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I bear entire responsibility for the various conclusions I have reached, as well as for whatever error of fact or reasoning there may be.

Srikant Mohapatra
South Asia exhibits all the general characteristics of a Third World region. The seven actors in the regional scene, namely, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives are new states. They have experienced violence and turmoil in the process of state and nation building. They are all economically backward. Uneven growth, hunger, malnutrition are the most pressing problems and the real challenges for these countries. Diversion of scarce resources to defence is bound to have an adverse impact on the development of the socio-economic infrastructure in these countries.

The perception of insecurity is very high in the subcontinent. Though the concept of security has multifarious connotations, the military dimension of security has thus far clouded the vision of policymakers in these countries. The present study is an attempt to measure such perception and its impact on both qualitative and quantitative defence build-up in the region.

Defence build-up is calculated here with the help of three broad parameters, viz. military expenditure, armed forces (including arms transfer), and arms production. The nuclear capability has not become a major part of this study partly because this in itself requires special attention, and secondly the scope of this study is limited to an assessment of conventional military capability. However, the nuclear aspect is highlighted whenever it merits attention.

Chapter I of this study investigates the perception of threat to national security in the South Asia region. Security perception has been analysed from three different but interrelated dimensions, namely,
domestic turmoil, intra-regional rivalry, and perception of extra-regional threat to peace and security in the subcontinent. The emphasis here is on the development of a theoretical framework on security problematics of the Third World, and on the observation of how the behaviour of the regional actors fit into that general framework. It also deals with the distinctions between regime security and national security, and observes the significance of these concepts in divergent political systems. Since the analysis of security perception falls within the subjective domain, its interpretation can also differ with the change of political actors, and it may undergo change over space and time. The various factors influencing such perceptions are the subject matter of discussion here. The study aims at linking perception with capability in the field of defence, and emphasises that both carry their meaning in relation to the other. Since the militarisation process undertaken by South Asian countries are justified in the light of their perception of threat, the subsequent analysis is an attempt at empirical study of defence build-up.

In Chapter II the main focus is on economic resources devoted to defence in South Asia. Certain indicators are used to evaluate the magnitude of defence expenditure and the latter's impact on conflict escalation. The study follows the widely prevalent practice of estimating the ratio of defence outlay to the Gross National Product and percentage share of defence from total expenditure met from the revenue receipt, in order to ascertain the degree to which these countries value military spending over other forms of governmental allocation. The inter-services share of defence expenditure (wherever available) is highlighted here.
Chapter III includes a study of the armed forces in South Asia. In this section the emphasis is on human resources devoted to defence. There is use of both qualitative and quantitative components in the analyses on the effectiveness of these forces for the defence of the country. The concept of quantity includes the number of men in uniform, number of troops for each kilometer of territory, number of aircraft, ships, tanks, and artillery pieces available for these troops. Quality refers to the quality of weapons compared to that of the adversary, defence planning, and security doctrine. The procurement of weapons highlights the issues involved (such as money, strategy and threats), leadership in command, and the suppliers role. The impact of arms transfer on strategic military balance and the resultant competitive defence build-up are discussed in this section.

Chapter IV focuses on the production of arms and ammunition in the region by its two principal actors, namely India and Pakistan. Here an attempt is made to study the stages of growth of armament industries, the level of research and development, particular items produced (including indigenous production and licence manufacture) and the different motivations and capacity for weapons production. Also, the obstacles confronted by these countries in achieving self-reliance and self-sufficiency in defence production are portrayed.

The final chapter summarises the major findings of this study that in each country in the region there is preparation for greater future conflict than future cooperation. Mutual mistrust and suspicion is so pervasive between India and Pakistan that it looks difficult to predict that the conflict and tension of the past years would be replaced by detente and cooperation between them. The first step to avoid a future conflict lies in evolving a bilateral conflict resolution mechanism.