CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

The effort in this study was to find the nuances to deal with the lop-sided China-South Asia security linkage. China has been and remains the most important state for all of South Asia. These concerns are either negative or sometimes positive depending upon the circumstances but the reality of the giant state on the northern fringe of South Asia has been mapped in all the states of the region, Nepal, Bhutan, India, Pakistan (later Bangladesh) and even Sri Lanka. It is this dilemma which was sought to be answered through the argument that this study tried to analyse. South Asia defined as a region meant factoring China as an external actor. This lead to the problems of handling the close interaction of China with all South Asian states, its role as a balancer for the smaller states against India as well as its physical presence of about four thousand kilometers of shared border with India. Southern Asia, in view of the conclusions this study reached, is a far more accurate way of classifying the region. The definition of Southern Asia that this study recommends is not exactly formulated, the purpose has been more to find a solution out of the limitations of South Asia. So the thesis suggests the formulation of Southern Asia which includes what has been known as South Asia and China.

The smaller states are all in some sort of wary relationship with both their bigger neighbors, India and China. Strategic thinking in India has been held hostage first, to the actuality of the break in the strategic unity of South Asia with partition and then the resultant adversarial relations with Pakistan. The next shock came with the troubles in Tibet and with concerns vis-à-vis the rising ‘giant’ from the North. For centuries before, the two states identified as civilisational entities had existed with their backs to each other. This was not so much due the existence of the buffer zone of Tibet as is understood in modern Westphalian sense but more a function of the International order of the time. The first of which was opacity of the concept of frontiers as opposed to the modern territorial demarcation that characterized borders. The change from the amorphous to the exact has been the fountainhead of disputes and many wars. The second and crucially linked to the first in the case of Sino-Indian relations was to concern the status of Tibet and its claim to independence that remains
mired in rival versions of history. While it is not the purpose of this study to debate and discuss the legitimacy of Tibetan nationalism but what is without doubt that the history of Sino-Tibetan relations fell more into the notion of suzerainty rather than sovereignty as the People's Republic of China would have the world to accept and this hierarchical relationship was also dynamic in terms of Beijing's ministrations and also hostage to changing power equations.

These are the two crucial developments that trace back to the period following Indian independence and remain today the most crucial challenge for defense and foreign policy establishment. The issues could be said to contain the seeds of the four India-Pakistan conflicts and the short India-China war and continue to bedevil the future. To the credit of the Indian strategic elite, is the fierceness with which the strategic space in South Asia has been guarded. However, this battle for strategic space in the region of South Asia also resulted in getting embroiled in the high politics of the era, staving off external challenges that were always brought in by local states. In this regard the failure to settle the issues with Pakistan remains one of failure.

For, India, a state that lays claim to civilisational status and traces its genesis back to a millennia old tradition of culture and statehood, and also has ambitions of regaining its lost glory of one of the important sates in the world, securing its region is perhaps the most crucial stage in the efforts to the high politics of continental and world status. The belief and ambition of great power status is deeply entrenched in the Indian self perception. In totality with its geographic size, its population size and the cultural influence across the swathe of South and Central of the Asian continent, it is a credible ambition even for neutral observers. The most powerful representation of the salience of India's world role was during the years immediately after independence under the astute and articulate leadership of the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. These early years and the crucial mediatory role in a world divided into rival blocs were both symptomatic of Indian possibilities and later their ambitions. Nehru's charismatic appeal coupled with his articulation and willingness to take on a larger role than the subsequent years would permit was the expression of the hope and aspirations of a nation finding its feet in the aftermath of two centuries of colonization. The expression was important for its enunciation of the 'natural' role
that the Indian elite envisaged for this newly independent country shaking off in unique style its colonial past.

The role of Mahatma Gandhi and the non-violent nature of the Indian National Movement was an inimitable contribution to the history of people’s protest and to the encouragement of all self determination movements across the world. The twin lenses of the colonial experience and non-violence remained the key variables for the socialist-liberal leadership that Nehru wielded without any serious challenge for most of his time in office. The challenges to Nehru’s leadership were never ideologically well equipped to counter his vision of India, a vision tempered by the hope of social Fabianism and the civilisational markers of the unity in diversity that, India exhibited.

It remains a matter of debate for political scientists and the strategic community as to how much of idealism or realism went into Nehru’s vision. Was the idealism a mask for the shrewd mechanizations of a realist in acute awareness of the weaknesses of his fledging state? Or was his idealism merely a function of time in the need for building national strength? The answers to these questions are important as they provide the first and possibly the most entrenched vision of the Indian strategic future.

In raising these questions, the effort is to mark out the larger path that India needs to traverse. For Nehru’s vision was slowly unraveling during his stewardship itself. The bickering relationship and war with Pakistan was the first of the foreign policy challenges that the Indian government faced. Was Kashmir an issue left over from the process of partition or was it an issue of the fracture of the domestic vision? The challenges to the clarity and the euphoria of the Indian vision were both from within and without and mired in these, over the years, the starker vision of the India’s role in the world slowly fogged up and soon faded into oblivion as the challenges of nation-building utilized most of the energies.

The purpose of the above narrative was to bring out the two crucial foreign policy challenges that were felt within a decade of independence and that in its functionalism resulted in the obscuring of the larger vision of the Indian presence in the world. The Pakistani challenge being the more complicated one as it involved
issue of nation-building, the linkage across the two nations and the issue of religious minorities in both countries. The derailing of the normal trajectory of an emerging and active India on the world scale occurred due to the occupation of Tibet by China, the emergence of the border dispute and the resultant war of 1962. These events were all a result of the occupation of Tibet and the drubbing in the war served to cut Indian status among the crucial collective that comprised the ‘developing’ or the ‘third world’ that both India and China were actively wooing in their respective efforts to find space amidst the ideologically divided world.

It can be observed since as early as the 1950’s that both China and India from their different locations in the cold war politics were involved in efforts of distinguishing themselves from the mass of newly decolonized states. It involved providing leadership to these ex-colonial states in their own respective ideological spectrum and it was important for both as it offered the possibility of providing space to maneuver amidst the blocs (or to create space independent of the Soviet bloc for the PRC) and also provide a bulwark of support from these states. Important symbols even during this time was the ambition for a status in commensurate with their ancient glories and the competition of the time served to reflect these great power aspirations and their obsession with issues of national status. The conflict can also be explained in terms of the world view of both the countries. For the Chinese, the coming of liberation was a largely violent exercise and drilled into them the notion of power out of the barrel of the gun. The People’s Republic of China under Mao was deeply affected by the century of colonial bullying and in their nationalist point of view responsible for the division of the erstwhile Chinese empire which they went about trying to integrate. The Indian experience as mentioned above was one of a long struggle but tempered with a learning experience from the colonizers, western liberalism and democracy had by the time of independence made their presence felt. The problem lay in the ‘idea’ of India as has been expounded by Sunil Khilnani, for even the most expansive of Indian empires did not include the territories that modern India came to occupy. The only example lay in the territories or the paramountcy exercised by the British Colonial Empire. The special trading rights in Tibet were one of those functions. The Indian state faced the problem of justifying the amalgamation of territories that had been brought under British influence in the colonial period and being stridently anti-colonial, this proved to be one of the tougher tasks.
The war in 1962 and its result, was a huge loss of face for India and for Nehru. Within a few years after Nehru’s death, Indian stocks were to plummet further with the Chinese nuclear test in 1964. This period was the time when it can be said that the Indian elite lost the thread of the plot. For despite the correct identification of the challenges facing India, of Pakistan and China and of the two of them together, domestic issues took away the energies of Indian leadership and the consensus in foreign policy that was one of the defining truths of an India under Nehru broke down. The breakdown in the consensus can be traced to the result of the war during Nehru’s time. It further suffered divisions with the Chinese nuclear test. The threat of the two-front war in 1965 resulted in the first Indian nuclear debate. With time and the changing domestic politics landscape, some of these changes were to be reflected in the foreign policy of the Janta Party coalition that came to power at the end of the 1970’s. However, it would be incorrect to read too deeply into this break down of consensus but the truth of the matter is that with the end of the period of the Hindi-Chini bhai bhai phase, Pakistan was to occupy the focal point of immediate Indian planning in defense and external affairs. This is also not to suggest that the threat of the PRC was forgotten, rather while remaining central to strategic Indian planning, it lost its immediacy and this was well reflected in the build up to India’s nuclear policy that was itself a long drawn out process culminating and coming out in the open for the first time in 1998.

Due to impact of the period and predilections of decision makers, the mechanizations of global politics, India got boxed into the region variously defined as South Asia and which came to represent the modern term of American origin and reflected the geographic realities of the British Colonial Empire. By the preference for the region of Southern Asia instead of South Asia, the effort in this study has been to articulate the emerging Indian vision of its strategic space. A state that appears to find itself economically expanding in the post-cold war period owing to the forces of liberalization and economic reforms and the shrinking, at least ideologically, role of the state in economic activity. This change in Indian economic thinking from the days of the socialist command economy to, a service driven with global linkages was largely a result of the changing politico-landscape in global terms with the collapse of
the Soviet Union and the failure of socialism to provide a successful model for
economic growth and in raising standards of living.

The two decades of reform has transformed India and Indian lives in no
uncertain terms and despite outstanding issues of rural poverty and increasing
inequalities, there is a new confidence in this transformed India. This self perception
is also reflected in the view of the external world, for the grudging but increasingly
Chinese acknowledgment of it and the Pakistani discovery at being significantly left
behind in national economic strength disproportionate to the Indian superiority. It was
around the start of the economic reforms in the early 1990’s too that we see the first
concerted and doctrinal effort on part of the government of India to break out of the
limitations of its past. It would be pertinent to mention that there were earlier efforts
to first, not be boxed into South Asia as well as escape its margins but these were not
very successful owing to the international environment. In the 1990’s the international
environment came to better use when the Narasimha Rao government harnessing the
rise in regionalism and regional integration and to connect the Indian economy to the
spectacularly growing South East Asian one, declared a Look East Policy.

This brings us to the expansion of Indian strategic space around the periphery
of the South Asia. Even in the period of the years leading to independence and the
period immediately following it, the articulation of Indian strategic space stretched
from the Persian Gulf to the Korean peninsula in Nehru’s assessment. Culturally, the
Central Asian republics and South East Asia was a sphere of Indian influence as were
the maritime states of Africa which had trade linkages with India and a significant
population of Indian origin which is also true of some of the states of South East Asia.
The expansion of ambitions in maritime areas can be discerned in the expansion plans
of the Indian Navy. In effect in the past two decades and harking back to the early
Nehruvian articulation, in our times we are witness to this expanding neighbourhood
in all directions. This can be seen as the space occupied by the British Empire in
India, where it was the most important state in the littoral region from the Persian
Gulf to the South China Sea.

The expansion of the neighbourhood into what has been called the ‘extended’
neighbourhood also occurs about the same time as the world documents the rising
national strength of the People's Republic of China. The PRC stretches into many regions from East Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, South East Asia by virtue of its large size and with economic growth and prosperity and the modernization of its armed forces has resulted in an integration of Asia centered around China with positive economic ties and negative security ties. The separate security dynamics of East Asia and South East Asia are history now and the regions fused into one and developments in one have security ramifications for all the states. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), the collective security mechanism of the South East Asian states that closely involves the United States and China is a good reflection of the reality of East Asia.

The Chinese power projection while not as pronounced in Central Asia and South Asia as of now is a reality that the states of the region are coming to terms with especially with the speed in of infrastructure developments. Secondly, the ongoing war on terror has also resulted in the presence of American troops in Central Asia and western fringes of South Asia, which probably has stemmed the otherwise buoyant Chinese involvement in Central Asia. These developments mark out the growing perception of an Asia, from Central to South to East, as one region due to the growth of China and with China as its core. Though, owing to the political and religious turmoil in West Asia and the complications within the security complex as well as its centrality to the global strategy of the United States, the relation of this complex to the larger Asian one is a question largely left ambiguous. But with the integration of Central Asia in the larger Asian supercomplex the status of West Asia, would not remain ambiguous for long. More over, the centrality of West Asia in the energy competition of the coming years, its importance in American strategy and the presence of American bases and troops in the area as much as the local dynamics of the security complex will determine the nature of interaction with the Asian supercomplex. And given the energy hungry and growing India and China, it would be difficult to imagine that the developments in region would be unaffected by the changing scenario in the rest of Asia.

The Chinese experience and their view of history holds that the colonial powers broke up the unity of the middle kingdom, Mongolia, Tibet, Taiwan and earlier even Hong Kong. And that despite liberation and self-rule, due to the
interference of great powers, they have not been able to re-gain their lost territories and this remains one of the key national collective consciousnesses that is remarkably consistent across time in China. The Chinese trajectory to great power status is but assured, having come so far, China has definitely changed a lot since the cold war years but what has not, is their desire to unify the country. This revisionism is what is perhaps the most worrying aspect of a future powerful China. A state which stretches from the Sea of Japan to the South China Sea to the Central Asian highlands and down to the borders of North East India and Myanmar, a huge swath of land with the largest population in the world and galloping economic growth for over more than quarter of a century.

In security terms, it is capabilities that matter most to nations, that worst-case scenario in which you have to plan for contingencies. Intentions can change over time but the marker of the security dilemma remains capabilities. It is the huge capabilities of the People’s Republic of China, that occupied Jawaharlal Nehru’s mind in the immediate years after independence and which saw Nehru taking a pro-active stand on issues related to China at international forums. The developments after the change in Tibetan status, has been documented in many places and even in this study, and saliently also the polarization of the ideological cold war conflict took its toll on the two Asian giants.

Though, it would be correct to identify the increasing perception of the Chinese threat only in the post-1959 phase, the short war in 1962, the Sino-Pakistan entente and the nuclear tests in 1965 that lead to the exacerbation and freezing of the image of China as a threat to India for the years to come. But even in the period after this, India’s primary security threat was felt from Pakistan, due to its irredentist claims on Kashmir, the numerous wars and also due to the Hindu-Muslim communal issues. Pakistan as an idea of homeland for South Asian Muslims was a failure from the very start. The Indian state had an equal number of Muslim citizens who continued to be part and parcel of Indian life and nationhood. Pakistan as a state began to fail in its ambitions and especially those that its founder Muhammed Ali Jinnah envisaged with the failure of democratic institutions to take root, the abrogation of power by the bureaucratic elite leading the nation jerkily over many crises till recent times. The civil war in East Pakistan in 1971 was merely a result of
the failure of the idea of religion superseding other notions of identity, like language, region or ethnicity. However, in foreign and security policy terms, Pakistan managed to be ambitious in its efforts to keep the Hindu India versus Muslim Pakistan stand off on an equal keel.

Pakistan was largely successful owing to the failure of the Indian state to deal with the grievances related to Kashmiri aspirations and due to the externalities of the cold war that prompted the American support to Pakistan. But what has been noteworthy is the utter penchant of the elites in Pakistan is to continue along the same path for over half a century with external support and unflinching egotism. This also offers us an insight into the insecurity in Pakistan that is deeply entrenched and that also is aware of the limitations of the idea of a Muslim ‘nation’ in South Asia. The rabid rhetoric that is the norm in Pakistan when dealing with the Kashmir issue is but a key evidence of that as is the Kashmiri obsession of its domestic polity. Pakistan has over the past also created distrust in relations owing to its expression of concern for Indian Muslims and this has far reaching consequences for both India-Pakistan relations and in domestic politics in India. In the domestic Indian scene, this raises heckles with the right wing Hindu forces that already work with the Pakistan (Muslim) threat which while tied to the issue of Kashmir, this politicization further stretches to all over India and involves the Muslim population. It further creates unwarranted conspiracy theories between both religious groups and vice versa. Thus, Pakistan while having the capacity to threaten India from without also has the capacity to wreck it from within. It is also true that these capabilities of Pakistan through which it can create trouble for India and has created trouble in the past, takes its cost on Pakistani society. And in the prevailing scenario of religious extremism, the lesson has been brought to the understanding of Pakistan.

But this focus on the threats from Pakistan did not by any means turn away the fears of China. As a result of the integration of Tibet to China, the problem of the borders had arisen and they remain unresolved to this day, though engagement on the issue has been in the process since the rapprochement. The border dispute has added to the consternation of the Indian establishment and mistrust owing to Chinese intrusions that occur in the disputed region. China as a threat is a perception that runs deep in India and it can be dated to even before the modernization process. With the
growing national strength, durable military contacts with the smaller states in South Asia, and the military build up in Tibet; it only serves to make India deeply apprehensive of Chinese capabilities and intentions. For India, it would be important to mark out the strategies at various levels which the security complex theory suitably compiles. This is not stating that the various levels offer a neat separation but what they do is offer is a framework within which the various levels of policy formulation can work within.

There is ample evidence that the changes in the extended neighbourhood, discerned by the regional security complex, also occupy the government of India. But what would be necessary would be a more concerted and unified efforts at reflecting the changing reality in its policy measures. As an example one can mention the difference in the way the Ministry of External Affairs reports have categorized China in different ways from being part of the list of neighbours to finding its place in the East Asia section. For the Ministry of Defense while no such categorizations exist, Pakistan and China hold the prime stage in their discussion of the security environment. The notion of an extended neighbourhood appears salient in Indian official documentation by virtue of its absence. So far, it has been the strategic community which seems to be pushing towards an acceptance of this larger neighbourhood. While there seems to be no generic demarcation of this extended neighbourhood and various terms, South Asia/Southern Asia, are used to describe it. But what it is unambiguous about is that it seeks to define an area larger than the current regional contours of South Asia, one can physically imagine it as a larger concentric circle drawn with its center in central India.

The study argued for the inclusion of China and renaming the understanding of South Asia as Southern Asia. The problem has been approached from both levels that China by virtue of its Tibetan integration is an integral part of South Asia and that by virtue of technological developments, the nuclear tests and the rising regionalism that brings into close contact world economies, has resulted in the expansion of the South Asian security complex. It is important to discern these two differences in approach that this study has taken in making the case for an expanded complex (including China) that is undergoing further expansion.
The RSCT does admit that arguments can be made regarding the interpretation of the boundaries formed by the patterns of relative security interdependence or indifference. However, it does not concede the point by seeking refuge in the constructivist approach that is assembled around security and defines security as what actors make of it and the RSCT's method is to examine, security discourses and practices of actors, and not their regionalist policies (2003: 47-48).

In building this narrative and coming to the problem of the regional security complex, it would be rational to state that while Buzan does identify his reasons for the categorization of South Asia on the basis of history and security linkages, there was a grey zone that required and also permitted intervention. The problem of the status of China that the study tackled was one of them. Theoretically, there isn't any problem with the tools that identifies boundaries of complexes but when it came to its specificity in the Southern Asian case; it ignored the most important security factor, China. As mentioned in the prior discussion of chapter 2 and also chapter 4 of the study, for Buzan, China became problematic as it straddles four regions and due to potential. In the first formulation China is termed a higher level complex while South Asia and Indian externalities composed the lower level complex. The notion of an Asian supercomplex forms in the aftermath of the Chinese growth years and with the theoretical fusing of the North East Asian and the South East Asian complexes into a East Asian complex. The higher level-lower level dichotomy was a device to segregate the global and the regional levels. But empirically, it would be difficult to prove that Maoist China was a global actor, it was effective in three regions, but that was more a function of its territorial expanse as well as its Soviet Alliance and not Great power status. In the current scenario, there is no doubt that China is a behemoth that straddles the Asian landmass from the Central Asian plains to the South China Sea and therefore the logic of the Supercomplex centered on China does convey the growing concerns with regard to China's rise and increasing the intensity of security interactions. The absence of China misses the crucial difference between the role of an external power in a region and that of a state located within the region. This crucial difference impacts first and foremost on polarity that is an important constituent of Buzan's schema as well as another decisive factor that of geography. These two factors both serve to make China a more than clear and present object of wariness than that which would be admitted while treating it as an external power.
There are a number of issues that still remain and should be further explored within the framework of the RSCT in Southern Asia. First, and perhaps the most important, a definition of the term Southern Asia, to fill in the details regarding the extended neighbourhood of India. This study which made a case for the inclusion of China is the first step in this regard and while there have been other efforts to define Southern Asia in more geographic detail, there appears to be lack of consistency. This geographically etched out Southern Asia would need to take into account a further group of actors. The case of Iran in the Persian Gulf complex provides a good example of this case. With concerns over Iran’s nuclear ambitions and its increasing arsenal of ballistic missile, it is of imminent concern to Indian strategic interests to factor in the rising Iranian capability and its reach.

The flux of International Relations being such that threats and perceptions are constantly being prioritized to take care of developing contingencies and despite the bureaucratic pace of state response, the China angle remains an issue that occupies the strategic community. The regional security complex theory provides is perhaps the most comprehensive of the sub system frameworks and incorporates almost all the elements of the preceding efforts and is just the framework for description and analysis of the trajectories of China-South Asia relations. It provides an overview of the entire system as different regions in which security externalities are experienced more strongly than others. The concept of the security complex also provides for the inputs in the regional system from external actors and offers a meeting of the global and regional levels of analysis. In doing so, the RSC theory with its wider non-traditional agenda and more importantly its constructivist interpretation of security, provides for the entire spectrum of security planes (global-inter-regional-regional-national-individual). This is perhaps the strongest point in its favor, the richness of the analysis that the RSCT unearths.

The RSCT offers us two functions, the first of organizing empirical studies. The theory tells us what to look for at the four levels, a security constellation, and how to inter-relate the variables. The second function of the theory is its descriptive application. This function aims at making sense of the mass of data accumulated by giving them a particular order and in writing structural history. The structural history can starting at the lowest level, that of a state, systematically link to the next level,
regional, inter-regional and global. This structure establishes the benchmark to assess change or continuity in the particular region and this incorporates its predictive potential. The empirical observation feed into the structure of regional security across the four levels and the predictive possibilities built up provide possible scenarios. The scenarios look into the durability, the relationship between its dynamics, interaction with other complexes, and the role of external actors and finally how does the regional dynamic affect foreign policy of states comprising that region and also how do foreign policies of states affect the security complexes.

It has to be understood that regional security while important in its contribution to management of international security provides only partial answers to security challenges. The virtue being that it can help to develop locally derived and supported norms to guide regional security behavior. But it is not by hypothesis the best approach to the resolution of regional issues and a mixing of local cooperation and constructive engagement with external actors can be beneficial. The regional level can strive to build norms of behavior and ingrain habits of cooperation.

There are a number of challenges to the regional level, the first being the concept of regions themselves, as regions are a dynamic formulation, political constructs masquerading under geographical tags. With time and changing policies and affected by each level, national, regional, global and temporally, regions can change shape and take on new forms, create new actors or conversely, absorb actors and build a new externality with the adjoining region. Challenges to the regional dynamics and the states that comprise it can come from below, national and intra-national forces as well as from external actors. Strategy is yet another challenge that regional dynamics face, the contents of policy for a desired outcome and the manner in which it is arrayed.

From the understanding of regional security structure, the institutions of regionalism can be better informed and more likely to succeed. The resultant framework to manage regional security ought to reflect the balance of power in its efforts to create norms and agreed patterns of behavior. Some regional security complexes remain tied to the traditional balance of power mechanism while others are exploring the collective and pluralistic security communities. This suggests that a
study of regions and how do they vary and reflect from each other would help in understanding security in the contemporary world. For the leading states of the global system, it is important that their policies keep the regional dynamics in mind when formulating policies.