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# The Baby Out With the Bathwater! Securitization of Corruption and its Impact on Human Security

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**The Baby Out With the Bathwater!**  
**Securitization of Corruption and its Impact on Human Security**

A Thesis

Presented to the

McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

in partial fulfillment of

the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

by

**Shabnam Mallick**

04/29/04



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## **ABSTRACT**

In the context of the president's rule in India in 1975, this paper looks at the intersection of political corruption and human security through the lens of the theory of securitization and desecuritization. In this, I study the deeper politics—i.e., the frame of reference of actors—behind the distortions in the civic and political institutions of India. I argue that the securitization of development led to its de-politicization, which in turn negatively impacted human security. In doing so, I arrive at some moral, social-psychological, and cognitive understanding of how not to securitize. The policy implications are towards employing securitization only as a last resort.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper looks at the situation precipitated by distortions in the civic and political institutions of India, leading to the 21-month emergency president's rule in that country. The period of president's rule or "national emergency" was one of the most ambitious of attempts at governance by decree by then prime minister Indira Nehru Gandhi. It affected not just a few states in India, as had hitherto been the case, but the entire country and the fates of millions.

Marked by vicious corruption in all levels of public life and a resurgent violent sub-culture, the distortions in the civic and political institutions of India were perhaps the result of competitive political discourses about the very meaning and developmental purpose of the Indian state (Brass 1999). In the context of the president's rule dramatically imposed in the wee hours of June 26, 1975, here I look at the intersection of political corruption and human security through the lens of the theory of securitization and desecuritization (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; Waever 1995). This paper explores the "deeper politics" behind the emergency—whose effect, I argue, in rather pedestrian terms was like throwing the baby out with the bathwater!

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

After independence in 1947, like in many other countries in the developing world, the primary focus for the Indian rulers was national integration and economic development. However, efforts to achieve their objectives were repeatedly frustrated, variously, by a population explosion of Malthusian proportions, wrenching resource scarcity, episodic wars against hostile neighbors, violent communal fault-lines within the Indian society, and increasingly rambunctious expressions of domestic political democracy. Some scholars

(Sprout and Sprout 1968; Orr 1977) have called this problem the “statesman’s dilemma,” of rising demand and insufficient public resources. Development, in this scenario of scarcity and social fragmentation, became a rent-seeking clientelist enterprise for politicians and led to skewed and selective growth, depriving many (Drèze and Sen 1996; Keefer and Khemani 2004). Expectedly, many responded negatively to any overarching national purpose. As a result there set in a radical polarization of the Indian polity, between those who stood to profit the most from “development” and those who did not—which, usually, divided along the lines of ethnicity-based social cleavages. This, of course, made the business of governing a vast and complicated country like India in any universalistic, impartial sense well nigh impossible. As a result, the development project and, indeed, domestic politics was reduced to an instrument of coercion in the hands of competing interests (Kohli 1990).

The modus operandi for the central government of India for ensuring stability and order in the country became repeated impositions of the president’s rule. The Center frequently invoked a controversial provision of the constitution that allowed suspension of the administrative powers of certain elected state governments (typically, those that are run by opposition political parties) and many rights and privileges of ordinary people in those states (Dua 1979). For a short period of time, in these circumstances, governance by decree replaced the normal conduct of politics—conducted by the governor of each state (who, in normal circumstances, is only a titular head) at the bidding of the president and in consultation with New Delhi. The permanent bureaucratic machinery of the state in question was made to take orders not from the elected state ministers but from the non-elected governor.

A decisive politician that she was notwithstanding, Gandhi, too, exploited a developmentalist discourse, enjoining people to set aside their differences, to sacrifice, in the

interest of long-term national progress. And Gandhi did tend to thwart political criticism and gain a high ground, as it were, by framing legitimate political disputes in the terms of a development imperative. The 21-month national emergency was perhaps a direct result of this mindset. However, what further complicated an already complex situation was the fact that Indira Gandhi and her administration were not free of allegations of corruption and had considerable political opposition to boot.

Yet, personal improprieties and political machinations aside, the “development” problematique is an issue of much wider currency. Often, it is a “means versus ends” debate: “means” typically being certain universal values like individual freedoms and human rights; development being the “ends”—often to be brought about by sacrifice and suspension of many of those sacrosanct values. For example, the celebrated administrator of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew has argued that “development is more important than freedom.” Given the limitation of resources, certain near-term compromise in rights is necessary for long-term growth and development, according to this view. Others, such as Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (2000), have contradicted with the “development as freedom” thesis, which eschews an either-or approach and has brought the development *with* freedom paradigm in recent vogue.

Thus, for many Indians, there were three major problems: One, there were doubts about Indira Gandhi’s integrity when she spoke of a threat to the national interest and enjoined the people to repose their unthinking faith in her charismatic leadership; doubts that her exhortations were merely expedient, self-serving, and narrowly political. Two, even if Gandhi’s words were taken on face value, what is to say that the people’s faith to be reposed in her would not be misplaced; that her chosen course of action would be correct? And, finally, what was the guarantee, in the case the above two problems were somehow magically

resolved, that Indira Gandhi would actually be able to deliver on her promises? (Here, I consider the last factor as peripheral to and outside the scope of my study, based in no small measure on the fact that Indira Gandhi could not be around long enough to have conclusively proved anything either way due to her tragic assassination in 1984.)

## 1.2 Purpose of the study

Even to this day, many scholars contend that the precursors, the triggers, and the conditions that led to the declaration of and acquiescence in the emergency exist (Klieman 1981). Moreover, given continuing risks of scarcity and the attendant “statesman’s dilemma” referenced above, there is an ever clear and present danger that “bureaucracies and ‘expert’ authorities (claiming) to possess special qualities or technologies of judgment in relation to the uncertain future ... (may be) circumscribing democratic (norms).” (Reddy 1996: 223) This can, and often does, lead to conflictual and risky political decisions (Orr 1977), such as a securitization of development.

Hence, (a) where triggers of emergency-like conditions persist; (b) where the continuing pressures on the administrative elite to resort to extreme measures are matched by their own similar proclivities, if only to perpetuate their legitimacy but also ostensibly to modernize the country; and (c) where influential segments of the population, typically the upper to middle classes and the intelligentsia, become acquiescent in the myth of the claim to greater control for better development—such a stylized model remains fraught with the potential for conflict between different points of view of the future. Conflicts of this nature, given the limitation of human knowledge, often require not a technical but a moral and cultural resolution (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982; Reddy 1996). Despite the subjective nature of such moral issues in public policy and scant scope of studying them scientifically due to their essentially non-falsifiable nature (Lal 1994), these issues remains fundamentally political.

Fundamental irreconcilable differences about the future course of any nation may not be unique but the ruling elite's varied responses to such differences may very well be. A recent analogous example of this problem is the debate between homeland security proponents and civic libertarians in the U.S. on the balance of individual freedoms and the required minimum conditions of security, in the aftermath of 9/11. However, either way (i.e., whether or not the ruling elite's claims to concentration of power in their hands was justified on the grounds of either self-perpetuation or greater administrative efficiency), there remains a real possibility that the results of such a choice may lead to a subversion of democracy, depoliticization of political issues, and diminution of human security.

An embattled Indira Gandhi declared a national emergency and suspended fundamental rights and civic liberties to remove that which threatened to impede India's trajectory toward national prosperity. There was indeed some truth to that threat; even though securing her personal political fortune and that of her family's were no less prominent factors in her decision calculus. What make this case particularly interesting are precisely such conflation of the personal and the political such that the relative causal weights of these analytically distinct factors are truly obscured. My interest in revisiting the emergency is to glean some valuable theoretical and policy lessons from a historical case that sat at the cusp of the problems of democracy versus development, freedom versus security... and in which the descriptive and normative issues in question had evidently hypostatized.

### 1.3 **Working definitions**

My working definition for **political corruption**, borrowing from Scott (1972), is it is the “employment of extra-political influence for selective and partisan personal and/or communal gain.”

Following the Bibliography on Human Security (2001), here **human security** is defined as the “freedom from the threat of manmade personal violence.”

A few words here, also, on the **securitization approach** of the Copenhagen School. This approach refuses to treat the notion of security simply in terms of any one type of conflict or only as an objective condition. Instead, the focus is on understanding the social and political construction of security threats. The character of security, in this sense, is rendered more fluid, subsuming a broader and deeper realm. The advantage with this approach is it takes a functional, descriptive view of a security issue by focusing on its interpretive, contextual and historicist aspects.

#### 1.4 **Research design**

In this paper, we shall look at the characters and causes behind the national emergency in India in 1975, in what is an exploratory historical research. The research design will be non-experimental; the methodology deliberately eclectic (Katzenstein and Okawara 2002). Here I combine inductive and deductive approaches: study the literature on the emergency and try to identify associative decision making patterns in order to arrive at generalizations regarding the structural organization engaging the crisis of 1975 (Allison and Zelikow 1999, Haney 1997); and, at the same time, do a summative evaluation of behavioral peculiarities of principal actors against symbolist, cognitive, social-psychological, and moral-philosophical theories (Bennett 1980; Borgstrom 1982; Chanley 1994; Dittmer 1977; Fishkin 1979; Nozick 1973; Sabatier, Hunter and McLaughlin 1987; Simon 1985; Stein 1994).

##### 1.4.1 **Research question**

The central question that this work tries to address as well as stimulate debate on is: **Why securitize?** But the “why” question may be methodologically difficult to answer as there could be significant heterogeneity in the manner crises are managed.

#### 1.4.2 Methodology

Crisis management often, crucially, depends on decisions made by idiosyncratic political elite. And while political decisions are informed by intentions and motivations of actors, these in turn are functions of and constrained by social-structural as well as social-cognitive factors (Simon 1985). But one of the problems is, actors don't always mimic each other in similar circumstances.

Therefore, were we to study only the processual nature of “speech acts” that lead to an act of securitization/ desecuritization, we may not be able to say, a priori, that all actors who are put in similar circumstances will indulge in similar speeches. This is also borne out by the fact that the subjective expected utility of an action for different actors differs.

Again, if we were to adopt solely a rational choice-type approach to answer “why securitize?” we risk running into the problem of unreliability of revealed preferences; that is, a person's revealed preference may not be her most preferred choice. In other words, if the consequence of event A is a securitizing act by actor B, it does not necessarily follow that *if A occurs, B securitizes*—because perhaps B (for whatever reason) might not have wanted to act the way she did in the first place and may not do so in the future if she can help it (Sen 1977). Additionally, there are non-cognitive, non-rational inputs to political decision-making that do not figure in a rational-behavioral approach to understanding such decisions.

In order to escape these difficulties posed by the “why” question, I combine process and structure (i.e., combine the “why” question with the “how” question): I propose to study the structural enablers of securitization with respect to certain actors uniquely susceptible to them. In other words, we will analyze their “frame of reference.”

A frame of reference is a structure that is intersubjectively (hence processually) constituted. Writes Jeff Coulter on the ontological dependence of structure on process: “The parameters of social organizations themselves are reproduced only in and through the orientations and practices of members engaged in social interactions over time... Social configurations are not ‘objective’ like mountains and forests, but neither are they ‘subjective’ like dreams and flights of speculative fantasy. They are, as most social scientists concede at the theoretical level, intersubjective constructions.” (Coulter 1982: 42-43) Thus, it is by probing the process of intersubjective interest formation do we begin to answer questions like, why do some political actors securitize issues while others, under similar conditions, do not. And, of course, to consider “why securitize” we also consider the “moral framework” of actors—for actors’ most momentous utilitarian decisions are also remarkably informed by moral considerations.

#### 1.4.3 Hypothesis and measurements

The hypothesis here is that *a policy of securitization not chosen as a last resort and without adequate regard for alternatives will lead to coercive depoliticization.*

In the above hypothesis, “a policy of securitization *not* chosen as a last resort and without regard for alternatives” will be my **independent variable**. (“A policy of securitization” refers to any policy that advocates the implementation of emergency measures in response to existential threats. “Last resort” is determined by the mechanism of whether or not other alternative policies that could also have been applied to the problem at hand were seriously considered and rejected before adopting the policy in question; here, we need not be worried by *how much* one “last resort” goes further than another, but, simply, whether all comparable alternatives were considered. Hence, this is an ordinal measure.) The **dependent variable** “coercive depoliticization” refers to the removal of human security

issues from the domain of democratic, participatory deliberations. (This is a nominal measure, as we will consider only those instances where one has no say in one's protection from manmade personal violence.)

A policy of securitization may or may not be embarked on with the best of intentions or lead to the most favorable outcomes, as we will see was the case with the emergency in India. But, given the many imponderables in this scheme of things, such as political actors suffering decision overload, becoming reliant on crises-based solutions, and seeking quick fixes to immediate problems (Orr 1977), really, the best way to avoid any precipitous course of action would be to proceed with the maximum amounts of ethical deliberation and caution. Falling short would likely degenerate into coercion, which is the common sense logic that informs my working hypothesis.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Besides the uniqueness of the emergent situation that summer of 1975, most scholars tend to agree on two other explanatory variables that have causal primacy with regards to the national emergency: Indira Gandhi's personality (to be sure, also the personalities of her contemporary political actors of significance); and the absence of organized resistance to her resolve (save for the very small politically-active minority that were in political opposition to her) (Klieman 1981: 244). Similarly, Bhattacharya (1973: J16) has observed: "Since Mrs. Gandhi became Prime Minister 7 1/2 years ago, the Center has invoked President's Rule 22 times to take over the administration of States. In the previous 16 years, after the Constitution took effect, these emergency powers were used 10 times." Indeed, nor has India witnessed an equivalent frequency of emergency proclamation since Indira Gandhi. Thus, we get a rather complex picture of political decision-making.

My attempts in surveying the relevant literature have focused on the primary questions: Why did Indira Gandhi impose the emergency? And, what are its implications? I have incrementally found clues to answers in journalistic and anecdotal accounts, and the tools to understand those accounts scattered over broad areas in the political and social sciences.

## 2.1 The Emergency

It is my view that India is not trying too hard to remember the national emergency. I was two years old when the emergency was imposed, and although my family by virtue of being in national administration was in the frontlines of implementing it—I personally passed its 21-month reign blissfully unaware of its impact. Nor did I hear much after growing up. There were perhaps only fleeting mentions of the period in popular literature or academic syllabi, and even then, these could have passed as either from polemicists or apologists.

Barely three years ago was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the emergency, and fortunately that occasioned a host of book releases and editorials on the subject. My survey of the literature is, thus, timely and reveals insightful works. They can be divided into two general types: one is biographical in nature, usually written from their vantage points by close observers or confidants of Indira Gandhi (Dhar 2000; Jaitley 2000; Sahgal 1978; Singh 2000). These are usually rich in context and narratives, and offer much first-hand insights and vignettes into interests and motivations of relevant actors. However, they do not situate those interests and motivations in any theoretical framework and so leave a rigorous analytical treatment of the crisis open. The other type of literature on the emergency is more analytic—written primarily by political scientists, journalists and commentators. These include comparative analyses of emergencies in comparable societies (Dasgupta 1978), gendered analysis of emergency decision-makers (Carras 1995), and analyses of domestic

political developments in the context of the emergency (Bhattacharya 1973; Dua 1979; Dutt 1976; Klieman 1981). Almost all of these works have a structural bias in their analyses, and to that extent do without the processual aspects of the crisis as well as the role of agency (i.e., relevant actors). Below is a sampling of some noteworthy work.

The distinguished P.N. Dhar (2000), Indira Gandhi's close confidant and chief official advisor, writes of his six year long service to her during what was clearly the most tumultuous period of Gandhi's time. He covers the momentous events: the 1971 Bangladesh War, the annexation of the state of Sikkim in 1975, the Emergency itself in 1975, and Gandhi's incredible electoral defeat of 1977. Significantly, Dhar resists laying all of the blame for the Emergency on its main protagonist Gandhi, and instead points to a continuing deep-seated and complex crisis of Indian politics as being at least partly the causal conditions for it. Coming from a person at one time at the helm of affairs in India, his analyses suggest serious implications for democracy, governance and the rule of law in India. Dhar sees the emergency as the result of a systemic failure in India's politics—a gap between the formal institutions of democracy and the broader political culture in which they had to function.

Myron Weiner, long a student of India, further illuminates that “gap.” India after Independence was a country functioning under the “Nehruvian consensus.” But before long, the discursive formation of that consensus became prey to a historic lacuna in Indian political culture: the disdain for political bargaining. Weiner (1962: 13-14) argues that the view of governance in India has always been essentially conservative, with little scope for conflict resolution:

Ancient texts tell us that government's main function was to maintain the existing social order. “The primary duty of a king,” according to the ninth-century *Sukra Niti*, “consists of the protection of his subjects and the constant keeping under control of evil elements.” ... The reconciliation of conflicts was not conceived of as part of the function of

the king, for Hindu political theory did not conceive of conflict as being part of the traditional order.

So, instead of bargaining to arrive at politically negotiated positions, a rambunctious Indian democracy coercively contested the prevailing development discourse (Bayley 1962).

That there was a growing “gap” in the restive Indian political culture between means and ends, effort and effect, which threatened the developmentalist imagination of the Indian elite and further hardened their stance, is also evident in the writings of Nayantara Sahgal (1978), Gandhi’s first cousin. Highlighted in her writings was the knowledge of this gap in Indira Gandhi’s thoughts. In her first broadcast as prime minister on January 26 1966, Gandhi had spoken of “the disconcerting gap between intention and action.” (Cited in Sahgal 1978: 36-37) But, Sahgal suggests, the skill and legitimacy needed to close this gap was somehow lacking. In her insightful work on Gandhi and Indian politics, Sahgal describes the content and change in Gandhi’s framework of values during her rise to power. Sahgal provides a window into the mind of Gandhi; her analysis illuminates Gandhi’s beliefs and constraints in creating a greatly centralized government, a powerful one-party system with an influential executive organ at its apex, and dynastic succession. Sahgal’s concern is that an unchecked concentration of power located in a contested national symbol ensconced in a forceful developmentalist discourse would be a potent recipe by any measure. History has shown that the effects of a propensity to control and centralize power were not lost on those it affected most.

On control and centralization of power in the name of national progress—Jyotirindra Dasgupta (1978) is informative. In a comparative study of constitutional democracies in Asia that at some stage of their recent political histories experienced imposition of emergency rules, Dasgupta finds a striking resemblance. Different leaders justified their recourse to emergency powers based on the following commonly proclaimed

threats: national security, public order, and rapid economic development. In all cases, leaders seemed to arrive at a diagnostic interpretation of the problem, confidently prescribed remedial measures, and sought a “free hand” (i.e., free from regulatory and oversight constraints) to administer. But the immediate overriding factor, the “trigger” contributing to the declaration, was a more complex interest to transfer a perceived personal insecurity to the public domain: “The problem of personal security to rule, of course, clearly emerges as the immediate overriding concern of these...leaders. Each of them was convinced that they had popular support to allow them to continue to rule...” (Dasgupta 1978: 323)

It is evident in the literature, thus, that the development problematique was, on the one hand, creating serious unrest in already divided societies and threatening government legitimacy. These governments, on the other hand, were determined in the efficacy of their particular brands of development and convinced in the use of force to achieve their ends. All of this was making the development projects, which were at best serendipitous activities, highly securitized and contentious issues, and to that extent were reducing any benefit that could be delivered to an increasingly restive recipient population by increasing the transaction costs for development.

## 2.2 Human Security

What is human security? Human security is an emerging paradigm, being thought of as a precondition for and precursor to human development (Leaning and Arie 2000). Contingent, broadly, on the presence of the twin freedoms: from *fear* and from *want* (Sen 2000), and famously elaborated in the UNDP’s Human Development Report (1994)—human security reexamines the relationship between the state and the citizen by shifting the “referent object” of security (i.e., the object that is insecure and has to be secured) away

from the state to the individual. For current purposes, we will understand human security in terms of general threats of man-made physical violence (Lodgaard 2000).

Notwithstanding an expansion of state sponsored security activism corresponding to the emerging realities where grave human miseries almost anywhere in the world may pose serious challenges even to the apparently least vulnerable state (initial U.S. neglect in post-Soviet Afghanistan, followed by Afghanistan’s implosion and Talibanization, September 11th, and the eventual turnaround in U.S. reluctance to accepting nation-building responsibilities there is a current example of such reality)—the radical implications of human security are pushing beyond simply a *resultant securitization* (Waever 1995) of certain existential hazards. Critical perspectives in human security warn against unreflectively challenging the essentially “realist” claim that only a state can be the sole custodian of its peoples’ lives and worth by implicating the anarchic character of the nation-state system (Wendt 1992).

Instead, critical thinking in human security charge, a common mistake in many arguments against the systemic anarchy of the nation-state system and its deleterious impact on human development lies in their being embedded in an ontological reliance on the State. This, unwittingly, retains an “embedded realism” in even “liberal” security discourse. As a result, such a line of argument obscures the familiar framework in which it remains trapped, and by reaffirming its foundational commitment to realist presuppositions (i.e., to the rationalist, behaviorist mode of analysis in which the interests and egoistic beliefs of agents are exogenous and given), paradoxically, ends up replicating that which it set out to contest (Seng 2001; Wendt 1992).

Most relevant to my paper is the argument that an ontological reliance on the state tends to produce an “ideology of state-exaltation arising out of a ‘fear of disorder’ or an orientation towards the elimination of ‘the cause of unrest.’” (Brass 1999: 1) Especially

occupied with such ideology would be the so-called Nehruvian consensus and its progeny, transforming many otherwise admirable objectives into “less about...humans per se than a *practice of statecraft*.” (Seng 2001)

Notwithstanding its promise, however, the concept of human security is notoriously ill defined. “There is consensus among its proponents that the ‘referent object’ of security should be the individual rather than the state, but no consensus with respect to the threats to individuals that should be included under the human security rubric.” (Introductory extract in *Bibliography on Human Security*, 2001) There is, also, tension among advocates of human security over the narrowing or broadening of its scope—the former arguing in favor of the technical “do-ability” of limited objectives; the latter succumbing to the political attractions of an all-embracing agenda (Paris 2001).

What is the link between corruption and human security? Definitions of political corruption, reflecting the complexity of the issue, are varied and contested (Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2002). For my purposes, corruption is a selective, informal political system used to exert political influence (Scott 1972). Corruption is a sign of political instability and institutional decay, challenging in the most serious magnitude functions and principles of governance. Moreover, as corruption and violence are both symptomatic of weaknesses in political institutions (particularly in societies in transition), the society which has a high capacity for corruption also has a high capacity for violence (Huntington 1969). Since, for our purposes, infraction of human security is indicated by significant threats of man-made personal violence, we can at least find a strong impressionistic correlation between corruption and human security.

Is misgovernance of civic institutions a cause for corruption and a threat to human security? Lapses of governance dampen the developmental momentum of societies and

threaten human security (Sen 2002). New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, for instance, has noted anecdotal evidence where riots in the Pakistani port city of Karachi are preceded by prolonged periods of disruption of residential power supply in affected areas.

Most prevalent in countries of the developing world, the victims of this less sensational yet quite insidious form of misgovernance remain severely deprived in terms of their potential for human development and security. This is not because of their sudden economic penury or significant educational inadequacy, but chronic neglect of social and economic institutions (like schools, hospitals, civic amenities, etc.). Access to these vital resources is limited or otherwise regulated to provide preferential treatment to some at the expense of many, bringing into play corrupt practices.

### 2.3 **Securitization**

In this paper we will see that both Gandhi herself and factors in her environment were crucial in securitizing issues at hand. This, however, leads to the following difficulties: Is empirical evidence of a securitizing process indicative of an underlying institutional-structural typology that uniquely enables securitization? Or, is a structure of political interests that elicits a securitizing dynamic guaranteed to obtain a like response from all actors? These predicaments bring me to considering the mechanics and dynamics of the theory of securitization and desecuritization.

It will be apt to note here that there is well underway a redefinition and rethinking of “security.” One notable attempt of rich analytic promise in this regard is the theory of securitization and desecuritization, from what has come to be known as the Copenhagen School (Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde 1998; Waever 1995).

In conceptual terms, securitization refers to the classification of and consensus about certain (and not other) phenomena, persons or entities as existential threats requiring

emergency measures. In empirical terms, an issue is securitized when articulated by a securitizing actor (government, international organization or civil society actor), typically in “speech acts,” as an existential threat to security. The consensual establishment of the threat needs to be of sufficient salience so as to produce substantial political effects and the act of securitization is only successful once the securitizing actor succeeds in convincing a specific audience that a referent object is existentially threatened.

Securitization-desecuritization—being essentially a functional approach, and as many functional approaches are wont to—can serve to illuminate the deontological purpose of security issues, by asking the question: Why... to what *higher* purpose was an issue securitized? Hence, the theory of securitization-desecuritization embeds the concept of security in a sociological view; it finds room for a moral dimension of things in its scope. This theory, then, provides a systematic and coherent framework to determine the “what,” “how,” “by whom,” as well as “why” in the realms of security issues.

We run into certain problems, however, with the theory of securitization-desecuritization as proposed by the Copenhagen School. First, the theory is not illuminating in terms of identity as it treats identity as a relatively fixed construct, as a fact of society. This hampers the analysis of security in terms of changes in identity (Albert 1998). Understanding threats and changes to identity are crucial if we are to answer “when” an issue may be securitized, and which are the issues particularly prone to being securitized. Second, securitization and desecuritization depend on many factors exogenous or endogenous to the immediate confluence of events, come in many forms, proceed in incremental stages, and involve a complex structure of processes and sub-processes. It is important to disentangle these to understand the dynamics of securitization-desecuritization with any precision. Copenhagen School scholars have focused on developing a broad theoretical approach to security studies

without paying much attention to empirical research. To date, the Copenhagen School offers no sense of the indicators of securitization and desecuritization. Even its explanation of how an issue is securitized focuses entirely on a single mechanism, the so-called speech act. How do we know when an issue is being securitized? Third, the Copenhagen School is little concerned with assessing the effectiveness of securitization and desecuritization policy. Nor does it pay much attention to the unintended consequences of these processes.

While the “national emergency” in India is a clear case of securitization and hence appropriate for being analyzed against the theory to illuminate the less understood issues, such as the question “why securitize?”—I was surprised that given its scale and scope it had escaped the serious attention of scholars for so long dealing with issues of nation building and crises management in developing countries. To that end, I now turn to the historical background of this one of the most dramatic periods in Indian history.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE EMERGENCY**

To examine the historical background to the emergency, we shall consider why a political culture operating under the so-called Nehruvian consensus (Dua 1979) through the 40s, 50s and 60s moved away from the consensual conduct of politics and assumed near internecine proportions. Here, we explore issues of political change and institutional decay.

### **3.1 Nature of issues, distribution of power and interests, and political background**

Independent India’s first generation politicians were stalwarts of the anti-colonial freedom struggle. These leaders’ almost legendary moral and intellectual legitimacy to govern had been born out of a mass national movement, which delivered the Independence and an yet untested (hence, unsullied) vision of India rooted in liberal, redistributive,

socialist-democratic ideals (Khilnani 1998, Sahgal 1978: 48). Because of the aura of benevolent elitism surrounding these early leaders, it on the one hand absolved them from being muddied in quotidian politics and on the other hand permitted them a degree of latitude in controlling political dissent and compelling agreement for the sake of certain putatively accepted ends. The most sacrosanct of those ends was, of course, India's development to which all were expected to acquiesce. But, in the face of systemic material deprivation and cultural upheaval, the leaders' capacity in co-opting or subduing dissent began to be tested.

Just around the years 1969-70, some populist policy measures like the nationalization of large private banks, abolition of the so-called privy purses (treaties that guaranteed state financial support to the erstwhile princely rulers in India), and a rhetoric of abolition of poverty were vigorously pursued by Gandhi's government. Their immediate result was that national elections in 1970 returned Gandhi's party with an impressive victory. In 1971, an insurgency in (erstwhile) East Pakistan forced a massive displacement of refugees through India's eastern borders. This volatile situation rapidly escalated into a short, decisive war against Pakistan. The war ended in the severance of Bangladesh from Pakistan, a military victory for India, and Gandhi's Congress party's widespread wins in state elections in 1972 followed. But the economy foundered.

The cost of refugee rehabilitation strained the national exchequer and the social-demographic fabrics of many sensitive border states in eastern and northeastern India. The Bangladesh war had triggered a punitive suspension of critical U.S. aid. Sub-normal monsoons in the two succeeding years forced a sharp drop in agricultural production. Runaway price escalation and the OPEC oil price shock of 1973 dangerously depleted

foreign exchange reserves. Inflation rose as high as 30 percent by 1974. This dismal economic scenario began to disquiet domestic politics.

Thus, for Gandhi, what had been gained through populism and foreign policy was compromised by a decline in the economic health of the country (Dhar 2000; Sahgal 1978). The opposition began to coalesce, with unprecedentedly insurgent demands and a cascade of violent agitations in the states of Gujarat, Bihar, and, particularly, Uttar Pradesh—the latter the victim of a full-scale police mutiny (Dutt 1976). A railway strike in 1974 practically crippled the wheels of commerce in India and the assassination of India’s minister of railways and an attempt on the life of the chief justice of India in 1975 rattled the political climate of the country. These were clearly turbulent years and the government responded sternly: serial imposition of emergency president’s rule on individual “problem” states became the central government’s *modus operandi* for crisis management.

### 3.2 **Immediate prelude to the emergency**

The most immediate incidents leading to the climactic proclamation of the emergency on June 26, 1975 had unfolded only a fortnight earlier, in the morning of June 12. Perhaps the biggest blow to Indira Gandhi’s legitimacy was struck on that day, not by any opposition politician, but by Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad High Court. On an electoral malpractice petition filed against Gandhi four years earlier, the Justice set aside her election to the lower house (Lok Sabha) of the Indian parliament from Allahabad. She was also to be barred from contesting another election for a certain period of time. Later that same day, results for elections to the geo-politically sensitive state of Gujarat in western India were declared. This was an election in which Gandhi was personally vested, having led her party’s campaign—but the Congress party lost to entrenched political rivals.

Even as a diminished Gandhi and a resurgent opposition marshaled their resources for what would be, by all accounts, an ultimate showdown, there was yet another legal setback. The Allahabad high court order of June 12 had contained a proviso staying its operation for 20 days to allow for an appeal by Gandhi to the Supreme Court. On appeal, the vacation bench of the highest court in India declined an absolute stay on the order. It allowed Gandhi to continue as prime minister but not to function as a full voting member of parliament (Dhar 2000: especially 223-269). This further assailed the prime minister's moral claim to continue in office. The next night, India was put under emergency rule.

## **GANDHI'S FRAME OF REFERENCE**

There were at least two discernible trends in then contemporary India. First, the belief that a "soft state" was unsuitable for rapid development (Myrdal 1970); this prompted increasing calls, usually from the ruling camps, for greater centralization and control of power. Second, the disappearing Nehruvian consensus hindered any need for accountability or persuasion in the prevailing exchange of political views. Political conduct gradually assumed an internecine character.

### **4.1 The Decision-Making Apparatus**

The threat of a near-collapse of governance in India in 1975 because, jointly, of mismanagement by the administration and extreme irresponsibility by the opposition was serious. But how and why did Indira Gandhi come to perceive the situation as an existential threat necessitating extreme measures like imposition of a national emergency? A possible answer may be found in analyzing the decision-making apparatus employed by the Gandhi government.

Organizational studies of crises management suggest that a political leader's decisions are a function of the institutional structures and bureaucratic processes in which such decisions are arrived at (Allison and Zelikow 1999, Haney 1997). Indira Gandhi, like most other Indian premieres, followed what is known as a “formalistic” (Haney 1997: 45) managerial/ administrative style, or perhaps a close hybrid of that model.

By all accounts, Gandhi sat at the top of the decision making hierarchy, while the machinery below her followed an orderly policy-making task utilizing well-defined procedures—a relic of the British colonial legacy. A formalistic model is characterized by its discouragement of bargaining and conflict in the various groups entrusted with formulating different policies, and this would sit squarely with an essential view of governance in India that is known to be conservative, with scant scope for conflict resolution (Weiner 1962: 13-14). Absent the constructive conflict of ideas in policy making, combined with an emphasis on hierarchically processed information—meant counterfactual and/or counter-preferential ideas would not have their day at decision-making at the top. Gandhi's famous reticence and insularity were notably unhelpful as well in helping the open flow of information (Dhar 2000, Sahgal 1978). Indeed, it is understood that even some of the highest members in her cabinet were not privy to the declaration of the national emergency until after-the-fact.

That Gandhi was sensitive about regime security and leadership security (i.e., survival of her party and her position) was clear; her advisors too seemed entombed in their bunker mentality. Moreover, her administration's occasional dabbles in administrative excesses were met by a near absence of organized resistance (Klieman 1981: 244). Thus, there was no incentive to learn from failures and for self correction (Stein 1994).

Amidst the bigger picture: of a continuing deep-seated and complex crisis in the Indian polity; an ontological reliance on the state producing an “ideology of state-exaltation

arising out of a ‘fear of disorder’ or an orientation towards the elimination of ‘the cause of unrest’” (Brass 1999: 1); and Gandhi’s appetite for a greatly centralized government, a powerful one-party system with an influential executive organ at its apex, together with her awareness and use of the vital levers of power—assured that the powder for a securitizing dynamic was kept dry and ready.

#### 4.2 The opposition to Gandhi

To be sure, the opposition did not help alleviate Gandhi’s sense of personal insecurity, and the evidence is clear on this. On opposition leader Jayprakash Narayan’s call for a “total revolution” or civil disobedience to bring down the government, Indira Gandhi was convinced it was a movement “aimed (at) the Central government and *me*.” Conflating the personal and the political, Gandhi felt, “Jayaprakash has always resented me being prime minister,” to which Narayan had remarked, “Does she think she can ignore me? I have seen her in frocks.” (Extracted from Bipan Chandra, *In the Name of Democracy*; cited in Jaitly 2003, emphasis added)

In an atmosphere of increasingly contested political legitimacy plaguing all actors, their speeches were marked by deliberate vagueness, obfuscation and emotions. Political discussion skirted simple, concrete issues and harped on the normative, metaphorical and ideational (and, thus, non-negotiable positions) to avoid being challenged or having to yield on the more susceptible empirical grounds.

Sahgal (1978: 57) describes the type and effects of language use by Gandhi:

Her forceful, insistent, and repetitious language when analyzed seemed puzzlingly remote from actual data. What did Mrs. Gandhi mean? What she meant was further complicated by the pervasive personal element in her statements. Her letter to Congressmen had said there was an opposition to her personally, bent on keeping her out of power... the dislike and distrust her former colleagues had of her – dull, inadequate material for drama – was converted by her intensely imaginative faculty to the grander stuff of hate and fear of a more-than-leader, a national

symbol. Her own utterances invented the beleaguered heroine, fighting the shadowy forces of evil...

The confusion arising at times out of official statements blurred issues and debate. A haze descended on argument and was, it seemed, deliberately held there.

It is easy to isolate here specific strands of the aggregate speech/language effect along theoretically salient lines. For instance, a theory relevant to speech acts provides grounding for the pervasive vagueness, emotions and ideology exhibited. According to this theory, the continuum between specificity and vagueness in political speech is a function of the power relation the speaker shares with her audience. Greater usage of vagueness, normative/ideology, and metaphorical/emotive language is generally considered a sign that the speaker is not confident of her authority and legitimacy with the audience (Borgstrom 1982). Gandhi's repeated references to "shadowy," "destabilizing evil forces," or the nefarious "foreign hand" in her speeches is striking in this regard.

On disregard for accountability reflected in political speech—W. Lance Bennett's (1980) theory on "political accounts" is relevant. Political accounts serve the purpose of clearing mutually held ambiguities in communication among political parties. Effective accounting allows for maturity of political communication. "Defining accounts as *excuses or justifications that are offered in response to contested or questionable behaviors* distinguish them from other kinds of language constructs." (Bennett 1980: 793, emphasis in original) However, when political parties are in open conflict over fundamental goals and they understand perfectly the nature of that conflict (a characteristic usually of well-defined, deeply-held or non-negotiable conflicts), the need to provide accounts or justifications becomes nonexistent. Political communication reflects that absence.

Likewise, Gandhi's speeches reflected a contemptuous disregard for political disapproval. This tendency weakened even legitimate political dialogue. In a parliamentary

statement in July 1970, responding to charges from opposition parliamentarians against her and her party of electoral malpractices and subversion of governmental authority, Gandhi replied: “It is obvious that the entire motion is designed as a personal attack on me, on the supposed concentration of power in my hands... I have been compared, not for the first time, to Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini. I think the people will laugh at the preposterousness of these comparisons.” (Cited in Sahgal 1978: 62-63)

There is yet another mechanism known in the behavioral sciences as the “devil shift.” The basic argument of this is, “at least in relatively high conflict situations, political elites tend to see their opponents as ‘devils’ i.e., as being more powerful and more ‘evil’ than they actually are.” (Sabatier, Hunter and McLaughlin 1987: 451) My research has produced evidence, both on the part of Gandhi and her opposition, consistent with the above theory. Gandhi was known to voice her concern for fantastic foes: “Fanatic and parochial forces are much in evidence. Some of them have been fomented by parties or individuals. I am deeply conscious of the danger they pose to our democracy.” (Reported in *Asia Magazine*, Hong Kong; cited in Sahgal 1978: 37-38) Just as the opposition demonized the intelligence department (Research and Analysis Wing or the dreaded “RAW”), and by implication, Gandhi: “The Research and Analysis Wing is being organized purely on the lines of the Hitlerite forces, and its sole job is to destroy democracy in the country.” (Extracted from Jyotirmoy Basu’s speech in the Indian Parliament to the Home Ministry’s Consultative Committee, cited in Sahgal 1978: 61-62)

Also telling was the extent to which the political vocabulary of the time had the immense symbolic merit of sharply posing Indira Gandhi as the referent object of security. Gandhi became the medium, the symbol, through which the political debate of the day transpired, and which was how she tried to influence the course of such debates. This was

an optimistic gamble, at best. But Gandhi was determined to reducing any political dissent to a personal attack on herself by repeated references to the personal; “Her persistent reduction of all criticism to “a personal attack on me” had the effect of slamming a door, much as tears or an emotional outburst put an end to argument. Mrs. Gandhi’s public speeches through the year had a strong defensive flavor...” (Sahgal 1978: 62) Moreover, she was seen to being equated with India, for example through the popular, infamous slogan: “India is Indira and Indira is India!” (Those inimitably ingratiating words were by Dev Kant Baruah, then Congress president, cited in Jaitley 2000). Gandhi, thus, tried leveraging the political with the personal. But conflating the personal and the political dangerously blurred their boundary, and an existential instinct privileged the “self” in crisis.

### 4.3 **Gandhi’s response to her environment**

In India, the way the official developmentalist discourse has been dispensed by implicated political actors (*a la* the national emergency), securitization of development had also led to its de-politicization. This partially defeated the primary purpose of the development project, threatened the people and their ways of life, and negatively impacted human security.

#### 4.3.1 **What determined Gandhi’s reactions?**

What exacerbated the above systemic and contingent difficulties was the degree of personal opposition to Indira Gandhi. Her political legitimacy and accession were contested by outsiders, but most remarkably by insiders in her party. This, in turn, reduced her level of tolerance for political opposition. “In his last years my father was greatly concerned that there were people inside the Congress who were offering resistance to change. My own experience even before the general election was that the forces of status quo, with close links with powerful economic interests, were ranged against me,” she lamented (cited in Sahgal

1978: 51). Gandhi was also particularly sensitive to criticisms against her elder son and heir apparent—Sanjay Gandhi’s alleged highhandedness, corruption and subversion of the law.

In a pioneering study on situational- and activity-based trends in political tolerance, Virginia Chanley (1994: 343) argues: “Attitudinal tolerance tends to be less when the activity in question may affect a respondent’s loved ones or home community, particularly in situations where there is relatively little consensus on whether an activity should be allowed... attitudinal tolerance is (also) less in situations where greater threat is associated with the consequences of the activity in question.” In this light, we can further understand why the political challenges to Indira Gandhi and criticisms against her son were exceedingly intolerable for her.

Indira Nehru grew up braving the vagaries of the freedom struggle, a shy, diffident and perhaps indignant person. She inherited her mother’s susceptibility to poor health and her father’s predisposition to flourishes of temper. Her childhood personality was torn between the Western liberal emancipated outlook of her father and his extended family and the emotive, indigenous personality of her mother (Kamala). Those formative contradictions in childhood hardened Gandhi’s later political views: “I saw her being hurt and I was determined not to be hurt,” she had said of her mother (during an interview on the publication of Kamala Nehru’s biography in May 1973, to its author, Promilla Kalhan, *Kamala Nehru: An Intimate Biography*, cited in Sahgal, 1978: 26). While she saw her oft-absent father’s preoccupation with politics as cause for his inability to reconcile with her mother, perhaps the unkindest cuts she saw were from actors from that same arena of politics her father was so devoted to. In the words of one of her closest, most trusted executives:

... Although immensely proud of her patrimony, she believed Jawaharlal Nehru was a weak man. She suspected his weakness was rooted in his

goodness. She often said: ‘People called Gandhiji<sup>1</sup> a saint, actually it was my father who was a saint.’ To achieve her political objective she herself did not hesitate to manipulate men and events... She did not have much use for what she called public-school morality, and she did not mind her critics calling her amoral and ruthless (Dhar 2000: 123).

Of her own approach to politics, she was unambiguous that she was of tougher mettle and would not brook insubordination. In a gendered analysis of Gandhi’s personality, rise to power, and foreign policy decisions, Mary Carras (1995: 50) writes of the roots of Gandhi’s political and personal traits:

Gandhi’s involvement in the national struggle for independence also contributed to her mistrust of others. It was a struggle deeply etched in consciousness, so much so that it must have been difficult at times for her to distinguish between challenges to India’s independence and threats to her own autonomy. The nationalist movement had identified as the enemies those who sought to impose their will on India. And Gandhi responded as an Indian *and* as Indira. Whether as a child, an adolescent, a young adult, or a prime minister, whenever she was challenged, she became more obstinate.

Indira Gandhi perhaps realized that the forces ranged against her were not all unprincipled or opportunistic. She admitted there were fundamental tensions in the extant political culture: “What we witness today is not a mere clash of personalities...It is not as simple as a conflict between the parliamentary and organizational wings. It is a conflict between two outlooks and attitudes in regard to the objectives of the Congress and the methods in which the Congress itself should function.” (Extracted from Indira Gandhi, “Letter to Congressmen,” November 8, 1969, cited in Sahgal 1978: 50-51) Her instinctive solution, which in retrospect appears consistent with the salience of the role of political symbolism in politics, was to transform herself into politics personified.

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<sup>1</sup> Referring here to M. K. Gandhi (the *Mahatma*).

Political culture is discursively formed through one's subjective perception of objective political realities, mediated by political symbols (Dittmer 1977). This is where political symbols come in. Symbols are instruments for influencing political choice; struck at the right chord, symbolic or symbol-mediated choices have strong emotional appeal (Kaufman 2001). Thus, in an atmosphere of contested political culture, Gandhi put herself and her symbolic agendas front and square of political tensions.

The symbolic message Gandhi portrayed through herself was, of course, a very strong one. Unsurprisingly, even before her landslide electoral victories in the early seventies, and buoyed by populist developmental slogans like “banish poverty!” Indira Gandhi preferred centralized control of the national development enterprise. In a speech in November 1967, she offered her version of the solution: “we should boldly adopt whatever far-reaching changes in administration (that) may be found necessary.” (Cited in Sahgal 1978: 36-37) Again, in March 1970, Gandhi told the Rajya Sabha (the upper house of the India parliament): “At any moment if any privately owned industry is operating against the national interest or is impeding social progress, *we should not hesitate to take it over.*” (Cited in Sahgal 1978: 60, emphasis added)

Gandhi's awareness and use of the vital levers of power was evidenced early, but their employment carried the very serious risk of being contingent on extra-legal means:

...on June 26, 1970, in a major cabinet reshuffle, she took the Home portfolio herself. This gave her control of the intelligence network and the police, and supervision of the Election Commission. The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), as the intelligence network was named, operated, in part, under Mrs. Gandhi's direct command, though in name it was made accountable to the cabinet secretariat. RAW did not remain an anonymous, behind-the-scenes agency, but became an actor on the political stage, with the press commenting on its activities, including the bugging of telephones of government's political opponents, censorship of their mail, and the impressive growth within a few years of its five-crore (50 million) rupee budget to 100 crores (1000 million). RAW was also

reported to provide Mrs. Gandhi with dossiers on Union and state ministers and officers of the rank equivalent to brigadier and above of the armed forces (cited in Sahgal 1978: 61-62).

Gandhi's faith in the use of force as a tool of public policy was resolute, as was her determination to enfeeble any potential source of criticism against the employment of that force. For instance, during the national emergency, despite apprehensions that her blatant decision to selectively censor the media might be embarrassingly untenable, she maintained, "There cannot be any Emergency without censorship on the press." (Cited in Singh 2000)

#### 4.3.2 **Moral considerations**

"Arguments in moral philosophy," writes T. M. Scanlon (1975: 655), "frequently turn on appeals to some standard on the basis of which the benefits and sacrifices of different people can be compared." I have found that Indira Gandhi had come to favor a socialistic re-distributive political economy. Let us accept on face value that equitable redistribution of resources for all could not be achieved not because the Indian political system was not sufficiently egalitarian but because it was beyond the immediate productive capabilities of the Indian economy. The question now becomes: what distributive share could Indians claim from the state and to what were they permitted? Of course, this is a moral question, not merely an economic one (Beitz 1981).

In pondering the above questions, I have found no evidence to the contrary that Indira Gandhi, indeed nearly the entire national development establishment in India, was ready to accept distributive inequalities in the larger interests of economic growth. The net effect of their policies betrayed a preference for an "end-state justice" (in Nozick's words). The most typical argument justifying the choice of such "end-state" policies was that economic growth would improve the lot of those negatively affected by those inequalities. But end-state justice is susceptible to imposing severe deprivations on people found at the

receiving end of these inequality-enhancing policies (Nozick 1973). And indeed that has been the case in India, as Paul Brass (1999) argues:

Despite the rhetoric of socialism that accompanied that framework under Nehru, both the practice in India and the development theory that justified it were fundamentally conservative. The conservative elements in the developmentalist framework comprised an ideology of state-exaltation arising out of a ‘fear of disorder’ or an orientation towards the elimination of ‘the cause of unrest’ ... it has become more and more obvious that those goals have failed to transform India into the modern, industrial state of its elite’s imaginings...

But striking are the haste with which that injustice was justified and rationalized and the disregard for alternative and more egalitarian policies. From the memoirs of Indira Gandhi’s closest advisors we learn of a near absence of deliberations or democratic debate on the merits and advisability before the emergency was declared (Dhar 2000; Sahgal 1978). Major policy decisions were implemented through executive fiat, skirting parliament.

The emphasis before and during the emergency has always been on depoliticizing substantive issues, removing these from the domain of political negotiations and judicial review. Indeed, indicative is the following catch-phrase coined by Sanjay Gandhi: *kaam ziyaada, baatein kam* – “work more, talk less!” (Singh 2000). The implicit message in that slogan was elevated to the level of a national creed—prioritizing developmental work by depoliticizing the development project, muzzling political expression, and reducing the desirability and necessity for political accounts to irrelevancy. Where is the virtue in such a governance style? Is not this a corruption of morals?

Although there were several instances of extra-political abuses before, during and after the emergencies, the net effect was short-term improvement in the political fortunes of the Congress in the different states where emergency rule was imposed (Dua 1979: particularly 234-394). This was because state elections were almost always held immediately after the lifting of the emergencies, after temporary improvement of local conditions

through emergency management, and a captive favorable public opinion to exploit. For Congress's decision-makers, success was measured solely in terms of the political fortunes of the party and a small coterie of its leadership. Any developmental benefits that may also accrue from the episodic crises management were at best incidental, not integral to this enterprise. Since, leaders and institutions learn most effectively from their failures, according to theories in political learning (Stein 1994), it is not therefore a great mystery why a lot of lessons from administrative and political “excesses” in emergency management were missed. Hence, questionable tactics were used, ends were touted over means, there was no attempt to honestly explore alternative policy options (James Fishkin (1979), for one, argues that virtually any government policy justified by whatever moral principle, if applied without regard to alternatives and exceptions, is likely to cause severe deprivations to some and thereby legitimate tyranny), and any remaining virtues in securitization and/or depoliticization was subverted through abuse and overuse. The effect was that of throwing the baby out with the bathwater!

#### 4.4 **Issues of Corruption and Human Security**

Corruption in India is unique in many ways. While endemic in all levels of Indian society, corrupt practice has been legitimized through pre-independence anti-colonial struggle. Indian society, although plural, is stratified in terms of “caste” constructs, that traditionally discouraged inclusive, universalistic loyalties and operated on primarily less-inclusive (i.e., based on family, kinship, ethnicity, linguistic, etc.), localized, consociational allegiances. This, combined with a society that downplayed materialistic proclivities, engendered a culture where nepotism was accepted. Colonial era freedom struggles legitimated a culture of subversion of rule of law, by which popular political strategies (for

instance, the strategy of *Swaraj* or “self-rule”), paradoxically, bred disrespect for institutions of governance.

Although corruption is often a contributory cause of political instability and developmental retardation in India, there is a certain rationalization of corruption leading to a taboo in any systematic research and scholarship on the subject. This reticence, marked by a distinct bias and hypocrisy, euphemistically termed: diplomacy in research, coexists with copious anecdotal evidence of corruption, perhaps reflecting even a grudging acceptance of corruption (Myrdal 1968).

Attempts to counter corruption, unfortunately, relied on discouraging open debate (from the days of Nehru) about such issues, in the (vain?) hope that avoidance would not legitimize or popularize pathologies such as political corruption. The effects of such approach as well as of selective attempts at anti-corruption enforcement by citing national interest and hence securitizing issues at hand (most prominently during the 70s Emergency), was the reverse: it de-politicized the problem, precluding better public understanding and broad-based consensus on the way/s forward.

The problem is not only corruption per se, but also the role of interests that precipitated corrupt practices. This is reflected in the not purely economic pay-offs sought from corruption but also a disproportionate emphasis on mobilizing dependants and political allegiance alongside capital, and is symptomatic of the structure of interests in the body politic more than it is the cause (although there is a degree of circular causality between interests and causation).

It is in the fitness of things here that we examine a sampling of corrupt practices that emerged during those turbulent years, followed by an account of the state of human security.

Again, the focus will be on instances that are linked to “speech act,” either in the form of actual speeches or as being relevant to such acts.

The idea of socialism-inspired ‘nationalization’ of private property was in vogue during Gandhi’s tenure. Its implementation as policy became mired in corruption and in practices clearly outside the bounds of legitimate political practice; mentions Dua (1979: 337)

Whether nationalization per se was good or bad for the economy may be an irrelevant question in the present context, but the depressing aspect... was that it was used to whittle down political dissent originating with the private sector... At times...ministers deliberately talked publicly about nonexistent government plans to nationalize or regulate a particular industry or trade with the intention of creating nervousness among the people concerned.

Calls for a ‘committed’ bureaucracy, judiciary and press, although such allegations were denied by Gandhi herself, were defended by other members of her cabinet. Executive and judicial appointments were subject to corrupt criteria like loyalty and ideology, and candidates were appraised along those lines. In defense of such practices, Mohan Kumaramangalam, one of Gandhi’s colleagues remarked in parliament: “...we (have) to take into account what a Judge’s basic outlook is in life.” (Dua 1979: 347)

This premium on loyalty and commitment was forcibly institutionalized and perpetuated with the help of emergency powers. Emergency rendered the normal checks and balances of a democratic political process into complete submission to the whims of a small elite. For example, amendments were attempted to the Indian constitution to grant sweeping judicial immunities against past or future criminal offences to the president, vice president, speaker of the parliament, and prime minister. Moreover, these positions were made virtually unimpeachable. More centrally, an act banned the publication of “objectionable matter,” making criticism against the political leadership a penal offense

(referring here to the 38th, 39th, and (proposed) 40th amendments of the constitution, Sahgal 1978: 156).

The independence of government functionaries was undermined by an extra-constitutional personality cult that bred corruption, solipsism and obsequiousness. This is particularly evident from the content of this correspondence below, written by an official government contracts administrator to Indira Gandhi's son and heir apparent, Sanjay. In this particular transaction, Sanjay Gandhi is in the role of a private bidder for a government contract to build cars, and from the text of the letter we can surmise that his product has perhaps failed the required test. However, note the repeated expressions of gratitude:

I shall be very grateful if you would kindly arranged to send the Chief Designer along with a team of engineers...immediately in order that they can properly investigate into the defect and put the car [prototype] back on the road after necessary rectification. I shall be grateful if you would advise me that the Chief Designer and a team of engineers have, in fact, left...to remove the defects. I shall also be grateful if I could be kept apprised of the progress made in putting the car back on the road for resuming the tests (cited in Sahgal 1978: 222).

Whereas, corruption is a sign of political instability and institutional decay, and since the society which has a high capacity for corruption also has a high capacity for violence (Huntington 1969), there is a strong correlation between corruption and violence. In light of that, we now turn to the Gandhi administration's record of human security (by which we mean the freedom from threats against man-made personal violence).

Significantly, violent political retaliation utilizing the coercive instruments of state was not sacrilege for the Indira Gandhi administration even before June 1975. In the early seventies, a campaign of organized police terror was unleashed to restrain the Leftists (the Maoist *Naxal* left-extremist movement, but also the more moderate Communist Party of India - Marxists) in West Bengal. "The campaign ... represented Mrs. Gandhi's violent

answer to political violence. It also effectively crippled the legitimate functioning of this political adversary. In 1974, a campaign as thorough was also mounted against a nonviolent movement in defense of parliamentary democracy that threatened Congress rule in Bihar, and ultimately in India.” (Sahgal 1978: 88-89)

Prisoners were tortured, in contravention of accepted human rights principles. An Amnesty International report (1974) details methods of torture that were graphic and included: severe beating to fracture major bones; hanging prisoners upside down and inserting pins in or administering electric shocks to sensitive and private parts of the body; extinguishing cigarette stubs on prisoners’ faces; denying medical aid to prisoners, even to those found to be in critical health condition. The head of a government-appointed commission to investigate a 1975 jailhouse shooting resulting in the deaths of five radical-Marxist *Naxalite* inmates concluded the incident had “violated the jail code, the penal code and the human code.” Writing recently on this 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the emergency, Arun Jaitley takes stock of human security:

What happened to the institutions during the Emergency? The judiciary which had already been made pliable by the supercessions in 1973 was the main victim. The Supreme Court by a majority of four to one held that a person could be arrested or detained without legitimate grounds and there was no remedy in the law courts since all Fundamental Rights were suspended. The attorney-general of India argued for the government that a citizen could be killed illegally and no remedy was available since there were no Fundamental Rights of the citizen any more.

... ..  
It was a case of anarchy in governance - to wreak personal vengeance any police officer could have anybody arrested (Jaitley 2000).

## CONCLUSION

Distribution of public goods where they are scarce, in a developing country like India with a history of deep social divisions, is bound to be skewed by the influence of power.

The exercise of (illegitimate) power breeds corruption and conflict (Keefer and Khemani 2004). Now, there are several ways such conflicts may be approached with even the best of intentions: Governments may adopt an incremental approach, and incur the attendant wrath of impatient populations; or perhaps, they can adopt a resolute and forceful stance, taking tough decisions (Orr 1977). These are all high-risk choices, as most business of government is. But the greatest risk to the greatest numbers is where administrative elites suffering from decision overloads rely on the logic of specialization and expertise in spite of democratic norms and to obscure their own incapacities. Given the limitations of human knowledge, such reliance can create a dangerous illusion of false control (Reddy 1996). Once in place, illusions can quickly reify, resulting in the fallacious jump in logic from “ought” to “can,” inviting policies that are applied without exceptions or alternatives. This could be a recipe for tyranny (Fishkin 1979).

In what circumstances would a political actor adopt policies that legitimate tyranny and negatively impact human security? The short answer is when the actor is disappointed in politics-as-usual. Disappointment is related to expectations: when expectations are high (which it can be when one so closely relates to a high stakes activity that one virtually personifies it, as did Gandhi Indian politics) disappointment can be quick and painful. Insecurity of expectations can be an existential threat leading to securitization of issues that are perceived to be the cause of that threat (Albert 1998), as was the case with Gandhi. She considered herself the very embodiment of Indian politics, India personified, only for her expectations to be belied—by her father, opposition politicians, and even her own party comrades. Not one to be cowed, she, aided and abetted by a crises management institutional structure, responded the only way she thought she knew how—and faltered in the

indiscriminate use of power. The stylized cycle of power and tyranny in the above paragraph was thereby in motion.

Hence, if the emergency in India is a case of “securitization gone badly,” it may be inferred from the above account how *not* to securitize. Securitization should never be used as a first resort but reserved only as last; securitization must be open to deliberations, if only in the interests of catching pitfalls and “getting it right”; securitization to break free from constraining regulations as a way to enforce morally ambiguous economic development policies is best avoided, no matter what the short-term attractions; and finally, certain political personalities can more easily concede to power and its follies than others.

It can be argued, that simultaneous attention needs to be paid to the processes that securitize as well as to the structures that are securitizing or are securitized. This approach was based on the insight that process and structure are mutually constitutive. Accordingly, we have seen the unique political situation of India in and around 1975 with special attention to the broader cultural-political dynamics that impinged on Indira Gandhi’s years in office. We have also looked at the formative highlights of her personality, the general population’s reaction (or, more correctly, acquiescence) to her overtures, its causes, as well as examined the processual “speech acts” that are suggestive of a securitizing dynamic. We have discovered significant deductive correlation of cognitive, symbolist, psychological and moral social theories to historically-placed speeches, facts, markers, indicators, etc. Just as the theory of securitization and desecuritization deepens and broadens security studies, adopting an eclectic analytic approach deepens and broadens securitization-desecuritization theories.



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