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## **SOUTH ASIA'S SECURITY : EXTRA-REGIONAL INPUTS**

The peace and security in South Asia has long been viewed as a function of Indo-Pakistan strategic equation. Not only the four wars fought between them since independence, but also the continuing hostility, now with its nuclear dimension go to testify it. The Indo-Pakistan recrimination looms large even on the region's future security horizon. But since the crisis of the 1971, a watershed in the politico-strategic development of the region, there have been some qualitative changes in South Asia's security calculus. The Simla Agreement formally renouncing the use of force in resolving future conflicts has to an extent subdued Indo-Pakistan tension and a delicate peace has been maintained between the two countries for the longest time in the chequered history of their relationship. The peace process survived even the fresh arms build-up in both Pakistan and India in the wake of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and tensions generated by possible nuclear proliferation in the region. Now, a democratic order installed in Pakistan further brightens the prospects of an enduring harmony between the two estranged neighbours.

The security situation in South Asia, however, remained as grim as ever only with the conflict areas and their intensity being shifted elsewhere. Strictly in South Asian context Sri Lanka had been the region's major security preoccupation in the eighties to the extent that a veteran Indian diplomat observed that Sri Lanka had the

potential of being a running sore like Pakistan<sup>1</sup>. It is during the same period that the superpowers' naval rivalry in the Indian Ocean intensified and India herself embarked on building up a blue water navy causing fresh anxiety in the littoral countries of the region and beyond. Thus the Indian Ocean itself has become an extended arena for regional conflict in South Asia. Now the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, continuing civil war and a possible Lebanisation of the country contain enough potentials to spark off new conflicts engulfing a part or the whole of the region.

Security concerns are caused also by India's regional role playing, particularly her controversial peace keeping in Sri Lanka and military response to an internal political crisis in another sovereign country, e.g., Maldives where India's security is not at immediate stake. Persistently irritating discords on account of boundary, sharing of common resources, apprehension over political and economic domination between India on the one hand and its smaller neighbours on the other, also contain the potentials of escalation and ultimately turning into major security issues.

Besides, the countries here are in the process of nation-state building with accompanying traumas and upheavals common in the formation stage. Most of them are still grappling with the uphill task of national integration in highly pluralistic social settings. Symptomatic of this process, the intra-states violences, are not only rampant, they have at places turned into inter-state conflict. In fact such violences have reached a new peak on parochial, religious, linguistic and ethnic differences with their effects spilling over the national boundaries. Political unrest has soared demanding representative government, regional autonomy or equitable economic opportunities. Such developments in one country have their reverberation easily felt in neighboring one leading to trans-border movement of refugees, political dissidents and even arms. "These are perennial

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1. Jagat Mehta, "India, Home and Abroad: Importance of Good Neighbourliness", *Statesman*, 13 April 1985.

sources of mutual suspicion among the states and potential source of conflicts"<sup>2</sup> in South Asia. A host of such internal elements of national security together with its external dimension, both regional and extra regional, make the region's security situation both intractable and complex.

The conflicts in South Asia are fundamentally rooted in socio-political and historical developments of the region itself. The forces and factors that influence the security environs in the region are generated right within its boundary. Nonetheless, the involvement of external powers in the region and impact of their interaction with the countries of South Asia and its security cannot be overlooked. In an ever-shrinking world of breathtaking developments in military technology such external involvements and their security implications are unavoidable, even if unwelcome at times. It has been empirically observed that external powers did play their role either in complicating or moderating conflicts in this region. The changes in the international system also has impinged on our regional system offsetting existing balance of power. China and Soviet Union already had traditional geostrategic interests in South Asia or areas peripheral to it even before the new states system came here into being. The US interest in the region began in the fifties in the context of a bipolar international politics in the aftermath of second world war. The countries of the region also had their own compulsion to establish linkages with these powers to redress their own imbalances. Consequently all three powers, e.g. US, Soviet Union and China and their pattern of relationship with countries in South Asia substantially influenced the course of strategic developments in this region. For the purpose of this paper we would track that course with a view to understanding the nature and extent of such extra-regional influences on the region's security.

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2. K. Subrahmanyam, "Security Issues in South Asia", in Sridhar K. Khatri (ed.) *Regional Security in South Asia*, (Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribubhan University, Kathmandu, 1987), p. 4.

### A Politico-Strategic Overview

In this context, the politico-strategic situation of South Asia in the wake of British exit from the region will be worth going a little deep into. It is to understand the rationale and compulsions behind a new set of relations that subsequently grew between the major powers and South Asian countries. The partition of the South Asian subcontinent came as an inevitable outcome of a protracted animosity between the two warring communities, namely the Hindus and Muslims who remained largely unassimilated in this region even after centuries of living together. Even the partition did not produce the desired result of ending the age old antagonism. The partition itself was marked by unprecedented communal violences culminating in great Punjab killings and soon after independence both India and Pakistan went to war over Kashmir. Although the conflict ended with an UN mediation such hostility right from the beginning set the pace for politics and trend of relationship that continue till date between the two countries. Though the creation of Pakistan was seen as an irreversible development of history, the resultant asymmetry as well as Indian posture and pronouncement often giving way to irredentist aspirations towards Pakistan led the latter to a state of despondency with regard to her security.

Indian posture was equally menacing towards other small neighbours in the region. In the north Britain's treaties with the Himalayan Kingdoms lapsed with the British transfer of power. It was quickly followed by similar sets of treaties concluded between India and Himalayan Kingdoms imposing similar limitation as the British did on the latter's independence. Besides, India's perception of smaller countries around falling within her security orbit and her tightening of grip on land-locked Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim as well as strategic island of Sri Lanka through various treaty obligations and carefully cultivated politico-cultural relations caused equal anxiety as to India's intentions right from those days. These disadvantaged small countries too sought increasing external linkage over years to be able to

exercise greater balance in their policies. It could be evident from the articulation of their posture vis-a-vis India at a later stage. Their political weight was, however, too insignificant to allow them such posture at that time.

A bizonal polity in Pakistan—rather novel in its approach and structure—made a jerky start often plagued by either leadership crisis or repeatedly faltering political behaviour. India, on the other hand, was right on the high crest of her set course of nation-state building with rather aggressive nationalistic fervour. With many tangible or intangible factors weighing heavily in her favour, by early fifties India, at least politically attracted world attention and as a leader of non-aligned movement achieved an enviable position among the newly emergent nations. On the other hand, by this time Pakistan was already stuck in the quagmire of political crises one after another. To redress the existing imbalances and to improve her political standing internationally, Pakistan, it seemed, desperately sought an ally. Other small countries of the region, however, with a number of limitations imposed on them, were perhaps too incapable to seek such connections so early.

Let us now see how things were developing then at global level. The great power concert envisioned in the UN Charter, adopted in 1945, soon disintegrated and drifted into a systemic power rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union. The Soviet threat figured so prominently in Western security calculation that hardly any time was lost in forming the most elaborate security alliance i.e. the NATO to contain them in Europe. In the US threat was perceived to be developing also in volatile West Asia and the West took steps to form a Middle East alliance under the auspices of Western powers.

In the meantime while independent India in 1947 was hailed by the US as her future ally in Asia, Pakistan was viewed as a creation of religious fanaticism.<sup>3</sup> One of the main objectives of the US

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3. Muhammad Ahsen Choudhury, "Pakistan and the United States", in Rais Ahmad Khan (ed.), *Pakistan-United States Relations*, (Area Study Centre for Africa, North and South America, Quid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 1983), p. 11.

foreign policy during the immediate post-war period was to obtain the cooperation of India and China (through Chiang Kai Shek) for the promotion of her interests in South and South-East Asia. But China went communist in 1949 and into alliance with the USSR, tilting the balance of power in Asia to the detriment of the West. The Korean war of 1950 added a new sense of urgency for the US. Seen in the back-drop of this development, Pakistan situated in the vicinity of China and USSR, assumed significant strategic importance in Western view. Its importance further enhanced after America had failed to win over India as an ally in Asia. India with Nehru at the helm had its own world view and charted a course of its own to become the leader and spokesman of the newly-emergent decolonized world. In pursuit of her long-term policy to this end, she carefully avoided entanglement in any superpower rivalry and began to advocate a course of neutrality and non-alignment. It was in this atmosphere that the US decided in 1954 to enter into a Mutual Security Pact with Pakistan.

### **The US and South Asia**

The US policy toward South Asia has always been a component but not so much important one of its global policy. As a result, US South Asia policy often fluctuated, changed and reversed depending on its other priorities and changes in its overall policy in international arena. In the fifties a (perceived) threat from Communism was the single most dominant factor that shaped the US security policies. Therefore, the main objective of US foreign policy then was to protect the free world "from the threats" and "aggression" of communism, whether "it is of Soviet or Chinese variety". During the sixties owing to the emerging process of East-West detente and mutual understanding reached between the superpowers, extra-ordinary Chinese hostility to the US, and its unequivocal support to communist insurgencies almost everywhere in US perception China turned to be the main threat to its interests.

During the early or mid-seventies, the situation, however, reversed. The worsening of Sino-Soviet rift, Sino-US rapprochement, Indo-Soviet friendship and more important, Brezhnev's extraordinary activism in the Third World en-bloc brought a radical change in US perceptions. During the early seventies onwards, the US viewed the Soviet Union as the single most important threat to its interests in the region and beyond it. Its main objective was to contain the spread of Soviet influence often in alliance with China.

It is only natural that these changes in US perceptions and policies have a clear imprint on its relationship with countries in South Asia. The following paragraphs attempt to sketch how the pattern of US relationship in South Asia has been formed by her policy changes due to shifting priorities.

#### *Pak-US Relation: "A Troubled Alliance"*

In post-war time the US made Pakistan its first foothold in South Asia in pursuit of her global strategy of containing communism. No wonder that Pakistan with her strategic location adjoining both Soviet Union and China was an obvious choice. The choice was also influenced by Pakistan's readiness to accept such linkage due to her security compulsions as against a neutralist India forcefully poised against military alliance. There could be more reasons and one such reason was put forward by Dulles: "the strong spiritual faith and martial spirit of the people of Pakistan would make them a dependable bulwark against Communism".<sup>4</sup> On a general level Pakistan's central location as deterrent to possible Soviet push to the South and its potential for defence of the Middle East were among the major considerations that led the US to form alliances with Pakistan and to extend military aid. As regards Pakistan, the perceived threat of India has been the motivating factor, although she did generally subscribe to the idea of halting further expansion

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4. Ataur Rahman, *Pakistan and America: Dependency Relations*, (Young Asia Publications, New Delhi, 1982), p. 13.

of communism in the area. Pakistan hoped that her alliance relationship with the US would ensure a guarantee against Indian aggression, help establish parity with India with resultant flow of military aid and pressurise India to resolve Kashmir dispute. Pakistan was distinctly less moved by ideological interest which she however combined at convenience with her main objective of tackling Indian threat.

So it is obvious that military alliance between the US and Pakistan was based on different expectations and aims from the two sides from the beginning<sup>5</sup>. While Pakistan continuously tried to play up an Indian threat alongside the danger of communist expansion the Americans however remained cool to such anti-India plank. Consequently, the US-Pakistan relation followed rather an uneven path with Pakistani objective remaining constant but the US interest changing with the change of her global strategy.

The Sino-Indian war of 1962 brought to the fore for the first time the serious clash of perception and interests that existed between the US and Pakistan. Pakistan was gravely disappointed at the massive flow of US arms to India in the wake of Himalaya War. The balance of power between India and Pakistan was seriously offset. It also revealed that US-Pakistan alliance bore little relevance in the context of Pakistan's perceived threat from India. During the war the US evidently collaborated with the Soviet Union, an Indian ally against China. Pakistan's shock and dismay over US conduct was partly removed by a humiliating Indian defeat.

During the sixties, Soviet threat to West Asia considerably subsided and a radical China was seen as a greater menace to the West. Consequently the US interests in Pakistan substantially waned and she took almost a neutral posture when the first test of alliance credibility came up in 1965. The US response to 1965 war, i.e.,

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5. G. W. Choudhuri, *India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Major Powers*, London, 1975), p. 87.



termination of economic and military assistance to both India and Pakistan, in fact, helped India as the embrace worked more to the disadvantage of Pakistan, exclusively dependent on US supply of arms. Pakistan also failed to invoke US assurances of military assistance on various technical grounds. By late sixties US interest in South Asia showed a gradual decline. A disillusioned Pakistan for a while shifted away from the policy of alliance to a policy of bilateralism aimed at maintaining simultaneous good relations with US, USSR and China.

The declining US-Pakistan relation was, however, rehabilitated in early seventies when Soviet ascendancy in West Asia and Vietnam was seen as a new source of threat and this perception was by a queer turn of events shared by both US and China in the wake of a widening Sino-Soviet rift. In the thick of 1971 crisis a beleaguered Pakistan widely condemned for her military action in its eastern province readily accepted the role of an intermediary between China and the US to tap up a fresh source of strength in the US by arranging secret Kissinger mission to Peking in 1971. Perhaps as a first step of this rehabilitation Nixon lifted the ban imposed during 1965 war on sale of military supply to Pakistan.

The Bangladesh crisis and Indo-Pak war of 1971 revealed a new alignment of external forces in South Asia. In the wake of this development of Sino-US-Pakistan collusion, an isolated India promptly went to conclude her Friendship Treaty with Soviet Union to counter the alignments. The consequences were obvious. The Soviets supported the Bangladesh War of Independence and sided with India in her war with Pakistan. The US and China stood behind Pakistan during the crisis. The US on the whole followed an ambivalent role in 1971 war but her 'tilt' to Pakistan was clear only after the outbreak of war when Nixon went to a dangerous extent of bringing in Nuclear Aircraft Carrier USS Enterprise in the Bay of Bengal to prove US credibility to both China and Pakistan.

Once the crisis was over and Bangladesh emerged independent the short-lived warming up between Pakistan and the US also came to an end. With a tarnished image in South Asia both for her controversial role during Bangladesh crisis and failure to come to help her ally i.e., Pakistan in some tangible way the US again reeled back and maintained very low profile in South Asia till the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Thus, so far "American commitment to Pakistan had been limited at the best and uncertain at the worst."<sup>6</sup>

The crisis in Afghanistan was different. It was for the first time that there was a congruence of interest between two troubled partners i.e., the US and Pakistan. Both saw serious stake in ensuring a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Soviet presence was seen as a threat to US interests in the Gulf while for Pakistan it was a threat to her territorial integrity and independence. It was no wonder that "bolstering Pakistan against a possible south-ward push by the Soviets was considered a top priority by the US."<sup>7</sup> Thus promptly came an offer of \$ 3.2 billion in economic and military assistance.

#### *US Relations with India: An Unclear Obligation*

Although an allied ally of Pakistan, the US had been on occasions more favourably disposed towards a non-aligned India—an arch enemy of Pakistan. Pakistan received a substantial military aid from the US amounting to a billion US dollars upto 1965 and that gave Pakistan a position at least of military parity with India. The US flow of military aid to Pakistan was not, however, matched by economic aid for which the US appeared to give preference to India. The US as the champion of the free world saw a stake in the progress and stability of India, the largest democracy of the world. The escalation of the Sino-Indian border dispute in the late

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6. Shelton U. Kodikara, "Role of Extra-Regional Powers and South Asian Security", in Sridhar K. Khatri (ed.) *op. cit.*, p. 63.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

fifties and ultimately their clash across the Himalayas gave the US her another stake in India. As containment of China figured more prominently in US strategic calculation, the US promptly went in assistance of India ignoring Pakistan's concern of growing military imbalance. Not only this seriously affected Pak-US relation, this in important ways also influenced South Asian politics and balance of power in India's favour. In fact the 1962 war marked "the turning point in the modernisation of the Indian Armed Forces."<sup>8</sup> The US role in Indo-Pakistan war of 1965 contributed significantly in India's favour. By simply keeping out of the war the US dashed all Pakistani hopes of US military assistance as envisaged in the bilateral agreements between US and Pakistan.

By early seventies politico-strategic situation had changed at global level. China was no more a threat to Western security. Instead US together with China had started to see with concern the increasing Soviet influence of Brehznev era. Consequently, Chinese co-operation—not Indian—was considered essential for the US. With this change of perspective India's position declined in US security calculation, although US policy in South Asia during 1971 crisis did not do much harm to India's objectives and interests despite the US Administration's clear anti-Indian posture. In the aftermath of 1971 crisis, both Nixon and Carter accepted publicly India's status as the dominant power in South Asia, but Carter was perhaps the first US President to indicate support for India's regional hegemony. The subsequent US Administrations also endorsed such notion in one way or other.

#### *The US and other South Asian Countries*

The US connection with other South Asian countries are of recent origin. In Sri Lanka, ever since the UNP formed Government

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8. Shelton Kodikara, *Strategic Factors in Inter-state Relations in South Asia*, (Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 1984), p. 41.

in Colombo the US had an increased profile in that country. Coinciding with Sri Lanka's deteriorating relations with India due to increased ethnic tension in early eighties, a series of visits in Sri Lanka by highly placed US officials took place. During the period US seventh fleet visited the coast of Sri Lanka and strategic Trincomalee was made available to it for harbour facilities. From Sri Lanka's side the new government appeared to be soft on US presence in Diego Garcia; it reportedly gave facilities to Voice of America for security purpose and accepted tender of US linked consortium for leasing of Trincomalee oil Farm. The US interests in Sri Lanka was largely guided by the need of the former's safeguarding of strategic interest in Indian Ocean. And the US was obviously taking full advantage the UNP government's distinctly pro-Western foreign policy and encouragements of free market economy. The US interests in Sri Lanka has, however, suffered setback with signing of Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord of 1987 which clearly sets out, among others, to eliminate all external influence in strategically sensitive area close to India's border.

Viewed in the backdrop of US role in 1971 crisis and her controversial policy towards Bangladesh War of Independence its relation with Bangladesh grew rather fast. It was among the earliest few countries to recognize the reality of Bangladesh. The relations seemed to have been based on the mutual realisation that Bangladesh vitally needed the US economic aid for her post-war reconstruction and US did have a responsibility to come forward to reconstruct its economy lest Bangladesh further drifted towards Soviet Union which already enjoyed a place of prestige in the new country for her role in its creation. Thus the US was rather quick in adjusting to the new arrangements in the region brought about by the events of 1971. Soon she became the largest single contributor accounting for over 27 percent of Bangladesh's total external aid. Though from the beginning Bangladesh pursued a socialist economy at home and a foreign policy with clear tilt towards socialists block, it's relation

with US was free from "stress and strain". The US economic role in Bangladesh continued to grow while her political influence in Dhaka got a boost from 1975 when after a political change in Bangladesh its foreign policy took a distinctly pro-Western orientation. Since then the US-Bangladesh relations showed signs of steady growth of friendly cooperation and understanding both bilaterally and internationally.

### **The Soviet Union and South Asia**

As indicated earlier, the Soviets had clear geostrategic interest in the area, more particularly in Afghanistan even during the days of Czars. In post-war time however two distinct factors guided Soviet policy in the region. First, Pakistan's joining of the so-called ring of steel around her was taken as an overt hostility and it went a long way in shaping her attitude towards the countries of the region vis-a-vis Pakistan. Second, a widening Sino-Soviet rift from mid-fifties and Soviet attempt to balance it with growing linkage with another Asian giant, i.e., India. In the following paragraphs we will examine the Soviet interaction with the region in the light of these two fundamental factors.

#### *Pak-Soviet Relation : An Imperative of Geo-Politics*

To start with, the Soviet Union took a neutral posture towards South Asian sub-continent. To her all the countries in the region looked alike—all led by monarchies and feudal or bourgeois reactionaries. Even on Indo-Pakistan differences particularly one relating to Kashmir she initially maintained neutrality. But soon, the Soviets gradually moved to a position of openly supporting India's policy on Kashmir question clearly in response to Pakistan's joining Western alliance aimed against Soviet Union. With Soviet's vital interests struck in the region by Pakistani policy—particularly after the U-2 incident—the Soviet attitudes hardened and she openly lent political support to India on Kashmir and Afghanistan on Pakhtoonistan.

But it remained at that. It was only in early sixties that Soviets started taking active interest in the region including Pakistan. Alerted by developments of Sino-Pakistan border agreement giving China a direct access to strategic Kashmir as well as increasing rift between her and China, the Soviets alongside political and military assistance to India started courting Pakistan also. There was an exchange of visits at Foreign Ministers level and President Ayub, somewhat disillusioned by US flow of military hardware to India visited Moscow in early 1965 where he expounded his policy of bilateralism with Soviet Union. With the concerns of Sino-Soviet confrontation in the background the Soviets seemed prepared even to ignore Pakistan's US connection and were more anxious of growing Sino-Pakistan axis. However the peak of Soviet influence in South Asia before 1971 was marked by her undisputed mediatory role in 1965 war which both India and Pakistan accepted. It also established her credibility in South Asian affairs.

After Tashkent Declaration a series of events took place marking growing relations between Pakistan and Soviet Union. At the height of such relationship in 1968 Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin visited Pakistan. This followed an exchange of high powered military delegations and a limited quantity of Soviet arms deliveries. This growing relation however went aground by mid-1969 when Pakistan opposed the Brezhnev plan of Collective Security primarily because of its anti-Chinese connotation. That disillusioned the Soviets who were also discouraged by strong Indian reservation about Soviet arms supply to Pakistan. Perhaps, the Soviets also had an inkling of a possible Pakistani role in the rapprochement between China and the US when Nixon visited Pakistan in 1969. Thus came to an end a short-lived simultaneous relationship of Pakistan with all—US, USSR and China.

*Indo-Soviet Relation : "A Tribute to the Maturity of Two Nations"*

The genesis of the relations can again be traced in the context of Pakistan's association with Western alliances, which was construed

by the Soviets as an unfriendly posture against them. Even if the Soviets had geostrategic interests to be pursued in the largest country of South Asia the process was rather hastened in mid-fifties. In precise coincidence with Pakistan's US connection formalised by this time the Indo-Soviet relation received great initial boost. Almost in a sharp reaction to Pakistani posture the Soviets endorsed Indian policies on disputed Kashmir almost in toto. The relationship got further boost from Soviet's deteriorating relations with China. By the end of fifties the Soviets clearly took India's side in her border dispute with China. Soviet preference of India over China was further manifested through her inclination towards India before, during and after Sino-Indian war of 1962. Such preference was also accompanied by massive Soviet arms transfer to India in the wake of Sino-Indian war. By May 1964 India had received from Soviet Union a total of \$ 130 million by way of military assistance. After 1965 war the Soviet Union became virtually the principal arms supplier to India.

Indo-Soviet relationship entered a new phase with the conclusion of Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty in 1971. Both India and Soviet Union successfully played their role during the events of 1971 and both substantially gained from the consequences of those events. India emerged dominant power of the region and Soviet influence in the region enhanced considerably. The Soviet Union had always special ties with India and these were reinforced during the 1971 crisis. Indo-Soviet relations got new impetus in restructured South Asian order and Soviets were justly proud of their big diplomatic gain in the region as a result of their role in Bangladesh War of Independence. By that time the Indo-Soviet relationship appeared to have been based on solid foundations.

Soviet relations with India were not, however, without some irritants. As a period of US-Soviet collaboration and collusion directed against China ended the Soviet Union in her relation with China reached a point of confrontation. In 1969 there were violent

clashes between them. It was in this context that Brezhnev propounded the doctrine of Asian Collective Security. In spite of a close warm relationship Indian reaction to it was rather cool and she maintained reservations about it althroughout. India however swallowed it in 1971 in somewhat different form by concluding Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Soviet Union. But the context was more important because India had hardly any option in the light of developing international alignment of forces in the context of Bangladesh crisis. Secondly, there were profound differences in their policies towards China, although both had adversary relations with her. The Soviets could never gain Indian support in its anti-Chinese tirades or whole-hearted endorsements in its campaign against China. India firmly maintained her own independent views on how to handle China from her side.

#### *Soviet-Bangladesh Relations*

Although the Soviets officially expressed concern about genocide in Bangladesh it appeared from the official exchanges that they still believed in a united Pakistan and repeatedly pleaded for negotiated settlements. Even the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty was concerned more as a contingency about Indo-Pak war. But the overall Soviet role in 1971 crisis certainly helped Bangladesh coming into being. Soviet Union was the first major country to recognise the new republic and its assistance in the form of urgently needed food and drugs started pouring in even before the recognition. Shiekh Mujib also recognised the special role of Soviet Union in voicing protest against Pakistani atrocities. There were high level exchanges that included the visit of Shiekh Mujib to Moscow and there were mutual pledges of all round cooperation. By 1972 Soviets were quite a factor in Bangladesh as was in India. However by mid-seventies Soviet preeminence in South Asia as a whole declined with Mujib's assassination in Bangladesh and change of government in India.



### China and South Asia

China shares border with four of seven countries of the region. Even Bangladesh, although separated from China by a narrow strip of Indian territory, is in very close proximity of China. As a result China does have interest in any developments that take place in South Asia. Moreover, there exists a huge mass of disputed territory between India and China. So China's involvement in the region is somewhat inevitable.

#### *Sino-Pakistan Relation : Enduring Entente*

In the early stage the relations were marked more by China's indifference and Pakistan's feeling of being awestruck by a giant lying just next door. Only reservation that China had about Pakistan was the latter's membership of CENTO and SEATO. During earlier years the relations also suffered some complication due to Pakistan's ambivalence about China's US admission and Taiwan question.

Even then the relation took off well mutually pledging to strengthen friendship despite "the difference between the political systems of Pakistan and China and divergence of views on many problems".<sup>9</sup> Peking made further overture to Pakistan for development of a new basis of relations between them. Perhaps it was prompted by a sense of insecurity emanating from her deteriorating relations both with India and Soviet Union. Though later Pakistan responded positively to such overture by signing border demarcation agreement as first step in the evolution of relation between Pakistan and China. On Kashmir question even during the heydays of Sino-Indian relation China kept a neutral posture. With the background of US-Soviet collusion in supporting India against China, naturally there was a community of interests between Pakistan and China, both left out in isolation. Such sense of isolation on the part of both Pakistan and China together with their urge for security in fact produced the China-Pakistan axis. In 1965 Indo-Pakistan war China stood firm

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9. G. W. Choudhuri, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

behind Pakistan. Subsequently through the rest of the sixties the Sino-Pakistan axis became an important ingredient in the balance of power in South Asia. The Sino-Pakistan relationship steadily rose culminating in Pakistan's intermediary role in Sino-American rapprochement in 1971. "China's special relationship with Pakistan from 1960 to 1970 was based on mutual advantage and pragmatic reality. Without any formal pact or alliance the relationship has the intensity of those of Pak-US alliance in mid-fifties or Indo-Soviet in 1971"<sup>10</sup>. Although Chinese support to Pakistan was little more than diplomatic, Sino-Pakistan friendship survived the crisis of 1971. China continued to support Pakistan both economically and militarily. By 1973 China's military aid to Pakistan equated the sum of US arms to Pakistan during the period 1954-56. When Pakistan was threatened by Soviet intervention in Afghanistan China again sided with Pakistan. Sino-Pakistan cooperation today has entered a stage of enduring entente and in the words of late President Zia, "China is the only country in Pakistan's experience which has stuck to its principles"<sup>11</sup>. The special Sino-Pakistan relationship is a steady and reliable friendship based on shared concerns and sustained by history. This relation is consistent and reliable till date and there is hardly any evidence of any dent in it despite the turn of trend in both Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indian relation.

#### *Sino-Indian Relation : Never a Closed Chapter*

Taking off from an euphoric platform of *Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai* the relations turned bitter resulting in violent clash between the two countries only within a decade. The initial differences centered round Tibet and great divide in Sino-Indian relation in fact came in 1959 when Dalai Lama of Tibet was granted asylum in India. By then according to some Indian scholars a point of no return

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10. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

11. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 16, May 1980.

was already reached. Added to it was the problem of border demarcation after the Chinese laid claim to a vast tract of Indian territory. The problem became acute when for the demarcation of border the British introduced and Indian supported McMahon Line was disputed by the Chinese. Consequently as much as 50,000 square miles of territory became disputed in Ladakh and NEFA. The attempts on both sides to gain control over this huge tract of largely uninhabited area led them to violent war across the Himalayas in 1962.

After the Sino-Indian war of 1962 the attitudes hardened on both sides. Symptomatic of that Sino-Indian border interventions and clashes became more frequent and continued in the sixties culminating in the serious military confrontation again at Nathu La in 1986. The Sino-Indian differences sharpened more with China's alignments with Pakistan—India's traditional enemy and China's unequivocal support to Pakistan in 1965 war.

A frozen Sino-Indian relationship suffered further setback in 1971 as a result of Indo-Pakistan war and a further polarization took place. To counter a Sino-US-Pakistan collusion India moved further towards Soviet Union. Nonetheless, the Sino-Indian normalization is vital to the peace and stability in the region. The point of interest is this that inspite of hard bargaining on border the Indians under no circumstances considered the improvement of relation and cooperation between the two countries as a closed chapter. Rather a new pragmatism in India's foreign policy has been the attempt to resolve outstanding issues in dispute between India and China.<sup>12</sup>

#### *China and other South Asian Countries*

Apart from her very close relationship with Pakistan, China developed relations with other South Asian countries like Sri Lanka

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12. Shelton Kodikara, *Strategic Factors in Interstate Relations in South Asia*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

and Nepal in a significant way. Chinese relation with Sri Lanka dates back to early fifties when it took off with the signing of a trade agreement reviewed regularly till date. A maritime agreement concluded in 1983 strengthened the tie. Political relations also steadily grew particularly during the administration of Mrs Bandarnaik who even took an initiative in 1962 to resolve Sino-Indian conflict. Sri Lanka's close connection with China grew without prejudice to India. Bandarnaik maintained equally friendly relations with India at the same time.

In contrast to it Sino-Nepalese relations were different in content. China's entry into Nepal was rather late and only in 1958 she established her mission in Kathmandu. The relation grew during the period of King Mahendra who brought in China element more as a politics of balance. Whatever might be the motives and circumstances on either side the relations between China and Nepal grew steadily as evident from Sino-Nepalese border agreements and constructions by Chinese of Kathmandu-Lhasa highway during early sixties. The Nepalese were cautious enough not to give a free hand to Chinese in Nepal. To curb rising Chinese influence in Nepal, King Mahendra craftily maintained a policy of equi-distance. Thus Nepal turned down Chinese offer to build another road in Terai region in Nepal and in 1972 quickly recognised Bangladesh much to the dismay of China.

China like United States suffered setback in South Asia on Bangladesh question. She, however, had diplomatic ascendancy everywhere else both because of her entry into the United Nations and rapprochement with the US by this time. The diplomatic failure in the region next door was however a sore point for her. So it was only expected that she would sustain her effort to improve her position in South Asia.

During 1971 China was not opposed to the national aspirations of Bangladeshis. But China was too preoccupied elsewhere during the year to give Bangladesh question a fair deal. In fact China failed to

strike a balance between her deep commitments to Pakistan which was playing the crucial role for her rapprochement with US and Bangladeshi aspirations in the backdrop of Pakistani genocide which China recognised and made an unsuccessful effort for political settlements. Contacts were established with China soon after independence and there were some trade links between Bangladesh and China. From the emerging pattern of relationship it appeared only matter of time that China would recognise Bangladesh. The political change in Bangladesh in 1975 hastened the process. There has been a steady growth of relationship ever since.

### **The Security Effects**

Let us now turn to an assessments of the security consequences of the relationship that we have so far discussed. But before that we ought to bear a basic fact in mind : the conflicts dynamics of this region is generated right within its boundary. After all, Indo-Pakistan conflict of 1948 was sparked off in absence of any extra-regional linkage. Similarly Bangladesh crisis was to start with, independent of any external influence and was more of a national integration problem in a country. The extra-regional linkages have only exacerbated the age-old rivalries between the races and religions in this region. These have also introduced a politics of balance leading to an incessant arms race that rages on till date. Once the external powers were involved in regional affairs their international alignment impinged upon South Asian politics and its security. In addition, there are other determinants of external origin, for example, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and escalation of superpower rivalry in Indian Ocean. We will go into some details of these external elements to understand their effects on security in our region.

### *Politics of Balance*

It was only matter of time that in the context of post-war strategic realities the major powers would involve themselves also in South

Asian affairs at least in their quest for gaining support base in this part of the world. The competitions were not less intense on the part of South Asian countries too for political, diplomatic and military support from major powers for redressing both real and perceived imbalances existing in their mutual relations. Pakistan's Mutual Defense Pact with the US has only initiated the process. Once initiated it went round a vicious circle and often got complicated by fluctuating response from major powers to regional balance.

Although India was extremely vocal against Pakistan's US connection and acquisition of military hardware its response to Pakistan military build-up was initially moderate and was primarily limited to indigenisation and stepping up of her military production. She tried to balance Pakistan's growing military strength more with her aggressive political maneuvering. But with Sino-Indian rift widening up she moved closer to Soviet Union with whom India was already having friendly relationship. And with the outbreak of Sino-Indian war in 1962 she simultaneously looked also towards the West to balance the combined weight of Sino-Pakistan threat.

After the war of 1965, as has been brought out earlier, Pakistan turned to Soviet Union for a while again to redress, at least partially Pakistan's imbalance vis-a-vis massive Western arms flow to India. Though for a short period Soviets' simultaneous arms delivery both to India and Pakistan helped maintaining regional balance to an extent. In 1971 to counter Sino-Pakistan-US collusion India formally brought Soviet Union in South Asian strategic scenario by entering into alliance with the later. By implication, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed in 1971 gave an external power for the first time a formal and direct role in the region. The Indo-Soviet ascendancy of the 70s was however balanced by a series of developments taking place during the closing years of the decade. Such politics of balance have also been practised by the smaller South Asian countries. This can be evident from Nepal's policy of equidistance from her two giant neighbours and Sri Lanka's display

of neutral posture vis-a-vis China and India particularly under Bandarnaike administration. Ever since 1975 Bangladesh too exercised greater balance in her policy vis-a-vis India by developing close relations with US and China.

The process has helped bringing in not only the increasing external linkages but also the politics, interests and influences of the powers concerned. The linkages thus established invariably brought in external assistance both economic and military. Thus there was a competitive arms procurement which further vitiated a region already charged with mistrust and suspicion. With all its accompanying complexities the politics of balance has significantly contributed to the overall maintenance of status quo in South Asia. Perhaps, exact balance is a phenomenon too difficult to be achieved. With military balance always tipping to one side or other even if marginally it could not ensure uninterrupted peace and stability in the region. At the same time it did not let the situation develop disparately to the detriment of disadvantaged and weak contender. Viewed against the backdrop of ever-deteriorating interstate relation as well as India's assertion of her hegemonic role the balance has indeed come to be regarded as an imperative for the survival of the smaller counties in the region.

#### *Arms Race and Nuclear Proliferation*

Pakistan's security linkage with the US, for the first time, brought in sophisticated arms in the region. Pakistan became eligible to receive military aid from the United States with the signing of Mutual Defense Agreement in 1954. During the period 1955-62 Pakistan had an unbroken record of obtaining large scale military assistance from the US. In response India stepped up the production of her own indigenous weapons (in her existing 16 ordinance and 1 aircraft factories), purchased some old model tanks, bombers and fighters of British and French origin and signed agreements with Britain for licensed production of Jet fighters in 1956. During the same period

Nehru dropped his opposition to Soviet military aid, which India carefully avoided heretofore to promote her non-aligned philosophy. During 1960-62 India received substantial number of Soviet planes and helicopters. Thus ensued an arms race which ultimately had a great deal to do with the region's security environments. In an atmosphere already charged with mistrust and suspicion it continued to generate tension, highly militarized the domestic politics and created temptation often to use military option.

The race became intensified when with the Sino-Indian conflict the West, particularly the US, sympathetic to India's request for military assistance started a massive arms delivery to India. However joint British-US military assistance programme involving \$ 120 million could not satisfy India and led the latter to go in for additional military agreements with the Soviet Union during the 1962-64 period. The defeat in the war with China in 1962 radically changed the Nehruvian view of defence and security. Indian strategists found it to be too idealistic and utopian to be practised. Indo-Pak war of 1965 further reinforced this line of thinking. The Indian strategists orchestrated their efforts to build up the theme of "India's will to power" which gave further boost to her arms procurement.

Indian arms build-up programme already undertaken after the Sino-Indian war turned to be a gigantic one following the Indo-Pak war. Particularly, US embargo on arms sale to the subcontinent compelled both India and Pakistan to turn to the Soviet Union and China respectively. During this period the Soviet Union emerged as the single most important supplier of arms to India. In consequence, India emerged as the dominant military power in South Asia overwhelming Pakistan as evident from the latter's defeat in 1971 and the emergence of Bangladesh. In response to renewed Pak-US military ties in the wake of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan particularly \$ 3 billion US military assistance programme to boost the defence capability of Pakistan as well as Sino-US military collabora-



tion India again embarked upon a major armament programme in 1980s.

Pakistan may have initiated this new round of arms race in the region following the outbreak of Afghan crisis, but it is falling far behind India in almost all respects. During the 1980s while Pakistan has substantially increased its defence expenditure both in absolute terms and as a percentage of its GNP it still remains far behind India. In spite of all that is said about Pakistan's proclivity for introducing foreign weapons into the region it has miserably failed to match India's performance as arms importer. Between 1983 and 1987 Pakistan imported foreign arms worth only \$ 2,940 million against India's \$ 12,589 million.<sup>13</sup> In terms of the indigenization of weapons production as well Pakistan is thoroughly outclassed. All these suggest that Pakistan's ability to keep pace with India is steadily declining. Nonetheless, most of Indian defense analysts have sought to blur the reality of India's military build-up with the suggestion that India's arms acquisitions have been to balance the Chinese and Pakistani arms build-up to maintain an equilibrium with its neighbours who possess more sophisticated weaponry. In reality however, defence against Pakistan and China is only one of the motives behind India's gigantic arms build-up programme.

The impact of 1971 war on the region's military balance was profound. The quest for military parity with India was, from partition days, the main objective of Pakistan foreign policy. The aftermath of the war revealed rather distinctly that Pakistan lost the race. Although a real parity in any case was unattainable it was believed upto 1965 in Pakistan's responsible quarters that it enjoyed a kind of qualitative superiority over India. After 1971 even such belief was dashed and there were indications that Pakistanis at long last reconciled to the reality of Indian power. The question of parity with India,

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13. See, *SIPRI Yearbook 1988: World Armaments and Disarmaments*. (Oxford University Press, 1988), Tables 6A. 2, 6A. 3 and 7.2, pp. 163-164, 168-169 and 178 respectively.

they thought, was never a practical proposition and they must get rid of the fiction of equality of status with India<sup>14</sup>. Such sentiments, however, did not last long. Soon Pakistan resumed its military competition to catch up India which was however as elusive as ever. By this time in truncated Pakistan there was clear realization that given her asymmetry vis-a-vis India in size and resource as well as inadequacy of an industrial infrastructure she could seldom match Indian military – particularly its conventional capability. If only the quality was the deciding factor by mid-seventies the Indian military was much more confident, matured and professional. Although fresh rearmament programme was undertaken and resumption of US military aid was sought, Pakistan was fully aware that the gap created in military balance after 1971 was to be bridged. But she has one option absolutely open. If a military balance was difficult proposition Pakistan could always redress the imbalances through a balance of terror. Thus the nuclear option of Pakistan was not a question entirely isolated from the arms race aimed at achieving her security. India exploded her nuclear device in 1975. But it did not appear that India's explosion had pushed Pakistan into a major nuclear programme. Rather her instinct for survival pushed her to this option to ensure security through dangerous means.

The arms race leading upto the nuclear proliferation in the region had highly militarized South Asian politics. At least Pakistan's domestic politics was strongly influenced by large scale arm infusion and consequent expansion of the military establishment having its repercussions felt in neighbouring countries. In 1965, "calculation and temptation for intervening in the widespread political unrest and agitation in Indian part of Kashmir were great for Ayub and his advisers"<sup>15</sup>

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14. Mohammad Ayoob, *India, Pakistan and Bangladesh*, (New Delhi, 1975, p. 38.

15. G.W. Choudhuri, *The Last Days of United Pakistan*, (London, 1974) p. 20.

The decision to go on confrontation with India in 1965 was substantially conditioned by Pakistani complacency of its qualitative superiority resulting from her huge acquisition of armament from USA till 1965. The political dissension at home often coupled with massive arms infusion led Pakistan to risk such adventure. Even in 1971 a militarised politics in Pakistan led it to disastrous course of action i.e., attempting military solution of a political problem.

In today's India which has travelled a long way from non-violent image of fifties to become a rising military power of the world her policies are greatly influence by growing chauvinism. It is evident from her military adventure in Sri Lanka where she committed the same mistake as the Sri Lankans did, i.e., imposing military solution to the country's ethnic problem which was essentially political. The temptation to assert her military role is also evident from her rescue operation in Maldives. Even in domestic context a tendency to resort to a military course is clearly evident. The operation 'Blue Star' portends a dangerous trend in democratic India.

#### *Impingement of International Politics*

In fifties the external linkages in this region reflected a pattern that was more of a South Asian version of central balance with Pakistan tied up with the US and India leaning towards Soviet Union. With the shifting demands of their own strategic and political necessities the international alignments of the major powers kept changing. Such changes also impinged on their relationship pattern with South Asian countries.

The first such changes occurred with the rifts between China and Soviet Union - two major external actors immersed in South Asian politics. The South Asian countries particularly India and Pakistan were totally drawn into the rift with the former siding with Soviet Union and the later China. It "also made the alliance between the Soviets and India and axis between Pakistan and China into

parametric givers in South Asian politics.”<sup>16</sup> In the meantime East-West development of detente had started to influence the US policy of containing international communism. Now onwards containment was directed only against China and thus was formed the US-Soviet collusion in South Asia, with its far reaching consequence on the region's security landscape. In fact it was the beginning of Indian military's modernisation with both US and Soviet arms supply.

US-Soviet collusion however had one moderating effect on the region's security i.e., the US supported Soviet mediation in 1965 Indo-Pakistan conflicts. At the global level Sino-US rapprochement through Pakistan mediation brought in two rival power axes in South Asia i.e., Sino-US-Pakistan collusion vis-a-vis Indo-Soviet friendship to play their respective roles during the crucial period of 1971 crisis.

#### *Indian Ocean : An extended Area of Conflict*

The British decision in 1968 to withdraw from East of Suez brought some dangerous implications for Indian Ocean area and added a new dimension to South Asia's security. The newly created vacuum in Indian Ocean, controlled by the British for over a century was promptly filled by others. Both the US and Soviet Union moved in “to secure their vital interests” in the region and continued to increase their naval strength in the Indian Ocean. There could be a set of reasons for their entry into Indian Ocean but the evidences made it clear that this was also a part of the “ongoing competition between the superpowers for political influence and economic gain.”<sup>17</sup> As the US began to develop Diego Garcia as a naval base and communication facility, Soviet naval ships freely cruised across the Ocean. Concerned by such develop-

16. Shelton U. Kodikara, “Role of Extra-Regional Powers and South Asian Security,” *op. cit.*, p. 46.

17. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Conflict and Cooperation in the Indian Ocean : Pakistan's Interests and Choices*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No. 23 Heritage publishers, 1981), p. 2.

ments the littorals spearheaded by Sri Lanka initiated the proposal of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace calling for the elimination of big power rivalry in Indian Ocean and the elimination of bases established in the context of that rivalry. However, the UNGA injunction that a conference on the Indian Ocean be held in Sri Lanka in 1981 to implement the declaration of zone of peace did not materialise mainly because of raging regional conflicts among the littorals themselves particularly in South Asia and Persian Gulf and a widely divergent interpretation of peace zone concept. No less responsible was also the global power struggle of the superpowers themselves and their involvement in the regional conflicts. "A few states in the region, each for its reasons wanted to see the superpowers doing their balancing tricks in the Ocean".<sup>18</sup>

The strategic consensus which had emerged in the politics of South Asia between US, China and Pakistan began to impinge itself into the politics of Indian Ocean itself. In Indian Ocean context such consensus meant backing up of continued US naval presence in the Ocean. On the other hand Indian resistance not only to US naval presence but the whole issue of superpower naval rivalry is understandable in the context of India's own ambition of becoming the dominant naval power of Indian Ocean. Thus, in the recent developments in the Ocean the conflicts in South Asia have indeed become enmeshed with superpower rivalry in Indian Ocean.

### **Security Inputs—A Continued Debate**

There are debates as to the factors providing input to the region's security situation. The extra-regional linkage is considered one such important factor. What is however ironic is that we often attribute undue weightage to it. There is tendency to highlight its dark consequences while external linkage has, at times, made positive contribution to region's security through moderation, mediation

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18. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

and strategic equilibrium. Such linkage is also a national imperative for a country in any region to enhance its international standing. A countervailing strategy for a nation's own survival is a recognised practice in the diplomatic history of the world. Moreover, the external linkage is not necessarily and always one with security orientation. They can be forged to maximize international contacts to promote a country's political and diplomatic interests. The linkages are built-up also to expand arena of economic as well as commercial inter-dependence. They are often the product of the imperatives of global politics and the changing dynamics of international relations even if a nation does not intend for one.

Ever since the close of the great wars the world has further shrunken in term of communication, transportation and development of technology. It is difficult for a country or a region to be insulated from what happens around it. "There is hardly any geopolitical region on the globe which is outside the great contest of the titans. Each of the four continents now has hot spots of conflict with which the superpowers are directly or indirectly involved. We live in a very divided one world washed by very divided one world Ocean."<sup>19</sup> So the regions which are at best good enough for their geopolitical identity have come to be overlapped with each other. In a world of unavoidable interdependence the linkage either internal or external is indeed a virtue.

External linkage and its security implications have been viewed from different angle in our region. The Indian security community has been unduly sensitive to and unusually articulate in condemning external linkage. The viewpoints held by rest of the South Asian countries are entirely different. The Indian perspective obviously grows out of her desire to play a pivotal role consistent with its acknowledged power potential in the region. In pursuing her 'hands

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19. See, Comments by Bhabani Sen Gupta on : Shelton U. Kodikara, "Role of Extra-Regional Powers and South Asian Security," in Sridhar K. Khatri (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 59.

off' external policy as it relates to the region she sees any external presence—even non-military as a kind of encroachment upon her "natural sphere of influence" Her pet theme of keeping the region free from foreign military bases, minimizing extra-regional powers' influence and demilitarization of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace are all directed towards the same goal—the realization of her hegemonic ambition in the region. Extremely conscious of her power potentials she, however, suffers from self-contradiction. It is a paradox that India with her fourth largest military, spots insecurity everywhere—whether it is Sri Lanka's warm gesture to Seventh fleet on a friendly visit or Nepal's deal purchasing odd small arms from China. That precisely spells out India's sensitivities to her own vulnerabilities and makes Delhi feel that the country has become a 'target of destabilisation of external powers'<sup>20</sup>. India over years has developed a 'foreign hand' phobia in every problem and problems are indeed enormous in India in terms of national integration, socio-economic development and abysmal poverty in parts of the republic.

Indian profession of 'no-linkage' with foreign powers suffers from queer dichotomy. While opposing other nation's option of cultivating such linkage India herself utilizes the option in freely choosing its own strategic partnership with Soviet Union. No country in the region today "even Pakistan does ... maintain such a closer bond with any extra-regional power as has India with the Soviet Union."<sup>21</sup> In India's defence build-up even the contribution of Western powers is no less significant. The policy of convenience on the part of India in making no discrimination in her acquisition of military hardware or economic assistance from any source either East or West can be easily understood however coated they may be in philosophic rhetorics.

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20. See, Comments by Dhruva Kumar on : Shelton U. Kodikara, "Role of Extra-Regional Powers and South Asian Security." in Sridhar K. Khatri (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.75.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

The other viewpoint on external linkages are shared by most of the other countries in the region. The viewpoint grows out of their basic security urge. India, right from the beginning, is keen in managing the security affairs of the smaller countries in the region and to that end she propounded security doctrine based on the strategic unity of the region from time to time. All such doctrines aimed at treating the smaller countries lying within her security orbit and implied that these countries must subserve Indian interest, particularly in security and foreign policy matters. The difficulties arise when the smaller countries refuse to be trapped by Indian security doctrine which is seen by them more as an encroachment on their own sovereign right. A relatively big neighbour, Pakistan took a defiant posture right from the beginning while other smaller countries articulated from time to time in exercising greater balance in their policies. And both evolved a counter strategy which did necessitate linkage with countries outside the region. They found particularly China's position much suitable with regard to their strategy and China provided that much-needed counter-balance in the region. Today China's position in South Asia has become, a crucial factor in the calculation of smaller countries' security and their conflict management. China has a reliable conduit for the arms transfers to countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan.<sup>22</sup> This suggests of China's continued desire to maintain precarious balance of power. In today's South Asia when the intra-state relations are, notwithstanding the functioning of the SAARC, far from desired, the presence of extra-regional powers providing countervailing strategy cannot so easily be done away with.

Security is a universal urge. All living being tends to be secured. So do the nation states. National security is a matter of a country's own perception. No alien perception can be imposed on a country. Given this context the South Asian countries themselves will individually determine their security strategy. If that prompts them

22. *Ibid.*, p. 77.



for a linkage outside the region they will do it out of sheer instinct for survival—more so when they perceive insecurity from within the region. The intriguing internal dimension of the region's security has been seldom debated by our security community who remained more preoccupied with insecurities emanating from external sources—either regional or extra-regional. It has often been over-looked that even when extra-regional inputs penetrated South Asian sub-system it had had more regional than global content. Even in case of external penetration during Afghan crisis the fall-out was essentially regional. In any case the security input provided by external powers is little more than a fraction considering the region's enormous internal insecurities—both at intra and inter state levels. Moreover, the insecurities that find their root in inherited prejudices, ethno-religious divide or socio-economic under-development will continue to grow and exert their overwhelming weight to overall security situation of the region whether there is a penetration of external force or not. Prof McHenry of Georgetown University aptly illustrates the point when he contends: "Problems between India and Pakistan for instance would continue in varying scale even if the United States or Soviet Union did not exist."

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23. Donald McHenry, a former US Permanent Representative to the UN and currently a Research Professor of Georgetown University made the observation while speaking on "Changing US-Soviet Relations and Implications for Regional Conflicts" at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies. See, *The Bangladesh Observer*, March 2, 1989.