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Food as Weapon

US and its allies are using food as a weapon to counter perceived threats from Least Developed Nations, explains Mubashir Mufti

Food prices in the recent years have sky rocketed creating extreme difficulties for millions of poor people who can't afford even a one-time meal. As we know thousands die of starvation and hunger every day. And according to an estimate the total world food production in the year 2004 was approximately 1800 billion tons and world requirement was 3000 billion tons creating a deficit of 1100 billion tons.

For the past six years, food production has not increased; on the other hand there is surge in population growth. Resultantly there is shortage of food for the vast population. On the other hand countries are plagued with famines, people blame governments for scarcity of food and in turn there are internecine wars among groups who seek to control food.

Developed countries through their official organs like World Bank dominate less developed countries and manage their food production. The international food cartel is being managed and controlled by thirteen international companies having genesis in the United States of America. They regulate the food market, and have monopoly in this sector. From sale and purchase of seeds to pricing of foods, import and export, from the fields to superstores they control food supplies of the world.

The US is feeling threatened by population growth in various developing countries and hence adopted a policy of birth control to address the problem of scarcity of food on December 10, 1974 National Security Study Memorandum 200.

Implications of worldwide population growth for US Security and Overseas Interests, a classified study conducted by US National Security Council under Henry Kissinger concluded that population growth in lesser developed countries LDC's was a grave threat to national security of United States. It is also called Genocide Plan of Henry Kissinger. This finding was adopted as official policy of US government in the year 1975 by President Gerald Ford. The policy outlined a covert plan to reduce population in these countries through birth control and also implicitly by war and famines.

The study conducted by Kissinger was based on royal commission on population which had found that Britain was gravely threatened by population growth in its colonies, since "a populous country has decided advantages over a sparsely populated one for industrial production."

NSSM 200 concluded that US was threatened by population growth in former colonial sector and enumerated thirteen key countries in which US had political and strategic interest, notable among others were India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The United States believed that population growth in those states was especially worrisome, since it would increase their political, economic and military strength. In order to deal with this threat birth control and related measures were to be adopted. Second measure was curtailing food supplies to targeted states; the policy was to come into effect after twenty five years. The policy laid broader guidelines like mandatory programs for carrying birth control.

IS US considering food as an instrument of national power?

Food is the new weapon which is targeted at LDCs. The Americans give eighty percent subsidy to their farmers and on the other hand, World Bank directs the developing countries to end concessions to their farmers. This has economic leverage as well. The import and export of food involves all the requirements of international trade which is being again governed by international cartel.

Americans are promoting bio-fuels as substitute for petrol, and utilizing their resources for developing biofuels when half of world population sleeps hungry. They have set year 2025 as target for running all their cars on biological fuels instead of petrol. The food companies are importing food products and are stockpiling them as they want to derive maximum out of it when a terrible famine will engulf the whole world. They are purchasing food products on cheap prices from the LDCs like India and Pakistan and in turn selling the same stuff at a costlier price back to these countries.

These food companies have now created Genetically Modified Crops which give better crop and are of high yielding variety. Earlier the farmer after successfully harvesting the crops would preserve the seeds for next season, but with GMCs, the farmer has to purchase fresh seeds thereby increasing economic dependency of farmers of developing countries, on these companies. Local industries are closing down their operations as they do not have the potential, the expertise and modern technological knowhow to compete with international giants.

Grains or cereals play a significant role in food security. Farmers usually planted many varieties of rice and wheat. Twentieth century saw new hybrid varieties replacing existing ones. For stable food supply, agriculture needs diverse crop varieties so that failure of one crop does not affect food production.

Food grains of the world are stored in global stores and in case of need, global carryover stocks or reserves are utilized. Grain stores reached a historic high in the year 1988, sufficient to feed the world for hundred days. However, 21st century witnessed its lowest in last twenty years. This decrease in grain stores was primarily due to cut basis in grain production in Europe and United States.

The demand for grains by the developing nations increases each year, largely as a result of population growth, which accounts for over 75 per cent of the increase.

The world has enormous water resources, approximately 1.35 billion cubic kilometer enough to submerge the United States of America, but 97 per cent of it is salt water. World is facing prospect of water shortage due to growth in population. Humans use water for three basic purposes, agriculture, industry and domestic use. Even today to produce one metric ton of grains it takes some 1100 tons of water. Humans currently use half of 12,500 cubic km of water that is available.

Water shortages could trigger international conflicts as countries compete for limited water resources. Conflicts have sprung up in volatile Middle East, the Jordan River which forms part of border between Israel and Jordan; both countries heavily depend upon it. We have a potential conflict simmering between India and Pakistan over sharing of Indus water.

Political tensions over water often result when different nations lay claim to the same river, lake or aquifer. According to UN more than 300 river basins or aquifers cross national boundaries are creating the potential for conflict. Ismail Serageldin an official of World Bank declared that "the wars of the next century will be over water."

Brahma Chellaney in his article, "Ties and Troubled waters" carried in the Times of India, recently pointed that water is becoming key security issue in Sino-Indian relations and a potential source of enduring discord. He further asserts, water as a weapon can be put to overt use in war or employed subtly in peacetime so that level of cross border water flows becomes a function of political concessions.

Pakistan and India are already water-stressed economies. The tiff over sharing of Indus water and construction of Baglihar dam has already given hiccups to both countries. David Seckler, Head of [International Water Management Institute](#), Sri-Lanka observes that due to extraction of water from aquifers, India's harvest could reduce by 25 per cent. The corresponding drop in food supplies could create National Food Emergency.

Every nation has an economic policy; it is high time we have a population policy too. But not the one that caps population growth when it explodes rather a policy which is rational and doesn't advocate Henry Kissinger's

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