CHAPTER-3
TENSION IN SOUTH ASIA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

South Asia has developed in such a region in the world where constant conflicts are norms of interstate behavior. Interregional conflicts have led this region into one of the most disturbed region in the world.

India is predominant in the region, therefore rest member states in the region have one or other type of conflict with India. India’s geopolitical location has clubbed other member states of the region to view India as a ‘big brother’ in the region.

India has thus emerged as regional power. This fact is basic cause of conflict in the region.

Other factors contribute which increase political tension in the region but this psyche leads them to have conflict oriented attitude towards India. Thus India, Pakistan, India—Sri Lanka, India—Bangladesh, India—Nepal conflicts rule the South Asia’s political environment. Bhutan and Maldives are not having much negative relations with India but patches of conflict stand.

Present chapter is an attempt to analyze dynamics of political conflicts in the region, it would attempt to highlight the main elements of disputes between India and other member at bilateral level.
3.2 CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIA & PAKISTAN

It is a historical fact that before 1947 India and Pakistan both were a single country being governed by British Government. After partition, it was never expected that both countries would maintain friendly relations as basis of partition was religion and its consequence was development of intense hatred and conflict psyche particularly in Pakistan.

Partition brought along with interstate migration of people and refugee problems, which created further rift between two newly emerged states. It is true that the people of the two states had common historical background, politically complementary to each other but instead of developing true and durable bilateral relations, “the story of Indo – Pakistan relations is by and large, one of mutual animosity and confrontation, though there were agreements on some issues.”

Conflict with Pakistan originated immediately after partition on certain issues as “the division of assets and liabilities, evacuee property, accession of native states like Junagarh, Hyderabad and Kashmir and allocation of water resources.” Partition also caused migration of the minority communities from Pakistan to India and from
India to Pakistan, though few Muslims went from India to Pakistan but more Hindus migrated from Pakistan to India, such large scale to and fro movement of the minorities not only caused problems of rehabilitation of refugees but also problem of communalism. Communal disturbances resulted in both the countries, communal psyche of a certain section of minorities exploited by Pakistani actions, has proved a constant cause of conflict between them.

But the major cause of conflict between the two countries is Kashmir, Pakistan treats Kashmir as a disputed territory but India has stated that, “Kashmir acceded to India according to Independence Act of 1947 hence legally valid, that the constituent assembly of Kashmir has formally accepted Kashmir’ integration with India in 1954 and that the ‘Jerring mission’ has observed that in view of the changed conditions plebiscite was no more feasible.”

But for Pakistan, Kashmir is a cause of its existence, “no government in Pakistan can be expected to compromise on that ideology of Pakistan, which is the very reason d'être of the state, and Pakistan regards the annexation of Muslim majority Kashmir as the completion
of that ideology, hence the persistent reference to Kashmir as the unfinished agenda partition.”

Pakistan has resorted to solve Kashmir issue by war sending its army in tribal form in 1947 in Kashmir. Clearly disrespecting international morality and law. “I was prepared to adopt the view that when in May 1948, units of the regular Pakistan force moved into the territory of the state, that too was inconsistent with International law.” Thus a new method of conflict resolution method ‘war’ was adopted by Pakistan against India. This method was subsequently adopted in 1965 when on 5th August 1965, many guerillas and soldiers from Pakistani side entered India violating explicitly ceasefire line.” Though International mediation succeeded in stopping the war but element of tension was entrenched in bilateral relations.

In 1971 when refugee influx from East Pakistan caused social, economic and political problems to India, then India had to intervene in East Pakistan on the demand of their people,” Indian government was not left in such a condition that it could change the direction of changed circumstances.” This development proved a major event in
deciding relationship pattern between two countries.

Pakistan attempted to avenge it by following policy of limited war, proxy war, encouragement to cross border terrorism, training to terrorists etc.

After having analysed its limitations in direct full scale war, it has maintained a status of war with India by encouraging, supporting and training terrorism. During 80’s in Punjab and in 90’s in Kashmir.

Thus Pakistan established tension and conflict with India at a solid foundation level.

Pakistan is alongside supporting Jehadi fundamentalism with a clear objective, to keep India’s population in bloodshed and in fear of bombs, it is attempting to bring anarchy, and horror in India’s internal security environment. For achieving its objective, it is running terrorist camps besides sheltering militants from Sudan, Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, Tunisia, Libya, Somalia and some other Islamic countries who had generally come to take part in the Afghan jihad, soon after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, they had nothing left to do, and so they
are found in trouble spots as far as Kashmir.

Pakistan has also followed a limited war policy when in May – June 1999, when it started Kargil war, though it did not assume form of 1948, 1965, 1971 full scale war but it had all the elements of a full scale war moreover it was, “Pakistan’s effort to carry on its war policy further.”

Conflict situation is so high that Indo – Pakistan negotiations are suspended at present because Pakistan has failed to appreciate India’s concern on certain matters as “its refusal to hand over terrorist suspects wanted by India eradicating cross — border terrorism.”

These contentious issues are foundations of conflict relationship pattern between two countries, besides these issues other unresolved issues also exist as dispute on ‘Siachin glacier’ since 1984, on which several rounds of talks of taken place but no resolution seems in to sight, Pakistan wants to occupy this strategically important area by force and pressurizes India to accept 1989 agreement.”

The Wullar barrage [Tulbul Hydro electric project] and the Sir Creek issues are other points of dispute. The Sir Creek basically a
technical problem has been adversely affected by political adverse relationship.

The Sir Creek is the key to conclusion of a long standing maritime boundary agreement so far eluded to them. India - Pakistan have met more over a dozen times but "The Sir Creek issue has floundered on a minor issue of Pakistan not willing to accept the 'median principle' for dividing the water boundary. Median principle has worked well in all over maritime boundary agreements with other neighbours."\(^{13}\) Pakistan has been insisting on the southern bank of Sir Creek being its boundary which is not acceptable to India.

Pakistan has attempted the colour such issues with political complexities. Its major object is to keep relations with India tense because, "gulf of suspicion and jealousy and rivalry too wide."\(^{14}\) that a normalised bilateral relationships appear distant dreams.
3.3 CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIA & BANGLADESH

India played a role of 'mid wife' in the birth of Bangladesh. India’s support to the Mukti Vahini and Muzibur Rahman quickened transformation of East Pakistan in the form of a new state Bangladesh which was first of all recognised by Indian on the 6th December 1971. Initial years saw common approach by both countries on several matters. India’s sacrifice in the matter of nursing of about 1 crore of refuges in fact laid a solid foundation of friendship between two countries. It was predicted that “together Bangladesh and India on the basis of mutuality of interest and equality of peace and security in the subcontinent, will promote the development and welfare of the people of two countries.”

Initial affection was not lost soon till the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman in August 1975. During this time “both countries concluded treaty of Friendship and Co-operation in March 1972.” which was an expression of cordial relationship between both countries.
India assisted Bangladesh in the field of Jute trade promotion, prevention of smuggling at border and efforts for resolution of Farrakka disputes. Thus this honeymoon period was not free from traces of bitterness.

During 1972, “Bangladesh Prime Minister talked about Bangladesh being a part of South East Asia and opposition parties created anti India environment in electoral policies.”

Since 1975 conflict sharpened as anti Indian government stance of Bangladesh forced them to tilt towards Pakistan besides India’s emergence as number one power in the region gave Bangladeshi leaders a point which they later on used to justify their existence.

Old as well new problems sharpened pattern of political relationship between the two states. The most unresolved problem was sharing of Ganga waters. It was matter of national prestige for Bangladesh. “The agreement of 1977, 1982, 1983, 1986 failed to resolve the lasting solution of problem” and Bangladesh continued to raise the issue at international fora. Thus in Oct. 1974
Assembly. Again in Oct 1995, Prime Minister of Bangladesh raised the issue in General Assembly. Though fresh negotiated settlement took place in Dec 1996, by then this had influenced negative psychological orientation of both countries. Conflict relationship pattern between two countries is projected at other issue as territorial disputes over New Moor island and others as Teen Bigha, which is a matter of emotional attachment to India.

Other problems also exist between two countries as use of Bangladesh as a shelter base by certain North East extremists, Bangladesh’s reluctance to supply natural gas to India, illegal settlement of Bangladeshi nationals is in India, killing of BSF people by Bangla paramilitary forces have caused tension between the two states recently.

It is unfortunate that both countries are having bilateral problems at present. They must realise their common historical past and should develop a framework of mutual understanding as they have exhibited in the matter of economic co-operation.
3.4 **CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIA & SRI LANKA**

India and Sri Lanka are close neighbours bounded by history, culture and geography. Their relationship pattern as shown cordiality for brief period but tense relationship most often. Main factor behind it is that "the Sinhalese are worried about the pulls exercised by the adjacent South Indian state and the superior power of the big neighbour in the south. The Tamilians in Sri Lanka were anxious about the possibilities of being treated as second class citizen, the xenophobic attitude. As displayed by many Sinhalese and their attempts at linguistic dominance."¹

In reality such underlying tense relations made the foundation of relationship pattern between India and Sri Lanka. Both countries diverged on important issues as Sri Lankan effort to keep Trinkomali naval base under English control, to develop cordial relation with Pakistan and China for increasing its strength at the expense of friendship with India. Although there appears some traces of cordial
relationship during 1956-76. As both “made efforts at UNO to declare Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace in 1971. Besides India’s handing over Kaccha Island unilaterally to Sri Lanka.”

India - Sri Lanka relations are mainly governed by Tamil conflict in Sri Lanka. India is unfortunately involved in it due to its emotional and generational attachment with the Tamils residing in Sri Lanka. This problem has two aspects, first is related to the citizenship problem of Tamils. These Tamils had settled in Sri Lanka during their work in tea and rubber plantation where they had been taken as a labour by Britishers. Sri Lankan government after independence defranchised them by several acts in which included citizenship Act no. 18 (1948), Indo-Pak residential Act no. 3 (1949). Amendment in Article 37 (1915) and article 45 (1952) in Residential Act. India pressurised Sri Lanka and in 1954 Nehru and Kotlewal agreement took place but its promises were not fulfilled. Later on this souring problem caused much disturbing current between both countries. Although by the effort of Rajiv
Gandhi government this problem was resolved substantially.

Second class treatment meted out to the India Tamils in Sri Lanka has presented second aspect of this problem. "Tamils demanded separate homeland for themselves called Eelam. Several readical organisations emerged for its liberation and establishment as Tigar of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), People's Liberation Organisation for Tamil Eelam (PLOTE) and others. Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), Eelam Revolutionary Organisation of Students (EROS), Tamil Eelam Liberation Organisation (TELO) and other splinter groups."³

Thus ethnic problems was polarised in Sri Lanka by political parties. India was in dilemma, at one point it supported them and at other time dissociated with them but India's behaviour proved a major irritant to Sri Lanka and relations continued acrid. Although India's intervention in 1987 in Sri Lanka proved a disaster to bilateral relations which enhanced disagreement between two close neighbour. In this matter it would be sufficient to state that "India's
confusing stand is extension of its domestic compulsion.”

Srilanka’s ethnic problem presents a strange dilemma to India’s policy, for India can not be comfortable with the outright victory of either the LTTE or the armed forces of Sri Lanka whichever side wins, it will only acute problems of India. No doubt thee factors have helped to detoriate relationship between both countries and Tamil problems is the crux of such political disharmony.

Recently India and Sri Lanka have reached to conclude a free trade treaty which is the signal to realization by both countries that political disagreement lead no where. Decimation of LTTE by Sri Lanka Government will help to develop a new pattern of bilateral relationship is between both countries in due course of time.
3.5 CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIA AND NEPAL

India and Nepal share cultural and geographical relationship. Prime Minister Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru had emphasized that the "intimate geographical and cultural relationship exist between India and Nepal" and "we recognise Nepal as an independent country and wish her well." Initial phase of relationship between two country was having friendliness when Indo-Nepal treaty of peace and friendship, was signed which formed a strong cooperative base between two countries. Still Nepal's strategic location made it imperative to India to take into account security factor as it existed as a buffer state between India and China and "therefore carried importance for both of them"

Thus relationship pattern between two countries in initial phase has two main elements viz., friendship & cooperation along with security concerns. But relations between two countries soon deteriorated in 1952 when most Nepalese political parties adopted anti-India stance and after March 1955 when King Mahendra adopted anti
India stance and peace element was gradually replaced by animosity with India.

India’s security concern proved true when Nepal came in close contact with China, “A Sino- Nepalese treaty relating to Tibet was signed in 1956 and construction of Kathmandu-Lhasa road.” took place, which created a schism between India and Nepal. India started to view Nepal’s association with China as harmful to its own interest and this element is still persisting. Nepal’s recent inclination to China are caused to rift between two countries.

Though India “adopted a new sensitive attitude towards Nepal” In sixtees by assisting it in economic, technical and cultural spheres. but friction still existed as Nepal’s objection on certain matters as on Kosi canal project and Susta area, demands for the with drawl of Indian personal from the northern chek post and its military liasion group from Kathmandu on the ‘guidance of the China’ detoriated relations further.

Advocacy of ‘Nepal as a Zone of Peace’ by Nepal’s king.
Birendra in late seventies caused bitterness in between India and Nepal. Its reflection was visible in 1989 when treaty of trade and transit expired. Though matter was resolved but an element of tension on reciprocity in matter of citizens of two countries still existed. Nepal’s contention was that, "India being a large country can afford to absorbs Nepalese Settling in India, while it finds it difficult to absorb Indians living in Nepal."  

Though India has continuously assisted Nepal in its economic development. Irrigation project on Kosi, the Gandak, the Karnali, the Trisuli, the Devi Ghat and Pokhara Hydel have been helped by India, besides India has helped in road, airport construction, agriculture, forestry, education and in field of telecommunication. During the last decade India’s assistance on upgrading of the Jai Nagar Railway (1992-1994), treaty on development of Maha Kali project (1996) give new direction of bilateral relationship. Indo-Nepal joint working group has been recently organised to resolve existing mutual bilateral problems.
Still tension continue, hijacking of Indian plane from Kathmandu airport in December 1999, use of Nepalese land by ISI against India, impact of Maoist insurgency on Indian main land and their nexus with ISI are new cause of tensions. "Maoist terrorist are taking shelter in West Bengal, Assam, Sikkim and Uttar Pradesh. It is also a fact that these Maoist organization act as a close nexus with Pakistan spy agency ISI." 

ISI is using land of Nepal for its mischievous activities and its role in Plane hijacking is self reveailing. India has constantly expressed its reservations against ISI activities but, "No substantial progress has taken place between two countries regarding exchange of information on ISI. Though Nepal had consented initially to cooperate in this matter, but soon it expressed its ability not to do so." 

It is true that "In recent years, Nepalese territory has been used by third country elements hostile to India and to destabilise India by infiltrating men and materials to aid and abate
acts of terrorism. Anti social elements engaged in
criminal activities across this (Indo-Nepal) open border
have also found a safe heaven in Nepal’s border areas
contiguous with India.” Recent revelations about fake
money racket operating against India has indicated that ISI
is using the Nepal as a transit point as distribution of
counterfeits money in Indian economy.

India is also worried on Nepal’s recent inclination
towards China. Security concerns are again at fore which
have proved to be a cause of persistent tension between the
two countries.
3.6 CONFLICT BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN

Indo-Bhutan relation have been traditionally free from major conflicts. India has supported Bhutan in every sphere. Politically Bhutan’s desire to project itself at international fora was supported by India, consequently Bhutan became member of UNO in 1971, of Non Aligned Movement in 1973. India has supported Bhutan in the field of infrastructure development as in road construction, microwave link of Paro airport with the remaining world, establishment of radio station and Chubha project and in the sphere of health and education. India’s assistance in economic aid to the Bhutan is noteworthy. India had given 17.22 crore ruppees to the Bhutan’s first five year plan, “in the sixth five year plan this figure reached to 7500 million ruppees.” Political and economic cooperation between both country is governed by treaty of Friendship and Co-operation, August 1949 which has assured establishment of permanent friendship between two countries.

This positive symbiotic inter state behaviour has specific conflict patches between two countries. India views Bhutan’s strategic and geographical position which gives a cause of concern to it.
China has strategic interest in this country and has tried to penetrate in Bhutan & creating mistrust against India in Bhutan as falsely stating Indian involvement in "the assassination of Prime Minister Daurji on 5 April 1964 and a following year assassination bid on king wang Chuk" produced bitterness between both countries but soon sanity prevailed and Bhutan king's visit in 1967 removed all mistrust.

After this episode no major cause of conflict emerged between two countries because Bhutan though a sovereign country, but in matters of foreign affairs, is guided by India. Moreover it can import arms only through India that to at her satisfaction.

Thus Indo-Bhutan relation presents symmetric relationship pattern. Though with the passage of time new conflict grey areas have emerged between two countries. It is hard fact that extremist organization of North East, particularly of Assam have training camps in the territory of Bhutan as claimed by Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi. "infact the outfit Bodo land army is said to have camps in the dense forest of Bhutan"
When Hasina Wajed government in Bangladesh exerted restraint on extremists of North-East staying in Bangladesh, "as a result, many ULFA leaders and cadre have moved to Bhutan." and have stayed there. Now they have been using Bhutan's land against India. This is a major cause of irritant between two countries. Bhutan on the Indian Government request although has dismantled the terrorist training camps operative in the Bhutanese soil.
3.7 CONCLUSION

It is explicit that political tension in the South Asian region has been detioriated to the minimum level. Present research work has discovered out that main cause behind such negative political environment in the region is due to the fact that all the remaining member states of the region have one or other problems with India.

India is sometimes confounded as how to conduct its relation with the neighbouring states because its pre eminent position in the region makes it compulsory to it that it must play some diplomatic role on major issues affecting the region. Perhaps this is underlying cause which generates tension in the region.