

VANTAGE POINT

A Newsletter on Non-Traditional Security



Contents

Issue Commentary

by **Dr. Sindhuja Iyengar**

Narratives from the North-East

by **Pratyush Pran Sarma**

Climate Monitor

by **Malka B**

Know your People

by **Manjima Manoj Kumar**

Infographics

by **Chris Koshy, Nikhil Kushwaha,
Ujjwal Deep, Mohd Tanveer Alam**

ISSUE COMMENTARY

Broadening the Definition of Security

Written By **Dr. Sindhuja Iyengar**

The contemporary world order is characterized by the prevalence of the welfare state. These are nation-states that have assumed roles that transcend the narrow limits of the traditional police state. The traditional state restricts its responsibilities to three activities: protection of territorial integrity (by a military force), maintenance of internal law and order (by a police force), and the collection of taxes (to financially sustain the military and police forces). The welfare state performs all these three duties, as well as several developmental ones such as providing food, water, health services, education, livelihood and other such population essentials.

Hence traditionally, security studies have been centred on tangible elements such as external military aggression, and issues of national sovereignty from a territorial context. However, in the context of the welfare imperatives of the state's responsibilities, the study of non-traditional security studies has emerged as a vital area of focus in statecraft. It has redefined what constitutes a threat and provides critical insights that enable a better understanding of evolving threats, and the state's response to them.

The new focus on non-traditional security concerns marks a growing recognition of intangible threats to a nation's populace. The intangible threats include famine and drought; pandemics and endemics; illiteracy, under-education and unemployability; human trafficking; cyber threats; and information warfare among others. Non-traditional security recognizes that security today is not just about protecting borders but also about safeguarding human life and quality of living, environmental ecosystems and biospheres, and development infrastructure, institutions, and processes.

Further, non-traditional security threats are often transnational, impacting multiple countries and requiring collaborative solutions. For instance, pandemics and climate change do not respect national borders; therefore, addressing them effectively necessitates international cooperation, shared resources, and collective responsibility. Non-traditional security studies emphasize the importance of diplomacy, multilateral organizations, and transnational agreements, fostering a culture of collaboration that transcends national interests. By framing security as a shared global responsibility, non-traditional security studies offer pathways toward inclusive and cooperative solutions that recognize the interconnectedness of modern threats.

Non-traditional security studies also play a crucial role in informing and guiding policy. As societies become more aware of these complex threats, policymakers are increasingly required to incorporate non-traditional security considerations into their strategies. Governments can no longer afford to ignore the security implications of issues such as food and water scarcity, which are intensified by climate change and population growth. Recognizing the interlinked nature of these threats, many countries are now integrating resilience and preparedness measures into national security planning.

A newsletter dedicated to non-traditional security studies plays an invaluable role in educating and connecting stakeholders from government, policy making, academia, as well as the general public on developments, perspectives, and narratives in non-traditional security studies. By disseminating timely insights, research findings, and expert commentary, it fosters a better understanding of these pressing security challenges and builds awareness about their far-reaching consequences.

NARRATIVES FROM THE NORTH-EAST

Understanding the North-East India through a Non-Traditional Security Approach

Written By **Pratyush Pran Sarma**

The North-Eastern Region of India is diverse, each kilometre speaks of its unique heritage and socio-cultural aspirations. Apart from the impact of such diversity in creating a unique society, the location of NER also tremendously influences how the security of such a region is perceived. The presence of contentious politics and difficult geographical terrain have added to the list of insecurities in the region. The national borders shared with several countries such as China, Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal bring forth more issues such as



human and drug trafficking, small arms proliferation and illegal migration. This range of issues has traditionally been viewed through the lens of traditional security concerns, especially emphasising issues such as territorial integrity, insurgency, and military interventions. Therefore, in an attempt to understand the multifaceted issues in the North East, it is argued that a non-traditional security approach is essential, one that is inclusive of the social, economic and environmental grievances.

Home to over 200 ethnic groups with distinct languages, traditions and historical narratives, the traditional security approaches usually reduce inter-ethnic conflicts as threats to national security. It is often overlooked how such conflicts find their base deeply rooted in the discourses of identity formation, cultural insecurity and inherited historical grievances and aspirations. Whether it is the conflict for recognition and segregation by the Assamese, Naga and Mizo militants, the Bodo-Bengali and Bodo-Assamese conflict in Bodoland, the indigenous Kokborok-speaking Tripuri people's conflict against the Bengali in Tripura, the conflict between the hill tribes in Meghalaya and inter-community violence between the Meitei and Kuki, it is only through Non-Traditional Security approaches that consider the rationale of such conflict and violence, and interact with their aspirations, fears, and grievances.

The NER's ecology is both a resource and a vulnerability. Frequent floods, landslides, and deforestation disrupt the lives of communities dependent on agriculture and natural resources. Traditional security frameworks rarely address environmental degradation, though it poses a substantial threat to regional stability. NTS instead views environmental security as vital for sustainable development, encouraging conservation, disaster preparedness, and resilient infrastructure. NER's socio-economic challenges, such as poverty, inadequate infrastructure, and unemployment, have fuelled unrest and insurgency. NTS, by focusing on human security, promotes addressing root causes of discontent. Improved infrastructure and connectivity with the broader Indian economy can reduce regional isolation, creating economic opportunities and fostering long-term peace.

The NER's porous borders with Bangladesh and Myanmar have led to issues of illegal migration, smuggling, and trafficking. Traditional responses focus on border control, yet NTS suggests a more holistic approach that considers the socio-economic drivers behind migration. Cross-border economic cooperation with neighbouring countries could ease demographic pressures and foster social cohesion by providing sustainable livelihoods. Strengthening healthcare, especially after COVID-19, and supporting women's roles in peacebuilding are essential to building community resilience. NTS frameworks that prioritize health and gender security contribute to a more stable society, enabling the NER to realize its potential. Embracing this approach could lead to sustainable peace, allowing the NER to flourish by integrating its diverse challenges into a cohesive and inclusive framework.

CLIMATE MONITOR

COP 29 – Perspectives for India

Written by **Malka B**

COP29: Managing Global and National Climate Challenges

Ahead of the Conference of the Parties or simply, COP29, the world has focused again on the urgent necessity for global unity in climate action. The COP at Baku this year has set higher expectations for nations gathered to address the most important issues from emission reduction to climate finance.

A key focus of COP29 will be on finance, as trillions of dollars are required for countries to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect lives and livelihoods from the worsening impacts of climate change. Here is a quick rundown on key agenda topics, global and national issues, and what to watch for as the climate change conversation shifts into high gear.

COP29's Agenda: What's on the Table?

The COP29 agenda primarily considers pressing issues of the climate. The intent is to bring efforts around the globe within the 1.5°C warming limit. Primary topics to be discussed this year include:

Strengthening Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): Countries are to submit updated and more ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) reflecting enhanced commitments in reducing GHG. Discussions will be held on binding commitments to ensure that targets align with the net-zero vision as a whole.

Climate Finance and Loss and Damage: The climate change crisis continues to fall hardest on the shoulders of developing nations, which contribute the least to global emissions. Developing countries will push for revisions in COP29 of already made pledges by developed countries to commit to sufficient resources to mitigate climate risks, as well as climate resilient infrastructure.



Adaptation and Resilience: As climate impacts worsen, adaptation has gained prominence. This year, countries will present and refine adaptation plans that include bolstering infrastructure, agriculture, and public health systems to handle extreme weather events.

Just Energy Transition: As there will be a global effort to phase out fossil fuels, COP29 will guarantee a fairer energy transition to countries dependent on fossil fuel industries. Their focus will be on how to give resources and alternative pathways for economic growth and employment.

Climate Financing at COP29: Voices of Urgency, Equity and Innovation

As COP29 unfolds, the urgency surrounding climate financing has reached a crescendo. In a lively discussion featuring three distinguished speakers, the complexity of financing climate action took center stage, revealing a spectrum of perspectives on the topic. Following are the insights and visions for addressing the financial gap at this year's conference.

What is Climate Financing?

Climate financing is not just about funds—it is about fairness, responsibility, and a global commitment to a sustainable future. At its core, climate financing is the financial support provided by wealthier nations to help developing countries move away from carbon-heavy practices, build defences against climate disasters, and, most importantly, grow sustainably.

This support embodies the “polluter pays” principle, acknowledging that those who contributed the most to climate change bear a greater responsibility to help those who are most affected by its impacts.

Initially, developed countries pledged \$100 billion annually, a figure that seemed ambitious at the time. However, in today's world, with the acceleration of extreme climate events and the rapid pace of technological advancements required for effective adaptation, the demand for climate finance has multiplied. From advancing renewable energy technology and climate-smart agriculture to disaster prevention and



water resource management, the financial needs are monumental. The consensus at COP29 is clear: \$100 billion is no longer enough, and nations must scale up their commitments to match the urgency of the crisis.

However, it is not just about the amount of financing—it is also about the nature of it. True climate finance should not saddle vulnerable nations with more debt. The focus is on grants and concessional finance over loans, ensuring that the countries receiving assistance are not trapped in cycles of financial strain. Real climate finance means empowering nations to take meaningful climate action while protecting their economies and communities.

India's Vision for COP29: A Pathway to Sustainable Growth and Climate Resilience

India steps into COP29 with a focused ambition: to forge a path that combines sustainable development with economic growth, ensuring that climate action is both effective and equitable. With bold climate targets, such as achieving 50% of its power capacity from renewable sources by 2030 and reaching net-zero emissions by 2070, India is setting the bar high for developing nations. But India's approach to COP29 goes beyond national goals—it reflects a vision for a world where climate resilience and development can co-exist.

India's climate plan encompasses more than just emission reductions. Its approach prioritizes building resilience within communities that are at the front lines of climate impacts. This includes constructing climate-resilient infrastructure in coastal areas to protect against rising sea levels and storms, promoting drought-resistant agricultural practices to safeguard food security,



and advancing clean energy technologies to reduce dependency on fossil fuels. India's stance is clear: climate action must address the vulnerabilities of local communities, ensuring that the most affected are equipped to face the increasing challenges posed by a changing climate. While India is committed to building its renewable capacity, a shift away from fossil fuels is an economic and social challenge, particularly in coal-dependent regions like Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh.

However, bringing this vision to life requires dependable climate financing that supports rather than burdens developing nations. India emphasizes that the financial support required for effective climate action must be in the form of grants or concessional funding—not loans. Climate finance should empower nations to take meaningful action without falling into cycles of debt, particularly those who are bearing the consequences of emissions they did not primarily cause. In advocating for climate finance that is accessible and equitable, India underscores the importance of ensuring that those facing the brunt of climate change have the resources to respond without risking their economic stability.

At COP29, India joins a collective call from developing countries to increase global climate finance commitments to at least \$1 trillion annually. This figure is not just a symbolic demand but a reflection of the true scale of resources needed to meet global climate goals, invest in resilient infrastructure, and adopt sustainable technologies. The outdated \$100 billion annual target set over a decade ago no longer aligns with today's climate realities. With the impacts of climate change accelerating, the need for substantial, consistent funding has become more urgent than ever.

India's position at COP29 also highlights a principle deeply embedded in climate negotiations: equity. India, along with other developing nations, maintains that climate action must account for historical emissions, acknowledging that industrialized nations have consumed a disproportionate share of the global carbon budget. As a result, developed countries should bear a greater responsibility in providing climate finance, fulfilling their existing commitments, and expanding them to address the current climate crisis. India's advocacy at COP29 reflects its commitment to this equitable approach, pushing for a climate finance structure that ensures financial justice for those most vulnerable to climate impacts.

India's active role at COP29 is a reminder that climate resilience cannot be achieved without a global commitment to fairness and support. As India's leaders advocate for a robust, equitable framework for climate financing, they bring forward a vision where sustainable development is possible for all, not just the wealthiest nations. This vision speaks not only to India's interests but to the broader aspirations of the Global South, which seeks a world where development and climate resilience are not mutually exclusive but interwoven in a shared pursuit of progress and justice.



KNOW YOUR PEOPLE

Sunitha Krishnan: A Champion Against Human Trafficking

Written by **Manjima Manoj Kumar**

Sunitha Krishnan is a renowned Indian social activist and co-founder of Prajwala, an NGO based in Hyderabad that combats human trafficking and supports survivors of sex trafficking. Overcoming personal trauma as a survivor of gang rape, she has dedicated her life to rescuing and rehabilitating victims of trafficking, particularly women and children. Despite facing violent threats and societal resistance, she has emerged as a global leader in the fight against one of the most heinous human rights violations.



Contributions

Rescue and Rehabilitation

Prajwala has rescued thousands of victims from brothels and trafficking networks. Through a holistic approach, it provides shelter, counselling, education, and vocational training to survivors, empowering them to reintegrate into society with dignity and independence.

Advocacy and Legal Reform

Sunitha is a staunch advocate for systemic change. She has worked with the Indian government to push for stringent anti-trafficking laws and comprehensive rehabilitation policies. Her campaigns highlight the need for a victim-centric approach in legal and judicial processes.

Prevention and Awareness:

To address the root causes of trafficking, Prajwala conducts community-based programs aimed at preventing vulnerable populations from falling prey to traffickers. Through media, public talks, and sensitization campaigns, she has increased awareness of trafficking's socio-economic and psychological impacts.

Integration into India's Security Policy

Sunitha Krishnan's efforts underscore the need for a multi-pronged strategy against human trafficking in India. Her model can be incorporated into a comprehensive national security policy as trafficking is not only a human rights issue but also a threat to societal stability and national security.

Prevention Measures: Strengthening grassroots awareness campaigns and enhancing livelihood opportunities in vulnerable regions can address trafficking at its source.

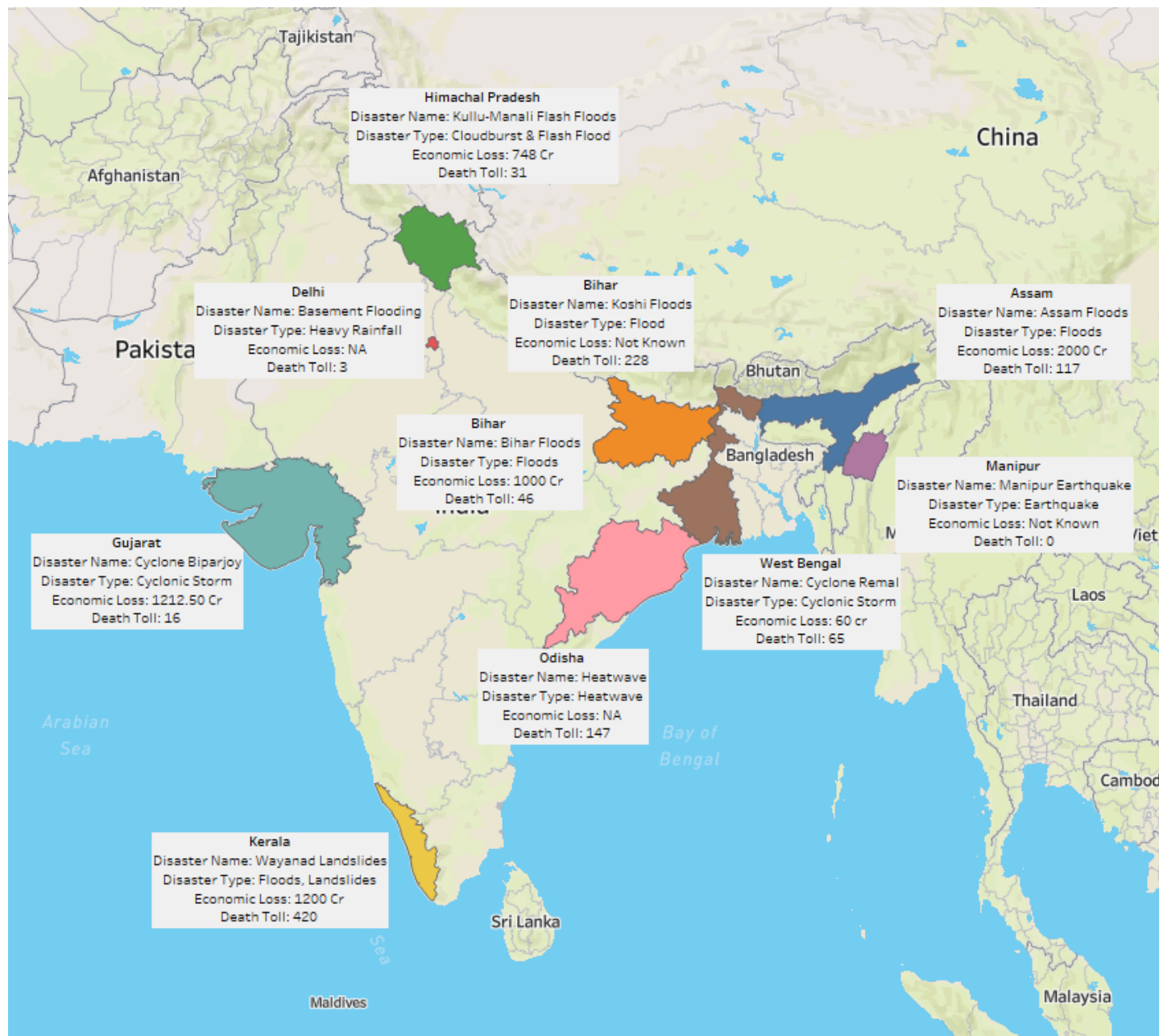
Law Enforcement: Training police and judiciary to handle trafficking cases sensitively and effectively is crucial. Partnerships with NGOs like Prajwala can bolster rescue operations.

Rehabilitation Framework: Establishing well-funded, state-supported rehabilitation centres that replicate Prajwala's holistic approach can help survivors rebuild their lives and avoid re-trafficking.

Cross-Border Collaboration: As trafficking networks often operate transnationally; India's policy must include collaboration with neighbouring countries to dismantle these networks.

INFOGRAPHIC

Made by **Chris Koshy, Nikhil Kushwaha, Ujjwal Deep, Mohd Tanveer Alam**



The map shows major natural disasters across India, detailing the disaster type, economic loss (in crores ₹), and death toll for each region:

- Cyclone Biparjoy (Gujarat): ₹1212.50 Cr loss, 16 deaths.
- Kullu-Manali Flash Floods (Himachal Pradesh): ₹748 Cr loss, 31 deaths.
- Assam Floods: ₹2000 Cr loss, 117 deaths.
- Heatwave (Odisha): 147 deaths, economic loss not available.
- Wayanad Landslides (Kerala): ₹1200 Cr loss, 420 deaths.
- Cyclone Remal (West Bengal): ₹60 Cr loss, 65 deaths.
- Bihar Floods: ₹1000 Cr loss, 46 deaths; Koshi Floods: 228 deaths.
- Manipur Earthquake: No deaths, economic loss unknown.

The map highlights both the financial and human toll of natural disasters across India.

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