CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION
It is risky at any point of time to say that a political system is in a process of fundamental change. However, having said that, policy-makers and academic experts have time and again, explicitly or implicitly observed and commented on a “fundamental change” in the international system.

The international system since the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 which recognised the state as the supreme or sovereign power within its boundaries, still remains very much a Westphalian one --- a system of states that are subject to minimal international governance and that go to war regularly to release various goals. “The anarchical society” 1 as Hedley Bull describes the international system. “Anarchy” 2 as Kenneth Waltz puts it.

As the “bloodiest” century draws to a close there are, however, grounds now for thinking that there are significant changes occurring in the growth of international cooperation or regimes --- and consequently in the strength of governance in the international system --- a kind of “international order” that some statesmen and scholars thought would come about after the end of World War I.

The changes are rested on the intensity of economic, social and environmental to necessitate high levels of coordination that is leading to states becoming increasingly enmeshed in a network of interdependencies and regulatory arrangements from which

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2 Kenneth N. Waltz, Theory of International Politics (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p.3
exit is generally not a feasible option. Which means that though from a purely legal perspective states still have the sovereign right and are not bounded by international accord but because of the existing time and the nature of problems (some global in dimensions), states are 'showing tendencies' to shed their rigid high degree of policy autonomy in their international relations. As Harold Jacobson judges, "States entangled in webs of international organisations is the proper simile to describe the contemporary global political system". ³

That states are increasingly being involved in formal and informal regimes does not necessarily imply that their degree of autonomy is declining. In fact, greater the participation, greater is the differences that emerge. It is in resolving the differences that the importance of sovereignty comes up and linked as it is with external security and national interest often if not always acts as a stumbling block in reaching a viable agreement. Mark Zacher's sixth and final identification of the pillars of state autonomy suggests, "a high degree of cultural, political, and economic heterogeneity among states that make the coordination of policies difficult because the differences sustain a nationalist commitment to autonomy, promote varied interests, and hinder communication". ⁴

If the world, in the words of Emanuel Adler, is in the process of a transition from "a season of general stability" to "a season of common security", then one can strongly assume that the scope of international governance will be profound. But civil conflicts, traditional national acquisitiveness, a continued willingness of states to take risks and provoke despite the destructiveness of weapons, the persistence of traditional international security "cultures", religious fundamentalism in some part of the world and states attachment to autonomy in decision making all make Adler's view quite difficult to accomplish. The realists are, therefore, quite correct in their understanding of the centrality of security concerns to all facets of international relations. States willingness to compromise their autonomy in some significant ways is not a regular feature and at best a feature that happens in fits and starts.

This can be cited through a variety of types of environmental problems that have in recent decades elicited international interest. While they have evoked a variety of forms of international collaboration but have hardly involved the required degree of cooperation. Jessica Tuchman Mathews optimistically says, "Environmental strains that transcend national borders are already beginning to break down the sacred boundaries of national sovereignty" but is hard to foresee that the emergence of environmental regimes will impose significant constraints on state behaviour. This can be illustrated through the problem of the 'warming of the earth' as a result of "green-house gases" which reduces the escape of radiation from the earth's atmosphere. The biggest

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5 Ibid., p.48
problem is carbon dioxide, which comes from burning fossil fuels. States are unwilling to cut substantially carbon dioxide emission mainly because it will hamper their development and also because oil is a national interest resource that has over a period of time and because of no viable alternative or the lack of political will for an alternative has become the backbone for national income as much as it has spawned lobbies that seek to protect the immense wealth that oil generates.

Likewise deforestation increases the content of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere but when linked with development as it is for the case of much of the developing countries becomes an issue that cannot be compromised. Both fossil fuels and forest resources has economic costs attached to it that makes any state hard to enter an arrangement seeking to curb effectively the carbon dioxide emission. The common enemy of global warming is not commonly harmful to all states and the costs of contributing to its solution are quite different for countries at different levels of development. Until and unless the catastrophic nature of environmental problem is effected directly on the economics of states in greater numbers and of the significant political repercussion that will come about in their respective boundaries, until then states will be ever be reluctant to enter an environmental regime and trade-off their autonomy.

In spite of the network of collaborative arrangements or regimes that are trying to create a very different international political world, states are still the central political actors and their actions are governed much by the realist perception of sovereignty, national
interest and security. John Herz’s 1959 hypothesis had described the emergence of “neoterritoriality” - a world in which sovereign states recognise their interests in mutual respect for each other’s independence and in extensive cooperation — a possible international system with ethical overtones. But Herz’s analysis though optimistic is also at the same time circumspect, “Neoterritoriality will function only if and when the danger of nuclear destruction and the interdependence of humans and their societies on the globe will have made nations and their leaders aware that the destiny awaiting us is now common to all.”7 This from a very perceptive political analyst underlines the ever looming presence of realism in international system — power politics, security, national interest and sovereignty.

Realism is primarily concerned with the protection of state-sovereignty and the survival of the state as a discrete actor. This perspective tends to rank environmental questions comparatively low on the scale of threats to national security, relative to the capabilities and intentions of potentially hostile neighbouring states. If an environmental problem is recognised as a potential threat to the security of the state, the territorial and possessive qualities of realism tends to favour unilateral solutions to such problems, seeking to maximise, or at least optimise the state’s access to scarce resources of say water, oil and land. Realism in international system advocates action by the state and its agencies to maintain and/or acquire control of resources. Faced with threats to the control of resources, states in the international system endorse military actions to maintain the

state's advantage. Power politics also ensures the strategic control of resources, for example the US under the Reagan and Bush administrations lobbied hard to privatise the ‘global commons’, specially mining-rights on the seabed conforming in the process a desire to maximise free access to the ‘commons’ by those with the financial and technical resources to exploit them in preference to a common-heritage regime with commitments to redistribute income among those who could not extract the benefit.

Sovereignty over natural resources is a fundamental demand of all countries. It is a highly charged and sensitive question especially for the developing countries. One of the logical components of self-determination is a permanent sovereignty over natural resources and any resource conservation through legal codes and environmental regimes makes the developing countries jittery and resentful. The extension of common-heritage argument to sovereign resources invariably provokes a hostile response on grounds of national sovereignty as the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dr. Mahatir Mohammad said in the Rio Conference in 1992, “The poor countries have been told to preserve their forests and other genetic resources on the off-chance that at some future date something is discovered which might prove useful to humanity. This is the same as telling these poor countries that they must continue to be poor because their forests and other resources are more precious than themselves.”

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The ‘Northern’ developed countries enthusiasm for the preservation of the ‘Third World’ environmental quality can be perceived as an approach towards “eco-colonialism”. The North having spent the past 400 years depleting their own forest resources and 200 years blanketing the atmosphere with carbon dioxide emissions, now desire to protect the natural wealth of the developing countries in the name of common heritage of mankind is nothing but hypocritical and more importantly demonstrates the ‘carrot and stick’ power politics. Will the UK turn over the North Sea oil for the common heritage of mankind? Will the US in the same spirit that it advocates to the Developing countries make the new found oil reserves in the Alaska region a common heritage for mankind?

It can be recalled the USA and UK along with the other G-7 powers and the European Community (EC) countries did not ratify the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea. These developed countries have undermined common-heritage arguments by their selective utilisation of the convention’s provisions for the extension of sovereign rights over territorial waters, the 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone, and maximum possible 350-mile claims to the Continental Shelf. An attempt by a small number of equatorial Third World countries to apply the same logic to outer space, in the claims of the Bogota Declaration to extend air space into geo-stationary orbits space, proved unsuccessful. In the international system where power politics rules the roost things are seldom on equal terms.
It is the tenor of political relations that shapes any feasible environmental cooperation. Resource control, exploitation and use are inter linked with perceptions of national security and the role this linkage plays in perpetuating international distrust and even dispute.

Environmental policies cannot be, therefore, devised and implemented as if in a political vacuum. In exploring systematically the ways in which discursive and material practices are politically constructed and mediated, it is hence impossible not to consider politics in addressing the issues of environmental change or certain means to go about rectifying the environmental malady.

One such means which has become a leitmotif, which promises to set all environmental problems right and is increasingly being considered by policy-makers and grass-roots activist is ‘Sustainable Development’. However, there is an intense political nature of sustainable development — from its initial definition to its implementation. First, sustainable development means different things to different people and, therefore, what is sustainable to one state cannot necessarily be sustainable to another. Sustainable development is increasingly being used as a means to classify a wide variety of economic activities — eco-tourism and plantation forestry — which are money generating activities instead of a more social context approach — involving indigenous people/tribes participation with their local environmental know-how. Such an approach of the state is focused on specifying the economic measures needed for sustainable development — that is, on seeking to integrate ecological factors into the economic
calculations. Sustainable development policies affect power relations in society generally. As Raymond Bryant says, "Just as human-induced environmental degradation reflects, and in turn, often reinforces power relations, so too the quest for sustainable development has a socially differentiated impact that is ripe with political meaning."\(^9\) As he goes on to say, "An important difference between the traditional and new industries is that political and economic elite have been able to use the latter to support their general claim that they are promoting activities consonant with sustainable development. That general claim is used in turn, by the states to proclaim their 'responsible' stewardship of the environment, solicit donor assistance and neutralise popular criticism."\(^10\)

In order to make sense of the inter-relatedness of politics and environmental problems, the thesis locates the high politics of external security, sovereignty, nationalism and perceptions as against the environmental problems in South Asia. For it is at the regional level that the interplay between political and environmental forces can best be analysed and understood. The thesis explores this interaction in the South Asian setting. South Asia has always presented a clarion call for more and better cooperation in resolving conflict. However, South Asia presents several fundamental tenets that highlight the essence of 'realism' and which because of it frequently mars reasonable and long lasting cooperation. These tenets are:

\(^10\) Ibid., p.5
The state is the only significant actor.

South Asia resembles the “state of nature” and is governed by the principle of self-help, which holds that states compete with one another and act only on the basis of self-interest.

States in the region are equal only in terms of their sovereignty.

Power determines the behaviour of the states in the region and propels it to maintain a certain hierarchy.

Such tenets can be argued to be a traditional political-military one, which does not serve as a guide for understanding the dynamics of conflict in the South Asian region. Other factors like the cultural, demographic, developmental, economic, ecological, religious and psychological cannot be ruled out without sparing a thought but it is the political-military whether manifested in conventional diplomatic relations or in situations of nascent conflict or full-scale conflagrations that dictate the landscape of South Asia. Therefore, realism cannot be easily discarded.

One of the features of the South Asian conflicts is that it is predominantly intrastate which can be defined as “identity-based” ¹¹, constituting a direct challenge to existing state authority. Such internal conflict is in contrast with the traditional interstate conflict. National and other identity groups typically define their actions as consistent with their own interpretation of legal conventions. They argue that since the conflict is internal,

their actions fall outside the realm of international law, and since they are challenging the constituted order, their actions fall outside the realm of domestic law.

Conflict hence has become highly conventional --- targeting civilians and destroying the natural resources for tactical and strategic gains. Such conflicts, whether called "protracted social conflict" 12 or "deep rooted conflict" 13 is characterised as hostile interaction among groups, where hatred, political and economic oppression, and other forms of victimization (perceived or actual) run along ethnic or identity based lines and periodically flare up in acts of extreme violence.

Looking at South Asia, conflict can be defined as escalated competition at any system level between groups whose aim is to gain advantage in the area of power, resources, interests, values or needs. It also has a "spill-over" effect that involves interstate rivalry.

Transformation of conflict according to John Lederach implies a deliberate process of embedding or "nesting" changes in a conflict's manifestation at the personal, relational, structural and cultural levels. 14 At the personal level, a transformational approach focuses on changes in perceptions of and attitudes toward the conflict, and in the conditions reflecting individuals physical, psychological, and spiritual well being. This

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suggests an intervention strategy designed to lessen immediate suffering and other psychological destructive effects of the conflict. At the relational level, improvements in the interaction and communication can increase mutual understanding and reduce fear, forcing parties to confront the terms of mutual interdependence. Transformation of conflicts concerns not only psychological aspects of the actors but also the social, economic, political and military relations as well.

Structural dimension of conflict focuses on the social environment necessary to fulfill basic human needs — access to religious, economic and political resources — and the need to participate in decision-making process.

Cultural dimension of conflict focuses on the values and beliefs that support interaction within a society. Transformation at this level is about identifying and reshaping the patterns that contribute to increased incidents of conflict — indigenous tribes, their resources and their management of it.

Conflict and the transformation of conflict in south Asia can be best understood by James Rosenau's, "bifurcation of world politics" 15 analyses of the post-Cold War world. Rosenau puts forwards three levels in a sovereignty-bound world and a sovereignty-free world. The first, the micro-level refers to the cognitive and behavioral skills by which people "link themselves to the macro world of global politics" 16. The

16 Ibid., p.10
second, the macro-level or structural refers to the “constraints embedded in the
distribution of power among and within the collectivities of the global system” 17. The
third, the mixed-level refers to “the nature of authority relations that prevail between
individuals at the micro-level and their macro collectivities.” 18

The bifurcation of world politics has not pushed the state out of the picture. In fact in
the supposedly “world order system in transition”, the state, power, national interest and
diplomacy assume a much wider frame. In such a framework what to do with conflict
remains the fundamental question. Whether it can be resolved, settled, managed,
regulated, escalated or terminated depends on how the state’s interest is at stake.

In South Asia the ‘realistic conflict theory’, therefore holds solid ground, for conflict in
the region as stated earlier is the result of incompatible interests, competition for scarce
resource including territory and of groups’ or nations’ attempts to maximise their
positions, rewards or outcomes. The relations between group v. group or group v. state
or the compatibility or incompatibility of “real” interests determines state v. state.

In a ‘group v. group’ or ‘in-group v. out-group’ or the “we-them” dichotomy, scarcity
of resources and subsequently competition over it frequently results in exacerbated and
prolonged conflict. In fact, the ‘group v. group’ is the incipient stage of conflict which
grows and transforms eventually into a ‘state v. state’ one. The competition over the

17 Ibid., p.10
18 Ibid., p.10
use of a scarce renewable resource can be seen as incompatibility among the groups in society. The exploitation or overuse of common natural resources by one party helps to organise new parties or to persuade the already existing parties to take up this issue in an intention to protect their interests.

The importance and urgency of protecting one’s own share of natural resources or acquiring from others potentially creates conflicting groups in a society. The activation of groups takes place in accordance with the existing religion, caste, class, linguistic differences or the scarce resource can itself bring the “we-them” dichotomy into the society. If one party perceives the state as a collaborator with the other, then this group conflict transforms into a ‘state v. group’ conflict and as discussed in the thesis turns into a secessionist movement.

In a ‘state v. group’ situation the resource uses of the state agency in a particular area or region is perceived by the local population as exploitation of the interests of the others. If the affected people belong to an ethnic minority group, then the perceived exploitation by the majority ruled state, might further stretch the already existing social dichotomies and contribute to the activation of actors. Likewise, if the environmental destruction is being perceived as premeditated imposition on a particular region or people, it then leads to the formation of a new actor in conflict with the state. The importance of the exploited resources elevates the probability of the ensuing conflict.
In the absence of an early resolution, these conflicts lead to struggles for autonomy or secession. Volker Boge’s study on the conflict between the forces of the State of Papua New Guinea and the secessionist forces of Bougainville island\textsuperscript{19} is an excellent example. According to Boge, one of the main causes of the struggle is “severe environmental degradation, which has endangered the very conditions of survival of the island’s indigenous population.” The lives of the inhabitants of Bougainville Island changed dramatically after the digging of one of the world’s biggest copper mines in the Panaguna hills in 1972. The mines and its related environmental damages reduced the availability of agricultural land as well as its yield. Deforestation and river pollution badly affected fishing and hunting in the island. For the local tribal population the mining operations was a bane. For the state it was a major pillar for economic growth in the country. The clash of two different interests was imminent. In the autumn of 1988 the Bougainvilleans sabotaged the mines and subsequently a bitter conflict against the troops of the National Government of Papua New Guinea for secession followed.

Lest this thesis falls into the domain of ‘political ecology’ an explanation is needed. Political ecology originated in the early 70’s at a time when human-environment interaction was coming under close public as well as scholarly scrutiny, especially in the developed world. As a result this emerging field had a strong negative connotations for many on the political left owing to its association with the work of Paul Ehrlich, Garret Hardin, Heilbroner and Ophulus. The eco-doomsayers predicted that the world faced

imminent social and environmental catastrophe due to runaway population growth (in the Third World) and consumption pattern (in the Developed world). They argued that an authoritarian global state was needed to enforce ‘limits of growth’. This school of thought was also known as the ‘neo-Malthusianism’. Its penchant for drastic political prescriptions to solve the world’s environmental crisis led to its work being described as political ecology. The thesis does not pretend to offer any “political prescription” but only states the issues of environment in relation to the high politics of state’s sovereignty, its national interest, security and threat perception and how these ‘realist’ issues dictate the proceedings in any environmental problem solutions.

The thesis is divided into five core chapters. Chapter II, ‘Types of Conflict in International Relations. A Theoretical Perspective’, puts forward a state-centric view. That state in the interstate system is primarily active in the sphere of politico-strategic and military field. Struggle for power defines states role and state’s national interest hence is to maximise power. The chapter devotes considerable space to war, which is an inevitable outcome of the social and political institutions in which states operate. War, therefore, can be viewed as one possible mode of policy activity aimed at effectively and favourably resolving on going conflict of interests. War, hence becomes like negotiations, conciliation, mediation or arbitration, a conflict procedure. While charting the causes of war into four categories — material, efficient, formal and final, Aristotle’s suggestion of causes has been taken. The typology of conflicts forms the core of the chapter and is aided by a chart to make clear the various degrees of numerous types of conflicts.
Chapter III, 'Environmental and Political Conflicts. Some Case Studies', as the title suggests puts forward how environmental changes lead to conflict. While environmental change contribute to conflicts as diverse as war, terrorism and trade disputes, it also has different causal roles: in some cases, it may be a proximate and powerful cause; in others, it may only be a minor and distant player that involves many political, economic and physical factors. It takes various case studies to illustrate the point. The crux of the chapter is the part, 'Power Politics vs. Environmental Concerns'. It takes the "Realist" view that states that are antagonists in the "high politics" of war and diplomacy tend not to be able to cooperate in the realm of "low politics" of environmental concern and welfare. It takes two case studies --- the greenhouse gases emission and the Jordan River water sharing to illustrate the point.

Chapter IV, 'Political Aspect of Environmental Conflicts: A Study of Conflict Transformation', looks into South Asia which offers a clear example of how power politicises the environment. Power whether concentrated with a select group or becoming diffuse is at the heart of the politicised environment. It is the unequal power relations of actors that are central to environmental conflicts. Since political decisions ultimately shapes or rectifies environmental problem and since states power are directly related to economic surplus which is related to maximising natural resources, hence any environmental conflict at its core is a political conflict.

Chapter V 'Political Conflict, Environmental Issues and Foreign Policies with Special Reference to South Asia', looks into the transformational ability of conflict in
the Sub-Continent. Because of this national sovereignty and national interest becomes an important feature. An important feature of the states interaction in the region has been the asymmetry of India in relation to her neighbours as well as her dominance and centrality in the region's states-system. The distinct feature in the Sub-Continent is that the internal, political, economic, social and environmental processes within countries affect the nature of relationships between them at both the bilateral and regional levels. The chapter further examines why India remains an inescapable geo-political reality suggesting that any country in the Sub-Continent has to conduct its foreign policies, whether it be water cooperation or sharing the waters of the rivers or other environmental cooperations, keeping in mind India's perceived fundamental interest. It looks into two aspects — conflict and confrontation; and suspicion and mistrust. Indo-Pak; Indo-Sri Lanka; and Indo-Bangladesh; Indo-Bhutan; Indo-Nepal relations are examined. Water conflict, water management and environmental aspects are the central feature when especially examining Indo-Bangladesh and Indo-Nepal.

Chapter VI 'Diplomacy of Environmental Issues in 'North-South' Context: A Case Study of India', deals with environmental diplomacy. The 1992 Rio Earth Summit is a watershed in India's environmental diplomacy. The assessment of India's diplomacy at Rio is done on a two-fold approach — Collective approach, in which India through the Forest Convention and the Convention on Biodiversity became the championed voice of the South and thus the issue of the environment gave India a chance to reinvent its leadership role in the South countries. The Individual approach of India is more self-centred keeping in mind the importance of aid flow from the North countries. At Rio
India stressed upon the importance of money as statements by Kamal Nath, the Minister of Environment and Forests reflects. India's diplomacy of criticising the North for the environment ills and paying for the corrective measures in the South developing countries seems to have worked. India since Rio has become one of the top ten recipients of about 80% of private capital flows and 3/4th of FDI (Foreign Direct Investment). The WB (World Bank) has projected that foreign investment will continue to grow at 7-10% per year over the next decade. For attracting this money flow, India stepped up its reforms — societal and fiscal, internalised Agenda 21 and introduced bold initiatives to control pollution and protection of the ozone layer. The net result was that India was in a good position to ask for technological exchange as well as financial investment. The Enron project was the first concrete fall out of the Rio meet. India's diplomacy in the Enron deal seems to be clearly directed at attracting the US based power corporation into the power sector in order to make other companies line up for various other projects that India had in mind in the infrastructure sector. One good deal with Enron would spell good deal with other companies, is what India bargained for and went all out to offer the best bargain for Enron. India’s environmental diplomacy clearly outlines the idea of development linked environmental protection, that is the primacy of development rather than the North industrial countries advocacy of environment first.