CHAPTER - III

INTER-STATE CONFLICTS AND CONTENTIOUS ISSUES AMONG SAARC STATES

The formation of regional cooperation was a harbinger of peace and cooperation. It was welcomed by all the member states (except few inhibitions). But the only institutionalization of the idea was not enough. It required many other practical things to sail ahead it successfully. Those were change of mindset, mutual cooperation, political will and tolerance etc. but these members have a kind of reluctance to each other because of their bilateral issues and identity consciousness. These issues hamper its progress. However, the present chapter unfolds their differences among them. This analysis would be helpful to discuss other SAARC activities.

South Asia has been experiencing an explosion of awareness, aspirations and identities like many other developing regions. This is the result of shrinking global distances, expanding communication network and advancing frontiers of technology in almost all the fields that affect human life. Many of the consequences of this triple explosion in this world’s most populous region are positive. There is a creative upsurge to find new answers to lingering questions. People are increasingly asserting their rights and seeking access to the avenues of empowerment to improve their living conditions and change their life styles. Institutions are being reformed and streamlined to cope with the pressures generated from below. New cultural forms are finding expression to identify with this process of constructive change and transformation. But there is another side to this creative turbulence as well.¹

¹ S.D. Muni, South Asia: The challenges of the Millennium, World Focus (Monthly Journal) October-November-December, 2000, p. 3.
The explosion of awareness, aspirations and identities in South Asia has also created new and intensified prevailing social tensions which have taken the forms of agitations and protest movements on the one hand and violent conflicts and organized insurgencies on the other, along religious, political and ethnic lines. While agitations and protest movements are a part of political process and have to be addressed by the governments within the given framework of political and administrative decisions, the insurgencies and violent conflicts threaten to tear the structure of the state apart. The challenge of coping with these conflicts is indeed complex and without meeting this challenge, the stability and development of the State or the region as a whole, cannot be ensured.\(^2\) Thus from the above it is clear that there are two types of conflicts occurs in South Asian region. One is intra-state conflicts and other is inter-state conflict. Intra-state conflicts are these conflicts which occurs within the state. Where as Inter-State conflicts are those conflicts which occurs between the two or more than two states. Intra-state conflicts are the main reasons behind the Inter-state Conflicts.

**INTRA-STATE CONFLICTS IN SOUTH ASIA**

There is no state in South Asia, perhaps with the exception of Maldives, which is free form such violent conflicts. South Asian countries are beset with a variety of intra-state conflicts that often develop into inter state conflicts due to ethno-religious overlapping across geographically contiguous or too close frontiers.\(^3\) India and Pakistan, the largest of the South Asian States have the

\(^2\) Ibid., p. 3.
largest number of such conflicts. In India, Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeastern region are in deep turmoil for a long time.\(^4\)

In Pakistan, the Sectarian violence between the Shias and the Sunnis have taken an ugly turn for the past number of years and regional tensions in Sindh, including the Mohajir movement, Baluchistan and the Frontier province continue like festering sours. The biggest challenge to internal order and stability in Pakistan, of course, arise from the proliferating gun culture under the Jehadi groups, which draw their sustenance from international Islamic terrorism based in Afghanistan and Pakistan’s own Inter services Intelligence (ISI). Pakistan’s political system is also bracing to face up to the traditional conflict between the military led authoritarian and democratic forces, particularly since the coup carried out by General Pervez Musharraf against the duly elected government of Nawaz Sharif in October 1999.\(^5\)

In the smaller South Asian countries, in Sri Lanka, the 17 years old ethnic conflict between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan State never seem to be any where near resolution, periodic efforts for dialogue and negotiations notwithstanding. In Nepal, the so called Maoist insurgency, led by the extreme left groups has gained momentum since 1995. Four to six districts in Nepal North-West region are already under the firm control of the insurgents and they are expanding their influence in the East of the Kingdom as well. In Bhutan, the Southern Bhutanese of the Nepali origin are fighting for their political and economic rights and nearly 100,000 of them, being pushed out by the Royal

\(^4\) S.D.Muni, Op cit, p. 3.
\(^5\) Ibid.
regime are languishing as refugees in Nepal. Bangladesh is in the grip of sectarian conflict between the Islamic fundamentalists and secular forces. Sometimes the intensity of this conflict becomes so severe, such as during the American President Clinton’s visit to Bangladesh in March 2000, that he had to cancel some of his travel plans for security reason.\textsuperscript{6}

The fact of the matter is that all these conflicts have been caused due to the denial of fundamental rights and aspirations of and discrimination against the people who happen to be in minority and have either been marginalized or excluded from the nation – building. A lack of respect for the identity, exclusion from the main-stream and marginalization of certain religious and ethnic communities, castes, ethnic and the poor, caused a backlash among the disposed and disfranchised people that took an exclusivist form to resist the forcible assimilation and integration.\textsuperscript{7}

The Interstate conflicts, suspicions and differences among the states of South Asia, such as between India and Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka and India and Bangladesh, encouraged the respective states to use, with varying degrees, the intrastate conflicts and differences of the adversary to their advantage.\textsuperscript{8} In this way the Intra-state conflicts becomes the weapons in the hands of the several South Asian countries and the Inter-state conflicts have become the battlefield for these Nations to use their weapons.

These conflicts have had not only distorted the whole process of nation building, socio-economic development, but have also retarded growth,
increased incidence of poverty and caused greater miseries to the people. The scarce resources have increasingly been diverted to military security at the cost of human security. No less devastation is caused to the environment, ecology and culture of the indigenous people.  

INTER-STATE CONFLICTS IN SOUTH ASIA (Various Dimensions)

South Asia is often described as a region full of contentious issues in bilateral Inter-state relations. States located in South Asia have taken longer than expected in overcoming their mutual suspicion and relating to one another as bloc. SAARC has not taken off because of bilateral impediments. Indian think tank is often heard saying that regional disputes should be resolved first. Outside observers and a growing community of intellectuals in South Asia recommended that regional disputes has isolated to pave the way for a regionally active SAARC. In order to understand the political dynamics of regional cooperation in South Asia, contentious issues has carefully observed.

THE NATURE OF CONTENTIOUS ISSUES

The contentious issues in South Asia are of a varied and diverse nature. They are falling within five categories.

1. **Issues resulting from colonial legacies**: The 150 years of firm British rule in South Asia the de jure independence of Nepal and Bhutan from the imperial rule notwithstanding – created many contradictions, and generated

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid., p.6.
historical distortions which were bound to emerge after the withdrawal of the British rule. The manner and pace of the British withdrawal was such that a number of questions were left inadequately attended by the withdrawing imperial masters. The creation of India and Pakistan as two new dominions was the most serious distortion, and it left not only the question of boundaries, but also of the distribution of assets and liabilities, unresolved. The trauma of partition yielded a host of other unanticipated problem. Then, there were the persons of one country origin living and employed in another country without nationalities ascertained. Such persons overnight became ‘stateless’ with the British withdrawal. The persons of Indian origin in Sri Lanka and Burma, which did not appear to be a problem in 1847, became a major issue of contention in the early sixties. The special nature of India-Nepal relations with an open border and free movement of men and materials, prevalent even during the British period, has since generated several irritations.

2. Issues of Ideological and Political Character: The main contention in this regard between India and its South Asian neighbours has been India’s periodic support for the political forces and systematic characters that have been inimical to the prevailing establishments in these neighbouring countries. It has often been found that India has lent its support to the democratic and secular forces which have been at odds with the undemocratic and sectarian state in a given neighbouring country. India’s

12 Ibid.
13 Ibid, p. 79, See also the studies of Lalit Kumar and P. Sahadevan on this subject. These studies were prepared as part of their M.Phil and Ph.D. Degrees, respectively at the Jawahar Lal Nehru University.
support to the democratic forces, represented by the Nepali Congress in Nepal against the assertion of Monarchy in 1960, created so much of bad blood that it scars are still visible in bilateral relations. India’s support for the struggle for democracy, launched by the Awami League of the erstwhile East-Pakistan under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1970-71 which led to the emergence of Bangladesh, is well known. That Indian support had created serious conflict between India and Pakistan and continues to be one of the major complaints of Pakistan against Indian intervention. Sometimes, this kind of a support has gone even beyond the parameters of political and ideological issues. The question of India’s support for the cause of the Tamils in Sri Lanka’s ethnic conflict, which constituted a major contentious issue between India and Sri Lanka between 1983 to 1987, may be mentioned here. Similarly, Pakistan has frequently spoken for the plight of the Muslims in India and even countries like Nepal have resented it whenever Nepalese in India have come under socio-political and economic pressures, as was evident during the Assam Agitation.\(^\text{14}\)

3. **Issues of strategic conflict and Military balance**: There have been the issues of strategic conflict and military balance, that have generated considerable ill-will and misunderstanding. Between India and Pakistan, such issues have involved questions of conventional arms acquisitions and military imbalances, as well as rivalry with regard to nuclear capabilities.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., p. 79, see also S.D.Muni’s, *India and Nepal, A Changing Relationship*, Konark, New Delhi, 1992.
Acquisition of large quantities and sophisticated arms by India’s neighbours from extra-regional sources has been an issue of irritation in bilateral relations because India has perceived it as a destabilizing factor in regional stability and balance. An extreme case of this type was Nepal’s acquisition of arms from China in 1988, which contributed most significantly to the serious crises in the relations between the two neighbours.  

In fact, strategic discord is a characteristic feature of south Asian relations. This is due to the fact that security perceptions of India, on the one hand, and those of its neighbours, on the other, have been divergent. While the former is concerned more with the security challenges emanating from outside the region and wants to emphasize the goes strategic unity of the sub-continent, the latter have been the threat to their security and freedom of action being posed from within the region, i.e. India, and have accordingly looked outside the region for support and protection against this threat. This divergence in perceptions has led the smaller neighbours to wriggle out of, or erode their bilateral and regional security obligations in relation to India. The dispute between India and Nepal as well as India and Bangladesh on their respective bilateral treaties of peace and friendship is an example. Sri Lanka’s uncased with the regional security obligations entered into under the Indo – Sri Lanka Agreement of July 1987 also fall into the same category.  

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15 Ibid., p. 80, see also Druba Kumar and S.D. Muni in Nepal-India Relations: views from Kathmandu and New Delhi, CWAS FORUM: Current Issues series, No. 10, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, October 1989.  
16 Ibid., p. 80
4. **Issues arising from the spill-over of internal conflicts and its effect on neighbours** : The fourth category of contentious issues in South Asia arises from the spill-over of internal conflicts and turmoil in a given country on its neighbours. Such spill-over is caused in the form of political pressures within a neighbouring country because internal conflicts cause misery and human movement resulting into live borders, flow of refugees, administrative and economic pressures in the receiving country and so on. The worst example of this type of contentious issues was the flow of some 10 million East-Pakistani (Bangladeshi) refugees in India in 1970-71. As a result of Sri Lanka’s ethnic crises, not only were the Tamils of Tamilnadu politically exercised because of socio-cultural identities, they also had to deal with hundreds of thousand of refugees. As a result of the ethnic crises in Bhutan more than 85,000 refugees have gone to Nepal creating a serious bilateral problems between the two Himalayan neighbours.\(^{17}\) Some of the spill over of internal conflicts and turmoil have not only initiated bilateral relations but even threatened regional security and peace, as was evident during 1971 between India and Pakistan and also between India and Sri Lanka during the eighties.\(^{18}\)

5. **Issues arising out of natural resources and development Conflicts** : Another category of contentious issues in South Asia are those which are arising out of resource and developmental conflicts. On the sharing and harnessing of resources, there continues to be an uneasy relationship between India, Nepal and Bangladesh. The Indus-water dispute between India and

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 81.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 81, see Also Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, War and session, Pakistan, India and the Creation of Bangladesh.
Pakistan was resolved with the mediation and help from the world-Bank, but such issues continue to erupt whenever possible, like the one on wular barrage/Tulbul Navigation Project.\textsuperscript{19} The more serious aspect of such contentious issues is that they not only create bilateral conflict and misunderstanding, but also inflict opportunity cost resulting from not harnessing the much needed and rich resources.\textsuperscript{20} Besides the resources, the pressure of development becoming unmanageable with the demographic explosion in the region has also created conflicts in South ‘Asia. There are problems of trade and investment, on the one hand, and those of economic refugees, popularly known as illegal emigrants from one country to another. The flow of such economic refugees from Bangladesh has not raised alarm bells only in India but also in Nepal. Similarly, this question of migrant workers is also exhausting the patience of India and Nepal, though the Treaty of peace and Friendship of 1950 between the two countries permits free flow of people and national treatment to them in each others territories. In this category, problems arising out of environmental degradation are fast assuming significant dimensions. Exploitation of marine and other common resources also causes conflicts occasionally.\textsuperscript{21}

The intensity of all these contentious issues is not similar, and it varies not only from one category to another, but also from one time to another, depending upon a host of political and other factors. These categories are

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 81, see also Niranjan D. Gulhati, \textit{Indus Waters Treaty}, Allied publishers New Delhi, 1973.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 81, se also B.G. Vergese and Ramaswamy R. Iyer, Harnessing the Eastern Himalayan Rivers: Regional cooperation in South Asia, Konark, New Delhi 1993.

analytical in nature, otherwise, there are discernible areas of overlap between them, and one category of contentious issue may tend to reinforce those of another category. For instance if there are border disputes and strategic irritations between the two neighbours, trade and economic relations between them may also be initiated. In the prevailing antagonism between India and Pakistan, the latter has openly stated that until the Kashmir issue is settled, economic and cultural relations between them cannot and will not be improved.\textsuperscript{22}

**INDIA and SAARC Conflicts**

Physical imperatives of the region place India at the centre of the problem. It abuts on almost all the South Asian states while these states are separated from one another by natural features or Indian territory. Due to the Indo-centric character of the South Asian region, in geographical, historical, socio-cultural and economic sense, most of the contentious issues are between India, on the one side, and one or the other of its neighbour on the other. There are some exceptions to this general pattern, like the question of Bhutanese ethnic refugees in Nepal, the issue of Bihari Muslims between Pakistan and Bangladesh, or the alleged involvement of Sri Lankans in 1988 anti-President Gayoom abortive coup in Maldives, but such exceptions do not seriously negate the Indo-centric nature of the contentious issues.\textsuperscript{23}

It is Indo-centric nature of the region that blames India for all their domestic problems. Sri Lanka holds India responsible for the Tamil Militancy

\textsuperscript{22} SAARC 2000 and Beyond, Op.cit, p. 82.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 82.
and takes exception to increasing Indian interference in its domestic politics. Bangladesh harps upon the overwhelming size of India and hold it responsible for its water and Chakma problems. Nepal blames that Maoist insurgency in its country is being perpetrated by India. Pakistan also blames India for disruptive activities in their country.

From the above it is very clear that most of the problems and conflicts of SAARC Nations are with India. Thus these conflicts can be better understood in the light of India’s relations with these Nations.

**INDIA AND PAKISTAN :** At the heart of the inter-state conflicts in South Asia lies India-Pakistan problem, the core of which is Kashmir, a territory claimed by both and divided between them. Ever since the partition of the British India in 1947, the relation between these two countries, the chief protagonists of the region has been conflicting discarding, distrustful and suspicious. The process that made Indo-Pakistani relations conflict prone is rooted to a considerable extent in two-nation theory which steamed from the belief that the Muslims of the sub-continent required a separate homeland based on Islamic Ideology and its tenants, the injection of which into the politics of the Indian Nationalist Movement ultimately led to the partition of the sub-continent, thereby creating so much hatred and divisions between the Hindu and Muslim communities that when the decision to partition the subcontinent was taken, it was greeted with unprecedented communal carnage in the history of the sub-continent. Besides creating hatred and divisions

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between Hindus and Muslims, it also exercised a considerable influence on the elites of the sub-continent in developing images, perceptions, identities or the pictures in minds of the elites of these two countries made their relationship prone to conflict.\textsuperscript{25} Jawaharlal Nehru seems to be closer to reality when he said that “the question of India – Pakistan relationship was a psychological thing relating from the way, the sub-continent was divided between India and Pakistan. There was a complete emotional upset of the people in India and Pakistan because of this.\textsuperscript{26} The partition trauma caused such psychological schism among the elites of both India and Pakistan which became the primary source of conflict between them.

India is far superior than Pakistan in almost every respect. And India’s superiority in the region is viewed with concern not only by Pakistan but also by other neighbours of India. Pakistan from the very beginning, being conscious of its regional inferiority, has strived hard to counter balance. India’s regional superiority by obtaining extra-regional support and developing intra-regional linkages explicitly designed to deal with India.\textsuperscript{27} India on the other hand has always sought to structure the region free from extra-regional involvement in order to preserve and protect the pre-eminent position it enjoys in the region.\textsuperscript{28} Pakistan brought the extra-regional powers in the region by joining the U.S. sponsored military alliances CEATO and CENTO, thereby bringing India closer to the Soviet Union. This Pakistani urge have partly or to

\textsuperscript{25} Stephen P. Cohen “Image and Perception in India-Pakistan Relations” in M.S.Rajan and Sivaji Ganguly (eds.) Great Powers Relations
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{28} S.D.Muni, op. cit. p.50.
counter-balance India’s regional superiority has been a persistent source of irritation and conflict between both India and Pakistan.

Having looked upon one another as enemies, both India and Pakistan have felt threatened by each other. And in order to strengthen their respective defences they have been locked in a perpetual conflicts of arms procurement. Pakistan in order to augment its defence sought extra-regional affiliations and made the search for arms a key element of its foreign policy. India seeing the arms race as provocative and destabilizing sought it to be stopped within the region thereby seeking the legitimization of its preponderant position in the region. This was completely unacceptable to Pakistan’s perception of regional balance. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto wrote in 1967 that “after two decades of Independence, Indo-Pakistan relations have remained static. None of the animosities have been removed, none of the causes of Partition remedied. In the prevailing conditions, a reduction in the armed forces of India and Pakistan would freeze the disputes forever and benefit India. It would amount to defacto recognition of India’s superiority in the subcontinent and for all intents and purposes, legitimize its usurpation of Pakistan’s economic and territorial rights… Bilateral disarmament between the adversaries is a negation of sovereignty and on admission of defeat by one of them. So the Pakistan urge for recurring arms continued. The arms race between India and Pakistan where brought into play an action-reaction spiral between them each making allegations and counter allegations in turn. It also exercised a very adversial impact on the security horizons of South Asia.

Furthermore the U.S. Soviet alignment and their equations with India and Pakistan provided a substantial boost to the arms procurement activities in the region. They as an effective instrument for extending their respective influence in the region. The intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in 1979 further intensified the arms race between both India and Pakistan. India considered the large arms transfer to Pakistan which began in the wake of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as highly provocative, destabilizing and escalatory. India lobed hard against the U.S. supply of advanced sophisticated arms to Pakistan such as F-16 aircraft and Airborne warning and control system (AWACS). It accused Pakistan of wrecking bilateral relations by cultivating extra-regional alliance.\(^{31}\) The Pakistani regime asserted that Pakistan must continue to arm owing to its conventional Military vulnerability to India and the latters military expansion programme. Pakistan’s arms procurement activities, especially during the last decade have extended from conventional arms to nuclear weapons, Pakistan associates the acquisition of nuclear weapons with its sovereignty, national pride and national security, there are many in Pakistan who subscribe to the American – Jewish Hindu conspiracy against Islam thereby justifying Pakistan’s nuclear weapon programme.\(^{32}\) Whatever be the motivations behind Pakistan’s nuclear weapon programme, it was infact, India’s acquisition of nuclear weapons capability, demonstrated 1974, which led Pakistan to go ahead with its own nuclear programme. Despite the fact that both the countries claim that their nuclear programmes are for the

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2. Ibid. pp. 31-37, Abha Dixit, “India-Pakistan and the Great Powers”. In Jasgit Singh (ed), op. cit. p. 23.
peaceful exploitation of the nuclear energy for civilian use, they are locked in a conflict over the issues of joining Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and making South Asia a nuclear weapon free zone. India along with other factors such as its acrimonious relations with China and the latter's status as a nuclear weapon power, considers the NPT discriminatory as it includes the nuclear weapons powers from its jurisdiction. Pakistan on the other hand, makes its stand conditional to India’s joining of NPT. In this way their respective nuclear programmes have become a sources of conflict between India and Pakistan.

Various factors intermingling with the disputed nature of Kashmir have brought the subcontinent to wars in 1948, 1965, and 1971. While there have been no further regional wars since 1971, there was a war score in 1987. The crisis began with a series of grand Indian Military exercises (Corporation Brass Tracks) along the Pakistani border in Rajasthan and Punjab. The Military exercises generated a real war ‘scare’.33 There is speculation that senior official, intended to provoke Pakistan into a move that would have justified a forceful Indian response or they had planned to attack Pakistan in North.34

From 1987 till 1997 the relations between the two countries are full of ups and downs. Several talks were held and also cancelled. No concrete development was there. In May 1999, India discovered that at least 500 heavily armed Pakistan intruders had dug themselves in on Indian side of line of control along an 80 km stretch north of Kargil and began pounding the strategic highway linking Srinagar to Leh. India moved in an entire army division to

33 Mahnaz Jspahani, op. cit.
34 Raavi Rikhye, *The war that Never was*, Lancers International, New Delhi, 1988.
evict the intruders. Towards the close of May 1999, Indian Air Force fighters started air strikes on the intruders’ camp on the high ridges. Pakistan shot down one IAF MIG fighter which made the situation quite tense, India charged Pakistan of trying to alter the line of control along the Kargil. Dross sectors. After tough fight India succeeded in dislodging the Pakistani intruders from Kargil.

In 2001, a summit was called in Agra, India and Pakistan’s military President, Pervez Musharraf turned upto meet Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. The talks broke down when the Pakistan dictator repeatedly dubbed terrorists in Kashmir ‘freedom fighters’ at a press conference. The Indian appeared miffed and the talks fell through. The terrorist attack on Indian Parliament on 13th December 2001 was another conflict between Pakistan and India.

On June 20, 2004, with a new government in India, both countries agreed to extend a nuclear testing ban and to set up a hotline between their foreign secretaries aimed at preventing misunderstandings that might led to a nuclear war. India has granted Pakistan unilateral “most favoured nation” trade status under WTO guidelines, but Pakistan is yet to reciprocate.

The four wars between India and Pakistan since 1947 have entirely vitiated and created an atmosphere of suspicion in the South Asian region. This mistrust is further augmented by the 26/11 incident in Mumbai. The bilateral dialogue process which was at minimal level get some momentum during the

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35 Prakash Chandra, Prem Arora, Comparative Politics and International relations, Cosmos Bookhive (P) Ltd., 26 edition, p. 125.
sixteenth SAARC summit. Where both Delhi and Islamabad expressed their willingness to minimize the gap which had jolted the rhythm of the bilateral dialogue process.36

It is evident from the above that despite occasional efforts by the leaders of the two countries to resolve their differences, much success has not been achieved and relations between the two countries have generally remained strained. The main irritant in the relations between the two countries are support extended by Pakistan to terrorists in Punjab and Kashmir, nuclear programme of Pakistan and the influx of latest generation sophisticated arms into Pakistan, which has obliged India to divert its resources from developmental needs to acquisition of matching equipment. The Kashmir issue and the Siachen Glacier are other permanent irritants in the relations between the two countries. Pakistan growing linkages with fundamentalists elements, transborder smuggling of weapons and drugs, determination of maritime boundary, discriminatory trade barriers against India, and the treatment meted out to the minorities in Pakistan are other irritants in Indo-Pak Relations.

INDIA-BANGLADESH : Leaving aside India, Bangladesh has normal relations with all of its South Asian Neighbours. India-Bangladeshi relationship remains torn between two divergent expressions. On the one hand, its Islamic and Bangla moorings demand sharpening of religious and linguistic nationalism to forge extra-regional identity, and on the other the limitation of geography forces Bangladesh to be guided by the sub continental politics.

India-Bangladesh relationship therefore remains geared to synchronize these diverse pulls and pressures.\textsuperscript{37}

The three decades of India-Bangladesh relationship suggests that the foreign policy of the two countries have moved in a cyclical form. The peace and friendship treaty signed at the time of emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 guided the Indo-Bangla relations during the reign of Shiekh Mujib ur Rahman (1971-75). The treaty became outdated soon after the assassination of Bangla Bandhu in 1975.

The major problems that cause irritant in India Bangladesh relations are sharing of Ganges and Brahmaputra waters and the Farrukka Barrage, the Teen Bigha Corridor, conflicting claims over the new Moore Island, dispute over the demarcation of the maritime boundary, migration of Bangladeshis across the national borders etc. The distribution of waters of Gangetic and the Brahmaputra river systems has absorbed the attention of both India and Bangladesh for over a decade.\textsuperscript{38} Before the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971, the issue of water distribution was a matter of conflict between India and Pakistan. The problem was inherited by Bangladesh which continues to bedevil the India-Bangladesh relation. Moreover the construction of the Farakka barrage for the controlled distribution of water is still an undecided issue. The distribution of water has been a major irritant responsible for the embittered relations between India and Bangladesh.

\textsuperscript{38} Leo. E. Rose, op. cit, p. 9.
There exist since long even before the independence of Bangladesh, a dispute over the enclaves held by one state in the territory of other. This dispute over enclaves was resolved to a satisfactory levels the signing of an agreement between India and Bangladesh in May 1974. India got the Beru Baru and in exchange Bangladesh was given Dahagram and Angorpot enclaves under the agreement, the Teen Bigha Corridor was to be leased to Bangladesh by India.\(^{39}\) The corridor is yet to be finally leased to Bangladesh. The delay in leasing the corridor to Bangladesh continues to embitter their relationship.

A much more difficult territorial dispute between India and Bangladesh is over the Islands at the mouth of river systems in the Bay of Bengal directly to the South of Both India and Bangladesh.\(^ {40}\) These newly emerging islands are located in areas where the territorial waters of India, Bangladesh and Burma merge. The Islands are also in the areas where it is said that there may be large of-shore oil and gas resources awaiting exploration.\(^ {41}\) Among these, “the New Moore Island which rose to the surface in the Bay of Bengal a decade ago, has given rise to considerable tension.\(^ {42}\) The issue is under negotiations with both India and Bangladesh preparing their cases on the basis of conflicting interpretations of the International law and the law of the seas.

The dispute over the demarcation of maritime boundary arose in 1974 when Bangladesh awarded. 30,00 square miles of of-shore area extending from

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40 Leo. E. Rose, op. cit., p. 20.
41 Ibid.
42 A. Appadorai and H.S.Rajan, India’s Foreign Policy and Relations, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 1985, p. 633.
South of the Sundarbans in the Best to the Chittagong in the east for oil and gas exploration to the foreign companies. In doing so, Bangladesh went by the concept of its continental shelf extending upto 20 miles.\textsuperscript{43} India disputed the claim of Bangladesh. And the question of demarcation of amicable solution.

India’s serious dispute with Bangladesh stem from the longtime movement of the people both Hindus and Muslims from the east Pakistan and later Bangladesh into the north eastern part of India, especially Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. The population movement continues from Bangladesh to India in search of better economic prospects. The Bangladeshi immigrants though, primarily concentrated in the north-eastern provinces of India, have gradually spread to other parts of India as distant as Bombay, Delhi, and many other places of India.\textsuperscript{44} The presence of large number of Bangladeshi citizens in India has been an extremely difficult problem for the government of India. The immigrants have already shown their potential to destabilize politics in the north-eastern part of India.\textsuperscript{45} The so called ‘anti foreigners’ agitation which started in 1978, in Assam and which once caused difficult problem for new Delhi has merely been controlled. The control issue has remained unresolved.\textsuperscript{45} Moreover the denial of Bangladesh that there has been any substantial migration of Bangladeshis into India since 1971.\textsuperscript{46} adds to the complexity of the problem. Bangladesh also insists that members of the Bengali community are Indian citizens for whom it has no responsibility. To deal with the problems


\textsuperscript{44} Patha S. Ghosh, op. cit., p. 6.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 7.

India decided to force the Indo-Bangladesh border. Bangladesh resents the fencing of border. Not only this, on 20 and 24 April 1984, a few days after the work on the fencing had started, shots were fired across border killing or injuring a few personnel of the Indian Border Security Force and a survey team. This led to same exchange of fire between India and Bangladeshi border security forces, eventually resulting in a total halt of the construction work.\textsuperscript{47} Migration issue is a major issue that continues to create tensions between the two neighbours.

The more persistent issue in Indo Bangladeshi relations concerns the tribal communities that straddle the border in Chittagong Hills and the neighbouring Indian states of Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura. The tribal separatist movements have been active on both sides of the border for years and both the countries have accused each other for providing assistance to the tribal dissidents in other states.\textsuperscript{48} Since 1983, the government of Tripura has been alleging that the tribal from Bangladesh are linking up with the tribal from dissident groups in Tripura to destabilize the Indian state.\textsuperscript{49} The tribal dissidents also strain Bangladeshi relations with India.

The Hindu Muslim ideological differences also has relevance for Indo-Bangladesh relations. It may be remembered here that before the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the Hindu-Muslim divisions have, often led to the communal violence in that country causing the exodus of many Hindu to India. And once these people were in India, there was a Hindu backlash against

\textsuperscript{47} India Today, 15 May, 1984, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{48} Le E. Rose, op. cit, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{49} Bhabani Sen Gupta, op. cit, p. 21.
Muslims.\textsuperscript{50} However since the creation of Bangladesh no serious communal violence took place there.\textsuperscript{51} There exist an apprehension that Hindu Bangladeshi may feel threaten at some point by the Islamization drive of the Bangladesh. The actualization of such apprehension may cause the exodus of thousands of Bangladeshi Hindus to India thereby further deteriorating the existing conflicting relationship between India and Pakistan.

The relations between India and Bangladesh got severely strained following brutal killing of 16 BSF men by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) in April 2001. Some tension was generated in the Indo Bangladesh relations in May, June 2002 following a report that Dhaka wanted to mediate between India and Pakistan in their current confrontation.\textsuperscript{52}

Another issues that vitiates the Indo-Bangla relationship is the allegation that anti-India activities are being perpetuated from the Bangladeshi soil. The NDA government had accused Bangladesh of sheltering Al-Qaeda terrorists and alleged that Pakistan’s High Commission in Dhaka was being used as a base by the ISI to conduct anti-India activities. The NDA government also made public a list of 99 terrorist camps run by northeast insurgents in Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{53}

The human rights issue, particularly ill treatment of the 11 percent Hindu minorities in Bangladesh, is another issue that has soured the bilateral relationship. The issue took an ugly turn soon after Begum Khalida Zia was

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\textsuperscript{50} Partha S.Ghosh, op. cit., p. 5.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., p. 6., Bhabhani Sen Gupta, op. cit., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{52} Prakash Chandra, Prem Arora, op. cit, pp. 146-147.
\textsuperscript{53} Syed Ali Mujtaba, op. cit., p. 103.
\end{flushleft}
sworn in as prime minister in 2001. Many Bangladeshi Hindus fled to West Bengal, alleging intimidation and torture by the BNP activities in their homeland. The issue became so serious the Prime Minister Vajpayee had to send his security advisor Brajesh Mishra to Dhaka to convey India’s concern. Bangladesh allayed Indian fears and in the wake of communal carnage in Gujral in 2002, its security forces guarded Hindu Temples and Minority business establishments to maintain communal peace.54

The other issues in Indo-Bangla relations are the Indian interest in bugging Bangladesh surplus gas. Some exploratory talks were done during the Awami League’s regime but the matter has been on hold since the return of BNP to power. Similarly, India is interested in using Bangladesh roads to reach its northeast states. It is believed that Bangladesh is considering the proposal and has assured India that it would provide security to its vehicles transporting containers to the northeast states.55

It is evident from the above that the relations between the two countries have been far from friendly. No doubt, occasionally the leaders of the two countries have expressed desire to improve relations, but still certain irritants exist in their relations. These irritants include running of insurgent training camps across the border with the active involvement of ULFA activities; large scale illegal migrations and border demarcation.

INDIA AND NEPAL

With Nepal, India has no major boundary disputes especially since the signing of a treaty between British India and Nepal on 15 November 1860.56

54 Ibid., p. 104.
55 Ibid.
56 Patha S. Ghosh, op.cit., p.11.
There are, however, India’s periodic disputes with Nepal, when a border river changes its course with the issue usually whether the old or new river bed should constitute the boundary.\textsuperscript{57}

India-Nepal relations started looking up since establishment of democracy in Nepal and particularly after Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujaral’s regime. The ‘Gujaral doctrine’, which did not seek reciprocity in bilateral relations with Nepal, helped a lot to iron out the differences between the two countries. However, the issues that remain to be addressed are; augmentation of natural resources, environmental degradation transit facilities and trade related matters.\textsuperscript{58}

The most crucial factor in India-Nepal relation is the harnessing of the water resources from the rivers which flows from Nepal to India. Nepal has given assurances that it would give first preference to India with regard to the development of its natural resources and for industrial projects of mutual benefits to each other. The energy starved India is too heavily dependent on Nepal to overcome its power shortage. It has signed agreements to harness the water resources of the rivers Kosi, Gandak, Bari – Gandak, Karnali, Sapat, and Pancheswar. However, after the establishment of democracy in 1990, the general feeling in Nepal brewing is that India had gained disproportional benefits from all these projects and wanted them to be reviewed.\textsuperscript{59}

In 1992, an agreement was signed between G.P. Koirala and P.V. Narsimha Rao regarding the Tanakpur Hydel Project on the river Mahakali.

\textsuperscript{57} Leo E. Rose, op.cit., p. 20.
\textsuperscript{58} Syed Ali Hiytaba, op. cit, p. 118.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
Under this agreement Nepal agreed to make available 205 hectares of Nepalese territory on which India would build an afflux bund for this project. In return India would give 10 million units of electricity free of cost annually, besides some water for irrigations, to Nepal.60

The agreement on Tanakpaur power project caused suspicion amongst the Nepali citizens who thought it was a sell out of their national interest. Nepal wanted a package to be worked out where India may double the supply of electricity. Kathmandu sought a 50 percent share in the power generated and said that it is entitled to 20 million units of power and 1000 cusecs of water. India refused Kathmandu’s claim for a large share of power and water and said it violated in 1992 agreement.61

Linked to the honing of natural resources is the environmental issues that has cropped up due to falling of the trees in Nepal and which is causing water logging and floods in India during the monsoon season. In U.P., Bihar, and West Bengal, huge areas gets inundated every year, causing heavy loss to men and material due to unchecked flow of water from Nepal. Several times this issue had come up for discussions at the bilateral level but no substantial progress has been made to solve this problem.62

The other issue between India and Nepal is the transit treaty. India and Nepal share 500 kilometers of border which is accessible from either side., The 1990 treaty of peace and friendship mentions that “both the government may grant on the reciprocal basis in the territory of others, the same privileges to the

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
nationals of others in matter of residence, owing property, participation in trade and commerce, movement and privileges of similar nature.”

The cross border migration is another issue between Indian and Nepal. The problem of Nepalese in India and Indians in Nepal is largely attributable to the open border between the two countries. Like the Nepalese in India, Indian are also emerging as an important ethnic minority in Nepal. However no accurate figures of Indian immigrants in Nepal are available. They are mainly based in the fertile Tarai region of Nepal bordering the Indian states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.

The presence of Indians in Nepal or Nepalese in India is not a major cause of conflict between the two countries. The autonomy demands of Nepalese of Indian origin in Tarai region and the correspondingly alleged political activism of Nepalese in Sikkim, Darjeeling and other adjoining areas had made Indo/Nepalese relations abrasive.

Like the problem posed by the Bangladeshi immigrants the growing number of Nepali immigrants in the bordering districts of northern and north-eastern India also has potential to cause tensions in Indo Nepal relations. The Nepali Migration to India has raised the so called Nepali question in an extensive area of Himalayan foothills in north-eastern India, from Sikkim through northern west Bengal to Assam. Nepalese have become politically

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63 Ibid.
64 Bhabhani Sen Guta, op. cit, p. 31.
important in Sikkim where they compete with Bhutias and others for political power.66

The Nepalese by their sheer strength of numbers have the capacity to call shots in the political affairs of the state. As in Sikkim so in the Northern district of Darjeeling, the Nepalese have emerged as a strong political group, constituting the majority of Darjeeling’s population, they exercise almost total control over the city’s life.67

The growth of Indian in Nepal is said to be causing anxieties to the government of Nepal. There exists a big divide between the Hindi speaking people of Tarai region and the Nepali speaking Hill people. In the 1950’s the Tarai people demanded national status for Hindi Language along with Nepali. They formed a political party, the Nepali Tarai congress with an objective to establish an autonomous Tarai state within the State of Nepal.68 Nepali’s main problems of integration comes from the Tarai region. It is also said that the Hindi-speaking people of Tarai region are politically and culturally more oriented towards India than Nepal. The Nepali elite foresee the possibility of the Tarai people organizing regionally conscious political activity in an opportune future.69

The other contentious issue is trade which India wants to combine with the transit facilities. Nepal wants to diversify its trade with other countries and objects to Indian position to link it with the transit facilities. A crisis below up

68 Bhabani Sen Gupta op cit., p. 28.
in December 1989 when India scaled off all its fourteen transit points to Nepal, causing a virtual blockade of the goods to the Himalayan Kingdom. In 1990, an agreement was signed to restore the status quo of 1 April 1987, and finally the matter was resolved in 1992 when two separate trade and transit treaty was signed.\textsuperscript{70}

India’s relations with Nepal got somewhat strained in February 2005 following imposition of state of emergency and suspension of all political activities in Nepal. India expressed displeasure at King’s action and suspended arms sales to Nepal. India impressed on the Nepalese king that the Maoist problem could be overcome only through dialogue and restoration of Multi-party democracy.\textsuperscript{71}

**INDIA-BHUTAN** : With Bhutan also, India’s relations are not very cordial. India has a very minor territorial dispute with Bhutan, which has been settled in principle but not by an actual border demarcation.\textsuperscript{72} Indo-Bhutanese relations have been troubled with the cross-border implications of the conditions of Nepalese, Bengalese, Assamese, the Marwaris living in Bhutan and Bhutias living in Sikkim and other part of Northern Bengal.\textsuperscript{73} The loyalty of Nepalese, Bengalis, Assamese and Marwari’s toward the monarchy is suspected by the ruling elite of Bhutan. They feel threatened from India and Nepal’s ability to influence the political change in Bhutan.\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{70} Syed Ali Mjutaba, op cit p. 120.
\textsuperscript{71} Prakash Chandra, Prem Arora, op. cit, p. 174.
\textsuperscript{72} Leo, E.Rose, op. cit. p. 20.
India-Bhutan relations are under strain on other courts also. Bhutan did not approve India’s stand of going to war with Pakistan in 1971. Bhutan also asserted its independent identity in 1990 when it pleaded for an international security cover for small states implying India’s hegemony in UN General Assembly.75

India baiter in Bhutan criticize Indian government for its alleged patronizing of Nepali elements in spite of India’s commitment not to interfere in the internal affairs of the country. The ruling elite apprehend that India’s support to Nepali population would be part of the same design which had resulted in the merger of Sikkim with India in 1975. The problems of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal further vitiate India-Bhutan relations.76

India’s stand of non-interference in the problem of Bhutanese refugee has been criticized by the human rights groups. The Bhutanese refugee also feel the Indian stand to be ambiguous as going by the 1949 treaty; India has the right to intervene in the matter to broker tripartite talks to resolve the issue. The Indian stand—not to support pro-democracy movement in Bhutan— is seen quite in contrast to its policy of supporting pro-democracy movement in Sikkim in the seventies and in the late eighties in Nepal.77

Though Bhutan is highly dependent on India, both economically and politically, its relations with India are not so cordial. This is probably due to the threat, it perceives from India’s potential political and economic ability to influence the desired political charge in Bhutan.

76 Ibid.
77 Ibid., p. 134.
INDIA-SRILANKA: India-Srilanka relations have been, more or less hostile. Various factors have caused such a relationship. There came a up issue of political status of persons of Indian origin: the Indian Tamils in Srilanka, soon after when Sri Lanka disenfranchised them in 1948 thereby denying them the political rights they were enjoying like other citizens of Sri Lanka before independence. In fact the question of Indian Tamils goes back to the 19th century when they were brought by the Britishers to work on tea plantation in Sri Lanka. Both India and Sri Lanka have argued litigiously over the issue; the former’s point of view has been that the Indian Tamils should be given Sri Lankan citizenship as they are domiciled there for generations and have contributed to the Sri Lanakan economy. While the latter, linking their emotional and family ties with their ethnic brothers in South India, maintains that they were simply brought to work there and they still live exclusively in Sri Lanka as Indian citizens. Moreover, Sri Lanka claims, that is a problem left as a legacy by the British and should have been solved by them before departing, hence Sri Lanka is under no obligation to give them citizenship after independence. However both the countries attempted to resolve the problem for which they reached to agreements, first in 1964 and then in 1974. Unfortunately these agreements have been the victims of bureaucratic delays, divergent interpretations, tardy methods of implementations and the petty politicking by the governments on both sides. The question of Indian Tamils between India and Sri Lanka to a considerable extent has been resolved but it still causes irritants in their relationship.

There came into light in 1956, a territorial dispute between India and Sri Lanka over the uninhabited island of Kachchathivu which lies in the Palk strait. The Island became a point of conflict between the two countries, both offering claims and counter-claims over the sovereignty of the island. Furthermore, when India extended the limits of its territorial waters to 12 miles in 1968, Sri Lanka. Correspondingly responded in 1970, thereby ensuing an acrimonious debate over the ownership right of the island. However, in a pragmatic and far-sighted manner, an accord was reached between India and Sri Lanka in 1974 whereby a boundary line was agreed which runs from the Palk Straits to Adam’s Bridge. As a result of this accord, the island of Kachchathivu fell within the jurisdiction of Sri Lanka. Although the dispute has been resolved, it remained a major source of conflict between the two countries for about almost two decades.

The foremost source of conflict in recent times which led to the deterioration of their relationship is the ongoing ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The majority Sinhalese and the minority Tamils are locked in an armed conflict for about a decade. The Tamils are fighting for the establishment of their independent homeland in the northeastern region of Sri Lanka which lies about 18 miles away from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. The Sinhalese despite being a majority invoke the fears of being drowned in a Tamil majority with a possible future Sri Lankan Tamil tie up with about 60 million Tamils of Tamil Nadu. The Sri Lankan perception of

threats originating from India is rooted in the ancient as well as the modern history of the region. Sri Lanka at various stages in ancient times entered into relations both of alliances and hostility with the Chola, Pandaya and Chera Kingdoms of South India. As almost all the invasions came from the South India Kingdoms, the historical memories continue to haunt the Sinhalese people in Sri Lanka.

In the decolonized history of Sri Lanka, it faced the typical security dilemma of a small state keen to preserve its independence and integrity in relation to its big neighbour India. The Sri Lankan leaders, following the independence, viewed India with distrust and suspicions. Certain statements made by Indian leaders provided sustenance to their fears. Jawaharlal Nehru, visualized in pre-independent India the “small nation state is doomed and envisaged that “Sri Lanka would inevitably be drawn into a closer union with India presumably as an autonomous unit of Indian federalism”. Besides Jawaharlal Nehru, K.M. Pannikar also opined that “the internal organization of India on a firm and stable basis with Burma and Ceylon was the essential pre-requisite to a realistic policy of Indian defence.” Sri Lankan leaders as a consequence leaved on the British through defence agreements by granting bases and facilities. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister, Sri Kotelewala (1953-56) expressing his fears relating to the problems of Indian Tamils said that, “If we do not solve it now, I can visualize that in twenty years of time we will be sitting in Delhi as part of India.”

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81 Spot light on Regional affairs, Vol. 5, No.4, April 1988, p. 3.
82 Ibid. p. 4.
Lanka’s perception of India threat kept alive its fears and suspicions. Furthermore, the sympathy and assistance which the Tamil Militants received in India, especially in Tamil Nadu sharpened Sri Lanka’s fears. India’s action of air dropping of food and medical supplies to the Tamils of Sri Lanka in 1987 almost confirmed Sri Lanka’s fears. Although India has consistently maintained that it is in favour of unity and integrity of Sri Lanka, the historical memories along with the recent development keep alive the fears of Sri Lanka. The ethnic conflict in recent times has become the major cause of conflicting relationship between India and Sri Lanka. During 1983-89 Sri Lanka was drifting away from India, mainly because of India’s role in the ethnic crisis in the country. Sri Lanka openly started accusing India for aiding and abetting Tamil separatism from its soil. Colombo, in a counter insurgency drive, started importing sophisticated weapons from various powers who were then unfriendly to India. It resumed diplomatic relations with Israel after a gap fourteen years and sought its help to train anti-terrorists military squads. Sri Lanka also opened Trincomalee and Colombo ports to western warships after a gap seventeen years for refueling purposes. All these measures were not appreciated by India. New Delhi also disapproved the United National Party (UNP) government’s desire to involve extra regional powers, including countries hostile to India, to solve the ethnic problem in the country.\(^\text{83}\)

In 1987, when Colombo launched a military offensive against the Tamil separatists and imposed food embargo in its northern region, public pressure mounted on India to intervene in Sri Lanka. India then launched operation

\(^{83}\) Syed Ali Mujtaba, op. cit., p. 72.
'Mazhai’ or rice bombing, dropping rice packets through its ‘Kaguar Warplanes’ to feed the Tamil population. The crisis was defused by the signing of an Indo-Srilankan accord. On 29 July 1987 between Rajiv Gandhi and J.R. Jayawardene, Gandhi, who visited Colombo to sign the Indo-Sri Lankan accord, had a miraculous escape when he was attacked by a Sri Lankan soldier while inspecting the guard of honour ceremony there.84

The Indo Sri Lankan accord acknowledged the legitimate security concerns of India and agreed to jointly hammer out a solution to the ethnic strife in the country. Under its provisions, Indian peace keeping Force (IPKF) was sent to Sri Lanka to restore normalcy in the trouble torn regions of the country. IPKF had a torrid time in maintaining peace in Sri Lanka. Its job was to disarm the LTTE guerrillas whom it had trained earlier to fight the Sri Lankan army. Its second job was to put up a civilian administrative structure in the north and east regions for which there were non-cooperation from the local people. No wonder, the IPKF was unsuccessful in both the assigned jobs.85

IPKF woes compounded when Ranasinghe Premdas replaced Jayawardene in 1989, and showed his displeasure over the presence of the Indian peacekeepers on the Sri Lankan soil. The new president flouted the terms of the Indo – Sri Lankan accord and supplied arms to the LTTE to fight the IPKF. This was the most embarrassing situation for the IPKF who were caught in a bind in the Sri Lankan ethnic quagmire. It was only after a change

84 Ibid., p. 72.
85 Ibid. p. 73.
of government in 1989 that New Delhi was ordered to pull out its troops from Sri Lanka.\footnote{Ibid.}

The most shocking twist of the Indo-Sri Lankan relation took place when LTTE activists assassinated former Indian prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi during an election campaign at Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu on 21 May 1991. Subsequently, Narisimha Rao, who became the prime Minister, completely disassociated India from the Sri Lankan politics. Under Rao, India’s official line changed to maintain neutrality in the internal developments of Sri Lanka. The downtrend in the Indo-Sri Lanka relations was arrested after the reassessment of the situation by the successive governments in the nineties.\footnote{Ibid., p. 73.}

The Indo Sri Lanka relationship in the twenty first century has definitely become more pragmatic than before. In the changed global content, when diplomatic relationship with US and Israel has become important for India, their threat perception emanating from Sri Lanka has now become redundant. India’s growing relations with China too has allayed fears that Sri Lanka is harbouring interests inimical to India. Further, the regional imperatives have also compelled New Delhi and Colombo to cooperate with each other to mitigate any ill feelings.

**INDIA-MALDIVES :** The least known and the least developed state of South Asia, Maldives has no conflicts with any of its neighbours including India. Maldives wants to keep itself isolated both from regional as well as
international power politics. However both India and Pakistan compete for developing cooperative and friendly relations with the republic of Maldives.

From the above discussion, it is very clear that there are several irritants that reflect upon the interstate relations in South Asia. Between India and Pakistan, there are issues of terrorism, drug-trafficking, walur barrage, Sir Greek, Siachin Glacier and Kashmir, Between India and Bangladesh, Talpatty, New Moor Island, Chakma, illegal immigration, water sharing and northeast insurgency are the contentious issues. With India and Nepal, the trade and transit treaty, and the kingdom becoming a sanctuary for forces unfriendly to India are being contended. The fishermen problem in palk strait, Kachatheevu Island and Tamil refugees impinge on India – Sri Lanka relations.

**INDO-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS**: India has enjoyed a cordial relations with Afghanistan since 1947 these were strengthened by the signing of the “Friendship Treaty” in 1950. India signed various agreements and protocols with pro-Soviet regimes in Afghanistan to promote co-operation and to enhance Indian influence. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 provided another opportunity for India to further strengthen its relations with Afghanistan. During 1979-99 India increased its investments in developmental activities in Afghanistan by co-operating in industrial, irrigation, and hydro electric projects.

The rise of the Afghan Mujahideen against the Soviet invasion (mainly supported by Pakistan and the US), the withdrawal of Soviet troops; the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991; and the formation of a government
by the Mujahideen after overthrowing the pro Soviet regime of Najibullah in Afghanistan in April 1992: these were the events that led to the first instance of diplomatic isolation and lessening of Indian influence in Afghanistan, as India had cordial relations with the ousted pro-Soviet government of Najibullah. However, later in 1992, when Burhanuddin Rabbani established a predominantly non-Pastun government, India again became active in Afghanistan and provided humanitarian and technical assistance to the Afghan government.

The rise of Taliban in Afghanistan and the removal of the Rabbani government in September 1996 again marginalized India influence in Afghanistan. India did not recognize the Taliban government because of its tilt towards Pakistan, and closed its embassy in September 1996. During this period, the non-Pastun groups opposing the Taliban regime formed the northern Alliance and controlled areas in the north of Afghanistan, bordering the central Asian states of Tajikstan and Uzbekistan. As part of its efforts to maintain its influence in Afghanistan and counter Pakistan’s support to the Taliban government, India established links with the Northern Alliance.

Throughout the Taliban rule in Afghanistan (1996-2001), Indian efforts were aimed at marginalizing the influence of the Taliban and encouraging groups with links to India. India also exploited the anti-Taliban approach of Russia and Iran to forge closer relations with those countries and to develop its link with central Asian states.  

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These issues have become a biggest hurdle in the development of SAARC. It is not wrong to say that these issues have always created problems for SAARC. This is a reason why SAARC is not progressing and standing very low in comparison to other regional organizations. The establishment of SAARC is an attempt being made to improve the well being of the people in the region. Since 1985 SAARC has been focusing on economic and other non-political issues and has been instrumental in creating a climate to promote regionalism. But as far as its developments are concerned there is no such development which is countable. The main reason behind its poor development is bilateral issues. It is very necessary to solve these bilateral issues for the progress of SAARC. And if it is not possible SAARC members should forget it at the time of SAARC summits so that any desirable and concrete result can be derived. SAARC has been established for regional cooperation. SAARC members may realize the importance of Regional Cooperation and stop looking outside for support and Assistance. They may understand that they belong to third world countries and are not in position to move hand in hand with external powers. These external powers would not help them, but always look forward to exploiting them. There are various instances when South Asian countries were exploited in the name of help by external major powers. SAARC can achieve its real goal only when they all collectively try their best to reduce their clash of interests.