3. Contemporary Security Priorities and South Asia

3.1. The Main Issues concerning the World Today

In the late eighties, the sequence of events took such a rapid turn that the world scenario now bears no resemblance with the world that existed in the post-World War II era. Just as international relations took a significant turn after the Second World War, likewise a change of the same magnitude took place in the early nineties. In the wake of "Perestroika" and "Glasnost", a wind of change swept the Soviet Union. It was followed by the collapse of communism in all East European countries, crumbling of the Soviet bloc and the eventual end of the Cold War. The Gulf War of 1991 rendered the United States of America as the only superpower of the world and the so-called "New World Order" was claimed to be in the offing. Amid the turmoil of the Gulf War, the former American President George Bush began to talk hopefully of a New World Order - "a system of international understanding that could restore stability and prevent future conflicts from breaking out". But by the end of 1991, the world witnessed the disintegration of the Soviet Union and secessionist civil war in Yugoslavia involving Bosnia-Serbia-Croatia. After passing through various degrees of intensity, the latter has now somewhat abated, primarily due to the repeated efforts by the entire world community to stop the mindless bloodshed. There have been several successes in armed conflict prevention over the past one year, with peace accords being concluded in some instances. Historic all-party negotiations began in Northern Ireland conflict, agreement to begin talks on peace treaties was reached by the two Korean states and by Japan and Russia, and peace accords were achieved in Bangladesh, Liberia, Nicaragua and Tajikistan. In contrast however, since 1997, military coups have unravelled the peace settlements in Cambodia and Sierra Leone; the peace processes in Angola, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechnya and the Middle East remained deeply troubled; and diplomatic efforts failed to prevent or halt wars in several states in Central Africa. In recent past, fighting has also erupted in western China and Comoros. Armed resistance in Kosovo and the ethnic strife in Ethiopia and Eritrea are major causes of international concern today.

Thus, the pattern of international relations that has emerged in the post-Cold War era inheres certain positive as well as negative developments which evoke both hopes and fears about global peace and security.

Primarily, there have been several negative developments that have diminished the prospects of global peace. Prominent among them are the continuing repercussions of the break-up of the Soviet Union. In the first place, the smaller Republics are still facing a number of problems - political, economic, military, social, ethnic, cultural, geographical, etc. Internal strife and sectarian tensions have surfacing in many Republics with the disappearance of the central authority. The formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) has also not alleviated the problems and periodic conflicts have been taking place in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Chechnya and the like. For instance, about 10,000 Russian servicemen were killed in 1995 during the military campaign to destroy the separatist regime of rebel Chechnyans.

Since 1997, Russia has intensified its efforts to promote settlement of the unresolved conflicts over territory and status across the former Soviet Union. At the same time, there has been a growing concern in Moscow about challenges to its position from competing influences,
particularly in the oil-rich areas of Central Asia. Undoubtedly, Russia played a prominent role in launching and promoting a political reconciliation process in Tajikistan. It increased pressure for negotiations between the conflicting parties in Moldova, Georgia and Azerbaijan, where the peace process remained fragile. Moreover in 1997, Russia and Chechnya moved towards a practical modus vivendi in their post-war relations. However, the future status of Chechnya still remains an open question. And despite repeated efforts by Moscow to maintain a hold over the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), these have increasingly sought to distance themselves from Russia. 2

The demise of the socialist superpower also rendered many Third World countries vulnerable to external interference, especially from the West. These developing countries had previously sought succour and moral support from the Soviet Union. The policies of the new Republics, particularly the more prosperous ones like Russia and Ukraine have been less sympathetic to the Third World because their primary concern is to attain national progress without ideological blinkers. Many West European governments are successfully courting the Republics of Russia and Ukraine because these Republics could form an excellent market for their products and also prove to be a rich source for the supply of raw materials like coal, oil, timber and gas which these Slavic Republics have in abundance. At the same time, it is now unnecessary for a country like America to continue floating money without the slightest chance of returns to several insignificant Third World countries, as the need of aiding regimes in order to contain communism has become obsolete. 3 On the contrary, many developing countries are increasingly complaining about America's self-assumed role of a "globo-cop" which is more of an unwarranted interference in security concerns of other states. The sudden dismantling of an international system in place for more than forty years is said to have left many Americans unsure about what precise role they wish to assume in the post-Cold War era. The desire to curtail defense spending and to limit military involvement overseas, clashes with the claim to global leadership. Americans in great numbers do feel a moral compulsion to help countries in need and to defend the weak, but are reluctant to be drawn into unpredictable and open-ended conflicts. They give new recognition to the economic dimensions of security, and they realise the importance of transnational relationships in an increasingly global economy. But they also struggle with how to balance international interests and responsibilities with domestic priorities

Further, as the only remaining superpower of the world, America has often been criticised of imposing its will upon weaker states, such as unjustly making human rights a conditionality for economic aid to certain "delinquent/rogue" countries. Given these simultaneous trends, both the order and welfare of several developing countries (including India, which was a major beneficiary of Soviet assistance during the Cold War years despite its so-called "non-aligned status) has been hindered due to the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Moreover, the disintegration of the USSR also heralded the extremely dangerous phenomenon of smuggling of nuclear material from Republics like Russia which have highly sophisticated defence (and particularly nuclear) technology and know-how. For instance, in May 1994, the German authorities had seized five consignments of what was described as "smugglers" samples of plutonium and highly enriched uranium". These samples were believed to have come from Russia and were probably bound for destinations such as Islamabad, Pyongyang Tehran and Tripoli. Some quantities may have been intended for sale to even non-governmental groups.
Indeed, there can be no denying that in the post-Cold War period, fissile material has been dangerously scattered all over the world. And much of the fissile material of the developed world is not adequately safeguarded. There is also the threat of covert nuclear material trade from the Western countries. In the future therefore, it might just be possible for a terrorist organisation of a developing country to convert fissile material into a full-fledged bomb. In the light of these imminent dangers, the leaders of G-7 nations and Russia met in mid-April 1996 to discuss measures for thwarting illicit trade in nuclear materials. Scientists from these industrialised countries believe that nuclear smuggling is a top national security threat and much of their concern is with Russia and other former Soviet republics. Between 1991 and 1995, the US alone allocated $76 million and spent about $18 million in programmes meant to improve security at former Soviet nuclear sites. The US customs service has also been tightening controls along the country's borders with nuclear detection devices placed at entry points. This is partly attributed to the fact that in a general accounting office report of mid-1996, it was estimated that 1400 tons of weapons-grade uranium and plutonium produced by the former Soviet Union are highly attractive to theft because of outdated security measures and poor records. Thus, greater co-operation between the G-7 and Russia has been advised in order to check a nuclear proliferation (stemming from nuclear smuggling) that may go totally out of control. The world leaders also discussed the related problems of dealing with nuclear waste including preventing dumping at sea, as well as improving the safety of the ageing Soviet-era reactors, particularly in the light of the Chernobyl disaster of 1986.

The break-up of Yugoslavia following the social and ethnic turmoil is yet another disheartening factor in world politics today. The civil war in the Yugoslavian states of Bosnia and Serbia raised the disturbing question of self-determination which has caused concern for many nation-states. Despite the cease-fire and world-wide attempts at rejuvenating the war-torn region, it remains a potentially explosive part of the world, always susceptible to ethnic and religious fundamentalist strife. As part of the present peace accord, Muslims and Croats in Bosnia have formed a tenuous federation to balance the Serbs. The accord has also given the federation control of roughly half of Bosnia's territory and remains susceptible to ethnicity-based discontent in the future.

Then there are the continued Arab-Israel differences in West Asia, the threat of war between North and South Korea, and the perpetual menace of Iran's nuclear ambitions. The war in the Persian Gulf changed the strategic map of the Middle east but did little to resolve the basic causes of regional conflict. In fact, the allied victory, while decisive in military terms, left in its wake many unresolved problems of regional security. Indeed, the war brought to the surface many of the region's long-standing conflicts between Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis in Iraq and the forces of fundamentalism and nationalism in key Arab countries. There have been almost perpetual conflicts of varying intensities among the states of Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Basically, it is the Arab-Israeli conflict that continues to polarise the region. The spread of weapons of mass destruction has not stopped either despite the fact that Iraq's capabilities in this area have been severely circumscribed. In recent years, Israel has been involved in a bloody war with the Hizbollah of Lebanon and a cease-fire was possible only by the concerted efforts of the US, France and other great powers in the UN. After what could have been a breakthrough in early 1997 over Israeli withdrawal from Hebron, renewed Israeli settlement activity stalled the Israeli-Palestinian talks. The peace process was further marred by new outbreaks of terrorist activities. Until early 1998, there have been no official talks between Israel and Syria, and the
level of violence in Lebanon remains high. Internal fighting in Algeria has worsened; conflicts in the Kurdish regions of Turkey and Iraq continue; and Islamic terrorists continue to make periodic strikes in Egypt. 7

Both Iran and Iraq also continue to be major sources of instability in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, the excessively oil-rich parts of the world. In mid-1995, the US instituted a trade embargo with Iran hoping that it would effectively curb Iran's drive to acquire devastating weapons and support for terrorist activities. The threat from Iran must have been perceived to be truly great for the sanctions meant a loss of roughly $4 billion in sales of Iranian oil by US firms on the world spot market, along with a total of some $300 million in other trade. And yet, Iran remains unruffled. As was remarked by former President Rafsanjani on Iranian television in early 1996, "In a world that desperately needs fuel and energy, Iran cannot be driven out of the global oil market". Iran, one of the biggest oil producers in the world, produces 1.25 billion barrels of oil a year, and industry analysts estimate that the country has untapped reserves of roughly 115 billion barrels. One hopeful indication came in 1997 when the pragmatic Mohammed Khatami was elected president of Iran by a wide margin. Although the new president has widespread popular support, he is likely to face an uphill task in trying to effect change in the country against the wishes of the still-powerful and highly orthodox religious elite. His efforts at improving relations with the West, especially the United States, although laudable, are still being viewed with great circumspection. On the whole however, there have been no indications that the new leadership is willing to make radical (and positive) changes in Iran's long-standing nuclear ambitions. 8

Indeed, hardly anyone outside Iran denies that the Iranians want the bomb. Iran is still trying to recover from its eight-year war with Iraq, and its neighbours - China, Russia and now Pakistan - are declared nuclear powers. And there is also no reason to suppose that Iraq's Saddam Hussein has abandoned his dream of acquiring nuclear weapons, even though the U.N. sanctions had temporarily dampened the Iraqi enthusiasm in this context. The stonewalling tactics that were faced by the U.N.-sponsored weapons inspection team in Iraq since late 1997 threatened to blow up into another military confrontation until major global diplomatic efforts finally defused some of the tensions. The consequent agreement signed between Iraq and the U.N. regarding these inspections has been far from satisfactory, with doubts about Iraq's latest commitment to chemical and non-conventional disarmament still at large. In his semi-annual report to the Security Council, chief investigator Richard Butler is reported to have declared that Baghdad has made "virtually no progress in verifying disarmament". In fact, the inspectors found evidence that Iraq may still have the capability to produce chemical and biological weapons. "The Iraqis are behaving nicely...but they haven't changed their policy", says a senior U.N. official. In early April 1998, a report by another U.N. body, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), revealed that Iraq has repeatedly tried to revive its nuclear-weapons programme after the end of the Persian Gulf War in 1991. And there are no signs of the so-called "new spirit of cooperation" that U.N. Secretary-General, Kofi Annan hopes to establish between Iraq and the rest of the world, being actually implemented. 9

As regards Iran, one US analyst predicts that "In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Iran will certainly possess a nuclear weapon". Moreover, Iran is believed to be vigorously supporting terrorist groups that are trying to wreck the Mid-east peace process. And finally, Iran and other fundamentalist countries are also attempting to spread Muslim fundamentalism throughout the Asian continent and elsewhere. Several terrorist bombings and hijackings in the industrialised
world have been traced to virulently fundamentalist groups of the Middle east and Gulf countries. Despite these ominous signs, countries like China and Russia are found to be providing training and nuclear know-how to hundreds of Iranians. Besides, since Iran and North Korea have a long-standing co-operation in building missiles, some Western observers worry that the Iranians could pick up a few nuclear tricks from Pyongyang as well. 10

On its part, North Korea, as an aggressive and expansionist state, has been providing enough reasons for concern regarding global security. Not only did the North initiate the Korean War in June 1950, but since that time it has been prepared to attack at a moment's notice. "One cannot rule out the possibility that Pyongyang may try to exploit a fluid international environment and unstable domestic/regional situation, the result of which could well be a militarised dispute". The military balance in the peninsula has traditionally favoured the North, and even by the early 1990s, South Korea had not caught up with North's level of military strength. Besides, South Korea, supported by the US, have always been pacifistic in their intentions in the region, an attitude which has often been exploited by the North. The country has been pursuing an ambitious nuclear weapons programme and has repeatedly backtracked on the N.P.T. and any other attempts at nuclear Non-Proliferation such as inspections by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the region. For instance, in March 1993, Pyongyang officials refused the IAEA inspectors access to the Yongbyon nuclear-research complex. This raised suspicions that North Korea must have bomb fuel to hide. There were even mutterings from the Pentagon of air-strikes against Yongbyon and it took several months of wrangling to reach some sort of a half-hearted agreement over the issue. The historical animosity between North and South Korea only serves to heighten the fear that any future conflict between these two could escalate into a nuclear war. It is generally felt that the threat from North Korea will grow in the near future even as the South continues its economic and military build-up. In May 1993, Pyongyang successfully test-fired the Rodong I missile, which, with a range of 1000 kilometers, could easily deliver a missile not only to South Korea but also to Japan, China or Russia. The Rodong II has since been under development, which would also bring South China and Taiwan within reach. The demilitarised zone between North and South Korea is a misnomer; it has been and continues to be a highly unstable border. This fear was justified when on April 4, 1996, North Korea declared that it would no longer "unilaterally" abide by rules concerning the maintenance and control of the demilitarised buffer zone with South Korea, accusing the south of turning the zone into a militarised zone. It also alleged that Seoul was making "invasion" preparations that were taking the peninsula to the "eve of war". Subsequently, North Korean authorities sent troops to the sensitive joint security area at the Panmunjom truce village passing point on the border, for three days, thereby raising the tension of a North-South war in the Korean peninsula. The North's incursions were interpreted in Washington and the UN Security Council as a ploy to push the Americans, who now have 37,000 troops in South Korea, into direct military talks that would sideline South Korea. The table given overleaf provides some insight into the delicate balance of defense forces maintained in the Korean peninsula (though these figures held good for the year 1993 and the numbers could have increased marginally by now). 11
Table 3.1: Comparative Military Strengths of North and South Korea, 1993

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>South Korea</th>
<th>North Korea</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Troops: Army</td>
<td>540,000</td>
<td>900,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>46,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air-force</td>
<td>55,000</td>
<td>84,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Troops: US Army</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Air-force</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Little wonder then, that North Korea has often been called "the Clinton administration's Cuban Missile Crisis"! 12

In April 1998 however, a fresh initiative was launched by both North and South Korea to reopen the inter-Korean government talks on economic and military issues. This has been largely brought about following radical policy changes under a new leadership in both the states. South Korea has started viewing the North from a fresh perspective ever since the death of Kim II Sung while on its part, North Korea has turned more responsive to the South Korean government of the new president Kim Dae-Jung. For the first time since the division of the peninsula in 1945, efforts are now being made to reunite separated family members in both states as well as to promote economic and humanitarian co-operation between the antagonistic neighbours. 13 It is hoped that such efforts will intensify in the coming months to set the pace for a major peace initiative in East Asia.

But then, there is also the Chinese factor that needs careful consideration here. China has often caused concern in the region, specially over the long-standing Taiwan issue. Beijing regards Taiwan as a renegade province and has repeatedly warned the US and its allies that China will not tolerate any external interfere in the island. In March 1996 the Chinese vice-premier and foreign minister, Qian Qichen had firmly reiterated that "Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and not a protectorate of the US. If foreign forces invade Taiwan or the Taiwan authorities attempt to go in for Taiwanese independence, we will not sit by idly and remain indifferent". This was followed by new military exercises in the Taiwan Strait which evoked strong opposition from the US and were condemned as unnecessarily provocative actions to fuel a crisis in the region. In fact, the US sent in several navy aircraft carrier groups "to be somewhat closer to Taiwan and assist in case of any aggressive action by China". Fortunately, tensions were defused over a period of time but since then, Beijing has renewed its call for reunification of Taiwan with the Chinese mainland rendering it a contentious politico-security issue in contemporary international relations. The Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to the US in October 1997, reiterated among other debatable issues, this unwavering stance of China over the Taiwanese problem. Strongly reaffirming the 'one China' principle, the Chinese authorities have again refused to agree to give up the use of force for reunifying Taiwan. 14

Ever since the collapse of the Soviet Union deprived them of a common enemy, there has been no underlying strategic imperative to bind the U.S. and China. On the contrary, many in the U.S. defence establishment see China as a potential threat, primarily stemming from the fact that the
American and the Chinese political systems are diametrically opposed. Furthermore, American concerns over China’s human rights record, the question of Tibet, and most recently, the alleged Chinese influence-peddling in U.S. elections have combined to hamstring President Clinton’s attempt to build the ‘strategic partnership’ that he and the Chinese President Zemin announced in the U.S. last October. 15

Contrary to most expectations, the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union has not ushered in global peace and stability. As mentioned in the very first chapter, it is widely held that wars have not become obsolete, particularly in the Third World. Many Third World states are becoming increasingly powerful and hence, they pose a major threat both to themselves as well as to the rest of the world. The likelihood of wars in the Third World is so high because these countries are characterised by domestic instability that leads to internal conflict which can conflagrate into international wars as well. Besides, the domestic turmoil can also undermine political stability and thus increase the risk of miscalculation in the international level crisis. Historical evidence supports this observation because from 1945 to 1990, there have been over 100 wars (both intra- and inter- state) in the Third World alone! Since 1945, nearly 20 million people have lost their lives in wars out of which, over 19 million people died in wars occurring in the Third World. Thus, "it would not be an exaggeration to say that war since 1945 has essentially been a Third World affair" 16 According to Project Ploughshares of Canada, Africa remains the most warring region on the planet, currently hosting 14 major armed conflicts. Furthermore, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook of 1998, 25 major armed conflicts were waged in 24 different locations around the world in 1997. And all the new conflicts in 1997 took place on the African continent, with Africa being the only region in the world that showed an increase in the number of conflicts over the past few years. Africa is also the region with the largest share of conflicts with a high level of intensity, that is, with more than 1000 battle-related deaths per year. 17

This is a highly precarious situation in the view of the fact that the regional hegemons of the Third World are known to possess most of the modern weapons, both conventional as well as unconventional (include nuclear and chemical weapons). The US-Soviet arms race has, indeed, been replaced by a rash of arms races among the rising powers in the least stable regions of the world. In this context, the SIPRI yearbook for 1989 reported that three-quarters of the major weapons transferred to the Third World between 1984 and 1988 ended up in fourteen nations only: Angola, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Syria, Taiwan and Turkey. Most of these countries have engaged in military combat at some point in the past 10-15 years, and many are engaged in regional power struggles with other nations on the list. Hence, an all-out military encounter between them would entail high levels of death and destruction, apart from drawing the developed world also into its fold. According to the most recent SIPRI Yearbook of 1998, there has been a clear trend of increasing arms transfers since 1994, but the volume is still only 62% of the volume in 1987, a year when the highest level since 1950 was reached! Among the arms recipients, the countries in Northeast Asia and the Middle East continue to be the leading importers. Surprisingly, though the countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have shown a tremendous spurt in armed conflict, they have not been the major recipients of conventional weapons and there seems to be no indication that these weapons have played an important role in the outbreak or outcome of conflicts therein. 18
The production and proliferation of nuclear and non-nuclear weapons also continues unabated in today's world, thereby adding yet another horrific dimension to the scenario. The likely violence of such encounters is partly a result of the international arms flow. At the international level, a growing minority of countries produces arms and an expanding majority is engaged in importing them. The US Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy estimated that by the year 2000, forty countries would possess the technical ability to manufacture nuclear weapons. This is ironical in view of the fact that to buttress industry at home and policy abroad, the US itself has been the largest arms merchant to the world. The following table highlights this.

Table 3.2 : Top 10 Purchasers of US Arms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>In US $ billions, 1990-93</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Critics argue that America's surging weapons sales would turbo-charge regional arms race - 66 per cent of all US exports go to Third World countries, among which are many fragile autocracies vulnerable to sudden power shifts and imbalances. Apart from all this, for nations that cannot afford brand-new weaponry, the Pentagon is literally giving away older but still lethal pieces of its Cold War arsenal! Officials explain that such "gifts" help to nurture closer ties between the US and foreign militaries and save million of dollars that the Defense Department would otherwise have to pay to scrap arms. Since the collapse of the Berlin Wall in late 1989, US overseas weapons sales have totalled $82.4 billion, far ahead of the $66.8 billion in sales racked up by the rest of the world's nations combined. US arms-transfer agreements in 1993 totalled $22.3 billion, eclipsing second-place Russia's $2.8 billion and Britain's $2.3 billion third-place finish. The Pentagon is said to have sponsored weapons sales to 86 countries. Further, Washington approved the shipment of $2.2 billion in free weapons and military supplies to some 50 countries and sanctioned arms deals with 146 of the world's 190 nations. In 1994 however, France displaced the United States as the world's top seller of arms to the developing world. With sales to Pakistan, Qatar and Saudi Arabia leading the way, French arms dealers signed $11.4 billion worth of new contracts during 1994 - nearly double that of US firms. But even including the 1994 figures, Washington still retains its global dominance of the post-Cold War Third World arms market. From 1991 through 1994, US firms accounted for 47.7 per cent of all arms transfer agreements with developing countries, according to a Report by the US Congressional research service. During this period, the US also led in supplying the Asian arms market, the developing world's second largest. The Gulf kingdom however, has alone accounted for almost 30 per cent of all developing world arms transfer agreements over the past eight years.
Asia is also considered the fastest growing market for arms, particularly the states of China, Japan and India. 22

Again paradoxically, the major suppliers to countries at war between 1993 and 1997 have been the US, Russia, Britain, China and France - the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. For instance, the 14-year war in Afghanistan that left over 1.5 million people dead, was fought mostly with illegal weapons from the West and the former Soviet Union. The American military equipment, including helicopters, had been used in attacks against civilians in southeastern Turkey. William Hartung, author of a well-known book on the US weapons trade, says that American arms are playing a role in 39 of the globe’s 48 conflicts today. These countries have also been guilty of looking the other way while illicit arms trade was being conducted the world over. For instance, several reports have confirmed how the American President Bill Clinton knew of and did not try to stop the illicit arms shipments from Iran to Bosnia’s beleaguered army. This helped the Bosnian government forces resist Serb rebel attacks in key parts of the republic through most of 1994 and 1995. This act was also in direct opposition to the UN embargo barring weapons shipments to all sides in the Balkan war throughout the three-and-half year conflict that killed thousands and destroyed property of countless value. 23 Furthermore, throughout the 1980s, the US is said to have winked at Chinese military aid to Pakistan because Islamabad was helping to fight the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan. Some analysts tried to justify the American stance by explaining that helping Pakistan catch up with India (“balanced imbalance”) would be conducive to regional stability because most of Pakistan’s actions are rooted in an insecurity dilemma vis-à-vis India’s superlative might. But it remains an undisputed fact that the US has always needed Pakistan, a country fortuitously located in the underbelly of the Asian land mass and bordering a region vital to its national interests - the Persian Gulf. Pakistan has been a key element in the dual containment strategy of checking the only two powers that can throw a spanner in the West’s interests in West Asia - Iran and Iraq. This is substantiated by the fact that in both 1993 and 1994, the US and Pakistan Navies conducted massive exercises near the maritime border of Pakistan and Iran. India, as usual, remained peripheral in the pursuit of these strategic interests of the United States. 24

More recently, charges have been levelled that when Clinton gave the American company, Loral and Hughes the permission to export U.S. satellites to China in 1996, he overlooked the Chinese missile-technology exports to Pakistan that should have invoked sanctions four years earlier. 25 On the contrary, the United States has lifted the 1989 embargo on nuclear exports to Beijing after the Chinese President Jiang Zemin promised Clinton in last October that China would not help countries like Pakistan and Iran to develop their nuclear capabilities. 26 In a similar vein, a report of Russia’s Foreign Intelligence Service, parts of which were leaked to the international press community in June 1998, throws light on the history of Pakistan’s nuclear programme and the “secret assistance” Islamabad allegedly received from member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). 27

Similar cases abound in several other Third World countries. The extent of this problem is evident from the following table which accounts for the enormous amount of weapons supplied to the less developed countries, that is, those belonging to the Third World, even during a short span of ten years only. 28
Table 3.3: Global Supply of Weapons to the LDCs during 1978-82 and 1983-87

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weapon Type</th>
<th>1978-82</th>
<th>1983-87</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanks</td>
<td>12,335</td>
<td>8,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-air Artillery</td>
<td>6,890</td>
<td>3,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Surface Combatants</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Aircraft (Supersonic)</td>
<td>3,505</td>
<td>2,058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surface-to-air Missiles</td>
<td>17,830</td>
<td>27,029</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It also became increasingly evident since the late seventies that a growing number of developing countries were not only importing but also producing (and even exporting) modern, sophisticated weapons systems such as jet fighters, armoured fighting vehicles, missiles, rocket systems, and naval combat vessels. The table given below enumerates this.

Table 3.4: Some Global Weaponization Trends

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABC</th>
<th>Developing ABC</th>
<th>Lesser Producers</th>
<th>Minor Producers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>Bolivia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Congo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>Dominican Rep.</td>
<td>Cuba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>North Korea</td>
<td>Gabon</td>
<td>Ecuador</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Honduras</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>Ivory Coast</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Madagascar</td>
<td>Guinea</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Morocco</td>
<td>Jordan</td>
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<td>Panama</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
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<td>Peru</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Senegal</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Syria</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>Tunisia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC: Across-the-Board Capability</td>
<td></td>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>Upper Volta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Alongside the generalised trend of diffusion shown above, there is a secondary trend of the concentration of military capabilities insofar as some states are acquiring a disproportionate share of military skills and technologies. Looking at the statistics on arms transfers, we find a group of twenty nations accounting for as much as 75 per cent of all such transfers to the Third World. The twenty nations are (by region):
Africa: Algeria, Angola, Egypt, Libya, and South Africa;
Middle East: Iran, Iraq, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and Turkey;
South Asia: India and Pakistan;
East Asia: China, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan.

These twenty nations also include all of the existing Third World nuclear powers, plus many of those who are on the list of nations that may acquire the capacity to produce nuclear weapons before the end of this century. Furthermore, they include all but few of the Third World nations reported to possesses chemical weapons and ballistic weapons. Similarly, if one considers the group of eighteen aspiring regional hegemons, one can identify at least twelve pairs of competitors among them: Argentina and Brazil, China and India, China and Taiwan, Egypt and Israel, Egypt and Libya, India and Pakistan, Iran and Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Syria, Iraq and Turkey, Israel and Syria, and North Korea and South Korea. Indeed, all these rivalries are the major reason for the concentration of arms. Rodney W. Jones and Steven A. Hildreth suggest that the rivals tend to "judge the value of weapons systems or technologies not on the basis of pure military utility against local threats but rather in terms of whether they are as modern technologically as the systems their neighbours are acquiring". 30

The following data reveals the actual cost of arming the world that is so preoccupied with security considerations.

* The world spends $1.7 million a minute on military forces and equipment.
* Military expenditures by under-developed nations has gone up 800 per cent since 1960 (after adjusting for inflation).
* Between 1974 and 1985, Third World debt increased to $580 billion. Out of this amount, $250 billion represented arms imports from the developed world.
* Each year, the world spends an estimated $800 billion on arms. This sum is roughly equal to the debt of the developing world.
* By some estimates, less than 0.5 per cent of the money the world spends on arms in one year would pay to develop agriculture so that developing nations could feed themselves during this decade. 31
* More specifically, in 1994, the world military spending was a staggering $750 billion, while only $3.8 billion were spent on the UN peace-keeping efforts. 32

According to a study released on June 30, 1998 by the Brookings Institution of America, the United States itself is said to have spent $5.8 trillion on its nuclear weapons programme since 1940 - an amount more than that spent on any single national programme except Social Security. 33

All this seems to point to the fact that the world community has yet to understand that security is not primarily a matter of military preparedness. Peace and security simply cannot be enforced where social and economic conditions fail to sustain it. Peace, instead, must be built.

Since the horrific bombing of the two Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the world has thankfully desisted from using nuclear weapons to resolve international conflicts. The nuclear genie, however, has not remained altogether in the bottle. Apart from the United States, the former Soviet Union, Britain, France and China too have developed nuclear weapons and these five are the officially-acknowledged nuclear states. With both India and Pakistan conducting a
series of nuclear tests in May 1998 and subsequently declaring themselves as nuclear powers, the
global nuclear configuration has been monumentally and irrevocably altered. Details of this are
provided in the next section. In addition, there are about a dozen threshold nuclear weapon
countries including Israel and Iran who already possess an undeclared nuclear capability or are on
the verge of doing so.

The protagonists of peace believe that three factors can help to prevent the rapid proliferation of
nuclear weapons. First is the ethical dimension. Large sections of international opinion have
viewed nuclear weapons as being morally repugnant. Indeed, deformed descendants of the
survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are a constant reminder of the catastrophic effects of
nuclear weapons, which can last for hundreds of years. Scientists have demonstrated that even a
limited exchange of nuclear weapons anywhere on the planet could create such climatic
conditions that all life on earth could face the threat of extinction. The second factor which has
prevented mass proliferation is the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (N.P.T.). While the N.P.T. is
deeply flawed and has been unable to prevent the stockpiling of nuclear weapons among
countries that already possess them, it has been quite successful in preventing horizontal
proliferation. In 1968, when the N.P.T. was signed, there were only five declared nuclear weapon
countries. About three decades later, there are still only five officially-acknowledged nuclear
weapon countries. And finally, the supply controls on the nuclear technology and fissile material
has also made it difficult to develop nuclear weapons. The London Suppliers Group, the
Australian Suppliers Group and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) have variously
tried to ensure that nuclear or delivery technology (or even technology which has potentially dual­
uses) is not exported to countries which have nuclear ambitions and unstable political regimes.

Of late though, all these controls seem to be breaking down. Several peace movements have
disintegrated with the end of the Cold War, and there is little internal pressure on governments.
Nuclear weapons are being viewed as an instrument of power and as an easy way of acquiring
great power status. Others believe that only the possession of a nuclear weapon can prevent them
from the tentacles of the United States, the only superpower today. Even a country such as Japan
(which has faced the real horror of nuclear weapons) is now rethinking its nuclear policy. Despite
the 1995 agreement by over 185 countries for a permanent extension of the N.P.T., there is not
much prospect at present of convincing the three major N.P.T. hold-outs - Israel, India, and
Pakistan - to accede to the treaty. This is in spite of the security guarantees for N.P.T. signatories
that the US has repeatedly offered as bait for signing the treaty. On the contrary, both India and
Pakistan have boldly gone ahead and declared their nuclear ambitions to the rest of the awe-struck
world. The cases of Iraq and North Korea, as well as deep suspicion regarding Iran's nuclear
ambitions, have also demonstrated the problem of enforcement under the existing system.
Furthermore, China and France themselves decided to resume nuclear testing soon after the
permanent extension of the N.P.T.. It was aptly remarked by the former Indian Prime Minister
Narasimha Rao in this context, "It is difficult to understand the argument that the security of the
world can only be safeguarded by the continued possession of nuclear weapons exclusively by
some powers for all times. This formulation can only imply a world-wide nuclear policing
regime". The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) has also still to come into force even
as many countries continue to view it with either scepticism or outright belligerence. The 1997
Conference on Disarmament at Geneva also failed to achieve most of its objectives with no
progress being made towards negotiating a global convention banning the production of fissile
material for military purposes. 36

Given the various causes of proliferation and the vast differences in verification requirements for
diverse states and regions, it would be surprising if any global approach was successful in dealing
with all regions and factors. Hence it has been suggested that the utility of the existing non-
proliferation regime can be maximised only if it is buttressed by regional frameworks addressing
the reasons why particular states go nuclear. 37 It is against this background that a reappraisal
of the issues of peace and security in South Asia is attempted next, especially when the region is
fast turning out to be a hot-bed for mutual conflicts and tensions.

3.2. South Asia's Compatibility with these Issues

There has been a revival of interest in regional conflicts all over the world and there is near-
universal consensus that South Asia constitutes one of the "critical regions" or "security
complexes" in the world. Historically too, South Asia has been notorious as one of the most
unstable regions on the planet. At the same time, its size and population; various significant
military and scientific establishments; and geographic position between the oil-rich Persian Gulf
and the dynamic economies of East Asia - give South Asia immense geo-political importance.
India dominates the region by its sheer size and an overwhelming population which makes it the
largest democracy in the world. Pakistan, a leader of moderate Islamic nations, plays a significant
role in ensuring the security of the Persian Gulf and was transformed into a front-line state
following the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan during the last decade. Bangladesh, a relatively
new nation, has a population of over 100 million poverty-stricken people and its struggle for basic
food self-sufficiency and economic progress has caught the imagination of the world. Sri Lanka,
long a bastion of democracy in the region, occupies a strategic location in the Indian Ocean.
Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives have their own special strategic significance and development
problems.

As elaborated in the previous chapter, most of the South Asian states are engrossed in varying
degrees of intra- and inter-state conflicts and crises. While the British imperial rule brought the
South Asian countries within a common colonial system, it simultaneously sowed several seeds
of discord which continue to plague inter-state relations in the area even today. The differences
between India and Pakistan over the two-nation theory and between Sri Lanka and India over the
nationality of Tamilian plantation workers are only two of the most outstanding examples in this
regard. The final hasty retreat of the British Raj and the ensuing bitterness generated between the
ruling elites of the two major South Asian states, gravely disrupted the traditional
complementarity and cohesion. Indeed, the historical fact that Pakistan and Bangladesh are the
severed limbs of what was once a united India under the Raj, bestows a unique complexity to the
entire region. Ethnic and linguistic complexities further complicate the scenario. Ethnic and
communal violence in India since the early 1980s has been at its highest since independence.
Estimates show that about 10,000 people were killed in various separatist, ethnic and religious
violence in India during 1983-86, while in 1991 alone the death toll was more than 7000, and the
casualties have been increasing. The year 1992 was the worst in terms of casualties with Hindu-
Muslim riots claiming over 1400 lives. Pakistan also continues to suffer from disturbances and
violence instigated by the forces of disintegration and about 9000 lives have reportedly been lost
in a recent five-year period. Similar types of problems continue to bedevil the domestic political scene in Bangladesh where the armed forces are involved in containing a small but potentially grave ethnic minority rebel group in the Chittagong Hill tracts. Likewise, a UN investigation team reported that 12,000 people were unaccounted for in Sri Lanka between 1983 and 1991. The problems arising out of divided communities spread across the South Asian countries are particularly intractable. Thus, there are Punjabis in Pakistan who represent the dominant community and there are more Muslims in India than in Pakistan. Likewise, there are more Nepalis in India than Indians in Nepal, and the Tamils in Sri Lanka are also closely connected to their brethren in India. Open borders encourage constant interaction between the populace of these countries. Such interaction often becomes the source of misgivings between states. Inevitably, Pakistan's reactions to the killings of Muslims in India are matched by India's response to the killings of Hindus in Bangladesh. Indo-Sri Lankan relations also remain strained over the discrimination and occasional maltreatment meted out to Tamils in Sri Lanka. Similarly, the overlapping of languages and more importantly, religions, frequently exerts a negative impact on inter-state relations in South Asia. To top it all, the manipulative ability of political leaderships to exploit ethnic tensions for electoral reasons is an ever-present danger afflicting South Asia.

Furthermore, the area is characterised by countries with widely differing political systems - democracies, military dictatorships and monarchies. Though most of the South Asian states emerged with shared colonial pasts, similar political experiences and common social values, divergences are still significant. In terms of the type of government, India and Sri Lanka are said to have performed better than others as functioning democracies with varying degrees of success. The Indian experience of democracy has had severe tests in recent years, beginning with the emergency period of 1975-77, while Sri Lanka has often compromised democratic norms as a result of ethnic crises. Pakistan and Bangladesh have at the beginning of the 1990s witnessed a sweeping democratic transition in their domestic scenarios. But in a longer term perspective, both have yet to institutionalise democracy, and to confirm the capability of the political system to keep the military out of politics. Nepal's transition to democracy has also yet to be firmly rooted. Bhutan retains the authority of monarchy as the dominant institution, while the Maldives has yet to experience a multi-party political system. Divergences are also manifest in values and principles followed in governance and state-craft. The Indian political system has been professedly a blend of democracy, federalism, secularism, and until its global collapse, socialism as well. Bangladesh started off with more or less the same principles in state-craft, but later changed course, making room for endless debates on the influence of religion - though more as an instrument of political profiteering than as an indicator of prevailing public opinion. Pakistan has Islam as the basis of its political system while Maldives is an Islamic society with relatively lesser influence of religion in politics. Nepal remains under Hindu influence whilst Bhutan and Sri Lanka are Buddhist societies. Not surprisingly, a leading scholar of South Asia remarked that "South Asia presents as different political orders and power structures as one seldom finds in any other geo-political region of the world". Almost inexorably, South Asian nations, despite their apparent adherence to the ideal of non-alignment, have pursued extremely disconsonant foreign policies. Consequently, the major global powers have played their roles in aggravating the intra-regional cleavages of South Asia. Finally, India's overwhelming regional preponderance creates certain basic insecurities and sharp differences between India and its neighbourhood. All these aspects have created a multitude of problems for the South Asian region, instances of which were provided in the previous chapter. These problems collectively boil down to a crisis of
legitimacy, welfare and order in the affected region. Thus it can be summarised that there are several contentious issues in South Asia that not only inhibit co-operation but also a subsequent feeling of "region-ness" among the countries comprising this geographical area. These issues include those resulting from colonial legacies; issues of political and ideological character; issues of strategic conflict and military balance; issues that arise from the spill-over effect of internal conflicts and turmoil in a given country on its neighbours; and issues that arise out of resource and developmental conflicts.

A disturbing offshoot of these tendencies is the fact that South Asia is moving totally against the global disarmament trends. Global military spending declined by about 37 per cent during the period 1987-94, from a peak of $1200 billion in 1987 to around $800 billion in 1994. However, military spending in South Asia during the same period went up by 12 per cent, from $12.5 billion in 1987 to $14 billion in 1994, while it declined by 41 per cent in the industrial world, and by 13 per cent in the developing world. The same picture emerges in the case of total armed forces personnel. South Asia is expanding its standing armies at a time when other nations are reducing theirs. Globally, standing armies have been reduced by 16 per cent since 1987; by 24 per cent in industrial countries; and by 10 per cent in developing countries. But in South Asia, the size of these armies increased by 7.5 per cent between 1987 and 1994. Both India and Pakistan enjoy the 'distinction' of belonging to that exclusive club which boats the ten largest armies in the world. India is fourth in this league, with a standing army of 1.3 million, while Pakistan is in eighth position, with nearly 600,000 armed forces personnel. What is more, while most members of this league have reduced the size of their armies since the end of the Cold War - Russia by as much as two million and China by one million - India has maintained and Pakistan has increased the strength of their respective armies. No wonder then, that South Asia as of now, is one of the most militarised regions in the world. At a fairly prohibitive cost in foreign exchange, the countries in this region are acquiring a range of modern weapons, particularly jet fighters, submarines, and missiles. Again, recent trends in South Asia are totally contrary to those in the rest of the world. Since 1987, the military holdings (combat aircraft, artillery ships, and tanks) have declined by 14.5 per cent in the world, but they have increased by 43 per cent in South Asia. Even in poverty-stricken Bangladesh, the increase is 56 per cent; and it is 49 per cent in Sri Lanka, which is torn by ethnic strife. According to the SIPRI Yearbook 1997, military expenditure for the year 1996 grew in real terms throughout South Asia, particularly by a staggering 29% in Sri Lanka.

The most pronounced security dilemma therefore, stems from an escalating arms race in South Asia, particularly between the two major military powers - India and Pakistan. In the past forty-eight years, both countries have fought three wars stemming from their bitter territorial dispute over Kashmir. This unresolved problem has also sustained a so-called "low-intensity conflict" between the two neighbours for several years now. Each accuses the other of seeking to destabilise it by fomenting anti-government communalism, secessionism and terrorism that have collectively caused massive casualties and destruction of national property. All this coincides with the fact that India has brought almost all South Asian states, except Pakistan, within the confines of its regional security framework. In the case of Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka, formal treaties, accords and agreements have connected these countries with India's conception of regional security (examples here are the Indo-Bhutan Treaty of August 1949, the not-so-successful Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement of 1987, and the various Indo-Nepalese treaties of
December 1991). As regards Maldives too, its political stability and interests are found to be best protected and promoted within the framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), an organisation supported by India. India's ready assistance in foiling a coup d'état in Maldives, in November 1988 and shared common interests in the Indian Ocean provide justification for co-operation between these two states.

The troubles in South Asia, its endemic tensions, mutual distrusts and occasional hostilities are largely considered products of the contradictions of India's security perception with that of the rest of the countries of the area. India's neighbours perceive threats to their security coming primarily from India which, for its parts, considers its neighbours as an integral part of its own security system. The pre-eminence of India in the South Asian power configuration given by the facts of geography, demography, economics and ecology is something about which neither India nor its neighbours can do much but accept. But the image of India in South Asia is that of a power which demands habitual obedience from its neighbours. According to the strategic doctrine of India drawn from that of British India, the country's defence perimeter is given not by the boundaries of India but by the outer boundaries of its immediate neighbours. Thus, the main theme of this doctrine is that South Asia is to be regarded as an India backyard!

Hence, it is clear that South Asia reasserts itself as an Indo-centric region wherein the only real threat to India's hegemonic stance comes from Pakistan. Similarly, Pakistan's perception of India as a major threat to its national existence, territorial integrity and ideological identity has always been the main determinant of Pakistan's policies towards India. Such attitudes have only led to deteriorating relations between the two neighbours. As was explained by a well-known Pakistani scholar in early 1996, "The Western dim view of South Asia's likely behavioural pattern seems to be based not merely on the unenviable record of the past but also on the slow development of institutional control. Three wars and countless border clashes, including major border clashes like the Rann of Kutch, is indeed, not a record that one can be proud of......Deep-rooted suspicions, mutual distrust and antagonism continue to bedevil Indo-Pak relations even after the passage of 48 years". 40 The situation has barely changed in recent months; if anything, it has only worsened! No wonder then that both countries are also fierce competitors in military and related technological acquisitions.

While India's military budget for 1992 ran into $ 6.75 billions, Pakistan was also spending as much as $ 3.29 billions on its militarization efforts. The share of India and Pakistan is 93 per cent in the total military expenditure of South Asia and 87 per cent in total armed forces personnel. Pakistan has also been involved in multi-million dollars deals with France, Sweden and China to purchase submarines, reconnaissance aircraft, main battle tanks and several missile systems. Even North Korea has been supplying medium-range missiles and nuclear technology, the latter supposedly for "peaceful purposes" to Pakistan. Both countries toyed around airborne warning and control systems (AWACs) in the 1980s. As regards India, during the past four decades, its government has spent more than $2 billion on its nuclear programme even as the vast majority of the population continues to live in appalling poverty. Indeed, since 1991, India has become the world's biggest importer of conventional weapons. According to figures from SIPRI, between 1988 and 1992, India imported $12.2 billion worth of defence equipment as part of a major modernisation programme. Simultaneously, India is also a major arms manufacturer in its own right. Unlike most developing countries, India is able to draw on its own indigenous defence
industry, the biggest and most diverse in the South, and the world's third largest pool of scientists. India is now offering an entire range of armaments like off-shore patrol vessels, survey vessels, anti-tank and anti-aircraft ammunitions and a series of other armaments for exports, in a concerted effort to boost its defence items. 41 The following tables provides further information about the amount of money spent by India and Pakistan on their respective military acquisitions. Also highlighted are the consequent military strengths of both sides. 42

Table 3.5: Defence Expenditure as Percentage of GDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>7.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988-89</td>
<td>3.37</td>
<td>8.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>7.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>7.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>6.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>6.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>6.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though this table indicates that as a percentage of GDP, the defence expenditure on both sides of the border has somewhat decreased, the figures are still alarming when considered from the viewpoint of pervasive poverty and under-development in the two countries. When most basic social services are missing in both India and Pakistan, the defence burdens in these countries continue to impose prohibitive social and economic costs on their people. Defence expenditure exceeds spending on education and health in Pakistan by about a quarter. In India, defence spending consumes two-thirds as much resources as does combined spending on education and health. On the other hand, the rich industrial countries spend three times as much on education and health as on their military. 43

Moreover, the sophisticated armoury of both India and Pakistan is lethal enough to create havoc in case of another war between these two constantly-at-loggerheads neighbours. The data given below substantiates this observation.

Table 3.6: Balance of Power in Critical Weapons Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main Battle Tanks</td>
<td>3,400</td>
<td>1,556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-propelled Artillery</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-role Fighters</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attack Helicopters</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submarines</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft Carriers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the light of these statistics it is clear that both India and Pakistan carry a heavy burden of defence expenditure. However, this burden is naturally much heavier on Pakistan, which has only one-seventh of the population of India and one-fifth of India's GDP. While India spent 3.6 per
cent of its GNP on defence in 1994, Pakistan had to commit as much as 7 per cent. While Indian per capita defence expenditure was $10, Pakistan ended up spending about two and a half times as much - around $26. While India finances 19 soldiers per every 10,000 citizen, Pakistan has to support 49 soldiers - and still the total strength of its army is only half that of India's. 44

This alarming militarization of the two neighbours notwithstanding, an infinitely more dangerous scenario emerges when one considers the long-standing nuclear ambitions of India and Pakistan. Indeed, the nuclear issue is the most worrying source of conflict between India and Pakistan, with Punjab, Siachen, and Kashmir providing the periodic flash-points. Until the nuclear tests of May 1998, India's nuclear policy had always been characterised by ambivalence and internal conflict. In the 1950s, while India was seeking to develop its role as a leader of the Non-aligned Movement in confrontation with the superpowers, Jawaharlal Nehru favoured a policy based on "permanent nuclear abstinence". The military and scientific establishments rejected this view and supported the development of nuclear weapons, however, arguing that this was necessary to counter "atomic colonialism". 45 The pro-nuclear position triumphed in the wake of conflict with China and the first Chinese nuclear test in 1964. The Indian nuclear programme accelerated after the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, as New Delhi became increasingly concerned about a perceived Pakistan-China-US alliance. One year later, the Indian government decided to proceed with the production of a nuclear device, and in 1974, it conducted a test. Since then, several prophecies and wild claims about India's nuclear ambitions have surfaced periodically. Prior to the nuclear developments of May 1998, the most trumpeted assumption was that India has been producing components for seventy to one hundred weapons as well as developing the technology for thermo-nuclear weapons. 46

The Pakistani nuclear programme has essentially been a response to the Indian capability although the Indian conventional threat is also a major source of concern. The objective has been to attain parity with India in the nuclear field where the Indian military forces would not look on Pakistan as a simple walkover. 47 Former Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto had once declared that Pakistanis would rather eat grass than surrender the nuclear option, and successive Pakistani governments have continued to develop the nuclear option, despite growing American pressures. The Pakistani programme developed slowly during the 1980s and according to some reports in 1990, during a crisis over Kashmir, all the components for nuclear weapons were manufactured. In 1994, a former Pakistani foreign minister had linked the resolution of the Kashmir dispute with the possibility of a nuclear war. 48 In September 1997, on the occasion of Pakistan’s defence day to mark the 1965 Indo-Pak war, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif openly acknowledged that Pakistan possessed nuclear capability, saying that it was an ‘established fact’ and the debate over the issue should stop now. He also reiterated Pakistan’s stance on the Kashmir issue, demanding adherence to the Security Council resolutions -something that has always been unacceptable to Indian authorities. Around the same time, the former Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral declared at an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) seminar that India can make nuclear weapons and would retain its nuclear option to meet ‘unforeseen circumstances’, the latter an indirect reference to a possible armed clash with Pakistan over the Kashmir issue. 49 These statements were followed by high-level talks between the foreign secretaries, and later, between the prime ministers of both countries. But as always, the talks got bogged down primarily on the issue of Kashmir, and peace and security, including confidence-building measures between the neighbours. 50 On the contrary, Pakistan is now believed to have
mapped out its strategy of violence and subversion in Kashmir when it was sure that it could keep
the terrorists well-supplied with sophisticated weapons and when its nuclear programme was
within sight of its goal. The Kashmir issue itself has become increasingly volatile as the spectre
of subversion looms large over India because Pakistani-sponsored arms, mercenaries (mostly
from Afghanistan) and funds from the Muslim world (in West Asia) are being poured into Indian
borders. 51

In one of his lectures on South Asia, former US Secretary of State James Baker had warned in
early 1996 that "the Indian subcontinent is one of the most dangerous places in the world because
it has the maximum risk of seeing a nuclear war......The US has conclusive evidence that both
India and Pakistan have the bomb". 52 Indeed, recent months have seen increased global
apprehensions about an Indo-Pakistan nuclear race being just around the corner. True to such
forebodings, as soon as it came into power in March 1998, the new Indian government led by the
Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) began issuing statements that hinted at a review of India’s nuclear
policy and the possible induction of nuclear weapons in its arsenal. This was followed by
Pakistan’s test-firing of an intermediate-range ballistic missile ‘Ghauri’(1500 km. range) in early
April, which afforded Pakistan an opportunity to steal a march over India - and subsequently,
renewed an earnest nuclear and missile row between the two countries. 53

It would be pertinent to add here that India’s own ballistic missile system includes two major
rockets: a short-range ‘Prithvi’ (150-250 km. range) and the intermediate-range ‘Agni’ (1500 km.
range). 54 On May 11 and 13 this year, India shocked the international community by
conducting a series of nuclear tests in the desert region of Pokharan, Rajasthan (also the site for
the first Indian PNE of 1974). Though a matching response from Pakistan seemed inevitable, it
was hoped that intense international pressure would somehow succeed in convincing Pakistan not
to follow suit. But on May 28, Pakistan exploded five nuclear devices, and followed that up with
one more on May 30, 1998. The reasons why India conducted its nuclear tests in the face of
international opposition and at this stage of its slackening economic reforms process, will be
debated for along time to come. The missile test by Pakistan, the ongoing nuclear and missile
technology co-operation between the two neighbours of India - China and Pakistan, and the
inability of the international regimes to enforce the non-proliferation obligations on the nuclear
weapon powers are said commonly believed to made it unavoidable for India to join the nuclear
weapon club. According to one of the country’s leading nuclear experts, K. Subrahmanyam,
given the overall national consensus for these tests, the idea of India staying short of
weaponization was an illusion and that after these tests, there is no looking back. At the same
time, Subrahmanyam also warns that nuclear weapons have only one legitimate purpose and that
is to deter intimidation by another nuclear weapon power as well as to retaliate if a nation has
been struck with a nuclear weapon. Therefore all said and done, India’s sole justification for
acquiring nuclear weapons should be only to deter Pakistan and China if they ever resort to
nuclear blackmail (either individually or collectively). Moreover now that the Indian government
has unequivocally and unilaterally proclaimed its commitment to a doctrine of no-first-use, the
next logical step should be to offer to draft joint declarations for mutual no-first-use commitment
with both China and Pakistan. The existing declaration between Russia and China could serve as
a model here. 55
At the same time, India must also bear the brunt of the economic repercussions of its nuclear (mis)deeds. Since the tests of May 1998, the U.S. and several of its allies (countries as well as major global financing bodies) have been imposing varying degrees of economic sanctions on India. Similar treatment has also been meted out to Pakistan. Indeed, taking this into consideration well in advance, a state of emergency was imposed in Pakistan after the May 28 tests, and all fundamental rights were suspended, ostensibly to deal with a looming financial crisis. Related to this, several theories abound which underline the game-plan of the Indian government to conduct nuclear tests that would provoke similar action from Pakistan, and consequently, destroy a long-time foe economically. For it is amply clear that while the economic sanctions from an enraged international community will only superficially and temporarily stunt India’s economic progress, they are bound to completely wipe out Pakistan’s already tottering economy. This also brings us back to the main premises of this research that inexorably bind a country’s order, welfare and legitimacy concerns together. It also makes one wonder if South Asia can ever boast of an extended crisis-free period during its contemporary history. More importantly, if the South Asians themselves would ever learn from their past mistakes and try to make amends for a better and more peaceful future. The attitude of belligerent Pakistani authorities can be quoted in this context: having conducted its nuclear explosions, Pakistan announced that it had “made the bare minimum response only to re-establish the strategic balance in the region”. 56 This again brings us back to the research hypothesis which questions whether in such circumstances, South Asia can really be referred to as a ‘region’ at all! The Pakistani statement also sounds incredible in view of the fact that having entered a subcontinental nuclear game, neither India nor Pakistan can ever hope to have some sort of a strategic balance between themselves. All that remains now is a balance of terror with horrifying possibilities, some of which are discussed below.

Whatever be the future outcome of South Asia’s ongoing arms race, it must be realised that there are certain calculable as well as incalculable consequences of another war between India and Pakistan (assuming that it would now naturally involve nuclear weapons). Any use of nuclear weapons in the region, even on a small scale, would cause very high civilian casualties and collateral damage. Moreover, it might also cause escalation from a limited nuclear exchange into a major counter-strike on cities. Among the expected effects of a nuclear war that cannot be calculated would be irreversible changes in the weather pattern and environment, mutations in plant and animal life, and unpredictable changes in the socio-political order. 57 In fact, there are certain social and political factors peculiar to South Asian states that would affect casualties and destruction after the nuclear war. These include the inherent weaknesses of both India and Pakistan when viewed in the light of ethnic, communal and separatist movements therein. Regional and ethnic tensions are likely to be exacerbated in the post-nuclear war period. Various ethnic and secessionist groups might view the destruction caused by nuclear war as a justification to break away from their respective states. Although in more economically developed countries, post-attack casualties could be limited by relying on medical shelter and economic resources of lesser allies, this would not be possible in the case of India and Pakistan. It would be impossible for either country to undertake an effective post-attack recovery without massive external assistance. And finally, it is conceivable that socio-economic and political crises following a nuclear exchange may lead to the break-up and disintegration of both India and Pakistan. 58
Thus against the backdrop of an uncalled-for national euphoria in both India and Pakistan over the recent nuclear tests, it would probably be wiser to recollect what Albert Einstein had said after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945: the impact of those explosions was so awesome that Einstein, one of the scientists responsible for its creation, lamented, "If only I had known, I should have become a watchmaker".  

Given these alarming occurrences in South Asia, it is natural for the rest of the world to view the region with deep concern. The United States, which has been playing the role of a regional security guarantor in Asia for over five decades now, is particularly anxious about the conduct of inter-state relations in South Asia. The inherent instability in South Asia coupled with the ever-present fear of a nuclear breakout in the region make it imperative for America and its allies to keep a check on the military developments of the subcontinent. In the light of the recent events of May 1998, the likelihood of even a conventional Indo-Pak war precipitating into a nuclear fallout with international ramifications, has increased manifold. In fact, in late June 1998, Pakistan's Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub urged the United Nations to move quickly to mediate the Kashmir dispute or risk a fourth war between the world's newest nuclear powers, India and Pakistan. Echoing the sentiments of his country, Ayub stated that relentless cross-border attacks in the disputed Kashmir region could quickly spin out of control and erupt into a full-blown war involving the use of nuclear weapons. The situation is believed to be specially grim in view of the unsuccessful outcome of recent high-level bilateral talks to resolve outstanding disputes between the two neighbours. 

Apart from this very real fear, the US is also concerned that South Asia might export nuclear and missile capability to Iran and other countries in the Gulf and Southwest Asian region - where the US has major oil interests. At the same time, another major security concern in South Asia involves the problem of arms smuggling across the borders of some countries of the region. The Indian government, for instance, has often been at its wit's end while trying to tackle the large-scale arms smuggling at various points of its geographical boundaries. Vast quantities of sophisticated arms funded mainly by drug money are finding their way to insurgent groups across the country. The most shocking incident in recent years was that of the Purulia arms drop of late 1995 which made the Indian authorities wake up to the fact that arms smuggling had, indeed, become a serious threat to national security. Yet, the total arms recovered in that incident are said to be less than what flows into the country every fortnight through a maze of conventional routes. In Jammu and Kashmir alone, ever since the Pakistani supported full-scale insurgency began in the 1990s, the army and paramilitary forces have seized more than 15,000 AK-type rifles, 2.4 million rounds of ammunition and about 10,000 kilograms of explosives - enough perhaps to reduce the entire state to rubble. Such raids have also occurred in the Indian states of Punjab, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerela, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. India is in fact ranked by international arms experts as among the worst-hit countries by the illegal proliferation of what is known in defence parlance as Non-Major Weapons Systems. The terminology is misleading: short of tanks and heavy artillery, it encompasses a vast range of lethal weapons including machine guns, rocket launchers, anti-aircraft guns, grenades and explosives. In short, enough for any militant group to wage a sustained war of attrition against India.

Furthermore, America and its allies intend to continue their domination of the post-Cold War world, primarily by preventing emerging regional powers from developing nuclear weapons
capability. India has steadfastly refused to sign the Non Proliferation Treaty (N.P.T.) in opposition of its various clauses. According to Indian authorities, apart from being oxymoronic—a state which conducts a nuclear test can hardly be considered “non-nuclear” – the law is also discriminatory as it seeks to punish others for exercising a right that the U.S. and the other four big powers have arrogated to themselves. Pakistan’s refusal to sign the treaty until India agrees to do so renders the situation even more difficult for the United States. But it must be admitted that the consensus for the indefinite extension of the N.P.T. by all the parties to the Treaty in mid-1995 was a great blow to India. Whilst its opposition to the N.P.T. on the grounds of its discriminatory character remains valid, the assessment by India’s nuclear experts that the N.P.T. would not be unconditionally or indefinitely extended turned out to be wholly erroneous. India’s isolation at the N.P.T. Extension Conference of April-May 1995 was apparent. The permanent extension of the N.P.T. also sharpens India’s awareness of the nuclear threat from China, which not only continues to test its nuclear devices, but is also known to be providing nuclear technology to Pakistan on a regular basis. Further details of this aspect are provided in the subsequent pages.

Western initiatives to declare South Asia as a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFS) are also unlikely to succeed in the near future because of the post-proliferation Indo-Pakistan status, and more importantly, that this entire process is considered a part of the overall discriminatory N.P.T. exercise. The new BJP government in India has also reiterated its opposition to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Fissile Material Control Regime (FMCR) and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) - a series of international regimes designed to bring recalcitrant states into the non-proliferation fold. Though, following the nuclear tests of May 1998, India has displayed a greater willingness to sign the CTBT without any pre-conditions, as and when the treaty comes into force. At the same time, it is also clear that the new nuclear powers of South Asia are not likely to be easily convinced into joining the non-proliferation club. Both India and Pakistan have repeatedly stressed that the N.P.T. and other such efforts only serve to legitimise the weapons of holocaust as well as to bolster a security order pivoted on a five-nation nuclear monopoly. The following data on nuclear explosions also highlights this point. It reveals an ironical situation wherein the very opponents of nuclear proliferation have conducted maximum nuclear explosions (as against the six each conducted by India and Pakistan until June 1998).

Table 3.7: Total Number of Nuclear Explosions across the Globe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Explosions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Furthermore, the statistics given below indicate that the US has conducted 1032 nuclear tests, more than the combined number of tests by other nuclear nations. It would also be pertinent to add here that when France and China tested N-bombs two years ago, the international protests were muted.
Table 3.8: Comparative Nuclear Strengths of the Declared Nuclear Powers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>US</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>China</th>
<th>India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Tests (till date)</td>
<td>1,032</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Explosion (in Year)</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1946</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear Warheads</td>
<td>12,070</td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>65*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Estimates (not official figures)

The so-called 'China factor' also plays a crucial role in determining the security patterns of South Asia. The geographical proximity to China is basically considered a threat to India, given the historical distrust between the two countries that has persisted ever since the Chinese attack on India in 1962 - also a stark contravention of the "Hindi-Chini bhai bhai" sentiments prevalent among the Indian populace during those days. While formally outside the region, China is linked to India's immediate security environment because of the unresolved border disputes with India to the north-east (including claims on Bhutan and Sikkim, and the present Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam) and to the north-west area of Asai Chin, adjacent to Ladakh. Further, though India has never claimed Tibet, it has implicitly supported Tibetan claims for greater autonomy from China both in the late 1950s, and during the subsequent periods of political instability. 67

Also in the regional context, smaller countries like Nepal and Bhutan have suffered from the typical 'small state' complex vis-à-vis India and hence, have often attempted to play off Indian dominance by making diplomatic overtures towards China. The implications of such probable configurations has also been a source of worry for India. Moreover in recent years, many experts have opined that the nuclear stand-off between Pakistan and India, and separately that between India and China, underlines a triangular nature and resultant complexities of the nuclear situation in South Asia. 68

As China is already a major nuclear power with a permanent seat in the UN security Council (a much-coveted Indian goal), a member of the N.P.T. regime and the single largest functioning communist regime to have successfully integrated its economy with the West, India feels even more disadvantaged in the proximity of such a neighbour. In its quest for a superpower status since the end of the Cold War, China has been building up its economy, not only in the areas of agriculture, science and industry, but also in defence. China has a comprehensive and fully indigenous nuclear programme. The major elements of its nuclear arsenal include a stockpile of nuclear devices, multiple independent recovery vehicle capability, a triad of delivery systems, surface-to-surface ballistic missiles, satellite communications and surveillance capability. Despite possessing such degree of military sophistication, China's defence budget has been increased by 14.8 per cent in recent years. According to John D. Holum, former Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), "China's pursuit of nuclear weapons and its continued nuclear tests make the prospect of regional arms control in South Asia more difficult". 69 In fact, India's so-called Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) of 1974 was said to be a response to the Chinese nuclear test of 1964 and Beijing's subsequent weaponization. China is also the only nuclear power to oppose the CTBT, stating that it will maintain its sovereign right to conduct peaceful nuclear explosions (PNEs) and would not agree to any future treaty that
prohibits them. Most recently, China has rejected the latest U.S. plea to join the MTCR, ostensibly to be able to sell missile parts to Pakistan and Iran. In fact, the Sino-Pak defence co-operation (often covert) has been flourishing since 1963, usually at the expense of better ties with India. Furthermore, China has stepped up its arms sale to Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar as well in order to gain a strategic foothold in all of Asia. Within the Indian borders, there is supposed to be documentary evidence of China's role in providing assistance and training to insurgents in India's troubled north-eastern states. China has also made several claims on the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, with both countries coming close to a confrontation over the issue in 1986. 71 It is not surprising therefore, that India has made it clear to the rest of the global powers that it will not accept any limits on its nuclear capability that are not applicable to Pakistan and China as well. For rather ironically, China has been favouring the establishment of a nuclear-weapons-free-zone (NWFZ) in South Asia and has also often supported Western efforts to bring India and Pakistan under the aegis of the N.P.T. 72

The following tables reveal how India (& Pakistan) and China stack up militarily. 73

Table 3.9: Military Strength of China and India, 1997

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Army (in thousands)</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Military hardware

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>India</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tanks</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Aircraft</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>4,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warships</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submarines</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.10: Force Comparison of India, Pakistan and China, 1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
<th>China</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Troops</td>
<td>9,80,000</td>
<td>5,20,000</td>
<td>28,40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main battle tanks</td>
<td>3,314</td>
<td>2,120</td>
<td>8,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-prop. Artillery</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat aircraft</td>
<td>777</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>3,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armed helicopters</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroyers/Frigates</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aircraft carriers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submarines</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-range missiles*</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-range missiles**</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear warheads</td>
<td>25-65</td>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Up to 300 kms.</td>
<td>**Over 300 kms.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Moreover, according to the latest figures released by the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) in September 1997, India’s military expenditure is found to be incredibly low in comparison to Pakistan and China. According to the agency, the Chinese military expenditure per capita in 1995 was $53 while India’s was only $8. For the same year, Chinese total military expenditure was $63.51 billion (it does not accept the official Chinese figure of about $8 billion) in comparison to India’s $7.831 billion. This military imbalance must also be considered in light of warnings by Asia observers such as Abe Rosenthal (a well-known journalist who had also extensively covered the 1962 Indo-China war) that “Today, if India has enemies, I feel China is the strongest”. Or the statement by Robert Menendez, a China observer in the U.S. House of Representatives, “With China’s past behaviour in mind, including its invasion of Tibet and the border war with India, India’s views of China’s threat are rational”. Of late however, China, the world’s third-largest nuclear power in terms of explosive strength, is wrestling with basic choices about the financing and deployment of its nuclear forces. A major dilemma is whether it should update its nuclear deployment facilities even if such a step requires the diversion of billions of dollars from pressing domestic needs. Though its economy has been developing very rapidly in recent years (see chapter two for further details), China needs a lot more capital to overcome persisting problems of rapid population growth. Here again, is an instance of welfare needs being subjugated in the quest for international power and security, which in itself may be stemming from a rather irrational fear since it has often been asked: where indeed, is China’s so-called strategic enemy? Which also brings us to an overview of the Southeast region as a whole.

3.3. Areas of Overlap and Common Concern with Southeast Asia

In the Cold War military planning, Asia always came second, behind Europe as far as global strategic interest were concerned. The wars in Korea and Vietnam, undertaken in large part because of perceived linkages to European security, forced Asia higher on the foreign policy agenda of the US and its allies. With the oil embargo and the Iranian revolution in the 1970s, the Middle East and Persian Gulf began to overtake Asia for the second place in global attention. The ever-increasing oil requirements of the entire world also fortified this new preoccupation. Reduced attention to Asia as a military problem in the second half of the Cold War followed from the US withdrawal from Vietnam and reconciliation with China. At the same time, East Asia started asserting its tremendous economic dynamism which led to new economic ties between the capitalist West and the countries of this region, thereby again relegating security issues to the background. Further, American and Russian presence kept a lid on territorial disputes in Asia, a region more geographically dispersed and culturally diverse than Europe.

But recent events have shown that with the end of the Cold War, East Asia’s security problems have not entirely disappeared. First came the suspicion that prickly North Korea may have been building nuclear weapons. Then a more powerful and militarily assertive China started pressing territorial claims against its neighbourhood, from Japan in the north to Philippines and Indonesia in the south, as well as bullying Taiwan. The Philippines and Malaysia have unresolved disputes over Sabah while Singapore and Malaysia continue to differ over the island of Petra Branca. There is also a dispute between China and Vietnam over three areas: the land border; the delimitation of the Tomkin Gulf, the Spartlys and Paracels; the continental shelf and the special
economic zone of Vietnam. In fact, Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam are all claiming sovereignty over the Spratly Islands. Though most of the parties concerned have agreed to settle these disputes peacefully, the disputes do leave some uncertainty for the future. Moreover, with Russia on the sidelines and China playing awkwardly by its own rules, the natural balancer in East Asia's changing power game should have been Japan. But with Japan opting to play a more passive role of a mediator/appeaser in most regional disputes, American presence in the region has become more assertive. It has been argued that without the US, the region's rivals could swiftly end up in a brawl. 77

As the champion of democracy, America and its allies are even more uncertain about the viability of authoritarian governments that dominate ASEAN and other neighbouring countries. 78 For several decades now, the armed forces have been dominating the politics of Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia. Even in the Philippines, the armed forces have frequently displayed political ambitions. Except in Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei, in the rest of the Southeast Asian countries the armed forces have a stranglehold over not only the politics but also business and industry. The rationale of every military take-over is the failure of the civilian administration to provide political and economic stability. The fact that in Myanmar and Indonesia, the army played a decisive role in the freedom movement made the Generals think that they have a right to shape the political destinies of their countries. Besides, in most of the military regimes of East Asia, it was argued that the armed forces are a cohesive and disciplined group that could provide adequate levels of order and welfare after assuming control of the state. But an overview of the performance of most military regimes has revealed that they have not been able to provide a credible alternative to the civilian rule that they had overthrown. Indeed, the legitimacy of such regimes has been severely eroded due to gross injustices meted out to the populace in terms of essential freedom and development. The biggest casualties had been the parliamentary institutions and attendant essentials of democracy - free press, multiplicity of political parties, independence of judiciary, human rights protection, etc. The Philippines, Myanmar, Thailand, and Indonesia have periodically faced varying degrees of tensions and political upheavals due to the persistence of military regimes in these countries. The democratic experiments in Malaysia and Singapore have also been subjected to frequent strains, even though the armed forces play a subservient role to the civilian authorities and elections take place at regular intervals. In fact, it has often been quoted in the context of Singapore that "the principal freedom left is the freedom to conform". 79

Another source of continuing conflict is the immense racial and cultural diversity within the Southeast Asian states. To some extent, the long spells of colonial rule have been responsible for these consequences. The inter-state boundaries were drawn along artificial lines and thus, instead of uniting people belonging to similar races and religions, they have tended to divide them. This has led to rather negative kind of cross-national linkages in the whole of Southeast Asia. Thai tolerance of cross-border activities of Burmese rebels, the Malaysian sympathy for the aspirations of the Malay Muslims in Southern Thailand, the external support to the separatist movements in Southern Philippines - are all illustrations of intra-state conflicts with regional ramifications. In addition, the presence of a large number of culturally exclusive, economically powerful and politically aggressive Chinese in some Southeast Asian countries has attracted the envy and resentment of the indigenous peoples, resulting in discriminatory policies against them. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in plural societies is also a recent cause of tension in Southeast Asia. For example, in the Islamic state of Malaysia, the Malay-dominated government is committed to
the promotion of Islamic faith in all possible ways. Such a policy may be necessary to mobilise the Malays under the banner of the national party but the needs of modernisation dictate that Malaysia must pursue a less exclusivist and fundamentalist approach within Islam.

In Cambodia, the situation has not yet settled down, and severe battles are occasionally fought between the government and the Khmer Rouge. Though the Thais seem to be trying to expand their influence over the Cambodian economy, it is widely known that the Khmer Rouge maintains co-operative relations with the Thai military. In that sense, it is not only a domestic security issue but also a question of regional security. Similarly, the question of East Timor, caused by the military occupation and oppressive military rule of Indonesia, had attracted much international concern in the past few years.

In face of such domestic uncertainties and regional imbalances, the US has maintained a paramount presence in the Asia-pacific region throughout its long history. In fact, the Pacific was at one time described as the "American lake". Not much changed during the Cold War era as the US continued to be the dominating power in this region. Consequently, it set up a string of alliances and bases here - the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Japan, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation, South Vietnam and at one time, Taiwan - to ensure its security and confront adversaries. Most of the smaller Asian countries themselves have openly supported the US presence in the region to preserve peace and simultaneously, counter the growing power of China and Japan.

Lately however, it has been ubiquitously felt that the US is unlikely to maintain its military presence at present levels in this part of the world. Though it is true that no other country except the US can project large amounts of military force at all points in the world, this unique capacity is being fractionated by multiple commitments in different regions. Although the US is in a military class by itself, it cannot act independently in many cases but needs the co-operation of allies to provide bases (such as Japan or South Korea in East Asia). Moreover, without the challenge of another superpower to contend with, US military forces are shrinking and likely to level off well below the baseline of the Cold War. American authorities are now only concerned with maintaining a base force of standing capabilities for limited contingencies in the region. In this context, a far-reaching security declaration was signed in early 1996 between Japan and the US whereby America decided to maintain its current force structure of about 100,000 troops in Japan -primarily in response to the threats to regional stability by China's sabre-rattling against Taiwan, and North Korea's military incursions into the demilitarised zone separating it from South Korea, that year. The American authorities remarked in this context that, "We think of American presence here as a super partner, and no longer as a super power". At present, there are 47,000 U.S. troops stationed in Japan, the largest single grouping of 100,000 or so troops in Asia. In September 1997, the United States and Japan further expanded their security alliance to give Japan's military its highest profile in Asia since World War II, despite deep reservations from China and other Asian nations that suffered Japanese military aggression earlier this century. The new defense guidelines, as announced by Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Defense Secretary William Cohen, are intended to upgrade long-standing U.S.-Japanese security alliance for a post-Cold War era. The possibility of a military crisis in the Korean peninsula and uncertainties posed by the growing power of China are believed to have provided the impetus for this renewed security alliance. At the same time, the alliance also emphasises
American and Japanese co-operation with China to ensure greater peace and security in East Asia.

In the Asia-Pacific region therefore, the manifestation of military multi-polarity now implies the strengthening of military capabilities of several states including China and Japan. The strategically important Indian Ocean and South China Sea provide the setting for the emerging maritime capabilities of regional powers. The "Kuwait of the region" lies conceivably in the oil-rich Sparty Islands in the South China Sea, which are the object of claim by at least five states of the region. As conventional capabilities, especially naval forces, increase to fill any security vacuum left by US reductions, nuclear weapons are also likely to become more widely available. The prospect looms large that North Korea will acquire a nuclear capability before the end of this decade, with potentially important implications for both South Korea and Japan. In these circumstances, whether Japan, faced with a nuclear-armed North Korea, would continue its present policy of nuclear abstinence cannot be positively ascertained. What is likely however, is that the deployment of a nuclear force of some kind by North Korea would coincide with drawdowns in the American force structure in the Asia-Pacific region and the rise of other states with advanced military capabilities, notably India. Such trends may collectively increase the pressure on Japan to augment its own military capabilities. Further, despite recent initiatives for bilateral discussions, it is still probable that North Korea may decide to test its nuclear capabilities on arch-rival South Korea.

Indeed, recent developments have shown that in contrast to the US, militaries are growing in East Asia. China especially has boosted its defense budget since the late eighties. Apart from the statistics provided earlier in this chapter, China is found to be buying and selling weapons at a fast clip, seeking naval facilities closer to the Malacca Straits, and developing rapid-deployment battalions. The Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy has also predicted that the total military stock of China (arms, ammunition, military vehicles, and basing facilities) will grow from approximately $240 billion in 1990 to an estimated $780 billion in 2010. Besides, it is widely held that since there is no security organisation like the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to fill up the power vacuum in Asia, the most obvious candidate seems to be the country that constitutes 75 per cent of East Asia's territory - China. Though China's bullying tactics against Taiwan have not quite borne the desired fruits, the issue remains a major concern of the international community. Especially since China has repeatedly made its long-term goal known to become the leading power in Asia. As Ross H. Munro, director of the Asia Programme at the US-based Foreign Policy Research Institute, told a senate subcommittee meeting on Chinese affairs in April 1996, "The issue whether China is going to use its growing power responsibly and play by the rules or it is going to insist not only on transforming the status quo but doing so according to its own rules. The indications so far are not encouraging". Some of the concern also stems from China's internal political situation that has yet to completely stabilise following the death of paramount leader Deng Xiaoping. The country's tremendous economic growth does help to balance the situation in some ways but in many more ways, it also reinforces the fears about China's hegemonic aspirations. The latter is reflected in a statement issued by an irritated Vietnam in July 1995 that, "The Chinese feel they can do anything they want: take an island in the Spartlys, test nuclear weapons, sell missile technology... There seems to be no limit". 87
The Balance of Power

China is already looking to the South China Sea, and Vietnam wants ASEAN to stand up to the regional giant. But other Asian nations worry such a confrontation could turn into a battle with China, should Hanoi provoke Beijing.

ASEAN countries
Disputed areas

MAP 3:1

Chile
Defense spending
$6.4 bil; 5.4% of GDP
Armed forces 26,500
Tanks 292
Combat aircraft 42
Combat vessels 9

Laos
Defense spending
$4.3 bil; 3.9% of GDP
Armed forces 25,000
Tanks 100
Combat aircraft 6
Combat vessels 20

Burma
Defense spending
$2.5 bil; 4.1% of GDP
Armed forces 167,000
Tanks 1,114
Combat aircraft 101
Combat vessels 12

India

Indochina

Indonesia

Malaysia

N. Korea
Defense spending
$6.4 bil; 6.4% of GDP
Armed forces 90,000
Tanks 500
Combat aircraft 233
Combat vessels 10

S. Korea
Defense spending
$18.9 bil; 6.2% of GDP
Armed forces 583,000
Tanks 1,149
Combat aircraft 273
Combat vessels 164

U.S.A (regional deployment)
Armed forces 95,350
Tanks 100
Combat aircraft 273
Combat vessels 12

Taiwan
Defense spending
$11.4 bil; 4.9% of GDP
Armed forces 285,000
Tanks 1,414
Combat aircraft 313
Combat vessels 184

Philippines
Defense spending
$1.3 bil; 2.3% of GDP
Armed forces 106,500
Tanks 41
Combat aircraft 185
Combat vessels 64

Brunei
Defense spending
$809 mil; 7.0% of GDP
Armed forces 4,400
Tanks 10
Combat aircraft 23
Combat vessels 8

Singapore
Defense spending
$2.8 bil; 4.8% of GDP
Armed forces 37,000
Tanks 300
Combat aircraft 104
Combat vessels 37

Source: Newsweek, July 17, 1995)
Partly to assuage such apprehensions, many East Asian countries have initiated an arms race among themselves. Between 1985 and 1992, while NATO's total defence spending decreased, South Korea's increased by 63 per cent, Singapore's by 36 per cent, and Malaysia's by 31 per cent. In fact, Vietnam was the only East Asian country whose defence spending was down by 24 per cent. In 1994, the original six members of the ASEAN, worried over China's hegemonic actions in East Asia and the Pacific, spent $12.7 billion on defense, up from $12 billion in 1993. The biggest arms buyer was Thailand, which alone spent $3.4 billion on defense. This country's ambitious programme included acquiring an aircraft carrier from Spain, the first flat-top bought by an ASEAN member. Other big spenders during that year included Malaysia, which bought America's F-16 fighters and Russia's top-of-the-line MIG-29 fighter-bomber. Also included was Singapore, the tiny but heavily armed state that uses Israeli military advisors, and periodically adds F-16s and Fokker maritime patrol aircraft to its arsenal. Indonesia acquired an instant navy in 1993 itself when it bought 39 warships, and support ships from the defunct East German navy. Even the Philippines, one of the poorest ASEAN member, has committed itself to a $2 billion defense modernisation programme over the next five years. According to the SIPRI Yearbook 1997, the three dominant spenders in Southeast Asia - Malaysia (an increase of more than 15%), Singapore (and increase of 7%) and Thailand (an increase of almost 23%) - maintained the region's reputation as the fastest-growing defense spender of the world in 1996. The updated SIPRI Yearbook 1998 reiterates this trend in Southeast Asia though it also notes that the military budgets of some of the ASEAN countries is being revised following the recent financial crisis in the region. 88

The ASEAN members justify such spending as an enhancement of their overall military credibility which also prepares them to collectively face any challenge from larger neighbours like Japan and China. 89 The following table also shows some of the defense budget trends of various countries in East Asia. 90

<p>| Table 3.11: Defense Budget Trends of Great and Middle Powers in East Asia (Figures in US$ Billions) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>---------------------------------</th>
<th>-----</th>
<th>-----</th>
<th>-----</th>
<th>-----</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>291.40</td>
<td>272.95</td>
<td>270.90</td>
<td>258.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>28.73</td>
<td>32.68</td>
<td>35.94</td>
<td>39.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>6.06</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>6.71</td>
<td>7.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>8.69</td>
<td>9.29</td>
<td>10.29</td>
<td>10.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>10.62</td>
<td>10.77</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>12.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Korea</td>
<td>5.23</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In consequence of such spending, the data on the following page points to the comparative military strengths of certain countries in East Asia, a case-study for the year 1992. 91
Table 3.12: Comparative Military Strengths of East Asian Countries, 1992

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Ground Force Divisions</th>
<th>Main Battle Tanks</th>
<th>Combat Aircraft</th>
<th>Submarines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,210</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>5,850</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.Korea</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.Korea</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>732</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to a 1995 Report of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), "in terms of the rate of growth of both arms acquisitions and defence spending, West Asia has clearly taken second place to East Asia". Further, the Report states that "by 2001, Asian nations will have more accurate, more lethal and more reliable weapons systems, thanks to technology readily supplied by European, North American and Russian suppliers. Southeast Asia is definitely emerging as the new arms market, not only due to its economic prowess but also because of the politico-strategic conditions prevailing therein. China, for one, will have a much more capable strategic nuclear force in 15 years which will be able to target all of Asia, Western Russia and the east coast of the US. It will also have an aircraft force carrier capable of extended operations within the Asian region. And finally, China will also be able to import and produce more high-technology military items and modernise its fighter aircraft and rapid action force".

As regards Japan, the Report summarises that "though Japan has the economic strength and technological ability to produce almost any weapon, it is not very likely to develop a nuclear force by 2010. However, it will probably have consciously increased the research and development for such a capability. In 15 years, Japan will have Asia's quietest and most advanced submarines, the most advanced US fighters, and technology to rapidly expand its military capabilities as well".

In fact, the U.S. Japanese defence agreement of April 1996 and the subsequent security alliance of September 1997 are interpreted as American encouragement to Japan to play a more decisive role in the region.

Such encouragement has naturally generated a negative reaction from China and a certain amount of apprehension from the ASEAN members. The historical memories of a politically and economically strong Japan in the inter-war period, and during the Second World war have not faded from the collective mind of this region. The US-Japanese agreements however, were the culmination of an exercise in creating politico-security equilibrium which the US and Japan had initiated on the disintegration of the Soviet Union to keep Russia in line and to counterbalance China. Despite repeated assurances to China from both America and Japan, this emerging super power is still wary of America's real intentions in the region. Little wonder therefore, that such developments have driven China closer to Russia, at least in terms of strengthening defence ties. For instance, the Sino-Russian response to the 1996 U.S.-Japanese alliance was an increase in interaction in the spheres of political relations and defence co-operation. This is significant in view of the fact that China has already imported arms worth $20 to 25 billion from Russia since 1909-91. Following the U.S.-Japanese alliance of 1997, major efforts have been undertaken by America to draw China into its regional security game plan. The signing of a nuclear pact between Clinton and Zemin during Clinton's historic visit to China in June 1998, and America's
increased insistence on bestowing China with a vital role in overlooking both South and Southeast Asian military developments, are but two recent examples. At the same time, Japan has also undertaken several appeasement strategies, basically taking into consideration the possible spill-over effects of the alleged technology transfers between Beijing, Pakistan and North Korea. Japan's efforts have included pleasing China's long-standing partner, Pakistan by offering to mediate between India and Pakistan. Similarly, offering about $1 billion aid to North Korea to build a nuclear plant on which Pyongyang was threatening the Western nations to either give aid or allow restoration of its nuclear research. (A nuclear capable state in its neighbourhood would also jeopardise Japan's economic as well as security precautions it had carefully undertaken over the past four decades as a submissive ally of the U.S.). And finally, embroiling China into an economic interdependence by entering Chinese markets through massive aid and investments. Such new kinds of competitive and constantly changing strategic games are a major feature of the entire Asia-Pacific and ASEAN region. In the long term, they are also bound to have repercussions in South Asia.

Given the frequency and ramifications of such developments, attempts have been underway to form a co-operative security structure in the Asia-Pacific region. Throughout the Cold War era, there were divisions between North and South Korea, China and Taiwan, and the communist and non-Communist regimes. A variety of security structures, alliances and relationships attempted to deal with the Asia-Pacific security environment, but none of them met with much success. The complexity of Asia has been thwarting all efforts at developing a comprehensive security structure even in the post-Cold War era. In any case, no serious efforts towards this end were made until the mid-1980s even though new ideas on security were being evolved at the Conference on Security Co-operation in Europe or the Helsinki process that started as early as in 1975. Even Gorbachev's security-related proposals at Vladivostok in mid-1986 went largely unheeded. Recent initiatives, however, have come from the ASEAN. The ASEAN itself has been best described as an organisation based primarily on political and security considerations. Initially, the ASEAN was meant as an alliance against rising communism in Southeast Asia and a forum to reduce intra-ASEAN tensions. As far as the member states of ASEAN are concerned, from the mid-1960s onwards, there has been a growing degree of commonality in the perception of major problems among the ruling elites. Anti-communist to the core and pro-Western in their orientation (as was apparent in the formation of the SEATO pact), they share an identity of approach regarding threats to their independence, security and stability - both internal as well as external. In this regard, the observations made by Fidel Ramos, former President of the Philippines can be quoted. He opined that the middle-ranking countries of the Asia-Pacific should use their combined economic clout together with military alliances, to counter-balance the region's major powers (such as the US, Russia, Japan and China) and to head off sudden destabilising shocks. He aptly remarked that, "After all, it is stability and the peace which continues to reign this region that ensures our dynamic economic growth and social cohesion".

This, indeed, is the truth for the ASEAN region. Even though the ASEAN members have been faced with a multitude of politico-security dilemmas, most of them have been resolved within the effective framework of regional co-operation. For, at a political level, the ASEAN intends to be a driving force in matters of co-operation and security and would like to extend regional co-operation to the whole of Southeast and east Asia.
As a part of their continued efforts in this direction, the Council for Security Co-operation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP) also came into existence in 1994. The agreement to evolve this body was finalised in June 1993. Ten leading strategic studies institutions of the region became founding members. The Charter was adopted in December 1993. Subsequently, several associate members were inducted including the prestigious European Union. However, due to technical differences, institutions from China and Taipei have not become its members as yet. The CSCAP is presently an informal, purposeful and wide-ranging dialogue system that might well pave the way for more positive security in the new era. The Council is also in the process of inducting additional members to give it a truly Asia-Pacific look. Further, it is attempting to establish linkages with other similar groups in the neighbouring regions (including South Asia, which ought to be of particular interest to India).

The first meeting of the CSCAP was held in July 1994, and subsequently became the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). The Forum is seen as a counterpart on security issues to the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) forum, and is expected to become a platform for practising some preventive diplomacy. All the six ASEAN members - Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand - form the core of the group. The seven ASEAN Dialogue Partners - Europe, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and South Korea - are also included in this forum. So are the three ASEAN Observers - Vietnam, Laos, and Papua New Guinea, and two Consultative Partners - China and Russia. An interesting omission from the ARF is Cambodia, which, according to some reports could not get in because of procedural problems. However, the Cambodian conflict does appear regularly in joint communiqués issued after the annual ASEAN ministerial meetings. Indeed, the impetus for forming this forum came from the prospect of a worsening security environment. The question of sovereignty of the Spratlys, the accretion of Chinese power, the anxiety regarding the continuation of US presence in the region, and the possibility of other instabilities escalating into conflict, could no longer be ignored. An added fear stems from the fact that the Asia-Pacific, while the most economically dynamic part of the world today, has also turned out to be the region where growth in arms expenditure has been highest in recent years. As regards the latter, in December 1995, the ASEAN countries signed a treaty (in Bangkok) for making Southeast Asia a nuclear weapon-free zone. The agreement aims at prohibiting the possession, manufacture and acquisition of nuclear weapons in Southeast Asia, and also obliges the signatories to ban nuclear tests. But it allows the passage of naval warships that may or may not contain nuclear arsenal. "The treaty speaks of innocent passage... as long as they have no war-like intentions".

All these efforts at maintaining peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific (including the ASEAN region) are also in defense of the research hypothesis. The above pages show that even though Southeast Asia, like South Asia, faces several pressures from above (the rigorous demands of international elites and their particular priorities) and below (constant struggle for order, welfare and legitimacy in the domestic scenario), the countries comprising this region have constantly endeavoured to evolve effective strategies to counter such pressures. In fact, they have coped with the situation so well that not only has the ASEAN achieved remarkable economic progress, but it has also helped resolve several security problems that could have flared up into major international conflicts. This is also one of the reason why great powers like the US have realised the futility of continuing with excessive military support structures in this part of the world. No wonder then, that the ASEAN is becoming an increasingly prestigious and enviable forum for
regional co-operation, and several countries are either trying to establish links with it, or alternatively, attempting to emulate its successes in their respective indigenous environs. This point has been further elaborated in the following chapter.
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