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THINK TANKS FORUM OF THE ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

“Building Multi-Dimensional
Security in the Islamic Countries”

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6TH THINK TANKS FORUM OF THE ISLAMIC COUNTRIES

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(06-08 March 2015, Serena Hotel - Islamabad)

The concept of security is not static. It keeps but evolving to cater to the requirements of the ever changing international environment. The word “security” means the sense of being out of harm’s way. Security is also the state where the established current social and cultural values are not under threat. In today’s world, the widely recognized security paradigm which puts political and military issues at the center stage has begun to be questioned radically in comparison to social, cultural, economic, environmental and industrial threats which have gained currency in matters of research and policy formulation.

The post-Cold War and post- 9/11 period has seen the emergence of new patterns of security. Today, security is not a one-dimensional concept restricted solely to military security. It is a contested, multi-scalar and multi-dimensional concept that includes economic, social and environmental aspects as well. The concept of multi-dimensional security was recognized for the first time in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. It states that threats to stability and security do not only originate from troops and weapons but also from economic crises, environmental degradation and human rights violations. The three dimensions of security include: 1) The politico-military issues, 2) non-traditional security challenges, and 3) human development. This model of comprehensive security which entails both traditional and non-traditional concepts of security is more relevant today than ever before.

Overall, there are three main trends responsible for the construct of multi-dimensional security. First, the emergence of rogue globalized networks, which have increased state vulnerability to non-state actors and to a range of transnational threats; second, technological developments in weaponry have generated new challenges; and third, globalized information networks are putting the governments under greater stress to enhance security. As a result, solutions to the new threats now require regional and even global mechanisms for cooperation & coordination.

Non-traditional security (NTS) challenges are threats whose sources are non-military in nature. The effects of NTS threats are transnational and effective response to these threats require multilateral efforts and strategies. These issues are dynamic, evolving and highly context dependent.

The reference point of NTS challenges is the concept of human security that focuses on the security of individuals, societies, and groups. It covers a broader range of threats such as environmental pollution, poverty, extremism, infectious diseases, illegal migration, small arms and drug trafficking.

Human security refers to protecting people from critical and severe widespread threats. Protecting human freedoms is via building on people's strengths and aspirations and creating political, social, environmental, economic, law and order and cultural systems that provide people with the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity. In order to deal with today's security challenges, this tool of human centred security needs to be adopted to analyze and conceptualize the increasingly diverse, less visible and less predictable non-traditional security threats.

The Muslim world today is facing multiple challenges. Representing one-fifth of humanity, a land mass spreading over 57 countries, holding 70 percent of the world's energy and nearly 50 percent natural resources, it is weak economically, politically and militarily. Its image in the international community has eroded lately. Geographically, Islamic countries in the Middle East, Central Asia, Asia Pacific, Africa and Europe are part of the most sensitive places in the world. Most of the important waterways and strategically vital points are either possessed or dominated by Muslim countries. Islamic countries, however, have not been operationalized in their power potential due to their inability in building multi-dimensional security.

The OIC Charter aspired, "to enhance human well-being, progress and freedom everywhere and resolved to unite their efforts in order to secure universal peace which ensure security, freedom and justice for their people and all people throughout the world,"... "to promote the Islamic solidarity among Member States"... [and] "to take necessary measures to support international peace and security founded on justice". Thus security building measures are vital for member countries' for consolidation of their self-reliance.

For achieving self-reliance, it is important for member countries to define and remove their individual security gaps; to strengthen their relations with friendly countries; to create a mindset of self reliance; to improve their image through public diplomacy and take a firm and respected stand in the international arena; to adopt an ethical working culture at individual and public level; to identify the field in which they are strong; to avoid pretension and to emphasize self-respect; disregard outside statements that negate their self-interest; to develop positive future perspectives; to act within principles and to promote the spirit of cooperation.

In today's world, organizations like OIC are recognized as effective multilateral platforms as these can focus on multifarious fields such as trade, finance, transportation, energy and tourism. In order to build multi-dimensional security, the areas of cooperation are required to be expanded by the OIC. It is necessary to jointly protect member states' territorial integrity, sovereignty and political unity by avoiding ethnic, sectarian, religious divisions within their societies and providing modern training to their security forces; preventing illegal immigration and human trafficking; and by adopting environment friendly policies.

Sectarianism in the Islamic countries one of the major challenges being faced today. The global war on terror gave a new dimension to the issue of sectarianism. Most of the sectarian organizations are today stronger in terms of finances and are, therefore, more violent and aggressive. Sectarianism, therefore, needs to be addressed on an urgent basis.

Human development in the Muslim World is another area which has not progressed as compared to the rest of the world. To overcome human under-development, the Muslim World needs to allocate more financial resources for human resource development. In a globalized world where non-state actors have become more visible, approaches which do not focus on human development, are far away from resolving issues with regards to security problems.

Due to circumstances that were unique to the last century, a meaningful and a permanent cooperation structure could not be established among the Islamic countries with regard to security. Since areas that need to be securitized are inter-connected, it has become increasingly difficult for countries to maintain their security in isolation. It requires international solidarity and multi-dimensional governance. International governance requires institutionalized cooperation, consultation and solidarity. In this context, the Islamic countries' multi-dimensional cooperation is crucially important for their middle and long term interests. The Islamic countries have many opportunities of cooperation, especially in the field of defense industry and military personnel training.

The defense industry in the Islamic countries is largely dependent on foreign sources. It can instead rely on indigenous sources to produce high-tech products. This will strengthen the economy of the Islamic countries and will have a lasting impact on peace, stability and security. It is generally believed that the defense expenditures of US and European countries are likely to decrease and the defense expenditures of the countries which are located in troubled regions will increase.

The countries in troubled regions will have to develop their abilities through technology importation from the West. If that be the case, with a proactive attitude, the Islamic countries can develop middle and long term cooperation in order to master genuine technologies. Developing intra-Islamic cooperation in defense as well as space industry will be beneficial in many fields such as: improving the infrastructure of defense industry, reducing dependency on foreign resources, acquiring new technologies through collective efforts, creating administrative synergy and a pool of talent.

In order to meet the security imperatives of the 21st century, there is a need for the Islamic countries to analyze and address the multi-dimensional security challenges being faced by the Muslims today. The discourse on the subject may focus on multi-dimensional security building through political, economic and strategic cooperative mechanism. Also, some specific issues such as combating terrorism, religious extremism, intra-sect harmony, nuclear non-proliferation, defense industry, conflict prevention and resolution, soft image building and deradicalization can best be addressed through intra-Islamic dialogue and cooperation.

The 6th Think Tanks Forum of the Islamic Countries, therefore, aims at academically contributing to address the important issue of multi-dimensional security among the Islamic countries under changing circumstances and creation of awareness as well as developing mechanisms for deepening multifaceted cooperation in the field of security.

Main Theme

Multidimensional Security Building in the Islamic Countries

Sub-Themes

Imperatives of Multi-dimensional Security : Political, Economic, Strategic Dimensions

Cooperative Security: Challenges and Prospects

(Intra-sect Harmony, Conflict Prevention and Resolution, Communication Network and Intra-Islamic Dialogue)

Non-traditional Security Threats

(Terrorism, Extremism, Economy, Cyber Security, Energy-Food-Water Security, Organized Crimes, Natural Disasters, Environment, Drug Trafficking, etc.)

Defense and Space Industry: Opportunities and Risks, Cooperation for Nuclear Non-proliferation

Soft Power Building and Management

(Human Resource Development, Governance, Civil Society, Media, Image Building, etc.)