ananya for whom this study meant the loss of valuable time that we could spend together.

New Delhi, May 2008

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