

# **GOOD GOVERNANCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY**

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**By**

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## **Introduction**

I have been asked to speak on two very topical issues – governance and security in the comprehensive sense. The burden of this paper is to seek out the value complementarities of the two.

My aim this morning is to briefly discuss elements of good governance and the central aspect of security and highlight the link between the two. My emphasis would be on the key issues of governance in our context, look at the challenges to delivery of service by the state, and whether good governance merits consideration as a factor in formulating national security. I shall, time permitting, spend some time on the issue of governance of the security sector.

Governance issues predominate our existence today. It is a catch phrase for our development partners. For us the developing countries, anything and everything that is donor driven today has to fulfill the criterion of good governance. In fact the idea has reached such a phenomenal proportion that tomes have been written to define what good governance is.

The World Leaders at the 2005 World Summit concluded that good governance is integral to economic growth, the eradication of poverty and hunger, and sustainable development , all of which ensures human security.

In fact the IFIs and the UN and EU have spent considerable effort and time to secure the assurances of the developing countries to understand their formulation and explication of the term good governance as well as implementation of such measure as would ensure that those conditions are fulfilled, to qualify for aid. And why not, those that provide money for various development programmes would want to know how well that is being utilised. And that is crux of the issue – doing it well – which is a function of good governance

But leaving aside the developing countries, good governance is an enabling condition, which claims universality in application irrespective of the level of

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development, and which enables governments to ensure that quality of life of its people which would rule out the possibility of unrest and violence. That in turn would ensure peace and security, at least in so far as the internal manifestation is concerned.

### **Definition: Good governance and Security**

Let me start by making so bold as to suggest that good governance is not entirely about wielding power although it will emerge subsequently from definitions of the international organisation that the concept is predicated on power. Neither, by the same token, is there a direct correlation between economic strength and security.

The concept of good governance is as old as civilization itself, concretised much later when nation states emerged with a central authority to command and manage the affairs of the state. Empires have vanished, states have broken up and regimes have crumpled because of failure of states to govern properly. There are many examples in recent times where lack of good governance has resulted in terrible consequences for the state.

‘Governance’ has been characterised as exercise of power and making decisions by a group which, in a democratic dispensation, happens to be the elected government. It is omnipresent in all segment of the society and the welfare of a community depends on the choices made by people granted this authority.<sup>2</sup> There are various actors who, by virtue of the position they hold, arrogate to themselves the power to govern.

‘Good governance, on the other hand, is a relatively new term that is often used to describe the desired objective of a nation-state’s political development. The principles of good governance, however, are not new and the major characteristics of good governance have been outlined by the United Nations.<sup>3</sup>

Security in its comprehensive sense is premised on three factors: one is the traditional security emerging from statist discourse, but also security of the people that can come from economic progress and good governance and rule of law; these three things, working together, are really what determine security.

### **Good governance – common definitions<sup>4</sup>**

Let us focus on several definitions propounded by international institutions. Definitions of governance by leading institutions and studies converge on the term as referring to a process by which power is exercised.

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<sup>2</sup> Issues.tigweb.org

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Good Governance and its Relationship to Democracy and Economic Development, Latif, Abdel M Adel, Global Forum III on Fighting Corruption and Safeguarding Integrity Seoul 20-31 May 2003

**World Bank:** Governance is defined as the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources. The World Bank has identified three distinct aspects of governance: (i) the form of political regime; (ii) the process by which authority is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development; and (iii) the capacity of governments to design, formulate, and implement policies and discharge functions. (World Bank, 1997);

**UNDP:** Governance is viewed as the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels. It comprises mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. (UNDP 1997);

**OECD:** The concept of governance denotes the use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development. This broad definition encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled. (OECD DAC, 1995);

**DFID:** The Department for International Development adopts the same approach to governance as that provided by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC), which identifies four key elements in governance:

- Legitimacy of government (political systems)
- Accountability of political and official elements of government (public administration and financial systems)
- Competence of governments to formulate policies and deliver services (public administration and economic systems, and organizational strengthening)

One could paraphrase all these ideas as – utilising the mechanisms at the disposal of the state to direct its resources for the purpose of development that would mitigate the risks to the wellbeing of the people.

### **Good Governance - Characteristics <sup>5</sup>**

1. **Participation** -All men and women should have a voice in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructively
2. **Rule of law** - Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights

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<sup>5</sup> UNDP Report, Governance for Sustainable Human Development, 1997

3. **Transparency** - Transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to those concerned with them, and enough information is provided to understand and monitor them
4. **Responsiveness** - Institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders
5. **Consensus orientation** - Good governance mediates differing interests to reach abroad consensus on what is in the best interest of the group and, where possible, on policies and procedures
6. **Equity** - All men and women have opportunities to improve or maintain their well-being
7. **Effectiveness and efficiency** - Processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources
8. **Accountability** - Decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organisations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organisation and whether the decision is internal or external to an organisation
9. **Strategic vision** - Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded.

### **Challenges to Good Governance<sup>6</sup>**

The following can militate against good governance if not addressed properly:

1. Rule of law
2. Lack of democratic practice
3. Weak state institutions
4. Effective parliament
5. Corruption
6. Accountability
7. Transparency
8. Devolution of power/ effective local government
9. Separation of power

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<sup>6</sup> These emerged as consensus points at an international seminar in Dhaka on, 'Democracy, Governance and SSR' in Aug 2007.

## National Security

'Security' and 'threat' are cognate words and there is a propensity to use these two in a fungible manner. Any discourse on security must of necessity take into consideration the entire threat scenario and the consequent strategic footprint that the planners need to study.

Discussion on threat or security is a complex issue. In spite of the reconceptualisation of the term, there still remains the propensity to consider it in the conventional form where threats are predicated largely on statist perception of the matter, the military being the major means of combating it. However, the post modernists see otherwise. To them, and rightly so, people's security assumes centrality in the discourse of security issues and where the means to combat these are other than military. The all-encompassing character of the term is well encapsulated in the comment that, "**National security threats must be assessed from the totality of factors affecting the survival, protection, safety, well being and contentment of the people.**"<sup>7</sup> Thus anything or anybody that subverts these objectives must be considered as THREAT.

The changing nature of threat must also be understood clearly since not always are nation states major sources of threat to one another. And this has been nowhere more definitively expressed than in Huntington's "Clash of Civilization" which propounded the notion that not only a country but an ideology also can pose threat to another country or a group with common interests.

Threat, or in other words sources of insecurity is multifaceted, and one is considered secure if one can exist in an environment free of coercive influence – endogenous or externally induced

Even when one indulges in the traditional security discourse, the inevitable question that follows is, what are the generic sources of threat that we might face in the years ahead?

One eminent scholar enumerates several interesting threat scenarios. He states that, loss of state monopoly over information – technological revolution in electronic media, failure of the state to protect its people, failure to achieve economic prosperity, loss of state's monopoly over justice in view of growing role of international organisation, lending institution, foreign governments human rights groups and, self-appointed spokesmen for democracy, failure to provide justice – role of international organisation and threat from within, are likely to induce negative impact on the security environment of the states and the region.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Patricia Doi Sampson, "National Security Issues-New Trends and Threats" 2005

<sup>8</sup> Prof Stephen Cohen, talk at the RCSS, Colombo, 1999

To that one could add the role of the MNCs, and deprivation from common resources or inability of a country to make legitimate and optimum use of common natural endowments could also pose threats to a country's security.

There is something that we overlook when we look at security which is that at times the state can itself be a cause of its insecurity.

### **Good governance and Security - The link**

The ICG identifies several aspects of security as follows:<sup>9</sup>

- **National security** – or freedom from the fear of military conflict;
- **Community security** – or freedom from the fear of violence: with law and order, and a decent justice system.
- **Personal security** – freedom from the fear of want: with income and employment, housing, health and educational opportunity;
- **Environmental security** - freedom to enjoy decent physical conditions in which to live and work and play; and
- **Personal liberty** – freedom to move, and speak and assemble; to live in dignity and without discrimination; and to participate in the political process, at least of selecting those who make the decisions that affect our lives;

And the capacity and will to deliver these things is good governance.

Security is inseparable from good governance, since good governance helps prevent conflict and ensure peace. The link had been spelled out more than 200 years ago by Kant when he said, **“People who feel secure and free, governed by the rule of law and not of men, are much less likely to go to war with each other - either within or across borders – than those who don't”**.<sup>10</sup>

It needs little emphasis that if governance relates to directing the proper utilisation of resources and the state institutions for the benefit of the people,

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<sup>9</sup> “Peace, Security and Good Governance” address by Gareth Evans to EU-UNU Tokyo Global Forum: Governance Across Borders – National, Regional and Global, United Nations University, Tokyo.

<sup>10</sup> Kant, in “Perpetual Peace”, quoted in “Peace, Security and Good Governance”, ibid

anything that weakens the process of governance will lead to instability and flux and which would consequently affect national security.

Experts opine that Improvements in good governance are closely linked with security and stability. If the goals of good government are the consolidation of political structures and the establishment of legitimate democratic institutions such as the promotion of constitutionality, power-sharing and human rights, a clear legal instrument which enables development of the private economic sector and the fight against corruption, attaining this particular level of governance would engender peace.

This is how the OECD sees the link. It says, "Security is important for improved governance. Inappropriate security structures and mechanisms can contribute to weak governance and to instability and violent conflict, which impact negatively on poverty reduction. As the UN Secretary General notes in his September 2003 report on the Millennium Declaration, **"We must make even greater efforts to prevent the outbreak of violence well before tensions and conflicts have eroded polities and economies to the point of collapse"**.<sup>11</sup>

It therefore follows that insecurity or lack of peace is the result of violence stemming from social or political instability. If there is a causal link between instability and violence which adversely affect good governance then perhaps one could also suggest that there is a reverse causality, in that, lack of good governance engenders violence and thereby instability and insecurity. Therefore, suffice it say that good governance = good government = stability and security, and the reverse is true too.

### **Governance of the Security Sector**

This is a sensitive issue seldom delved into with seriousness. But there was an occasion to do so more than two years ago. As with other sectors that become dysfunctional the security sector too fails to deliver if there is lack of good governance of the sector.

Contrary to common perception security sector is more eclectic than we are disposed to credit it with. It not only includes the security forces but all those institutions that exercise oversight on the forces. And the two major issues - democracy and governance- predicate the functioning as well as the reform of the security sector.

Reform of the security sector is an issue that all governments should be seized with constantly. And that involves:<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> OECD, DAC Guidelines and Reference Series, "Security System Reform and Governance."

<sup>12</sup> OECD ops, cit

- Developing a clear institutional framework for the provision of security that integrates security and development policy and includes all relevant actors
- Strengthening the governance of the security institutions
- Building capable and professional security forces that are accountable to civil authorities.

In our context there is much to be desired in so far as good governance of the security sector is concerned.

## **Conclusion**

Looking at the matter in a more down-to-earth manner, it would not be remiss to suggest that good governance is in fact good management and at the national level that is a function of good leadership.

If politics is means of, not to power but to fulfill the development need of the people, then harmonization of efforts, of resources, ensuring allocational efficiency, achieving consensus and directing policies form an integral part of the overall strategy. In other words good government makes for good governance and vice versa although they are not quite the same thing.

Good governance gives the state an opportunity to focus on four critical elements of sustainability and human development: eliminating poverty, creating jobs and sustaining livelihoods, protecting and regenerating the environment, and promoting the advancement of women. Developing the capacities for good governance underpins all these objectives and create enabling environment for peace and sustainable development.”<sup>13</sup>

Security, stabilisation, democratization and constitutionality are the basic conditions needed for individual well-being, peaceful coexistence and social, political and economic development. Appropriate measures should promote mechanisms providing peaceful solutions to conflicts and reconciliation and contribute to the protection and integration of minorities and underprivileged groups. And these are what guarantee security of the people.<sup>14</sup>

And if people are secure so is the state.

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<sup>13</sup> Governance, Peace And Stability In LDCs,' Louis O. Dorvilier Policy Adviser, NGO Forum Brussels, Belgium - May 9, 2001

<sup>14</sup> Swiss Agency For Development and Cooperation, “Security, democratization and good governance.”