NATIONAL SECURITY IN THE THIRD WORLD
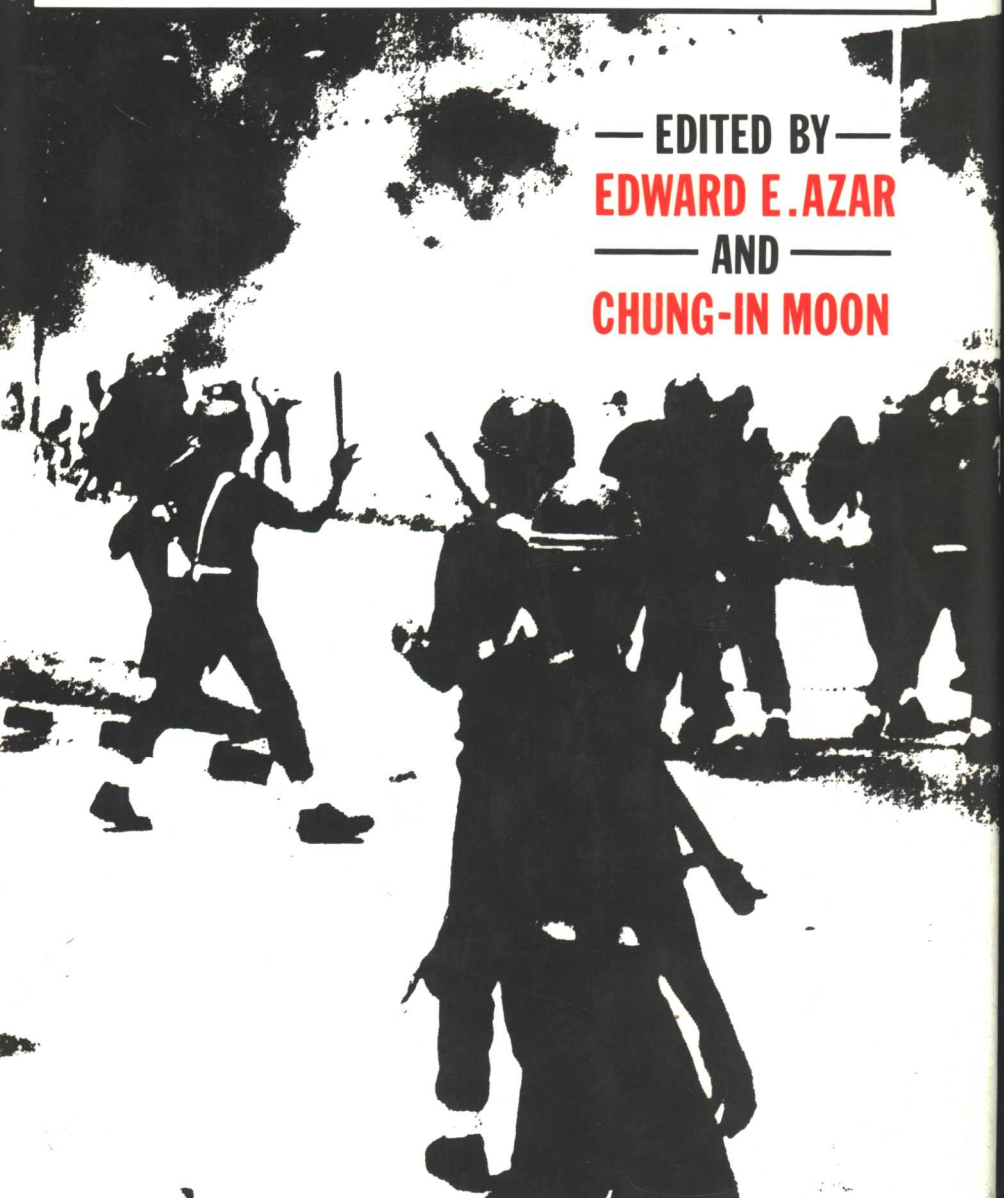
The Management of Internal and External Threats

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Contents

1. Rethinking Third World National Security

EDWARD E. AZAR and CHUNG-IN MOON

National security is a Western, largely American, concept that emerged in the post-World War II period. As the burdens of the presidency of the United States grew heavier and American involvement in international affairs grew deeper, the structure and management of policy-making at the national level required new and bold approaches. As the international environment grew in complexity, and it became necessary to integrate military, diplomatic, intelligence, technological, economic and other diverse data at the apex of American decision-making, the American President in 1949 launched the national security apparatus. The nature of this apparatus has, of course, changed over the years. Despite a good deal of writing about the development of the concept and the machinery of national security in the USA and Western world, a good deal of writing has lacked solid analytical and empirical research, and thus only limited scholarly advances have been made.

In recent years, the concept of national security has attracted the attention of scholars and statesmen from the Third World both as an analytical and as a management formulation. The scarce body of literature on Third World

national security is generally produced in the West and appears to suffer from relying on the Western experience to understand and apply national policy and security. This literature has focused chiefly on the military dimension, especially threat perceptions of contending elites, doctrinal responses, security resources and capabilities to meet external threats to the state (often the regime in power). This body of literature has, however, underestimated the salience and impact of domestic political structure and policy-making fragility, economic and technological underdevelopment, ethnic, religious and social cleavages in the ever expanding populations and the severe ecopolitical pressures affecting the Third World.

This book is intended to examine the utility and weaknesses of the Western conception of national security in the Third World. We address both the conceptual and functional issues involved and try to provide an alternative framework within which various dimensions of Third World national security can properly be identified and analysed, and subsequently raise theoretical and practical issues. The basic assumption here is that national security has a meaning, and that that meaning is related to threats to core national values. The nature of threats (which, behaviourally, must be perceived threats) will vary from country to country, across issue areas, and over time. It is a grievous error to fix a rigid operational meaning to national security and apply it administratively across the board. The conceptual meaning of national security must be definitively resolved, but must allow for varying operational and managerial elements, depending on the nature of the threat, just as it must allow for varying policies and actions depending on the nature of the situation.

COPING WITH INSECURITY: TRADITIONAL VIEWS

The proliferation of new nation-states after World War II reshaped the global landscape. Their diversity notwithstanding, these new nations may be seen in some respects as a distinct collective entity in the bipolar cold war system.

Collective expression of their solidarity and perceived unifying grievances through the Non-Aligned Movement and the pursuit of a 'new international economic order' has elevated the Third World to the centre stage, or at least part of the centre stage, of world politics for the past three decades. In the shadow of flamboyant rhetoric and gestures of bravado, however, most Third World nations have suffered persistent and pervasive insecurity. About 90 per cent of the domestic conflict, regional crises, and overall international violence which has taken place in the world since World War II is concentrated in the Third World. More striking, of the 120 wars recorded since 1945, 119 have taken place in the developing countries.[1] Overt violence and conflict aside, most developing countries have become insecure places to live in because of chronic poverty, crime, pollution, famine, population expansion, and a deteriorating quality of life.

How can we understand this insecurity? A cursory review of the literature and government policy statements in the Third World indicates that they share several common features in the diagnosis of, and prescriptions for, insecurity.[2] First, the security problem is commonly understood in terms of the physical protection of the state from external threats — violent threats that are predominantly military in nature. External aggression involving war and border conflicts, espionage, sabotage, subversion, and other threats operationalized by actual or potential adversaries are the immediate concerns of national security.[3] Treating national security as military and political matters obviously reflects the realist interpretation of international politics where anarchy is pervasive and each state pursues its own national interests. In the vicious circle of action and reaction, self-help is the only rule of the game. For the weakest and most fragile Third World countries, which fell prey to colonial domination, conceiving security issues in terms of the Hobbesian *Weltanschauung* is certainly understandable.

Diagnosing Third World national security in terms of external military threats has produced a predictable prescription in an anarchic world where self-help is the name of the game. Security is measured by the ability to protect state

sovereignty, to preserve territorial integrity, and to maintain autonomy. The behavioural and coercive nature of external threats demands the accumulation and exercise of the same kinds of force to resist or deter attack or other hostile behavior. Such logic dictates that each nation develop, maintain, and exercise coercive and behavioural power. Any shifts in absolute or relative coercive power, in fact or in prospect, trigger new security problems. This coercive-behavioural dimension of power is most clearly manifested in the form of military force. The capacity to coerce, kill, and destroy becomes the important source of power, and thus the pre-eminent safeguard for national security. Indeed, the military component becomes the ultimate criterion by which overall levels of power potential and national security capability are measured and judged. Human, material, and technological resources and constraints are all tied to this military power.

The primacy of military power in considerations of national security is pervasive in the Third World. Military expenditures of developing countries have increased sixfold since 1960 in real terms. In 1960 developing countries accounted for 8 per cent of global military expenditures. By 1985 their share had increased to 20 per cent. Arms imports by the Third World also increased sharply from $4 billion in 1960 to $35 billion in 1981. Over the two decades ending in 1983, total arms imports by the Third World amounted to $223 billion.[4]

Construction of a modern military establishment is not an easy task, nor an inexpensive one, and is rarely undertaken without the presence of tension in the security environment. A state surrounded by hostile adversaries typically produces a build-up of military forces. In the absence of endogenous power adequate to deter or contain external military threats, governments may rely on coalitions or tacit or open alliances. Most of the literature on Third World national security focuses on security environment issues such as threat perceptions, strategic interactions, and regional and superpower alignment and realignment.[5] The dominant theme of this security environment literature is ecological determinism. That is, Third World national security prob-

lems are treated as a mere extension of system-level or sub-system-level dynamics. Perhaps this bias results from the perception that most developing countries are clients and proxies of big powers and 'system-ineffectual' states that can never, acting alone or in small groups, make a significant impact on the system. In this view, the superpowers and medium-sized powers establish the agenda of international issues and determine directly or indirectly the parameters and the type and intensity of interactions in the international system. The rest of the world, including the Third World, is simply the backdrop for the competition of the superpowers and medium-sized powers and is relegated to the status of clients who benefit or suffer commensurately with their protectors. Consequently, it is essential to understand the dynamics of the general and local balances of power in order to describe, explain and prescribe the national security policies of developing countries.

Finally, most developing countries are burdened with policy environments and resource availabilities sharply different from those of the West. The developing countries typically suffer from fragile domestic political structures, shortages of qualified manpower, and ineffective security infrastructures. Nevertheless, policy-makers and scholars alike implicitly or explicitly promote and assume the importance of emulating and adopting Western national security management tools and techniques. Popular themes are policy guidelines, institutions, and lexicons such as:

- procedures for an effective integration of foreign and defence policy,
- strategic planning,
- military doctrines,
- defence budgeting,
- weapons-systems evaluation and choices,
- threat perception and analysis,
- intelligence capability, and
- alliance or coalition strategy.

This emulative process may reflect colonial ties or client relationships with Western powers.

The current concept of national security in the Third World manifests a set of distinct characteristics:

- defining insecurity in terms of violent external threats,
- heavy emphasis on coercive-behavioural power founded on military force,
- understanding of security environment through ecological determinism, and
- emulation of Western tools and techniques of security management.

This interpretation of, and prescription for, security issues has merit and relevance to Third World national security. It is, however, our contention that this monolithic view framed around the realist tradition of international politics is not only too narrow in scope, but also is distortive of objective reality. As we have argued before, there is no fixed concept of national security. The operational definition of national security is largely contextual. Consequently, the diagnosis of, and prescription for, security can vary from one country to another. Moreover, the idiosyncrasies of each national security situation complicate the application of the Western concept and management technique of national security to Third World.

ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

Against the backdrop of conventional views, the articles in this volume question the validity and applicability of the concept, operational meaning, security environment, and policy prescriptions currently prevalent in the Third World. In the second chapter, Barry Buzan argues that the concepts and issues of national security are largely of Western origin, and he delineates some fundamental difficulties in applying them to Third World states. The security conditions of Western and Third World states differ on two grounds — their degree of political cohesion, and the nature of their security environments. Many Third World states are fragile political entities, and this fact introduces serious problems in identifying the referable object for a concept like national

security. One danger in using national security for politi-
cally weak states is that it easily legitimates the use of force
in domestic politics. Most Third World states also face a
much more turbulent and unstable security environment
than do most Western states. This endemic instability is of
course linked to the political weakness of many Third World
states, creating a vicious circle of insecurity. Buzan argues
that these major differences may invalidate the use of the
concept of national security for Third World conditions, or
at the very least constitute an argument for considerable
circumspection in applying the concept.

In 'Simple Labels and Complex Realities', Davis Bobrow
and Steve Chan consider several of the conceptual issues
raised by Buzan through different lenses. Imprecision and
diversity in the application of the concept of national
security make it difficult to conceptualise Third World
national security in a meaningful way. The authors
overcome these difficulties by differentiating content, actors
and processes. Furthermore, they draw our attention to sub-
jective interpretations of national security. An operational
definition of national security is contingent upon policy-
makers' judgements about the *significance* and *probability* of
some foreign act of commission or omission, and about their
leverage in encouraging or restraining this act. Like Buzan,
Bobrow and Chan make some salient distinctions between
the Third World, on the one hand, and the First and Second
Worlds, on the other, in terms of respective national security
problems and coping capabilities. Departing from the pre-
vious undifferentiated view of the Third World, they further
disaggregate the Third World into four subcategories —
Achievers, Goliaths, Davids, and Weak — by using such
indicators as size, economic development, and military
capability. Within this differentiation, the variety of national
security problems, options, accomplishments, capabilities,
and management proclivities of each of these subcategories
is raised and discussed. Finally, Bobrow and Chan suggest a
direction for future national security studies by urging us to
engage in more systematic mapping of the ecology of
domestic and foreign military threats, comparative studies
on actual operationalization of the concept of national

security, plotting the relationship of means and ends among the major security dimensions, and overall patterns of status management by Third World countries.

While Buzan and Bobrow and Chan clarify conceptual ambiguities of national security and identify the limits and difficulties of applying Western concepts to the Third World, the chapter by Edward Azar and Chung-in Moon directs our attention to domestic political dimensions as a relevant area of national security studies. Azar and Moon delineate three dimensions of national security policies: security environment, hardware and software. While security environment is an essential indicator of external threat and alliance pattern, the hardware side of security management involves physical capabilities, strategic doctrines, force structure, and weapons choice. By contrast, the software side refers to political legitimacy, integration, and overall policy capacity. Traditional approaches have been preoccupied with security environment and hardware, which could hinder dynamic understanding of Third World national security realities. More attention is due the dynamic software side of security management, because of fragile political legitimacy, fragmented societies, incomplete nation-building, and rigid policy capacity. Moreover, the software side of security management is the crucial intervening variable linking security environment to hardware.

In 'Ideology and Security', Han-Sik Park and Kyung A. Park elaborate the importance of non-tangible domestic political factors in the non-Western world. Through a comparative study of China and North Korea, they elucidate the crucial role of ideology in influencing overall security management and performance. Maoism in China and the Juche ideology in North Korea, both of which embody the principle of self-reliance, have been instrumental in indoctrinating, mobilizing, and restructuring the popular masses and the military for national security objectives. Although China and North Korea may represent deviant cases by Third World standards, their practice and performance demonstrate clearly that ideology can be an integral part of national security.

In the conventional view, the stronger the military power, the better the security posture. Indeed military strength is often considered almost synonymous with national security in some simplistic analyses. In reality, however, the blind pursuit of military power may engender negative consequences. Ethan Kapstein's 'Economic Development and National Security' traces the link between national security policies and economic development strategies. Contrary to liberal assertions, the scope, timing and trajectory of economic development in the Third World seldom follow market principles. They are instead greatly influenced by the nature of national security policies. Through a comparative examination of South Korean, Brazilian, and Argentinian experiences, Kapstein concludes that national security considerations have played essential roles in shaping the nature and direction of economic development strategy through direct military spending and state support of military-related industries. These national security considerations have distorted the pattern of economic development, and created a classic trade-off between guns and butter.

In 'Arms Acquisition and National Security', Andy Ross substantiates limits of national security built on military strength. Conventionally, military force is the essential ingredient of national security. Military force in turn depends upon arms acquisition. In acquiring arms, national security policy-makers in the Third World usually rely on three distinct options: local production, importation, and a combination of the two. Each of these options has a different impact on national security. Ross, however, shows that even though arms are acquired with the expectation that security will thereby be enhanced, the manner in which arms are acquired may well erode security by significantly limiting policy and behavioral autonomy of Third World countries, precisely because of the resulting structure of military dependence.

Through a penetrating analysis of the Argentina case, Carlos Egan explores a complex relation involving national security and regime security. Egan argues that 'national security' in Argentina was nothing but a fig leaf for regime

security. The two Dirty Wars (of the 1920s and 1970s) waged by authoritarian regimes in the name of national security were to protect the interests and privileges of the dominant class that dependent capitalism had created and reproduced. Egan finds answers to the metamorphosis of national security into regime security in interactions between global economic cycles and dependent capitalism. In the trough of global economic cycles, Argentina as a dependent capitalist state was forced to face major economic crises. The crises politicized the popular sector and made it more militant, which in turn threatened the very survival of the capitalist system. To contain this popular sector challenge, the capitalist regimes created imaginary enemies, introduced the ideology of national security, and launched the so called 'Dirty Wars' against the popular sector. National security became an instrument to justify state terrorism and human rights abuses for the preservation of class interests.

Conventional wisdom argues that forming an alliance with superpowers to seek their protection is an important logic of survival for many Third World countries. Mark Gasiorowski, however, challenges the proposition through a case study of Iran under the Shah, and argues that such a client relationship may be a liability to national security. Imperial Iran was militarily strong, and claimed to be the hegemonic power in the Persian Gulf. Iran's military strength was furthered by its strong ties with the United States. Ironically, it is this external source of power that not only toppled the Shah, but also drove Iran to immense insecurity. The Shah was returned to power through a foreign-backed coup and built up his military strength through a strong relationship with USA. This cliency compelled the Shah to pursue policies distinct from the public interest. As a consequence, the Shah's legitimacy eroded, inviting social unrest and revolution, and eventually subjecting Iran to Soviet intimidation and an invasion by Iraq.

Finally, the chapter by Ronald McLaurin relates problems associated with the emulation of Western security management techniques to the uniqueness of the environment in

which the concept of national security evolved in the USA, and distinguishes this environment from that in the Third World today. The concept of national security must be related to 'threat'. In the USA, national security, employed initially to refer to the general area of politico-military affairs in relatively specific contexts of jurisdictional, budgetary, and policy disputes after World War II, increasingly took on management overtones, but continued to focus on the politico-military environment. Economic and social issues were seen as relevant to 'national security' only to the extent they impinged on the politico-military domain. Therefore, the prevailing concept of 'national security' in the United States is highly inappropriate for most Third World governments whose principal threat is economic and social. The concepts of national security management developed in the USA may well be applicable to the Third World, but if so must be modified to suit the circumstances of this very different threat.

RETHINKING THIRD WORLD NATIONAL SECURITY: NEW DIRECTIONS

The articles presented in this volume argue compellingly that the traditional approach to national security is inappropriate to Third World countries. Four major weaknesses can be singled out. First, defining the concept of national security in terms of physical protection of nation-states from external military threats is not only narrow, but also misleading. The threats facing the Third World are diverse and complex, and so are the dimensions and content of national security.

Second, the accumulation, maintenance and development of military force is no panacea for security problems. Military strength is a necessary but insufficient guardian. The complex and multiple vulnerabilities of Third World states compel us not only to look at a deeper structure and a broader spectrum of issue-nexuses, but also to search for different resources and capabilities corresponding to each pertinent threat. Furthermore, excessive preoccupation with

military power can entail extensive trade-offs with domestic social, political and economic issues, which would eventually undermine overall security posture.

Third, the security environment is important, but it does not necessarily determine or dictate the nature of security issues. Domestic factors such as legitimacy, integration, ideology, and policy capacity play equally important roles in shaping the national security posture. Security challenges in many parts of the Third World are of endogenous rather than exogenous origin. Moreover, it is fallacious to understand Third World national security from the perspective of superpower rivalry. The superpowers may affect — perhaps significantly — the parameters of national security in the Third World, but they do not determine its nature. As current developments in many parts of the Third World illustrate, the superpowers are seldom able to contain, manipulate, mute or dictate regional and country-specific security problems, whether military or economic. Furthermore, cliency with superpowers can be a security liability.

Finally, direct emulation and adoption of national security management tools and techniques also appears unwise. The search for effective management techniques should be context-bound, taking account of problems, resources, and requirements specific to each national security environment.

These observations can be applied at two levels and in two geographic domains. First, analysis of national security in Third World environments has been far too greatly influenced by the conventional order of battle military assessment. Where other considerations — human rights, economic development, ecological scarcity, social modernization and national integration — have been analyzed, no methodologies have been developed to incorporate such assessments into the national security picture. From the policy standpoint, this inability has seriously handicapped decision-makers and has forced them to *choose between* competing analyses rather than *choose from* an integrated national security assessment.

Similarly, the observations and conclusions advanced in this book apply to both Third World and the developed

countries. Western analysts and decision-makers at present display no greater ability to assess and weigh the factors at play in Third World national security than their counterparts in the developing countries. Because of the impact of superpower policy on Third World security reality, this shortcoming has a multiplier effect on the Third World.

The foregoing does not suggest that the conventional approach to national security must be scrapped. The traditional concept of national security is still valid in many parts of the developing world where significant, immediate external military threats characterize the security situation. Against this background, the final chapter of this book refines and expands the concept of national security, suggests multiple dimensions of security concerns, and elucidates the complex trade-off structures associated with them.

NOTES

[1] Ruth Leger Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1986* (Washington, DC: World Priorities, Inc., 1986), p. 27.

[2] See Edward A. Kolodziej and Robert E. Harkavy, *Security Policies of Developing Countries* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1982). For dissenting views, see Robert Rothstein, 'The "Security Dilemma" and the "Poverty Trap" in the Third World', *Jerusalem Journal of International Relations*, vol. 8, no. 4 (1986), pp. 1–38; Edward E. Azar and Chung-in Moon, 'Third World National Security: Toward a New Conceptual Framework', *International Interactions*, vol. 11, no. 2 (1984), pp. 103–35; Abdul-Monem M. Al-Mashat, *National Security in the Third World* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1985). For an eclectic and comprehensive approach, refer to Barry Buzan, *People, States, and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, and Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983).

[3] W. Handrieder and L. Buel, *Words and Arms* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1979), p. 79.

[4] Sivard, *World Military*, p. 27.

[5] An overview of Third World national security literature indicates that a great majority of works focuses primarily on regional security environment.