

State Security, Statecraft and Conflict of Values*

By Mr. Ajit Doval, KC,

National Security Adviser to the Prime Minister of India

Chair of today's event Chief Secretary Mr. Swadheen Kshatriya, distinguished members on the dais, Mr. Bharat Doshi, Mr. Bam, Mr. Arun Bongirwar, Chairperson of the Foundation Mrs. Pratima L. Doshi, Dr. Gagarani, and all other distinguished friends here.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am grateful to the Foundation for giving me this opportunity to interact with you on a subject about which doubts have been expressed by my dear friend Mr Bam, who would probably be wondering that I being from an operation background may not be the most competent person to speak on the subject.

Friends, it is a momentous occasion for me today, because we have assembled here in memory of a great friend and a great colleague of ours, whom we all admire. Mr. Lalit Doshi was one of the most promising officers, a man who in his short life has contributed a lot and probably had much more promise and potential that the country was deprived off. I had the occasion today of meeting some of his family members. I can well understand that it must have provided them a certain amount of solace to see that many of his friends and admirers still remember him with a lot of respect and reverence.

As the Chief Secretary has mentioned, I was here a few days back, that was last Thursday. It was an event of a sort in Mumbai and in the evening somebody forwarded a statement made by an important Leader to me – “That State sponsored killings diminishes all, reducing us to murderers.”

This formulation literally means that all coercive instrumentalities of the State; be it the army in the battlefield; the police/NSG neutralizing the terrorists in the Taj Hotel on 26/11 or even a private citizen exercising his right to self-defence, because he is empowered by the instrumentality of law to exercise that right, provided he exercises caution to deprive anybody of his life, he reduces himself to the status of a murderer. The formulation is very clear, “State sponsored killings”, now what does “State sponsored” imply? It

**Annual (twenty-first) Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture, arranged by Lalit Doshi Memorial Foundation at Mumbai on August 4, 2015.*

State Security, Statecraft and Conflict of Values
21st Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture

means anything which has got the approval and legal sanctity of the State, diminishes all by reducing us to murderers. I am not going into the proprietary, the expediency, the correctness of the statement. But it generates an important discourse.

Today's discourse is about Conflict of Values. It is a real discourse that we should all look into very seriously. In retrospect, many of us who have been in government or in any decision making capacity have faced this dilemma on several occasions. There are some things which are in the public interest; in the larger interest of the Nation; in the interest of generations of Indians who are yet to take birth. But then, there are your own values, thinking, faith systems and beliefs, which may come into conflict with decision. Then the question arises is how to resolve the dilemma.

Addressing the US Congress after the 9/11 attacks, US President George Bush had made a statement – "America values its freedom, but should it come in conflict with the supreme interest of the State, the latter will prevail". The freedoms which are guaranteed by the Constitution, which are sacrosanct, can also be subordinated should it come to when the State has to be protected and the supreme interests of the country have to be protected.

This dilemma comes in nearly all aspects of the State's functions, but it becomes particularly relevant when it comes to the exercising of the coercive instrumentalities of the State. There has always been a talk about "just wars" and "unjust wars", correct interventions and incorrect interventions by the foreign powers. This dilemma is real. It is not hypothetical, imaginary or political posturing. Everyone involved in decision-making is faced with this dilemma at some point in time while exercising it. I may use the word 'power' in some form or the other. Even the scriptures have addressed this aspect and come to their own conclusions.

For instance, in the Bhagwad Gita, in Chapter 2 there is an interesting verse, which says what can you do, when there is a dilemma? How do you resolve this dilemma? It says - "*Sukha dukha same kritva labha alabho jaya ajayau;*

State Security, Statecraft and Conflict of Values
21st Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture

Tatah yuddhaya yujyasva na evam papam avapsyasi” (Chapter 2, Shloka 38). If you can bring pleasure and pain, loss and profit, victory or defeat on the same pedestal, there is nothing for you in this. Thereafter whatever you do in the battlefield, you would be committing no sin. It is not for yourself, it is not for profit, it is not for name, it is not for fame, it is not for money, it is not for power, it is for a higher cause. Even in Quran, in Surah 2, there is a verse, which says that for the defence of faith – Millat & Jamaat, “Slay them wherever you find them, for allowing persecution by Evil is worse than slaughter”. Slaughter is permitted. But accepting the Evil's persecution is not. If it is real, why does this dilemma arise? Why does it remain unresolved till today?

There are three main reasons for this dilemma. The first is, that the objectives of the true sets of values are entirely different. You need your personal values for your faith system, sublimation, spiritual elevation and for your material benefits. That is only you -- You may like to go to heaven, some Siddhi for your mind or soul.

On the other hand, the value system of the State is for the objective of protecting the society, safeguarding the coming generations and those core values for which society exists. So there is a conflict on the value systems for which the state exists.

In my personal life, too this dilemma arises. I come from a family of Brahmins from Uttarakhand and my family conventionally was a vegetarian family. I happened to be posted in North East for seven years and then in Pakistan for another seven years. To begin with, I did not want to consume non-vegetarian food. But during that time, I ate only non-vegetarian food, nothing else. At some point of time it looked like it was not the right thing to do. But soon you sublimate to a larger cause. This is a very small example. What I mean to suggest is, *desh-kal-patra ke anusar, rashtraki seva ke liye jo bhi aap karte hain, jo bhi samarpan karte hain, jo bhi sacrifice karte hain, woh manya hain.*

This is just one school of thought. Should there be a conflict or a clash of

State Security, Statecraft and Conflict of Values
21st Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture

values, then the higher value in which you have got nothing at stake should prevail. Because all your values have got something in it for you - your material well-being, intellectual well-being and spiritual well-being. You are the epicentre of that value, but when you are faced with the question of the larger societal values, it is selfless.

The second thing is, that the States have been tyrannical, they have not always been very fair, objective, humane or correct. How do you fight that tyranny? You fight the tyranny through defiance internally and through wars externally. Whether it is Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, persecution by Pol Pot regime in Cambodia or of despotic regimes like that of Idi Amin in Uganda, conflict of values arise. Another question that arises is who will decide what is best for the State?

There is a third reason, which is actually the most practical one. And that is how does the values of the State manifest themselves? They are exercised by few individuals. In dictatorships or monarchies by one or two. and may be in democracies there will be another two hundred people who are wielding real power. Leave aside the theoretical model. In a recent survey, it was brought out that only 173 persons run the USA. In totality real power is exercised by an even smaller group of people. That does not matter. What matters is that they are all human beings. When they take decisions, they do not automatically transform themselves from a model of an individual entity to a collective entity of a State.

Human beings carry with them their own prejudices, values, likes and dislikes, and also self-interest. Therefore the dilemma arises because of that. That is why there have been very extreme views about the morality of the State itself. Mikhail Bakunin wrote a thesis about Immorality of the State. He lambasted the theory of social contract. He contended that a child is born and is a member of the society, you say there is a tacit social contract between him and the State. He will abide by the laws of the State and the State will protect him. He says this is a contract between the man who cannot speak, hear, or understand and the mighty power of the State. So this contract itself is vitiated. And then

State Security, Statecraft and Conflict of Values
21st Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture

there are Machiavelli and others who have, on the contrary preached, of the absolute power of the State.

Thomas Hobbes, for example, has said that accepting all the authority of the State is the duty of every citizen. The quintessence of democracy is that the laws by which people are governed will be made by them and executed by people whom they elect. They will be independently adjudicated by people who are experts of law. Therefore, the rule of law became the quintessence of democracy. Democracy is not necessarily about the ballot box. It is about those who make laws will come through the process of ballot and formulate laws which will be binding not only on the people but also on those who make it. So that is how the extreme views were attempted to be reconciled. But the people who came through the process of the ballot to make laws or the Executive could not always measure up to the confidence that was reposed on them by the people to protect the State, its citizens and its progeny. That is where the dilemma enters into a state of confusion, fundamentals are lost, and we therefore think that probably much can be said to support both sides of the argument.

I do not think that much can be said on either side, let human failings not be taken as the failings of the system or the failings of the concepts and doctrines. Because, at the end of the discussion all thinkers and practitioners have accepted one thing, that if humans beings have to live in a community, it requires an order. This order has to be administered by someone and for the sake of convenience we call it the State, whatever may be its form. If you become a hermit and go to the forest, leading a life of total isolation, probably the rules of the State may not apply to you. But if you are a social animal, living in a society and if your conduct is going to affect my survival, my pattern of life, then how can you have total freedom that I too may have. How can you have the freedom to shoot and I may not have the freedom to defend myself or to retaliate. So an order will have to be established to determine who will have freedom and upto what levels, what will be the costs and responsibilities?

State Security, Statecraft and Conflict of Values
21st Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture

Another reason for the existence of the state is that the citizens individually cannot protect themselves from large number of emerging threats. Only collective security can be provided to them. What can a single individual do against the onslaught of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons, modern wars and rising terrorism. So the State became a necessity. Another important dimension pertains to disarmament. You cannot say I believe in disarmament, so I am throwing away my weapons, while everybody else will keep it. We are living in a comity of nations, where we are being subjected to pulls and pressures of by what other nations are doing. It cannot be that somebody has the freedom to carry out terrorist acts against you, but you probably think that the State has got no right or the privilege to use its power which will deprive somebody of his life.

The State has power, but it requires an organisational structure to regulate that power. The first question that then arises is, what is the primary duty, the first charge of responsibility of this institution? From the time that the concept of Nation-State evolved many years ago, the first duty of the State has been to protect itself. That has also been the cause of large number of problems. What is the first duty of the Government of India? It is to ensure its territorial integrity, its Sovereignty, core values of its Constitution, security of its citizens, continuity of its institutions, protection of its civilizational and cultural values. That is the protection of the Self, whatever you decide as the ingredients of the Self of the society. In this protection of the Self, the Conflict of Values is automatic. Because when you are protecting your rights in the defensive or offensive mode, conflicts are bound to arise. Those conflicts will at times be to my advantage and sometimes to somebody else's advantage. We will have to accept the package in totality. For instance, if there is a traffic regulation, in place, for the traffic to move in an orderly manner a traffic constable has to be present. Then I will have to learn to wait till my time comes. Maybe somebody is lucky as the moment he reaches that place, the signal turns green.

So to expect that there will be a perfect equation every time, in every situation and on every occasion and making logical comparisons is fallacious. It is not

State Security, Statecraft and Conflict of Values
21st Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture

sustainable or tenable and is not doable. It has never happened and will never happen. But the system in totality must be fair and upright.

Coming to Statecraft -- Earlier Statecraft was more confined to the question of wars. Rules of wars like the Vienna Convention were formulated. The permissible type of weapons which can be used, types of mines that can be laid and those that cannot be laid, whether Claymore mines can be put or not, how the prisoners of war will be treated etc were prescribed. But the days of looking at Statecraft only through the prism of wars is coming to an end. Wars are no longer an effective instrumentality for achieving political and strategic objectives in a cost effective manner. There is no guarantee that a very powerful nation with a huge arsenal and large economy, robust intelligence capabilities or scientific prowess would be able to subdue even a small group of terrorists. Some recent examples have been the US experience in Vietnam and Soviets in Afghanistan. Therefore other institutions or parts of statecraft are becoming quite important. So in this background, new instrumentalities, like diplomacy, intelligence, perception management, use of soft power, influencing the minds of the people have become the new instruments of statecraft.

In a way, have you ever wondered why the Americans decided to support the Islamic Gulbuddin Hekmatyar irregulars against the regular Soviet Army? It had many options. When the Soviets made an entry into Afghanistan, they could have taken them on militarily. They could have gone in for an economic blockade. They could have gone to the UN Security Council and passed Resolutions against them. They would have tried all means which are available to the greatest power of the World. But it resorted to an entirely different mechanism. That is the mechanism of covert war, the proxy war you are fighting against someone, using somebody else's manpower and weapons. You fly the weapons from Egypt which are of Russian origin and send it to Peshawar, then distribute it to the Mujahedeen and dispatch them to Afghanistan. It happened because they found that other means of statecraft were unaffordable against a country which had enormous strategic weapons strength.

State Security, Statecraft and Conflict of Values
21st Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture

That is the dilemma. This is Statecraft. War is more transparent. Wars through other means that includes covert operations, proxy war, sabotage and subversion are much dicier and much more difficult to handle. If by influencing the minds of the people sitting in this hall, I can make all of you think the way I want you to think and behave, I wield a power over you. The real power in the coming times will not be wielded by those people who are going to have control over your labs or over the technology, means of production or over wealth. It will be wielded by people who can make you think in a manner that suits their interests. If I want you to buy a product and you buy that, I control your minds. If I want you to hate everything, I want you to be ashamed of your culture and civilisation and if I achieve that, I win the battle. If you resist it, then you win the battle. This is the battle of the civilisation, battle of cultures, basically the battle of the minds. It is achieved by exercising the soft powers and statecraft comprises of these new instrumentalities.

I would like to conclude by stating that State is necessary and if it is necessary, then protecting itself will continue to remain its supreme role. To perform that role, it will have to develop capabilities to protect its vital interests. For that it will have to employ Statecraft that is necessary to protect itself. Individual morality cannot be inflicted on the larger interests of the society and the nation. Whereas, the individuals must possess the liberty and freedom in their personal lives to follow their values, it cannot be superimposed on the larger interests of the society. There cannot be any unilateralism when the Nation is threatened. Therefore, the Nation will have to take recourse to all means, which are necessary to protect itself, not only for the present generation, but for the generations to come.

The State may belong to those who are its citizens today, but the Nation belongs to those who were part of it thousands of years ago. Maharana Pratap and Shivaji are as much part of this Nation today, as they were when they were alive. We owe a responsibility to the people who are going to inherit the nation in the years to come. Therefore we cannot subjugate and subordinate anything that is going to affect our long-term vital interests for the sake of individual

State Security, Statecraft and Conflict of Values
21st Lalit Doshi Memorial Lecture

considerations only. When State acts in a way that is judicial, fair and through the due process of law without furthering any vested interests, its actions are totally correct. Let us all have the confidence to do what is right for the sake of the Nation and not get confused about these artificial contraptions of which there is conflict. In reality there is no conflict.

In reality, there are parallel values in which the liberality of the values in which we can live, the generations have lived and the coming generations will have to live. In a family we live with those plural values, we have got a relationship with our elders, our parents and our children. They are all decided and governed by the different set of values. It is not one thing that you can superimpose on others, therefore the formulation that any coercive instrumentality used by the State reduces us to the status of murderers is totally untenable.

Thank you very much.