Introduction

After the end of the Second World War for four decades, although no formal war between the superpowers of the United States and the then Soviet Union was ever declared, they advanced their respective sphere of influence throughout the world in order to gain military, political and economic advantages, and aligned themselves with partners who could protect their interests against those who threatened them. Each superpower thus began mobilizing other states, trying to form alliances and to balance the other. The proposed research work seeks to explore into the efficacy of alliance formation and balance of power to find out the implications of Cold War politics in the South Eastern region of Asia (comprising the East, Southeast and South Asia). There are two principal reasons for undertaking this task. The South Eastern Asian region has been carefully chosen as an element of case study of this thesis because first, the superpower rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union had deepening impact on this region as each of them tried to expand its sphere of influence over the region and thereby the latter had fallen a victim of the Cold War. Second, the regional and local rivalries in the region in turn got entangled in the superpower rivalry directly or indirectly by siding with either of the two blocs (Capitalist or Communist).

This research work has been divided into six chapters. In order to understand the nature of balance of power and alliance system prevailing in the South Eastern Asian region during the Cold War period, it is felt necessary to make an in depth analysis of the theoretical aspect of the discipline of international relations. The first chapter deals with the understanding and a critical evaluation of the realist and neorealist theory in explaining the nature of international relations, alliance formation and the concept, characteristics and models of the balance of power system as the cornerstone of realism. This chapter also makes a critical analysis of liberalism and neoliberalism, the two contending theories to realism and neorealism respectively, thereby presenting the two 'Great Debates' between the two theoretical paradigms, so as to justify which of the two theories (realism or liberalism, neorealism or neoliberalism) have emerged as the dominant theoretical trend in the history of international relations. Thus this chapter is organized into two sections. The first section of the chapter reviews the nature and scope of such debates and organizes the various interpretations of it into a framework with an effort primarily to present
the outlines of each theory and analyze the sustainability of each theoretical trend through arguments and counter arguments. The second section of the chapter will focus essentially on realist notion of balance of power and alliance formation.

Realism has always been the dominant theoretical tool to explain the nature of international relations. According to classical realists international order which is constitutive of nation states is anarchic as international politics is characterized by the struggle for national power between states. The roots for struggle for power come from the human nature which is self centered and self regarding. The sole appropriate response to minimize or eliminate such conflicts is through the creation of countervailing power, and intelligent utilization of that power provides for national defense and deters potential aggressors. In other words, it is essential to maintain an effective balance of power as the only way to prevent war and preserve peace and to protect the states' security. Thus the necessary outcome is the alliance formation which is the formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states’ military capabilities. In other words, as according to Morgenthau alliances are a necessary function of the balance of power operating in the multiple state system.

Neorealism or structural realism of Kenneth Waltz takes a different approach to explain the nature of the conflicts between the actors in international relations. It considers state conflict is rooted in the absence of a central authority that can enforce rules and agreements, an absence that creates a self help situation in which all policy makers are pressured to act competitively, regardless of their individual natures or personal preferences. This situation is called anarchy, not in the sense of chaos, but in the sense of absence of world government which can enforce rules in international relations. In short, anarchy originates in an insecure international system, and states must act to reduce or eliminate this insecurity. This is achieved through forming alliances whereby the states balance against the superior power capabilities of other states. Thus the only type of security cooperation that really plays a major role in neorealist account is the alliance which falls within the broad compass of balance of power arguments.

Liberalism on the other hand provides an optimistic approach to world politics where they consider human beings to be rational. When reason is applied to international relations, international organizations are established based on mutual cooperation that
would bring about peace and justice. Moreover liberal ideas such as free trade and modernization, along with open diplomacy could also claim success in an attempt to end war and call for peace. Neoliberalism is a response to neorealism. Although neoliberalism does not deny the anarchic nature of the international system, it argues that its importance and effect has been exaggerated. The neoliberal argument is focused on the neorealists’ underestimation of the cooperative behavior possible within a decentralized system and put emphasis on the role of international institutions and cooperation among states. Institutions, according to them, play the main mediating role and act as the principal means to achieve and maintain cooperation between states. Mutual interests of states minimize differences, pave the avenues for cooperation. States become willing to cooperate once institutions are seen as beneficial.

The two contrasting views between realism and liberalism and neorealism and neoliberalism lead to the two ‘Great Debates’ that is discussed in the first chapter so as to justify which of the theories emerged as the dominant theory of the discipline of international relations. However, although world politics always contains a mix of realism and liberalism, scholars of international relations have universally agreed to consider realism as the dominant theoretical paradigm.

The theory of balance of power is thus the cornerstone of realist theory. But the realist concept of balance of power has been criticized especially by the liberals who argue that international system being anarchic; order may not be restored through the functioning of balance of power. Order also evolves through norms and institutions based on reciprocity and cooperation. However, notwithstanding the criticism, the states subscribe to the principle of balance of power in their interaction with one another. A balance of power exists when there is parity or stability between competing forces and that through shifting alliances and countervailing pressures, no one power or combination of powers will be allowed to grow so strong as to threaten the security of the rest. Balance of power is thus referred to as ‘equilibrium’ or certain amount of stability in international relations. The two most typical models of balance of power are called multipolar and bipolar. Multipolar situation is where the chief actors whose forces are not too unequal, are relatively numerous, or on the contrary, when two actors dominate their rivals to such a degree that both become the centre of a coalition and the secondary actors are obliged to situate themselves in relation to the
two blocs, thus joining one another, unless they have the opportunity to abstain, is bipolarity. Intermediate models are possible depending on the number of chief actors and the degree of equality or inequality of forces among the chief actors.

This leads to the second chapter that explains the functioning of the bipolar model that characterized the balance of power mechanism during the Cold War period, with the two superpowers dominating the two rival blocs. The international system came to be dominated by the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union leading the NATO (a military alliance comprises of leading West European countries) and Warsaw Pact (a military alliance of major East European countries) respectively.

Apparently it seemed that the Soviet-American rivalry during the Cold War was motivated by a desire to protect and promote respective national interest and the resulting competition of the bipolar world has in fact gone forward simultaneously in several parallel arenas. The first of these is the strategic theatre which entailed nuclear proliferation and the resultant arms race between the superpowers. However, it was the deterrence strategy that deterred each superpower from making a nuclear attack on the other, thereby maintaining the global balance of power; the second encompasses the Eurasian landmass, primarily Europe in the West and northern Asia in the East where each superpower tried to maintain its dominance; and the third arena might simply be labeled the ‘third world’ where the United States wanted to check any kind of Soviet expansionist policy and to block the growing influence of communism and support moderate nationalists in the colonial empires. In the latter two arenas the superpowers however did not intervene with overt military actions against each other and sustained each of its position by forming alliances aiming towards the achievement of a stable balance of power between them.

In the third chapter the liberal and neoliberal perspectives of the Cold War period is discussed. The core concept of this chapter is to justify that not only through alliance formation and balance of power mechanism global peace sustained during the Cold War, but the liberal notion of cooperation between states through the formation of international organizations and institutions remained one of the primary factors for maintaining peace during the period. This chapter is organized in four different phases where each phase discusses how international organizations played their respective roles in bringing about cooperation among nation states and thereby maintained peace amidst the odds of the superpower rivalry of the Cold War period.
In spite of strong justifications and arguments on part of the liberal and neoliberal scholars that world peace could be sustained through cooperation among nation states with the international organizations and institutions playing the mediating roles, one cannot deny the strong foothold of realism as a theory dominating the discipline of international relations for almost about a century. Thus this research work concentrates on the realist notion of alliances and balance of power that prevailed during the Cold War period and the South Eastern Asian region has been chosen as an element of case study which is dealt in chapter four and five.

Most of the third world countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America apparently remained committed to the principle of non alignment throughout the Cold War period i.e. they belonged neither to the US nor to the Soviet bloc. But in reality most of these countries could not adhere to such principle as they soon got entangled in superpower rivalry.

With the end of the Second World War the communist victory in China and the growing Soviet influence in North Korea made the United States apprehensive of the Soviet Union’s expansionist policy in Asia. On the other hand, American policy in Asia was aimed at preserving friendly relations with Japan and South Korea. Thus the Soviet Union, China and North Korea were pitted against the United States, Japan and South Korea. However, in South Eastern Asian region (comprising the East, Southeast and South Asia) the Cold War between the superpowers was launched with the outbreak of the Korean War. The United States thus formed bilateral alliances to take stand against communism: with Philippines and Japan in 1951, with Republic of Korea (ROK) in 1953, and the Republic of China (ROC) in 1954 (which was terminated in 1979 and replaced by the Taiwan Relations Act). The United States also formed two multilateral alliances, South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO), and CENTO as Asian counterpart to NATO to thwart Soviet expansion.

The main concern of the United States in Asia was the growing Soviet influence in the Indochina region and hence it got entangled in the long drawn Vietnam War that proved to be disastrous. Meanwhile the United States taking advantage over the Sino-Soviet split got engaged in the policy of rapprochement with China. Turning to South Asia it is observed that Pakistan has always remained a close ally of the United States and helped the United States to establish friendly relations with China. Thus a United States-Pakistan-China axis was formed in Asia during the Cold War. On the other hand
US-India relations remained without warmth and the latter’s support for Vietnam during the war and India signing a Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union in 1971 (in wake of Bangladesh War) further embittered the relations between the two countries. The United States defeat in the Vietnam War revealed her weakness which provided opportunities to the Soviets to proceed with their expansionist policy. In fact the Soviet backed Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in 1978 and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 can all be seen as part of that pattern. However the United States’ relations with Japan remained cordial throughout the Cold War period and the two countries maintained close cooperation in security and economic spheres.

Thus the overall scenario in East, South East and South Asia reflected a contention between the two superpowers where each accused the other having designs to gain control of the region by forming alliances with the regional actors.

Chapter four identifies East and South East Asia for case study in analyzing the nature of alliance formation and how the balance of power between the superpowers functioned in this region during the Cold War, including the regional balance affected by local actors. Chapter five identifies South Asian region for case study in understanding the nature of alliance formation and functioning of balance of power between the superpowers encompassing the nature of regional balance determined by the local actors during the Cold War. These two chapters are dealt to seek answers to such questions as what kind of situation prevailed in the South Eastern Asian region during the Cold War period – was it apparently stable despite few frictions or generally anarchic? Pre-eminent in anarchy-stability scenario was the functioning of balance of power and alliance formation a key element of security cooperation? In what form balance of power evolved and sustained?

Chapter four is divided into two sections. Section one of the chapter deals with an overview of the course of events that occurred in East and South East Asian region during the Cold War period in three different phases (phase1-1945-60, phase2-1961-70 and phase3-1971-90) analyzing the role played by the superpowers and the local actors affecting the regional politics. Some of the major events discussed are the formation of People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Korean War, the US-Japan relations, the Indochina crises, the Sino-Soviet rivalry, the Vietnam War, the Cambodian adventure, Sino-US rapprochement, regional security arrangement (SEATO) and the formation of the first regional grouping – ASEAN. Chapter five is
divided into two sections. Like chapter four this chapter also deals with an overview of the course of events that occurred in South Asian region during the Cold War period in four different phases (phase1-1947-60, phase2-1961-70, phase3-1971-80 and phase4-1981-90) analyzing the role played by the superpowers and the local actors affecting the regional politics. Some of the major events discussed are the roots of the Kashmir issue, Indo-Pak relations, India’s foreign policy, Pakistan’s foreign policy, India-China war of 1962, Indo-Pak war of 1971, Indo-Soviet friendship treaty, nuclear policies and security of India and Pakistan, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The second section of both chapters four and five analyzes whether there was existence of balance of power between the superpowers while getting involved into the regional politics of East and South East Asia and South Asia respectively during the Cold War discussed in the previous section. It also analyzes whether the regional balance of power was maintained during the Cold War and the extent to which the local actors affected the regional balance of power. While analyzing the nature of balance of power mechanism prevailing in East, South East and South Asian region this section of both chapters four and five unfolds the pattern of superpower relation in South Eastern Asian region during the Cold War. In order to explore such a situation, in the second section of both chapters four and five the United States and the Soviet Union’s perception of East and South East Asia and South Asia respectively as well as the latter’s perception of the superpowers during the Cold War is analyzed and then moves on subsequently to determine the nature of alliance formation, bipolarity and balancing in South East Asian region during the Cold War.