Chapter - I

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Bilateral relations between developing countries are influenced by several variables. Geography is an important factor and geostrategic location plays a vital role in this context. The location of a state, in relation to other states, and who is or is not one's neighbour have significant strategic implications, and can have considerable impact on one's national security. Location, in the sense of spatial relationship to other land bodies and to other states also profoundly affect a state's culture and economy, and both its military and economic power.

As a successor state of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq's geography posed an existential challenge. It is virtually a land-locked country, whose coastline on the Gulf is only 15 km long and is surrounded by six countries with Turkey and Iran being the significant neighbours. The proximity of Iraq's major strategic and


economic assets to the Turkish and Iranian frontiers has been no less worrisome for Baghdad. Iraq's internal fragmentation along ethnic and religious divisions -- Kurds versus Arabs, Sunni versus Shii -- has had a weakening effect on the country by impeding the crystallization of an Iraqi national identity and by enhanced external influence. Iraq has, then, suffered from an inherent feeling of insecurity.

The geostrategic location of Iran in comparison with Iraq, seems better off. Not only is Iran a much larger country in terms of territory and population, but also most of its major strategic centres are located, by and large, deep inside the country. Iran possesses a long Gulf coastline of some 2000 km., which makes it the major contender for regional hegemony and prevents a crippling encirclement. However, Iran faced a geostrategic constraint: namely, its 1700 km., border with the erstwhile Soviet Union. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and Iran's improved relations with the Central Asian Republics have minimised this threat.


'Karsh, n.3, p.259.
In order to participate in international trade, a land-locked country has to maintain friendly relations with its neighbouring State. For example, Nepal has to depend upon India for its trade and transit channels. If the relations deteriorate, neighbouring states can impose certain restrictions upon land-locked countries regarding the use of its transit links and port facilities. Such restrictions can be detrimental to the economy of the land-locked countries, possibly resulting in inefficient use of transport means, partial unloading and reloading at the border, causing delays and possible damage to merchandise. In this context, the importance of Shatt al-Arab for Iraq cannot be ignored. Iraq needs the security and control of the river, since its major port of Basra is its major trade outlet on the Persian Gulf. The long-drawn Iran-Iraq war further restricted Iraq's access to the sea: seaborne trade via the Shatt al-Arab and the port of Umm Qasr had almost ceased. For Iraq, oil export is the major source of income. Oil cannot be exported without the goodwill of its

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neighbours: Syria and Turkey, or without coming close to the Iranian territory in the south. The war has clearly shown the limitations of Iraq and demonstrated the dominance of geography over its geostrategic variables.

Factors like religion, ethnicity, language, culture and tradition may be a binding force leading to cordial relations or differences over these factors can put strains on these relations. Any disturbance of these factors within a state will have spill-over effect upon neighbouring states. For instance, the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka affects the Indo-Sri Lankan relations; the Kurdish movement affects the Iran-Iraq relations and Iraq-Turkey relations. Also, the Palestinian movement for the creation of a Palestinian State has its impact on Arab-Israeli relations.'

The ethno-religious variable of a state can also change. For instance, Iran underwent a metamorphosis from monarchy to theocracy, with greater emphasis on Shii religious fundamentalism. Another example of ethno-religious impact upon a nation-state is the gradual disintegration of the State system in Lebanon. This has regional implications.

Economic variables affect bilateral relations and can lead to co-operation or conflict. The intra-state economic policies concerned with development or subsidizing of particular economic sectors, can produce inter-state reactions like the use of resources or a dispute over the waters of rivers which are international in character or of industries which are capable of spreading pollution. Some examples are the sharing of waters of the River Ganges between India and Bangladesh or of the Jordan River between Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel, the U.S. Super 301 Trade Act, and the role of oil production/pricing policy and its impact upon the oil producers and consumers. Another example is the closing down of the Kirkuk-Mediterranean oil pipe-line used by Iraq, frequently by the Syrian government in order to bargain for higher transit fees. The Western Saharan question of decolonization of Spanish Sahara has not yet been solved due to Morocco's reluctance to relinquish the rich phosphate deposits in


the contested region." The phosphate mines at Bu-Crua are among the richest in the world and a potential source of huge export earnings."

Discovery of new resources like oil, uranium, minerals etc..., and the depleting character of these resources can influence the importance of a given area. The discovery of deposits of precious metals like Copper, Zinc, Silver, Gold, etc... in 1963, in the Red Sea region," have enhanced the importance of this area and influenced the inter-state relationship. For instance, the Khartoum Agreement of 1974 between Saudi Arabia and Sudan for the joint exploitation of these minerals in the Red Sea region," is a good example of regional co-operation. Also, the demand for new formulae of resource-sharing may arise and influence the regional and global polices of a country, or a set of countries. The dispute between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq over


"Drysdales and Blake, n.10, p.88.


allocation of the waters of the River Euphrates is a striking example."

Another important variable influencing bilateral relations is the impact of domestic policies upon the foreign policies of countries. In the domestic political environment the impact of interest groups has both positive and negative effects upon bilateral relations. Interest groups like the arms lobby and the armed forces favour more defence spending and acquisition of more sophisticated weapons. In developing countries, generally the military favours a more authoritarian posture in domestic politics and a more vigorous pressing of territorial or ethnic claims against various neighbours." For instance, the role of Pakistan's military in domestic politics and vis-a-vis India over the Kashmir issue is a case in point.

Another example is the role of the Algerian army in domestic politics. It had infiltrated the political group, the National Liberation Front (FLN) soon after independence and gradually emerged as the dominant political group in Algeria. So it lost credibility. After the spectacular win of the Islamic Salvation Front

"Drysdale and Blake, n.10, pp.93-95.

in the parliamentary elections held in December 1991, the army cracked down on the FIS in January 1992. The State High Council set up by the army seized power and declared an emergency," since the fundamentalists were committed to make Algeria an Islamic state.

Often foreign policy of a state becomes a crucial issue in the domestic political struggle. The Watergate affair in American politics and the Iranian revolution are domestic political developments which have exerted an impact on each of these State's foreign policy behaviour." In the Gulf, the attitude of the Shah of Iran to the Iraqi coup d'état of 1958 or that of the Iraqi Baath regime towards the emergence of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran also need to be analyzed from this angle.

The type of government and mutual perceptions of states, both at the regime level and at the popular level, play a vital role in determining bilateral relations. The hostility at the regime level between New Delhi and Islamabad need not necessarily reflect similar views at the popular level. Similarly, the friendship at


the governmental level between Israel and Egypt may not be shared by the masses. Thus, there can be multiple tiers of bilateral relations, regime, interest groups, public etc., that affect the short term and the long term policies of states.

Public opinion can be a major source of domestic constraint on the foreign policy of a state. Foreign Policy is determined and pursued by governments, which, at least in democratic societies, represent and ultimately depend upon the opinion of their people. The nature and depth of dependence varies greatly among various types of regimes. For instance, the disenchantment of the Egyptian public with President Sadat's inability to make any progress in recovering the occupied territories from Israel was one of the major influences on his decision to embark on the October 1973 war.

In the domestic political environment the change of a government can alter the existing pattern of relations. The emergence of a new interest group is also possible. The overthrow of monarchy in Egypt in 1952 or in Libya in 1969 had far-reaching implications not only


"Wendzel, n.1, p.245."
in domestic, but also in the foreign policies of these states. In the Gulf, the radical changes of regime, like the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958, were partly responsible for the assertion of Iraq's claim to Kuwait on the eve of its independence in 1961, or to the apparent revival of Iran's claim to Bahrain after the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979. Thus, the domestic changes have a far-reaching impact, both at the regional and global level.

Foreign policy of any state aims at furthering its interest amongst the comity of nations. Any change in the foreign policy of a state can bring about an alteration in the power equation. For example, Colonel Abdel Karim Qassem, by his decision in 1959 to pull Iraq out of the Baghdad Pact and to reject US military aid, not only abandoned Iraq's pro-western policy, but also tilted towards the Soviet Union. This resulted in the enhanced Super Power rivalry in the region.

There are some vital inputs into the making of a foreign policy. One such is the regional and international security environment. The other is the


role of extra-regional powers in resolving or aggravating regional conflicts. The deep involvement of the Super Powers in the region has influenced the foreign policy orientations of the regional countries, as well as local and regional conflicts; such as Arab-Israeli, Somali-Ethiopian and the struggle for Eritrea. All these have affected their outlook towards the complex network of inter-state relationships. In situations of inter-state conflict, the pattern has been for one state to ally with the West, the other with the erstwhile USSR. Israel's alliance with the West in the 1950's was followed by Egypt's with the USSR. Likewise, a stronger response by the major powers could lessen regional tensions. For example, the Super Power detente has considerably toned down the level of military confrontation between Israel and Syria.

There are possibilities of changes in the above mentioned variable over a period of time. Developments in Iran and Afghanistan after 1979 increased the importance of Pakistan in the calculation of American global strategy to counter the Soviet moves in the region. But, once again the geo-strategic relevance of Pakistan underwent a major change after 1988-89. The relative political stability in Iran, the Soviet pull-out from Afghanistan, and greater understanding between USA and Russia, have, of late, lessened Pakistan's
importance to the US in that context. Also, changes in international environment like the Geneva Accord on Afghanistan, the INF Treaty, US-Russia detente etc... have brought about a radical change in the very pattern of Super Power relations. At the regional level, the Iran-Iraq war brought about a realignment of forces in the Gulf. The war also hastened the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). At present, international relations are bound to be affected by the changes that are sweeping the globe and some aspects of the foreign policies of some countries have to change. The collapse of the USSR has caused convulsions in the foreign policy making processes of several countries in the World.

While analyzing bilateral relations, one needs to analyze not only the interaction of these domestic and foreign policy variables at a given time, but also the changes in these variables over a given period. The changes would reflect the wide spectrum of bilateral relationship ranging from entente at one end to detente, conflict, crisis and ultimately war at the other. Transition from one phase to another, over a given time, reflects the cooperative or conflictual trend in bilateral relations. It is important to underscore this wide spectrum and possible transition from one phase to another so that one is not influenced by a 'mindset' of
conflict and/or co-operation that tends to colour the study of bilateral relations.

Conflict

No state can claim to be sovereign without ensuring its security -- security for its political system, its economic system and for its people, with their cultural characteristics and ethos. To achieve these goals, at times, states compete with each other which may result in a conflict. Conflict situations are essentially bargaining situations, since they combine divergence of states' individual interests with powerful common interests. Conflict originally arises out of a substantive dispute, which may be over territory, border, legitimacy, ideology etc...Disputes can be counted, but conflict cannot be. It can be, at best, measured in terms of degree. According to Bertarnard de Jouvenal, conflict can never be eliminated from politics and disputes are always solved only temporarily. Further, he adds "solutions to disputes are, in fact, nothing other than compromises reached between the parties to the disputes, though only temporarily".

"Douglas, n.9, p.85.

"Frankel, n.8, p.72.

"Quoted in Mahendra Kumar, Theoretical Aspects of International Politics (Agra, 1990), p.12.
Crisis

Conflict between parties, that continues at a relatively constant level of intensity, would not constitute a crisis, unless there is a sudden shift in the level of hostilities. Crisis is one stage of conflict. Its distinguishing features include a sudden eruption of unexpected event influenced by previous conflict. According to Hermann, crisis is a situation that creates an abrupt or sudden change in one or more of the basic systemic variable. Holsti says, crisis is a situation of unanticipated threat to important values and restricted response time, and is likely to affect policy processes and outcomes. Definitions of 'crisis' vary but, according to most writers, it is a situation characterized by threat to some vital interests, a high probability of military activities, time pressure resulting in decision making, and often also by surprise. For example, a conflict such as the division of Jerusalem or sovereignty over Taiwan, may continue


"Ole R. Holsti, Crisis, Escalation, War (Montreal, 1972), p.9."
for decades, but occasionally sudden and unexpected hostile actions by one party will arouse tensions and perceived threat to such a point that policy makers of the responding state are forced to choose between extreme alternatives including war or abject surrender.

**War**

War is generally used as an instrument of policy for settling a dispute. While some nonviolent modes of settlement may be found for the dispute, its nature can be changed fundamentally by introducing the military option. War can be viewed as one possible mode of policy activity aimed at effectively and favourably resolving the ongoing conflict of interests. War is an organised and systematic violence by the armed forces of any party to the dispute as a purposeful instrument of policy.

**Detente**

Few states can afford to sustain the pressure of prolonged crisis and hence tend to de-escalate the degree of mutual confrontation, leading to a detente. It

may be defined as a policy aiming at the relaxation of tension and lowered levels of threats or conflict between two or more States. It is possible to argue on concrete issue, to negotiate, to bargain, to deal with each other through give and take compromise only after the conflicts have been reduced to manageable pragmatic proportions. For example, President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem in 1977 to argue for peace before the Israeli Knesset and subsequent negotiations at Camp David in September 1978 led to the agreement for peace. The subsequent Egypt-Israel peace treaty in March 1979 not only settled some territorial issues, but also prescribed modalities for conducting future Egypt-Israel relations. Detente reveals itself in the actual actions taken by the governments, rather than detente being the result of a particular policy. Detente does not necessarily imply shared interests beyond the mutual desire to avoid war, crisis, and a high level of tensions and threat.


*Ibid., p.7.*
Entente

While the policies of detente refer to those actions and agreements which are designed to reduce conflict and improve mutual relations, entente suggests overlapping and common interests, policy coordination and also possibly alliance." Thus, in entente the problem lies not only in the identification of common goals and of methods for reaching them, but also in the achievement of these goals.

The bilateral relations between Iran and Iraq, has been taken as the case study. There are number of variables that influence the relations between them. Both are neighbouring, Islamic and developing countries. Firstly, the contiguous geography has had its impact on their relationship. The two neighbours constantly differed over their border demarcations, continental shelf and the Shatt al-Arab waterway. Secondly, the status of ethnic minorities in both the countries - the Arab population of the oil-rich province of Iran, the Shi' population of Iraq, and the Kurdish speaking population of Iran-Iraq, which are sensitive of national identity, make the stakes very high for the two states. Subsequently, at one time or the other, both Iran and Iraq have supported the ethnic minorities in the other

"Encyclopedia of Peace, n.30."
state to fight against their respective governments. This has caused great concern in both the countries.

The subsequent changes in the 'regime' have also had their effect on the interstate relationship. This has resulted in mutual antagonism, and profound mistrust has characterised relations between them, viz., the Shah's perception of the overthrow of the Hashemite dynasty in Iraq on 14 July 1958 or the Baath perception of the Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 that toppled the Pahlavi Shah. Also, changes in 'regime' have affected the domestic and foreign policy attitudes in both the countries.

Both, Iran and Iraq, have aligned differently on regional and global issues. The other major point of conflict between them is the hegemony over the Persian Gulf. Iran and Iraq have been the only two nations in the Persian Gulf region in the post-Second World War period with the size, population, wealth and military strength to strive for supremacy. While Iran was economically strong, politically united and heavily armed under the Shah during the 1970's it called the shots in the region. After the fall of the Shah, it was the Iraqi Baath party's turn to strive for supremacy in the Gulf region. These are some of the variables that
influence Iran-Iraq relations. These will be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapters.