CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: SECURITY PERCEPTIONS IN SOUTH ASIA

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1.1 Security:

In a general sense, security implies state security or protection of the nation-state. Defining the concept Walter Lippmann argued:

A nation is secure to the extent to which it is not in danger of having to sacrifice core values, if it wishes to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by victory in such a war.(1)

Arnold Wolfers identifies national independence and territorial integrity as minimum national core values, though for him national security is an 'ambiguous symbol' lacking precise meaning. The danger that a nation encounters in maintaining its independence and integrity can be considered as a security threat. The vast body of literature on security is overwhelmingly dominated by the idea of military threat to national security, and projects security problems of developing countries from a western perspective. This narrow definition comprising security and core values have often neglected other aspects of threat confronting the Third World. These countries are vulnerable to problems which are not always military in nature but which have the same potentiality and consequence like the military threat. In the words of Robert S. McNamara:


In a modernising society security means development. Security is not military hardware, though it may include it. Security is not military force, though it may involve it. Security is not traditional military activity, though it may encompass it. Security is development and without development there can be no security. (4)

Hence, military capability alone is insufficient to guarantee national security. Political stability, economic self-sufficiency, and a broad cultural base are prime requisites for the security of a country. But these vulnerabilities can only become an integral component of security when they become acute enough so that the state would perceive an open threat to its core values.

1.2 Security Perception in the Third World:

Security Perception is an important element in any exercise in defence decision-making. Since perception of threat to national security projects the basic issues relating to when, why and how decisions are made on defence matters, the decision-makers take an important place here. Such perceivers may be a single individual or a group, or there might be an elaborate apparatus to perceive threat, depending upon the nature of government and the political system. The degree of distortion in security decisions based upon the perception of one man or a few would be greater compared to a political system where decisions are taken by the elected representatives. In every kind of political system threat perception undergoes change over time. "Dissimilar political units are likely to generate dissimilar perceptions of similar threats."  

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It is difficult to conceptualise the security decisions of developing countries because attempts are often made to treat the state as being inseparable from the ruling regime. Any threat to the regime is interpreted as a national security problem. This interchangeable perception of regime security and national security makes it an uphill task to distinguish between perception and reality. Perception becomes as important as reality if security decision-makers operate on the belief that their perception is reality. Problems arise when hard evidence is distorted to fit the perception, or when, as Robert Jervis argues, while making security decisions "one tends to see what one believes".

Perceived threat includes both estimated capacity and estimated intention. Assessing the military capability of a country is an easy task but study its intention is difficult. Where relations between countries remain antagonistic over a period of time, and both structural and situational factors exist such that they might lead to an eruption of war, then the threat each perceives from the other is real. But nation-building tasks in narrowly based regimes are often performed by magnifying the potential external threat. The vital task undertaken is to gain regime legitimacy which otherwise becomes difficult. The attention of the people is diverted from internal problems to external danger.


Besides ensuring regime acceptability this helps in bringing unity in a fragmented society.

Security perception is influenced by a host of factors. The geostrategic location influences the perception. Physical configuration (e.g. island, land-locked), location in areas of high inter-state tension, super power rivalry or proximity to strategic communication links and bordering big powers (acting as buffers), shape the perception of security decision-makers. Sometimes historical factors influence contemporary perception. Memories of past invasion mould the present outlook with regard to a particular state. But over-reaction on historical events and experiences may also lead to misperception of the present situation. Socio-cultural factors add to the sense of insecurity for many new states as nation-building process poses serious crisis. The growth of sub-nationalistic sentiments among minorities is a direct threat to the nation. The situation becomes further complicated when minorities or sub-national groups in one country receive direct sympathy and support from across the border cutting artificial state boundaries. In this manner, the haphazard colonial demarcation of state boundaries contributes to the legacy of conflict that many Third World countries confront today.


It is essential to identify the sources of threat. The traditional literature on security limits itself to the issue of the protection of the state from external attack only. But, threat may emanate from three different sources - domestic, regional and international. Domestic turmoil in the form of subversive, secessionist and terrorist activities, narrow base of the political regime, and uneven distribution of economic resources pose threat. The various groups who are denied a share in national power and wealth, often perceive the state and its nation-building process as a threat to their security. On the other hand, state feels that these anti-national activities could only be eliminated by the use, or the threat of use of the military power at its disposal.

National military power is viewed as essential in defending against not only external threats but also a wide range of internal threats. The military in the Third World is frequently called upon to utilise its power of coercion in the domestic arena, to ward off or eliminate indigenous threats to the survival of the polity and/or the longevity of the regime, and to attempt forcefully to resolve ethnic and communal conflict. (17)

These sub-groups in their pursuit for self-determination seek external support and sanctuary in neighbouring countries while the ruling regime in its effort to neutralise such outside help for the secessionists itself seeks external support. As domestic problems spill over borders, external powers get involved in internal conflict. When both the rulers and the dissidents seek external help to advance their

own interests, an inter-relationship is established between external and internal threats.

A mix of internal and external sources of threat to small states' structures and particularly to its ruling elites, is quite often heavily weighted in favour of internal sources. Moreover, external threats quite often augment the problems of insecurity that exist within state boundaries.(19)

This 'internal-external conflict nexus' is also possible in countries with a high degree of domestic discord and political instability. The ruling class shall try to identify an external enemy against which various antagonistic and conflicting groups can rally with the belief that external threat to a nation often tends to increase internal cohesion.

...groups seeking self-preservation... may be driven to a policy of foreign conflict-if not open war - in order to defend themselves against the onslaught of domestic enemies.(21)

External intervention does not take place only due to a state's internal contradictions. Inter-state disputes over demarcation of land and maritime boundaries, sharing of natural resources, ethnic and communal spill-overs constitute the second dimension of security. In the Third World, relations between neighbours are vitiated because of


mutual suspicion, distrust and misgivings which have their origin in the colonial rule. The arbitrary delineation of land frontiers, to carve out states where none had existed, is the gift of colonial rulers. Owing to this, the post-colonial period has witnessed widespread inter-state disputes over these seemingly unresolved issues. Where states in a particular region perceived imbalance in military capability vis-a-vis their comparatively big neighbours, attempts were made to seek support from extra-regional sources to alter the status quo. This provides an opportunity to the extra-regional actors to get a foothold in the affairs of other regions.

These three sources of threat are not exclusive, they are inter-related and reinforce each other. Domestic crisis, which is both a cause and a result of inter-state conflict, creates the ground for the involvement of extra-regional powers. But instead of reducing tension, the entry of outside powers in domestic and regional affairs, heightens internal problems and inter-state conflicts respectively.

1.3 Security in Southern Asia

South Asia is Indo-centric and the regional power structure is asymmetrical and hierarchical. Four states share a common land border with India, and two states share maritime boundaries. All countries in the region are related to India by both socio-cultural ties and historical experience. Ethnic groups in one country have close ties with similar ethnic groups living in India, so that any trouble faced by a country has a spill-over effect in India and vice versa. India therefore has to face both the goodwill and suspicion of its neighbours.

The distribution of power in South Asia is uneven. India is described as a dominant major power while Pakistan is a significant

middle power. Bangladesh, with more population than that of Pakistan, is a weak and dependant middle power. Sri Lanka and Nepal are small powers while Bhutan and Maldives are micro powers. Besides gross imbalance in military capabilities there is uneven distribution of economic resources, population and territory. India is not only bigger than any other country in the region but it is bigger than all of them put together. It accounts for 76 per cent of the population, 72 per cent of its area, 79 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product, 46 per cent of the military manpower, and 72 per cent of the estimated defence expenditure in South Asia.

Systemic divergence is more pronounced in South Asia than in any other region. Two of the countries, India and Sri Lanka, have successfully retained the democratic system, though both countries in the last decade have passed through serious crises emerging from the domestic milieu, which threatened the political system and jolted the unity and integrity of the nation. Pakistan and Bangladesh have been swinging between long periods of military rule and brief democratic experiments. Nepal, a traditional autocratic monarchy, has recently switched over to a multi-party democratic system. Maldives has single party "rule while Bhutan's monarchical system of government and Royal authority are facing threats.


States in the region confront problems both from within and outside. Inter-state relations in the region during the past four decades are characterised by mutual mistrust, bilateral discord, tension, and occasional inter-state hostility. The roots of their conflict lie in the dissonance between the idea of nation-state as it was developed in India (democratic, secular, pluralistic and federal polity) and the ideas of nation-state that developed in the neighbourhood (authoritarian, theocratic, sectarian and unitary polity). "For evolution of common security consciousness there has to be commonality of values. The absence of that creates tensions in the region. Indian dominance in South Asia is to be seen not in military terms but there is dominance in terms of these values of nation-state building".

The South Asian region has seen one of the most divergent pattern of threat perception among its constituent units so far as external threat to national security is concerned. This conflicting perception of threat can be of four major types:

In the first type, one South Asian country feels threatened by others, directly, and believes itself to be the victim of actual or potential aggression by the other. In the second type, a South Asian country under threat from a country outside suspects the latter has an accomplice or a proxy within South Asia. The third type is the intrusion of Super Power rivalries in forms which make, one South Asian country an enemy of another. The most pernicious type is the fourth in which two or more of the first three types interact with each other and reinforce all of them.(28)

A perception of threat from India is common to all countries, and for all, excepting Pakistan, the threat from their big neighbour is non-military in nature. It is inherent in the regional imbalance and asymmetric power structure. William J. Barndes argues:


The real problem in South Asia is that while the small neighbouring countries became over sensitive to India's pre-eminent position and interpret any Indian reaction on matters relating to their own affairs as India's hegemonistic tendency, India, on its part, was insensitive to these fears and has made little effort to understand these fears and try to dispel them.\(29\)

For the small countries India is "powerful enough to be feared" because of its capability to destabilise them, but "not powerful enough to be respected" as it does not have enough economic resources to serve as a point of attraction for them. Another major dilemma of regional security in South Asia is that "while India perceives neighbours as being integral to its own security, the neighbours perceive India as the threat against which security is necessary".

This difference of opinion on regional security issues also shapes their attitudes towards a number of international problems. While India and its neighbours share a concern on such issues as disarmament and arms control, and declaring the Indian Ocean as Zone of Peace, they differ on their applicability. Pakistan's resolution in the United Nations General Assembly to declare South Asia as a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone is opposed by India and Bhutan on the basis that prior consultation among concerned states must precede such resolution. Indians suspect here a Pakistan intention to disarm India in the interest of extra-regional


\[32.\] For details, see Dilip K. Singh, Peace Zone Proposal in South Asia: A Comparative Study of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, South Asia as a Nuclear Free Zone and Nepal as a Zone of Peace, Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis Submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1990.
powers. Though both India and Pakistan agree on principle for nuclear non-proliferation, their opinion on the NPT differ. India refuses to sign the NPT because it not only discriminates between nuclear haves and have-nots but also negates the ideals of a nuclear weapons-free world. Pakistan's adherence to the treaty is conditioned upon India signing it first.

Similarly, all South Asian countries supported the 1971 United Nations resolution to declare Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace and to keep that region free from great power rivalries and competition. In the later phase Pakistan welcomed the American naval presence in the Indian Ocean as it was more concerned with offsetting the Indian naval advantage. Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal also advocated a reduction in force level of all the naval forces patrolling the area, including the Indian navy. How security perception changes with the change of regime and political leadership can be cited here by taking the example of Bangladesh. During the civilian regime of Sheikh Mujib, Bangladesh supported the Indian views on the SANWFZ proposal and abstained from voting on Pakistani resolutions. It also endorsed the original (1971) UN resolution on IOZP proposal. The post-1975 military regimes voted in favour of Pakistan's SANWFZ proposal and had insisted on a wider scope of the peace zone concept on Indian Ocean. Its contention was that any resolution that sought only to end extra-regional military presence from

33. This was highlighted by K. Subramaniam in the seminar on "South Asia in the Changing World Order", 7th to 9th May 1992, India International Centre, New Delhi.


the region without looking into the security threat originating from the region would not be workable and therefore, unacceptable. This shows that in the regional sphere, perception of great power threat is subordinated to intra-regional concerns.

Because of this perceptual divergence, other South Asian countries have adopted different strategies to neutralise the fear of Indian domination over their affairs. One common strategy adopted by India's neighbours is to seek extra-regional support. By that they not only exposed India to super power threat but opened their own gates to outside influence and penetration. A commentator on regional security affairs observes:

Instability is not inherent in a situation of natural hierarchy of power. On the contrary, endeavours to impose an artificial balance in such a situation may bring about instability and strife. Developments in the region since 1947 have repeatedly demonstrated that conflict has resulted from efforts to blur and distort the natural power hierarchy in the sub-continent.

As none of the South Asian States excepting India are strong as states, they face an enormous amount of security threat arising inside their own boundaries. These domestic problems cannot be separated from their relation with neighbours. Significant numbers of Bengalis live in India and Bangladesh, Tamils in India and Sri Lanka, and Nepalese in Nepal, India and Bhutan. Demographic factors help fanning threat perceptions inside the region. The influx of 10 million Bengali refugees to India in 1971 because of West Pakistan military atrocities in the East


38. Lok Raj Baral, "SARC, But No SHARK": South Asian Regional Cooperation in Perspective" Pacific Affairs (Vancouver) vol.58, no.3, Fall 1985, p.418.

Pakistan strained India's relations with Pakistan and led them to another round of war. The infiltration of Tamils to India after the outbreak of ethnic violence in the island country vitiated bilateral Indo-Sri Lanka relations and led to Indian intervention in Sri Lanka. It is not that these demographic factors had affected only India's relations with neighbours; other countries experienced similar problems. This has strained Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan, and has affected Bhutan-Nepal and Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral relations in recent days. But the Bengali nationalist movement of 1971 demonstrated two things: ethnicity does not have national boundaries and can have volcanic effect, and there is close interaction between domestic, regional and international security complexes.

1.4 India's Security Perception:

In matters of threat perception and strategic doctrine independent India inherited the British legacy. For the safety of the Indian Empire the colonial rulers believed in subcontinental defence which was based on three pillars. The first pillar consisted in safeguarding the northwest frontiers up to Afghanistan and in keeping the Russians out of that region. Secondly, the British displayed a similar interest in Tibet not out of any fear of China but due to the Soviet presence in Pamir and French presence in Indo-China and the latter's steady approach to the Burmese frontiers. Thirdly, for India's maritime defence the British contemplated complete command of the Indian ocean by keeping it free of external naval forces. In sum, the British envisaged India as a regional power whose security depended on keeping Afghanistan and Tibet as

buffers, and on securing control over the Indian ocean.

India's defence after independence was viewed basically in terms of the protection of its frontiers. It was thought that an enemy attack could only be with conventional weapons and by land, sea and air. Therefore, defence could be ensured by having friendly neighbours. The possibility of a nuclear attack by any of the great powers, though envisaged, was kept out of immediate consideration. Nevertheless, India had an early perception of super power conflict as a source of threat. To cope with this India provided the leadership for the effective mobilisation of the Afro-Asian group. But whatever be the theoretical premise of nonalignment, India was more inclined to the United States and Britain than to the Soviet Union in the first few years. Stalin's Russia criticised Nehru's policy of nonalignment as collaboration with British imperialism and condemned all policies of free India as extension of British policies. Therefore, the Indian communist parties were encouraged to rebellion. Possibly this prompted Nehru to think in terms of forging closer ties ('somewhat ally') with the United States to build up India's economic and military strength.

Two important events of those early days adversely affected India's security interests. The partition of the subcontinent and the Kashmir war of 1947-48 exposed India's north-western frontiers to outside attack. Owing to the lack of any natural barriers on the India-Pakistan border and the vast plains of Punjab and Rajasthan sectors, the earlier notion


42. Panikkar, Ibid., p.61.


44. Ibid., p.59.
of safety and security in that region was eroded. Added to that the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 made the Himalayan region live after having remained dormant all through history. Although in the early 1950s Nehru saw little danger of any large-scale Chinese aggression across the Indian borders, he made it quite clear that the "slightest attempt at such aggression whether in India or Nepal would be stoutly resisted". In August 1959 Nehru reaffirmed India's responsibility to protect Bhutan and Sikkim and to treat "any aggression against these territories as aggression against India". In order to safeguard India's security interest in the north-eastern frontiers, India entered into special security arrangements with these Himalayan States and made early efforts to strengthen defence of the northern frontiers with the limited resources available.

In 1953 India got firm indications that military alliance between the United States and Pakistan was in the offing. Nehru saw in it both long-term and short-term threat to India. The announcement of the alliance stiffened India's attitude towards Pakistan and the US, and gradually softened towards the Soviet Union. Policy-makers in India believed that the martial law regime in Pakistan with no checks on its authority and with heavy supplies of weapons from abroad, obviously threatened India more than ever before. It was also believed that the United States would use the military alliance as a means of expanding the cold war to the subcontinent and thereby weaken India's security. The US

45. Panikkar, n.41, p.41.


objective appeared to be the containment of India by building up Pakistan.

In the second half of 1950s India's relations with both China and Pakistan speedily deteriorated. New Delhi followed a dual policy of patience with China and firmness with Pakistan. Till the summer of 1962 India justified all its armament programmes in relation to Pakistan rather than to China. This was because till that time, no one in New Delhi envisaged any major conflict with China in the foreseeable future. Nehru realised that the "Indian policy had to be one of delicate balancing, of building up her military and industrial strength even while seeking peaceful solution, of preparing if need to be for war while striving to avoid it". It was also believed that any major military response on its part would aggravate Sino-Indian relations. Moreover, nonalignment was viewed as a viable guarantee against external threat.

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50. Gopal, Ibid., pp.204-5.

In October 1962, when China attacked the northern and eastern regions, it came as a surprise to the security policy makers. In the period immediately following the Sino-Indian war India made drastic changes in its defence structure though the overall assessment of security problems facing the country remain unchanged. Past failure in the hardware of the armed forces was acknowledged. The government expressed its willingness to obtain arms from any sources.

India's overriding concern on threat from Pakistan was inherent in the organising principles of both the states. The historical, geographical and cultural ties did not allow them to ignore each other and their sense of insecurity were closely intertwined. Secular India considered the mixing of religion with politics as threat to its nation-building process, while Pakistan (based on theocracy and islamic unity) considered India's secular policy as anathema and a threat to its own independent status as a nation-state. This divergent nation-building strategy adopted by the two was neatly institutionalised in their territorial dispute over Kashmir. For India, Kashmir was the symbol of its secular status. Pakistan felt its state-building process would remain incomplete without the annexation of Kashmir. Pakistan had adopted the whole range of manoeuvre - internationalisation of the issue through manipulative diplomacy, covert war by sending intruders to the valley, low-intensity and proxy war by encouraging militancy in the valley and providing weapons, training of and sanctuary to the militants on its soil, and even on three previous occasions had launched full scale war - to stake its claim over Kashmir.


This feeling of insecurity confronted by India was aggravated owing to Islamabad's efforts to distort the natural power hierarchy in the region by imposing an artificial military balance vis-a-vis India. With the help of the United States and China, which these extra-regional powers were willing to provide because of their own national interest. While India was keen on preserving the status quo and keeping the region free from external influence, because it believed that its pre-eminent position in South Asia would not only add to its security but would bring peace and stability to the region, Pakistan viewed this very idea as a threat to its security and tried to change it at all cost.

The Sino-Pakistan border agreement of 1963 followed by the security relationship between the two during and after the 1965 Indo-Pak war made India conscious about the possibility of Sino-Pak collusion against India. The perception of that two-front threat remained alive even during the third Indo-Pak war in 1971. The problem was seen in the light of Chinese diplomatic support, arms transfer, and threat to intervene militarily on behalf of Pakistan. It was viewed in New Delhi that


Chinese involvement would take place during the period of Indo-Pak war. Though full-scale Chinese invasion was ruled out (because of the great Himalayan mountain barriers), the possibility that China might undertake threatening posture by occasioning a large-scale movement of troops in the occupied Tibetan territory to exert psychological pressure on India remained live for a long time. While containing Pakistan by itself was not regarded as a serious military problem, the prospect of dealing simultaneously with threats from Pakistan and China, or to tackle a low-intensity conflict mounted by both in a coordinated fashion, was viewed as potentially more serious.

The Indo-Pak war of 1971 and India's victory in it, followed by the truncation of Pakistan and the birth of Bangladesh as a sovereign state, reemphasized India's pre-eminent position in South Asia. Subsequently India insisted on the principle of bilateralism in resolving contentious issues with neighbours. India felt that bilateralism was essential owing to the international configuration of forces and its fall out within India's immediate strategic environment. But the emphasis on

bilateralism, and expectations on India's part for acknowledgement of its neighbourly pre-eminence have been resisted time and again.

The traditional belief that external threat could come from across land borders facing China and Pakistan dominated the security planning till the early 1970s. Later, it underwent change due to the events in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf regions. The decision of the OPEC countries to raise the price of oil sharply led to world-wide inflation that adversely affected the economy of the Third World. Added to that, political instability in West Asia and the super powers' active involvement led to an arms build-up in that region which was viewed in India with much apprehension. Pakistan's military links with the Persian Gulf region, particularly Saudi Arabia and Iran, began to indicate an expanded security environment for India. Iranian military support to Islamabad during the 1965 war, and their help to the Bhutto government during 1973-75 period to suppress the Baluch rebellion, the deployment of a strong contingent of Pakistan troops in Saudi Arabia, and the financial help that Pakistan received from these countries to modernise its armed forces and expand its military industrial base, gave new impetus to India's strategic thinking.

For the first time India became conscious about sea-borne threat when the U.S. "tilt" towards Pakistan became more discernible, and (in pursuit of gun-boat diplomacy) the U.S. aircraft carrier The Enterprise, entered the Bay of Bengal during the war of 1971. In the later part of 1970s the super power naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean had brought nuclear weapons to the seas around the sub-continent. They searched for new bases in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives. This development added to India's vulnerability.

The Indian Ocean, and who moves in it, must always be of interest to us for though a conventional seaborne attack is now wholly impossible, naval dominance by others in the sea to our South, can imply pressures of many sorts - political, economic and even perhaps subversive.

The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan was a cause for concern and a source of threat to the region, including India. It has been India's policy to keep the subcontinent free from influence and intervention of the super powers. In pursuit of that policy New Delhi reacted in the mid-1950s when Pakistan joined the US-sponsored military alliances CENTO and SEATO, and signed a defence pact with America. India had the same motive when it opposed the militarisation and nuclearisation of the Indian Ocean. Hence, it gave the lead in the United Nations and the Nonaligned Movement to declare the ocean as a zone of peace.

India had declined to join the Asian Collective Security plan of Soviet Union in mid-1970s. India's deep concern over Soviet entry into


Afghanistan in December 1979 was a continuation of that policy. India was equally worried because of the active military support the United States provided to the guerrilla outfit, the Mujahideens, to fight against the Soviet-backed Afghan Government. It viewed with dismay the prompt willingness of Pakistan to join the US-sponsored strategic consensus for the region, the massive supply of military assistance to Pakistan, and Islamabad's policy of playing one super power against the other in the South Asian region in order to increase its leverage against India.

As high-tech American weapons reached Pakistan it affected India's strategic calculations. Justifying Indian concern an American security expert commented:

Revisionist sentiments continues to run deep in Pakistani military circles, where the humiliation suffered in the fighting with India in recent years have not been forgotten. It would serve no discernible US interest to bolster Pakistan's military capability because of the current Afghan crisis, only to have that capability used in a new conflict with India.(66)

It was felt that India responded to the situation by underplaying its apprehensions on the Soviet incursion, and by reacting strongly to the apparent establishment of the US-Pak military alliance. To this, Indian defence analyst K. Subrahmanyam argued:

The Soviet action in Afghanistan was reprehensible and unacceptable to India. But given the increasingly delicate security situation, and the fact that Soviet Union had proved a staunch friend and reliable defence supplier and our relationship with US and China had left us with little manoeuvrability, the

65. See Bhargava, South Asian Security After Afghanistan, n.34.


decision not to come out publicly against the Soviet Union but indicate our disapproval through abstention (from General Assembly voting) was correct. (68)

Since the early 1980s Pakistan's clandestine weapon-oriented nuclear programme caused sufficient anxiety and apprehension in Indian policy planning circles. What worried India was not the use of nuclear weapons by Pakistan in a future conflict. The threat of its use posed the real danger considering the fact that a nuclear blackmail strategy would give Pakistan tremendous psychological advantage to solve some of the contentious bilateral disputes, including Kashmir, in its favour. The 1965 and 1971 wars explicitly demonstrated that Pakistan failed to achieve parity in conventional military terms. The search for a nuclear deterrence, as the best guarantee for security, was launched immediately after the war in 1971. The achievements in this field were so fast that in 1979 the Carter Administration imposed a military and economic embargo to demonstrate US displeasure over Islamabad's secret nuclear weapons programme. After the 1979 Afghanistan crisis, when Pakistan accepted President Ronald Reagan's US $3.2 billion military and economic aid package, Islamabad made it amply clear to the United States that its nuclear programme was non-negotiable.

In such a scenario it was argued that for security against both conventional and implied nuclear threat India should develop an "optimal strategy" that is, enhancing the potentials of all three services to counter a powerful conventional assault and evolving a coherent strategy accompanied by a nuclear weapons programme. But although this doctrine


gained momentum all through the eighties, it did not receive approval of the security policy makers.

Another aspect of India's strategic perpectives in the eighties was the problem of internal security. The Sikh militancy in Punjab, insurgency in the north-east, secessionist movement in the Kashmir valley, a host of other problems (of comparatively lesser intensity) had compelled the security planners to look inward to locate the real source of threat. The frequent use of armed forces in the country made the dimension of domestic problems very clear. In December 1991, out of a total strength of 34 divisions of the Indian Army, 20 divisions were deployed on internal security duty. This was in addition to the large contingent of paramilitary forces already normally deployed.

The best guarantee against external threat is domestic stability and unity. But the task of containing the internal disruptive forces becomes difficult due to their external linkage. The Sikh terrorists and Kashmiri secessionists are being actively supported by Pakistan. It has invited Pakistan's covert interference in India's internal affairs, which in turn has made the government realise that these internal security problems are externally created. Moreover, it is realised that unless these issues are solved, both by a mix of diplomatic and military means, India's security climate would further worsen in the coming days.

If the smaller states in South Asia interpreted India's pre-eminence in the region as its predominance and feared it, India too perceived


72. FEER, Ibid.
threat from these countries because of their vulnerability either to 
external penetration or internal fragility. Paradoxically threat to 
Indian security arose not from their capability but from their weakness. 
Unstable conditions in their political and economic spheres had resulted 
in large-scale exodus of illegal migrants into neighbouring Indian 
states.

Since independence India has been making persistent demands for an 
end to great power meddling in the subcontinent. This has been wrongly 
interpreted as India's imperial defence policy or its Monroe 
Doctrine, which means that outside threat to small neighbouring 
countries within the region was to be considered as a threat to India 
thereby extending India's security parameters beyond its own territory. 
To pursue this strategic doctrine India would use the small states as her 
defensive or security buffers and to restrict their foreign policy links 
so that they would not in anyway affect India's defensive or offensive 
strategic postures.

73. Stephen P. Cohen, "India: The Strategic Imagery of Elites" in James 
M. Roherty ed., Defence Policy Formation: Towards Comparative 

74. Jay Raina, "Infiltration from Bangladesh assumes alarming 

75. This Nehruvian policy was reiterated by Mrs. Gandhi in the context 
of Sri Lanka in July 1983. See Bhabani Sen Gupta, "Regional 
Security: The Indian Doctrine" India Today (New Delhi), 31 August 
1983, pp.20-1; also see Strategic Survey 1983-84 (London: IISS), 

76. Kodikara, Strategic Factors in Inter-State Relations in South Asia, 
n.31.

77. Sunanda K. Dutta-Ray, "The Rajiv Doctrine: India as Mini Super 

78. Gowher Rizvi, "Role of Small States in the South Asian Complex" in 
Berry Buzan and Gowher Rizvi eds., South Asian Insecurity and the 
India's response to request for military assistance from Sri Lanka and Maldives was not a case of flexing the muscles but a display of sympathetic concern, and a signal for outside powers not to interfere in the region. The prompt withdrawal of troops after the completion of the missions was an indication of India's intention for domestic stability and order in South Asian. Indian motive behind economic pressure on Nepal was to send the message to Kathmandu that though it believes in the policy of non-interference in the affairs of neighbours it would not allow them to play a balance of power game prejudicial to India's security interests.

Moreover, there has always been an "extra-strategic consideration" in India's defence planning. The 1962 military debacle makes successive governments sensitive to a charge of lack of preparedness. Even if there is no specific threat from the adversaries there is the necessity for a country of India's magnitude and size to have a large defence establishment and to ensure a posture of basic military preparedness. Justifying this new approach to defence planning the former Indian Defence Minister Mr. R Venkatraman informed the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of the Indian Parliament) in March 1982 that:

India's defence preparedness would not slacken irrespective of a threat or no threat from across the border... Defence plans are prepared to meet contingencies which may arise from continuous assessment of the possible adversaries' capabilities rather than intention. (80)

In recent years, defence planning in India aimed at meeting an 'extended security environment', and increasing the ability of the armed


forces to face threats coming from beyond the regional perimeter. The mutual suspicion and hostility between countries in the South Asian region invited, in the past, super power involvement thus "connecting the regional security complex with the international security complex" which, till 1980s, centred around US-Soviet and Sino-Soviet rivalries. Though, South Asia was accorded low priority in the super powers' global strategy, India had to guard against any possible fall-out of such conflict in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf or in the Southeast Asian region. India even viewed itself as a direct target of manipulation by extra-regional powers.

India's real strength lied in the depth of its defence. Its vast reserve of manpower could be mobilised in a defensive warfare. It had the third largest reservoir of technical manpower in the world and industrially India ranked tenth. With the fourth largest standing army, fifth largest air force and eighth largest navy, India was in a comfortable position to safeguard the region. India's recent build-up and its emphasis on missile based defence system went beyond the traditional approach to security. The objective was to adopt to a new security scenario that extended beyond India's immediate neighbourhood.

1.5 **Pakistan's Security Perception:**

The major problem in the hands of security policy makers in Pakistan, ever since the birth of this new state, was the problem of defence against India. Owing to its pathological enmity with India, the

82. Security complex offers an approach to security that requires attention to both macro-level of great power impact on the system and micro-level of domestic discord and tension-prone inter-state relations. External involvement or intervention tending to amplify local problems and the latter facilitating external involvement and influence; see Barry Buzan, People, State and Fear: National Security Problem in International Relations (New Delhi: Transasia Publishers, 1987), pp.106-14.

perception of threat had dominated its foreign policy. From the beginning Pakistan perceived a pronounced imbalance in terms of military strength, size and resource between the two countries. The task set for her foreign policy and defence strategy was to correct this imbalance.

This perception of insecurity had grown out of the events preceding the partition of the subcontinent and the divergent paths followed by the two estranged neighbours in state and nation-building in the post independence period. Much of the Pakistani elite perceived that India had not reconciled to the separate existence of Pakistan and considered partition as a tragedy resulting from the doctrine of divide and rule invented by the British. At the highest policy-planning level it was apprehended that India nurtured an "ambition to absorb Pakistan and turn her into a satellite". India's secular approach to nation-building was conceived as a threat to the cultural and political identity of the Muslim community in the subcontinent and, therefore, it was believed that India could never accept a strong and independent Muslim State next door. Ayub Khan wrote: "the early years had proved conclusively that the threat from India to our security and existence was both real and constant". This sense of insecurity and interpretation of asymmetry prompted Pakistan to search for external support.

But Pakistan's perception of threat was far more complex. In the formative phase, "defence against India was in past a defence against


87. Ibid., p.117.
internal threat" to the civilian government in Pakistan. The latter's priorities were certainly not hostilities with India over Kashmir. Rather, formation of a state, consolidation of central authority over the fragmented provinces, and most important of all, to keep the armed forces under "firm check were the most urgent and pressing problems. The military elite was bent upon building a "state structure largely geared to sustain the political economy of defence" which they could not have achieved without projecting the external threat. The weak and unstable government in Pakistan, and its Kashmir policy in 1947-48 gave the cutting edge to the military that later proved to be disastrous for the state. But the army knew that building a state structure only to sustain the increasing demands of defence in a country where agriculture accounted for 60 per cent of the gross national income was studded with risks. "It was to defuse these that Pakistan had joined U.S. sponsored military alliances with alacrity".

In fact, till the beginning of the Kashmir conflict in 1947, Pakistan did not perceive direct threat from India. The perception of Indian threat to Pakistan grew after its failure to occupy entire Kashmir in the first Indo-Pak war. With the motive to ward off such threat and to gain superiority over India in Kashmir, Pakistan sought military


89. Ibid., p.236.

90. Ibid.

91. See Muni, "Defence and Development in South Asia", n.15, p.191; and, Bhargava, South Asian Security After Afghanistan, n.34, pp.116-17. In fact the first Kashmir war was initiated by the defence establishment in Pakistan on the pretext of balancing force level with India by pressing the political leadership to spend more on defence. With that motive Pakistan requested the US to help finance its defence expenses. As early as in October 1947 it was argued that Pakistan wished to line up its external and defence policy with the USA, see Jalal, Ibid., pp.55-60.
assistance from the United States. This is how the US-Pak military alliance came into being in 1954.

In the words of Field Marshal Ayub Khan:

Our membership of the pacts was directed solely by the requirements of our security... my interest was exclusively in terms of the defence of the country... I was anxious to take maximum advantage of this arrangement to build-up defence forces of Pakistan.(92)

The Defence Agreement Pact in 1954 helped Pakistan in acquiring massive military aid from that country. Though, the pact was directed against communist threat, it was modified and redefined in 1959 which envisaged joint US-Pak action against aggression from any direction.

This US-Pakistan military arrangement had great impact both at the regional and the domestic front. India viewed it as a troubling development because it would bring a super power to India's doorstep thus endangering the security of the subcontinent. Commenting on the underlying motive of the agreement, Jawaharlal Nehru declared:

The Pakistani newspapers and the statements of responsible people in Pakistan make it perfectly clear that they have joined the Pact because of India. Either they are apprehensive of India, or they want to develop strength and as the phrase now goes, speak from strength. Whatever it is, they have joined the Baghdad Pact and SEATO essentially because of their hostility to India.(94)

Nehru informed his Pakistani counterpart, Mohamed Ali Bogra, that the whole context of the Kashmir issue had been changed and India would resist any attempt to settle it by force of superior U.S. arms.

92. Ayub Khan, n.86, pp.116-17.
Bogra admitted that the US aid made improved relations with India more difficult to achieve. Externally this alliance brought the hostility of Soviet Union, through its friendship with India and Afghanistan, thus posing a constant threat to Pakistan's security. The alliance had significant domestic fall-outs also. It facilitated the ascendency of the civil-military bureaucracy to the central stage thereby not only destroying the growth of viable democratic political institutions, but also increased, "the likelihood of direct military intervention in politics more imminent" and made the "relationship between state and society more discordant".

Perennial political instability had contributed to Pakistan's problem of security. From the beginning the military became actively involved in domestic and foreign policy (not to talk about defence) to the extent where it became, what S.E. Finer calls, a "military supportive state" wherein the civilian government became increasingly dependent on the military for survival. In 1958 the generals moved one step ahead, took over civilian administration, and made Pakistan a "praetorian state". The long periods of army rule (from 1958-1970 and 1979-88) had made Pakistan a 'militarily penetrated society' where the military not only influenced politics but moulded the country's economy, social values and culture. The civilian governments, that came only in patches, had


little room for manoeuvre. They were aware of the fact that if they followed policies opposed to the armed forces they would run the risk of being overthrown. Zulfiqur Ali Bhutto, the first popularly elected Prime Minister, was overthrown in a military coup d' e'tat because of his unsuccessful but ambitious defence reorganisation plan, in which he wanted to keep his generals under firm civilian control. Benazir Bhutto came to power by striking an understanding with the army, and was removed from power when she failed to share the perception of the armed forces on a host of internal and external issues. In the present power structure in Pakistan, military is the dominant partner in the 'Troika' consisting of the President, the Prime Minister, and itself.

Regionalism and the growth of sub-nationalism had added to the problem of Pakistan and contributed to its sense of insecurity. Pakistan was built as an Islamic state, and the religion of the people was considered as the sole determinant of their nationhood. But the shared identity of religious nationalism between the east and the west - separated by one thousand kilometers of Indian territory - soon after the birth of Pakistan began to yield to another principle of nationalism based upon ethno-linguistic identity. The disparity in development between the two wings and the exploitation of the people of the east by the west Pakistanis led to the growth of Bengali nationalism. This resulted in the emergence of Bangladesh. Even in the post-1971 period

Contd. F/n.98


there was resentment against Punjabi domination because 80 per cent of Pakistan's bureaucracy and the Army consisted of Punjabis.

Nationalistic sentiment was strong among the three minority communities - Sindhis, Pukhtuns and Baluchis - because they had been consciously denied a share in national power and wealth. The tribal rebellion in Baluchistan in mid-1970s, and the ruthless method adopted by the state to suppress it demonstrated the fragile character of the Pakistani state.

It was often argued that the real threat to Pakistan's security came from within and not outside.

The real danger to the continuance of the Pakistani state are internally generated and they seem to possess a life of their own irrespective of any malicious Indian intent. (101)

But Pakistan had one of the most complex threat calculus:

Pakistan's domestic policies remains intimately linked to political relations with Pakistan's neighbours; any analysis of threat to Pakistan's security must emphasize this overlap between internal and external problems. (102).

The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 enhanced Pakistan's security concerns. For the first time it confronted a


three-front threat scenario which was considered in Islamabad as more grave than the two-front threat India was facing. Unlike the plains of Pakistan's border with India, the Pakistan-Afghanistan border is mountainous. Afghanistan, though considered an unfriendly neighbour, was never viewed as a potential threat because of that country's inferior military strength. Furthermore, the rugged terrain condition along the Durand Line precluded all out war between them.

With an obvious intention to bring Islamabad under its strategic consensus, the US made Pakistan believe that the Soviets would move south through Baluchistan to pursue their much desired access to the warm water ports in the Indian Ocean. A combined attack by Soviet-backed Afghanistan from the west and India from the east to dismember Pakistan was predicted. Moreover, the Soviets might engage in sanctuary destroying operations in view of Pakistan's action of aiding and encouraging the US-backed counter-revolutionary Mujahideens. Furthermore, the Soviets might be tempted to exploit the internal problems in Pakistan in the two trouble-prone border states of Baluchistan and North West Frontier Province.

But the military in Pakistan had a different perception of the Soviet threat. For them, there was little incentive for the Soviets to invade Pakistan because that would lead them away from the oil-rich


Persian Gulf region. Secondly, the Soviet attempt to push through Baluchistan on way to the Indian Ocean would precipitate retaliation by the United States. The Soviet attack on refugee camps inside Pakistan or an attempt at creating trouble in Baluchistan seemed probable but it was believed that Pakistan's military could handle that. The prospects of both India and Soviet Union joining in an attack to dismember Pakistan was not correctly an actual threat.

Writing on Pakistan's security after the Afghanistan crisis Hasan Askari Rizvi wrote:

So far as the Soviet threat to Pakistan is concerned, it will be naive to think that the procurement of weapons from the US will enable Pakistan to withstand any direct Soviet military intervention in Pakistan... Despite the strained relations between Soviet Union and Pakistan, mainly due to the Afghanistan crisis, there is no evidence to suggest that the Soviet Union will either play the Baluchistan card or invade Pakistan in the near future... Pakistan's major security concern in the eighties will continue to be India.(108)

This obsession of Pakistan with the Indian threat was evident from Fukuyama's Trip Report on Pakistan's security:

The central point made by the officers on charge of planning at the Joint Staff Headquarters and by numerous other Pakistanis was that regardless of what happened on the western border, Pakistan's major preoccupation was and would remain India.(109)

The troop deployment along the India-Pakistan border demonstrated that country's perception of Indian threat. Immediately after the Soviet


military intervention in Afghanistan when Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's National Security Advisor, suggested redeployment of Pakistan troops from the east to the west to meet the new threat. Pakistan refused.

A consensus had existed that the "most likely contingency of direct aggression would be from the threat posed by India". Therefore, Pakistan sought to upgrade the 1959 executive agreement with the United States to the status of a treaty to commit US action in case of Indian threat. Though the US accepted the existence of the agreement it could not make commitment for Pakistan's defence against aggression from India. That might be the reason which prompted General Zia to reject President Carter's offer of US $ 400 million military and economic assistance as 'Peanut'. In the words of Agha Shahi, the then Foreign Minister of Pakistan:

To abandon non-alignment in favour of the role of a strategic ally of the United States without a credible guarantee against aggression from any quarter together with an assured flow of large-scale military aid including sophisticated weapons as well as a more even-ended US attitude towards Pakistan's nuclear programme, would be to court Peril to Pakistan's existence from the Soviet Union which now sits on its north-western border. (114) (emphasis mine)

President Reagan enhanced the military assistance, guaranteed US action in case of Indian threat, and allowed Pakistan a free hand to


113. Agha Shahi, n.55, p.179.

pursue its nuclear programme.

The nuclear issue between the two countries was laid to rest in April 1981 when Secretary of State Alexander Haig assured me that the United States would not make Pakistan's nuclear Programme the centre piece of the new Pakistan-US relationship. (116)

During the 1980s, Pakistan tried to enhance its status as a balancing power and to act as a counter-weight to India's predominant position in South Asia. This task was undertaken in two different directions: in the field of nuclear weapons development, and in forging and expanding extra-regional options, particularly with the United States. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was the single most crucial event which not only opened new opportunities for Pakistan to move in both directions but also allowed the military regime to consolidate its hold over power in the domestic front.

1.6 **Bangladesh's Security Perception:**

The security perception of Bangladesh had both military and non-military dimensions. Flood, famine and environmental hazards were more acute and challenging than military security. Two decades after independence the country could not find any viable solution to her economic problems. The two most important factors that had a direct bearing on the country's security and posed a challenge to its status as a state, were chronic political instability and the extremely adverse ratio between population and resource distribution. Political unrest in Bangladesh was due to the very early (in the third year after liberation)


116. Agha Shahi's address on "Pakistan, India and a Non-nuclear South Asia" Pakistan Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, 12 September 1987, see his book, n.55, p.276.
violent intervention of the military in the affairs of the state. From 1975 to 1979 and again from 1982 to 1986 the state was directly under the rule of martial law. During the interim period also it passed through camouflaged military rule. The change of General Zia and General Ershad's regimes from military to civilian were mere cosmetic because the armed forces continued to be an important and active participant in policy-making. "The history of Bangladesh since 1975 is one of intermittent instability within the army, leading to general instability in the country". The armed forces' direct involvement in the assassination of the country's two Presidents and their role in twenty-odd coup attempts during the first decade had made the military the major source of political unrest in Bangladesh. In future, threat to any democratic government in Dhaka would come from the army.

The nation-building process undertaken in the post-liberation period had also a bearing on the country's perception of insecurity. When Sheikh Mujib declared secularism, along with nationalism, democracy and socialism, as the guiding principles of the new state, it showed that unlike Pakistan, Bangladesh had discarded the religious basis of nationalism. But after the military take-over, Bangladesh switched over to the pre-1971 position on defining nationhood with the twin motives of gaining legitimacy to their rule from the fundamentalist forces, and of


distancing the country from India. As it could not accommodate the religious aspirations of Hindu Bengali and Buddhist Chakma minorities they felt insecure and the state considered these minorities, at least 119 the Chakmas, as a source of threat.

Regarding the military dimensions of security, the geo-strategic security structure of the South Asian region made a profound impact on the country's perception of external threat. "It was not the threat but the fear of threat that had characterised the security perception of Bangladesh". Geography has placed the country in an extremely vulnerable position. There is a lack of natural barriers for the country's defence. It shares 92.5 per cent of its land frontiers with India and the remaining 7.5 per cent of the international boundary is shared with Myanmar in the south-eastern region. In the south it has about 700 kilometers of maritime boundary in the Bay of Bengal. The limited Burmese frontier and its terrain condition naturally restricted the "potential threat from that source". But after the exodus of over one lakh Muslims from the Arakan Province of Burma to Bangladesh in the face of atrocities by the Myanmar Army, the latter's blatant violations of Bangladesh border, attacks on Bangladesh Rifle camps, and the Burmese


120. Interview with Professor Shamsul Haq, the former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, at Dhaka on 5 April 1990.

military build-up along the border has created a new sense of insecurity in the mind of the decision-makers in Dhaka.

As the country is surrounded on three sides by India, and the security planners believed that contiguous territorial neighbours could alone breach its boundaries on an aggressive impulse, India was considered as an "imminent source of danger" to its security. The tension between India and Bangladesh intensified during the post-1975 period. The lack of any long-term understanding on the use and sharing of water from the Ganges, India's unilateral occupation of New Moore Island in 1981, non-demarcation of the maritime boundary, and the alleged Indian involvement in the Chakma problem in the Chittagong Hill Tracts are the outstanding issues cited to question India's desire to have cordial relations with Bangladesh. "The fact of failure to resolve these issues gives a sense of insecurity".

In Bangladesh security threat was perceived at the individual, national, regional and international levels depending upon the objective conditions prevailing in the country. Past experience indicated that civilian governments were more concerned for security in the face of


125. Personal interview with Tobarak Hossain, former Foreign Secretary, at Dhaka on 4 April, 1990.
extra-regional threats, whereas military regimes were susceptible to threats of various kinds of which domestic threat seemed to be more pronounced. The security perception of the Awami League Government of Sheikh Mujib (1972-75) differed substantially from that of the post-1975 military regimes. The former perceived no imminent threat from any regional powers. The conditions prevailing at the time of independence compelled the government to eliminate the potential level of threat. An attempt was made to reduce the influence of extra-regional powers. The security perception in the formative phase was dominated by the global perception wherein the western powers, particularly the United States, were seen as posing threats to small developing countries. Since 1975, as the military regime tilted towards the west, the "regional threat was highlighted as real and as such of more immediate concern and to counter this regional arms imbalance, Bangladesh sought security through extra-regional alliance". China provided that much needed psychological security against India.

For self-perpetuation in power, the army projected the Indian threat knowing that an Indian intervention is unlikely. This anti-Indian perception helped in the domestic front, particularly to gain legitimacy to its own rule and to justify rapid increase in defence expenditure. On the pretext of an Indian threat, General Zia strengthened the army to consolidate his hold over political power (for further discussion on this issue refer to Chapter 3). The eminence of Indian threat was nowhere


better pronounced than in the words of General Ershad who for eight years (1982-1990) remained the Chief Executive of the country.

India is our only adversary and possible source of threat. We need basically 7 Divisions to defend ourselves. Right now we have 6 Divisions and we feel we can hold our own for 21 days. As you can see, with its intricate network of rivers and natural obstacles, Bangladesh is very defensible and certainly not easily accessible to an invading Army. However, we intend to raise one more Division which will complete our minimum defence requirements.(129)

Ershad had also acknowledged that problems with India were both psychological and physical.

The quality of Indo-Bangladesh interaction stood transformed from one of "pronounced cordiality" during the Mujib era to that of "tacit hostility" in the later period. The common Bangladesh perception was that India neither desired to intervene in an economically backward, politically unstable and religiously hostile Bangladesh nor did it want Bangladesh to become a potential threat to Indian security. The likely Indian strategy, it was felt, would be a non-conventional use of force to destabilise any regime in Dhaka if it allowed anti-Indianism as a plank to hold on to power, and if it took steps which would have an adverse effect on India's security.

Despite the fact that successive military regimes had projected India as that country's potential source of threat, the internal threat was more pronounced and required immediate attention. Localised low-level insurgency in the Chittagong Hill Tracts by the non-Bengali Chakma tribes and their armed wing, the Shanti Bahini, posed a threat to the territorial integrity of Bangladesh. Possible irredentist claim by


elements working from across the border (the Bangabhumı Movement) was viewed as a threat.

1.7 Security Perception of Nepal and Bhutan:

Nepal and Bhutan are Himalayan states surrounded by the two long-standing rivals, India and China. Both are least developed and landlocked countries with access to the sea through India. The two countries have passed through long periods of autocratic rule. In Nepal the monarchy has yielded under popular pressure as a result of which a multi-party democratic system has now been established, and power has been transferred from the palace to the elected leaders. Ethnic strife, and pro-democratic demonstrations and revolt have become a regular feature in Bhutan in recent days. Both carry great significance for India's strategic planning for the northern frontiers facing China. Hence, India has signed separate treaties of Friendship and Cooperation with Nepal and Bhutan.

Nepal is situated in the Central Himalayan region. Its northern border with China is demarcated by formidable mountain peaks and was therefore believed to be impassable. This natural barrier had till the 1950s prevented any sort of historical and cultural ties between the two countries. On the other hand, its border with India lacks any natural barriers and is permeable. The southern border of Nepal, which is connected to a sizeable sector of India's northern extremity, lies in the Indo-Gangetic plains. A majority of the Nepalese live in the southern Himalayan foothills (Terai region) which is the main agricultural and industrial production centre of the country. Nepal and India are bound by

131. Personal interview with A.K.H. Morshed, former Foreign Secretary and Chairman of Bangladesh Institute for International and Strategic Studies, at Dhaka in March 1990.

strong cultural, social, historical and religious ties since time immemorial.

This tradition of Indo-Nepalese friendship took new shape in 1950 when both signed a treaty to that effect. Implicit in it was India's overriding concern for its own security against Chinese threat. After the Chinese military occupation of Tibet, Nepal shared India's concern and threat perception, and showed a tacit approval for its inclusion within Indian defence spheres.

In December 1959 Jawaharlal Nehru revealed to the Indian Parliament a paragraph in the unpublished letters exchanged between the two governments along with the Treaty of 1950. It said:

Neither Government shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggressor. To deal with any such threat, the two Governments shall consult each other and devise effective counter-measures.(134)

Article V of the treaty permitted Nepal to import arms, ammunition and other war-like material necessary for the security of Nepal, from and through the territory of India. However, Para 2 of the letter specified that the assistance and agreement of India were necessary for such imports from third countries.

Thus, the threat perception of India and Nepal converged as both considered Chinese action in Tibet adding to their sense of insecurity. When, in 1959, in reply to a debate in the Parliament on India-China relations Nehru declared "...any aggression on Bhutan or Nepal would be


135. Ibid.
considered by us as aggression on India", it became explicit that India's security in the north was closely entangled with that of Nepal and therefore India was willing to act as guarantor of Nepal's security in the event of external threat. In view of Nepal's inherent military weakness, and its geographical and historical ties with India, Nepal found nothing wrong in coming under India's protective shield. However, in order to tame the communist opposition in the domestic front, it was argued that the initiative to decide whether any threat to security had occurred would remain with Nepal.

One major motivation for Nepal to break away from India's northern defence system was India's military debacle in the Sino-Indian war of 1962. It was demonstrated that India was vulnerable to Chinese threat and could not even defend its own territory. In fact, the attempt to cultivate Chinese friendship started in the late 1950s when the Sino-Indian conflict over their disputed border started shrinking, and both countries were heading towards a final show down. In 1960, Nepal signed a Friendship Treaty with China in line with the similar treaty it had signed with India a decade ago. On October 5, 1962, just fifteen days before the out break of India-China war, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Marshal Chen-yi stated in Beijing that "in case any foreign army makes a foolhardy attempt to attack Nepal...China would side with the Nepalese people." Implicit in the Chinese assertion was their intention to


137. Appadorai and Rajan, Ibid.


neutralise Nepal and to prevent any possibility of Nepalese territory being used for forward bases. In 1961 China and Nepal agreed to construct a strategic road linking Kathmandu to Kodari on the China-Nepal border ignoring India's sensitivities that the Himalayas were the natural security barriers to outside forces. It was evident therefore that Nepal had shifted from its earlier policy of special relationship with India to a policy of equal relationship with both India and China.

The Nepal monarchy's pro-Chinese foreign and security planning arose from its autocratic nature. Both King Mahendra and his successor King Birendra were apprehensive of India's sympathy and support for the pro-democratic forces in Nepal represented by the Nepalese Congress. The palace perceived very early that while India could be a reliable guarantor of Nepal's security in case of external threat, the same might not hold good in the event of any internal threat to the survival of the regime. China, on the other hand, saw nothing wrong in an autocratic regime in Nepal so long as the King continued to support the Chinese policy towards India.

As the monarchy distinguished its threat perception from that of the nation, and viewed any threat to the regime as essentially a national security problem, it was thought that closer ties with communist China was less threatening than any links with democratic India. In January 1961 when King Mahendra dismissed and arrested all ministers and proclaimed a dictatorship, India expressed its outrage that democracy was murdered at a time when the possibility of Chinese aggression loomed large. Nehru declared that India would not undertake any new projects in Nepal. This prompted the monarchy to play the 'China Card' to

counter the domestic enemy, that is, the Nepalese Congress and its external sympathiser, India.

Throughout the 1960s Nepal sought to develop greater freedom of action by playing a kind of Himalayan balance of power game, bringing China into the picture as a counter weight to Indian influence over that country's security matters. Any hope of a change in the Indo-Nepalese security relationship, after the creation of Bangladesh and re-emergence of India as the pre-eminent power in South Asia, was short-lived because of the later developments in the region. In 1975 Sikkim, an Indian protectorate, was integrated to the Indian Union. Such integration, it was argued in New Delhi, was vital from strategic point of view. It gave India a position of considerable advantage because of its location alongside the Chumbi valley. After this event China argued forcefully that in India lies the threat to the security and sovereignty of the tiny Himalayan Kingdoms because the Chinese appears to have transferred the former Tibetan buffer status to Nepal. In a future conflict with India, Tibet would become an inner buffer zone where no foreign


intervention shall be tolerated. The Himalayan states shall serve the outer rampant of Chinese defence."

Both under King Mahendra and King Birendra, Nepal’s attempt was to get out of the security relationship with India. By playing a balance of power game, Nepal developed a new approach to security. It was felt that such a policy would be a sure guarantee not for external security but against internal vulnerabilities. Given the continued rivalry between India and China, Nepal believed that it was free from external threat because in case of both neighbours, the overriding concern in their defence planning was to protect the Nepalese territory from the hands of the antagonist. Therefore, the real problem for the monarchy was internal security. King Birendra’s 1975 proposal to declare Nepal as a Zone of Peace was essentially meant to dilute security arrangements under the 1950 treaty with India. The proposal underlined the balance of power policy as the key to security. Article 5 of the proposal stipulated that "no state endorsing the peace zone should permit any hostile activity on their soil". Since the Nepalese Congress leaders were permitted to use Indian territory, India read in the proposal no genuine desire for security against external threat, but only the desire to reduce Indian influence in the Kingdom by getting its formal commitment that dissident Nepalese would not be allowed to use the Indian territory. In 1983 the Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi

145. Dawa Norbu, "Chinese Strategic Thinking on Tibet and the Himalayan Region" Strategic Analysis (New Delhi) vol.xii, no.4, July 1988, pp.391-2.


148. For the internal dimension of this proposal, see S.D. Muni, "Nepal as a Zone of Peace" Strategic Analysis vol.7, no.10, January 1984.
remarked "it was not clear as to which country posed a threat to Nepal's
security."

Paradoxically, when the King was soliciting India's support to the
Zone of Peace proposal, 500 truck loads of Chinese arms, ammunition and
anti-aircraft guns reached Kathmandu through the Kathmandu-Kodari
highway. It was argued that the arms would be used against the
internal enemy. But from the Indian point of view the arms purchase
eroded the spirit of the 1950 treaty, the letters exchanged along with
it, and the arms purchase agreement signed between the two countries in
1965. Even more disturbing was the secret agreement (of June 1988)
between Nepal and China for exchange of intelligence.

The perception of Indian threat changed in Kathmandu with the
assumption of power by a popular government. The joint communique signed
during interim Prime Minister K.P. Bhattarai's visit to New Delhi in June
1990, stated:

Nepal and India will fully respect each others' security
concerns. In this context, neither side will allow activities in
its territory prejudicial to the security of the other. The two
countries shall have prior consultations with a view to reaching
mutual agreement on such defence related matters which, in the

149. Rising Nepal (Kathmandu) 12 February 1983.

150. For Chinese arms to Nepal in June 1988, see S.D. Muni, "Chinese
Arms Pour into Nepal" The Times of India, (New Delhi) 1 September
1988; John W. Graver, "China-India Rivalry in Nepal: The Clash Over
950-75; Narayan Khadka, "The Crisis in Nepal - India Relations"
Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, vol.xv, no.1
(Fall 1991), pp.54-92; Far Eastern Economic Review, 20 April 1989,
p.34.

151. For Indo-Nepalese arms agreement of 1965 and Nepalese reaction to
Indian charge, see D.P. Kumar, "Chinese Anti-aircraft Guns: Nepal
Violated Secret Agreement with India". The Statesman (New Delhi), 27

152. Leo E. Rose, "India's Frontier Relations: Reassessing Basic
Policies" in Philip Oldenburg ed., India Briefing 1990 (Boulder;
view of the other country, could pose a threat to its security. (153)

With an area of 20,000 sq.miles Bhutan is flanked on the north by Chinese Tibet, on the south by the Indian states of West Bengal and Assam, on the east by Arunachal Pradesh and on the west by Sikkim. With about a million people and with a primitive agricultural economy, Bhutan's strategic position as a buffer state between India and China gives her an importance out of proportion to her population and resources. The strategic Chumbi Valley is only eight kilometers away from the Bhutanese territory. The Chumbi Valley along with the Nathula Pass are considered by the Chinese as likely routes for attack from the south. From the Indian angle, Bhutan, along with Nepal, constitute natural barriers to hostile advances from the north. Furthermore, its territory could be used as forward base by the Indian armed forces. Bhutan's strategic location had led India to include it in defence parameters for the country's northern frontiers.

The relative attitude of Bhutan's neighbours towards its buffer status and their relative military capability would always determine the perception of external threat in Bhutan. Bhutan shared the Indian


concern over the strategic and security implications of the Chinese controlled Tibet. Even much before the Chinese offensive in Tibet, Bhutan had decided to step out of its traditional policy of isolation by depending on India for security. Under the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of August 1949, India guaranteed Bhutan's internal autonomy while Bhutan agreed to be guided by Indian advice in regard to its external affairs. Bhutan agreed to import, "with the approval and assistance of India", such arms, ammunition, war-like materials and stores as may be needed for its defence and welfare. As a part of the agreement India sent a sizable contingent of armed forces to Bhutan on a training mission, but the main mission of that force was intelligence, reconnaissance, and facilitating the rapid injunction of massive Indian forces, if required, in pursuance of India's forward defence policy.

However, the 1962 Sino-Indian conflict gave a blow to India's prestige, and its capacity to ensure the security of Bhutan was seriously doubted. The Dragon Kingdom maintained strict neutrality in the 1962 war and continued to maintain a low profile in the Sino-Indian rivalry throughout the 1960s because it thought such a policy would be the best guarantee for its security. Inspite of that, the special relationship between the two countries continued and there was great deal of convergence of interest between India and Bhutan. Their strategic perception on regional and international security issues continued to remain the same.


Although India regained its 'lost glory' in the 1971 war, the subsequent events that led to the merger of Sikkim made Bhutan realise that its security lies not in exclusive dependence on India but in opening up to the outside world and getting international recognition of its independent status. But unlike Nepal, Bhutan was cautious about the risk involved in playing the intricate game of playing one country against the other. On the other hand, it realised that New Delhi would not obstruct the gradual expansion of Bhutan's external relations if that could be accompanied by India's tacit approval and if that would not undermine India's regional security interests. New Delhi had not objected to Bhutan's desire for negotiations with China to demarcate the 470 kilometer-long common boundary. Bhutan's perception of the Chinese threat had receded considerably over the years but this had in no way eroded the special relationship between India and Bhutan. Their common perception of security based on the inviolability of the Himalayan barriers had remained intact.

1.8 Sri Lanka's Threat Perception

Sri Lanka is a small island country situated at the centre of commercially and strategically vital sea and air routes. Of all the South Asian countries, it has the closest proximity to India. Only 18 miles of shallow water in the Palk Strait separates the northern Sri Lanka from the southern most tip of the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Its geostrategic location in the Indian Ocean, its proximity to the US naval base at Diego Garcia and to the oil rich Persian Gulf region, have elevated its

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strategic significance. Commenting on Sri Lanka's perception of external threat and the likely strategy to be adopted for the nation's security, one defence expert wrote:

Our defence shield against external aggression lies in the nature and character of our external relations which are conducted as to be friendly with all nations and hostile to none. Prima facie, therefore, we face no external threat. It follows that if our security is threatened, it would be for reasons beyond our control and for which we would have no responsibility. In such an eventuality, it would not be unreasonable to expect other powers to come to Sri Lanka's assistance...(164)

A somewhat similar view was echoed after independence by the first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, D.S. Senanayake. Keenly aware of his country's weakness against external threat, he declared:

We cannot defend ourselves... Let us confess that our defence depends upon someone or other undertaking to help us defend ourselves... I see at the moment only one country with sufficient interest to defend us at their expense and that country was Great Britain.(165)

He was emphatic that as a means of defence against external aggression, Sri Lanka had entered into a defence agreement with Britain. What he did not specify was the external enemy (real or potential) whom Sri Lanka perceived as a threat to its security. Furthermore, it was not made clear as to what interest Britain had in 1948 to enter into a defence agreement with Sri Lanka when no such agreements were signed with other countries in the subcontinent. The agreement provided for mutual assistance for the protection of the island nation with permission for Britain to use the Trincomalee naval and Katunayake air bases.


166. For the text of the agreement, see Lucy M. Jacob, Sri Lanka: From Dominion to Republic (New Delhi, 1973), pp.200-3.
It was presumably on the basis of the offer of defence and logistic facilities for Britain in the island that it became possible for Sri Lankan leaders to clinch the deal for early independence. The agreement was conceived not from the point of view of Sri Lanka's defence but as a means to accommodate British interest which suited its security objectives at that particular juncture. Justifying the defence ties with Britain, Senanayake told the Parliament:

"...we should be ready and anxious to give all assistance and all facilities that His Majesty's Government might require provided that we are also given the control of our country... This method would, I suggested, assure the Government of Britain of a friendly people and a friendly government, another dominion on the sea and air routes to Australia and New Zealand. It would assure the Government of naval and air bases that would dominate the Indian Ocean." (168)

Though Britain granted independence to its colonies in the Indian subcontinent it still had an Asian Empire and was in complete command over the Indian Ocean. It did not want to quit the region so early. For Britain the island's value lay in the military bases which were developed and used by them during the World War II to launch their attack against Japan. In the post-war period, Britain wanted to retain those bases to protect its interest in the Indian Ocean, specially for securing her links with Australia and New Zealand.

A basic requirement of commonwealth strategy was the maintenance of communication in the Indian Ocean by sea and air. Ceylon occupied a commanding position as a base for defence communication, without which control over the Indian Ocean would

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be seriously weakened. It provided the only existing fleet between Malta and Singapore.\(^{(170)}\)

Ostensibly with that interest in mind Britain entered into the defence agreement with Sri Lanka. In 1956, when the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) came to power and Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike asked the British forces to leave, Britain had already decided to withdraw its fleets from the East of Suez and the Indian Ocean region. The Trincomalee naval base and Katunayake airbase were handed over to Sri Lanka. But the defence agreement itself was not abrogated.

Even if Senanayake did not specify the source of outside threat for which Sri Lanka had to seek protection from Britain, a hypothesis was in circulation at that time in Colombo stating that the threat was from her big neighbour India.\(^{(172)}\) John Kotelawala was more explicit in a statement which he made in 1955: "the day Ceylon dispensed with Englishmen completely, the island would go under India". But that perception changed the very next year when the United National Party (UNP) was for the first time ousted from power. This highlighted the fact that there was no unanimity among the political leaders in that country regarding India as the only adversary. The UNP leaders were also not ventilating the official version of the security doctrine, if there was one. Bandaranaike announced that the "real position of our country

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171. J.L. Fernando, Bandaranaike Legacies (Colombo: Times of Ceylon Ltd., 1965), p.21. In April 1984, the former President J.R. Jayewardene declared that the UK-Ceylon Defence Pact was still valid, see The Times of India (New Delhi), April 9, 1984.


173. For several other statements by Sir John mentioning 'India as the source of threat', see Shelton U. Kodikara, "Strategic Perspectives of Indo-Sri Lanka Relations" paper presented at the seminar on Indo-Sri Lanka Relations, held at Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Colombo in January 1990.
in Asia should be that of Switzerland in Europe". He regretted that nothing has been done to implement that line of action. For him Sri Lanka should immediately enter into multilateral agreements with the countries of Asia and the Middle East for defence and non-aggression. But his Finance Minister, N.M. Perera, stated explicitly in his first budget speech after British withdrawal that, "I do not think we need envisage the prospect of any country invading us unless, of course there is a general world war".

Writing in 1958, J.D.B. Miller aptly described that:

The main aspect of Ceylonese foreign relations must, however, always concern India. No India government would be pleased to find Ceylon a tributary to any potentially hostile power. Ceylon is, in fact, as much a responsibility of Indian defence as the Isle of Wight is to Britain for Tasmania of Australia. From the Indian standpoint, Ceylon is safe so long as the Ceylonese government does not provide bases or other opportunities to an enemy of India; if there were any prospect of this in a situation of danger of war, India would probably act swiftly to secure the cooperation of Ceylon, either by agreement or by coercion. As things stands, there is no need for India to worry about this possibility, and Ceylon can proceed with her own foreign and defence policy, aware that, in the long run, she will be protected by India.(176)

Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic country. Out of a total population of 16.5 million, Sinhalese constitute 74 per cent, Tamils 12.7 per cent, Indian Tamils 5.5 per cent, Muslims 7.5 per cent and the rest are Malays. The Sinhala community is concentrated in the South, West and Central provinces, the Sri Lankan Tamils are predominant in the North and East. The Indian Tamils are the descendants of workers brought from

South India during the late 19th and early 20th centuries to work on plantation and inhabit the hill region of Central Province where plantations are located. Though they are not involved in the current ethnic conflict, still they constitute a key factor as regards the political and economic security of the island due to their stronghold over a vital sector of Sri Lankan economy. Since they voted for the communist parties earlier, they were viewed as a threat. The majority Sinhala community had always claimed that they were the original inhabitants of Sri Lanka. The Tamils were treated as invaders. This adversary perception of the Tamils in the mind of the Sinhalese had its roots in the myths of Sinhala Buddhism and history but it had got state backing. The ill-feeling towards the Tamils was reinforced by the memory of repeated military adventures undertaken in the Sinhala Kingdoms by the rulers of the Chola Dynasty of Southern India in antiquity. This contrary historical perception of the two communities had coloured their perception after independence. The Sinhala consciousness was dominated by a fear of external intervention. Though they considered themselves racially superior to the Tamils, they nurtured the psychological fear of a minority compared to the larger Tamil community of South India. This fear came out of the close cultural and ethnic affinity between the Tamil communities of both the countries. The Tamils in Sri Lanka saw themselves as a minority in a Sinhala dominated society. The Sinhala political elite in the post independence era exploited the fear of outside attack, and the minority complexion of the majority community to

178. Ibid., p.29; also see Shelton U. Kodikara, Indo-Ceylon Relations Since Independence (Colombo: Apothecaries, 1965), Chapter III.


180. V.P. Vaidik, Ethnic Crisis in Sri Lanka: India's Options (New Delhi:
build Sinhala nationalism in a multi-ethnic society. Thus, the elite gained maximum political mileage out of it.

When ethnic conflict erupted in Sri Lanka in July 1983 owing to the killing of 13 Sinhala soldiers by the Tamil militants of the Northern Province, the Sinhalese felt that their perception had become a reality.

The open support of nearly 50 million Tamils in southern India, less than 20 miles from North Sri Lanka, for their cousins in the north and east of Sri Lanka coupled with threats of past invasion, has created a nightmare of insecurity for the Sinhalese. (181)

Tamil Nadu's displeasure with the Sri Lankan Government and its military on their dubious role in handling the ethnic violence in Colombo in July 1983 was not without reason, and has even been admitted by J.R. Jayewardene. But the expression of concern by the Government of India went beyond the parochial considerations of Tamil Nadu politics. The major reason for Sri Lanka's fear of India was that the Sinhalese tried to visualise India through the prism of Tamil Nadu. India saw the possibility of influx of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka. Moreover, India feared that external powers might take advantage of the situation in the island in military terms. India was also equally worried for the safety of around two lakh Tamil plantation workers who had qualified for Indian


182. The President said, "I think there was a big anti-Tamil feeling among the forces, and they felt that shooting the Sinhalese who were rioting would have been anti-Sinhalese; and actually in some areas we saw them (armed forces) encouraging them (Sinhala mobs)". The Times (London), August 9, 1983; for similar views, see James Manor, "Sri Lanka: Explaining the Disaster" The World Today (London) vol.39, no.11, November 1983, pp.540-59, also see his book, Sri Lanka in Change and Crisis; (London, 1984); S.J. Tambiah, Sri Lanka: Ethnic Fratricide and the Dismantling of Democracy (London: I.B. Tauris, 1986); Kumara Rupesinghe, "Sri Lanka: Peace Keeping and Peace Building" Bulletin of Peace Proposals (Oslo) vol.20, no.3, 1989, pp.335-50; and "Ethnic Conflict and Human Rights: A Comparative Perspective" in the same issue, pp.655-6.
citizenship but were stationed in Sri Lanka. Therefore, India offered its good office to resolve the crisis within the framework of unity and integrity of that country. But this was interpreted as "Indian intervention in Sri Lanka" on behalf of the Tamils. President Jayewardene declared:

Supposing, she invades, our principles are not in any way tarnished by India's invasion. Take Sri Lanka and rule it (you) can't rule 15 million people if they are opposed to it. If I am alive I will carry on the movement against that invasion.(186)

As bilateral relations started deteriorating, the intervention bogey was kept alive in Colombo with the intention to seek military assistance from countries other than India. The Government in Sri Lanka alleged that the Tamil militants had Indian backing and were provided training in Madras and part of South India. Arms were purchased from such diverse sources as Israel, South Africa, China, Pakistan, South Korea, Britain and the United States. The government admitted that former members of Britain's elite Special Air Services Regiment and agents of Israel's domestic intelligence agency, Shin Bet, were engaged in training anti-guerrilla security forces. These developments in a neighbouring country directly impinged upon the security environment in South Asia in general and India in particular. Indira Gandhi felt compelled to assure


184. Samarasinghe, Ibid.


186. The Hindu (Madras) May 9 & 10, 1983.


Jayewardenne that "India had no intention of invading its neighbours".

But the Indian perception of the Sri Lankan situation did not go unsupported in Colombo. Opposition members argued in the Sri Lankan Parliament:

In defence the first principle is to find out from where the threat comes. It is very clear that the open threat we all know is the ethnic threat. But, there is a hidden threat also, which is the super power threat...The country is going through a period where we are facing both these threats at same time.(190)

The main issues on which India and Sri Lanka parted company were, first, India's insistence on a peaceful solution of the conflict, and the accommodation of Tamil grievances without affecting the unity and integrity of the country. Secondly, India was equally concerned about the anti-Indian orientations of the military support that Sri Lanka sought from other countries thereby affecting India's security environment. Therefore, when the Sri Lankan armed forces launched military operations in the early part of 1987 in the Tamil dominated northern province, Indian Air Force planes violated the Sri Lankan air space. Though India argued that such action was necessary because innocent people were in need of relief supplies, the hidden intention was to pass the signal that military offensive was not up to New Delhi's test. The active role and support of external powers increased India's anxieties. The Indo-Sri Lanka accord of July 1987, and the deployment of Indian Peace-Keeping Force that immediately followed, were in fact an extension of the policy of strategic denial to curb outside interference in the affairs of South Asia.

189. Cited in Kearney, Ibid.


Though there were misgivings in Colombo about India's intention, the real threat came not from external aggression but from domestic disruptive forces. The psychological suspicion of India in the minds of the Sinhalese was nothing but a problem of their own making. The question of big power sensitivity was very much there in the island. But this feeling of insecurity had resulted out of long neglect of the Tamil minority which has ethno-cultural affinity with the people of India.

1.9 Conclusion

South Asia is characterised by gross disparity among its constituent units in terms of their size, population, territory, resources and military capabilities. Divergent perception of threat was an in-built feature of this Indo-centric region. There was a lack of initiative among the countries to develop coherent strategy for regional security. While India believed its security was linked with that of other states in the region, and expected regularised cooperative behaviour in issues relating to national security, others sought support from outside the region because, for these countries, India's intention of developing a common strategy against extra regional threat was a manifestation of big power hegemonism. History, asymmetry, geopolitics and systemic divergence clouded any vision of new inter-state relations in South Asia. The sense of insecurity among the small countries was more psychological than real (excepting the case of Pakistan). They were the creation of distorted history and the wrong interpretation of asymmetry.

contd. f/n. 191


For external security, small states in South Asia either relied on outside help or planned to adopt unconventional military means to that end. The militarisation process undertaken by them was not meant to face any external threat but for regime security and to counter internal forces of fragmentation.

The India-Pakistan conflict had occupied the centre stage of the South Asian security complex. They justified arms acquisition in relation to each other, and in both countries there was preparation for greater future conflict. But their militarisation process could not be explained solely in terms of the arms race. For India, Islamabad was not the only source of threat and similarly for Pakistan, threat from New Delhi was live and real, but both confronted multiple threat scenarios. The Chinese threat to India was imminent during the last three decades, and the strategic linkage between China and Pakistan haunted Indian policymakers. During the 1980s internal discord and its external connections appeared to be more threatening than external threat.

Though the sense of insecurity in relation to India was the single major factor that shaped Pakistan's defence and security policies over the last forty-five years, any objective analysis of Pakistan's security emphasized the overlap between internal and external problems. The prolonged military rule and the resulting crisis of regime legitimacy, and the extreme regionalism had added to political instability and contributed to the defence build up. The threat from Afghanistan had exerted strong influence on policy makers during the 1980s.

Under the grip of this divergent pattern of perception, the non-military dimensions of threat to the security of the countries viz., poverty, underdevelopment, scientific-technological backwardness, environmental hazards, and natural calamities were not reflected in their security calculations.
It is also highlighted that in most of the South Asian countries, security perception had changed with the change of regimes. Except India and Pakistan where both structural and situational factors contributed to overt threat, thereby leading both to devise defence strategies to ward off the threats, in other countries the external threat scenario had been deliberately created either to gain political legitimacy or to suppress domestic disruptive forces. The major threat for these countries was internal not external. For them, it is more appropriate to speak of state security (i.e. regime protection) than of national security (i.e. protection of the nation from external enemies).