

CHAPTER VI

Indo-Pak Relations — Its impact on the SAARC

No nation in the present world can live in total isolation. In pursuit of one's own national interest, independence, survival and development, an interaction takes place among and between nations which marks the characteristic of the present international system and other subordinate state systems. The international system is dominated by the super power whose major aim is to increase their sphere of influence in all parts of the globe. The subordinate state systems such as South Asia, South East Asia, Middle East, Africa and Latin America are rife with regional conflicts, and wars largely rooted in their historical territorial and psychological claims. Though both the international system and subordinate systems are affected by each other, the former basically sets broad limits, context, and direction of regional conflicts in the subordinate state systems.¹

South Asia, where lives a large number of the human race, is passing through a difficult situation. Conflicts between the countries of the region are assuming new and complex forms. External forces are also impinging upon the region in ever more powerful ways. Interactions between the two trends are making each more pretentious.

South Asia, over the years, has become a theatre of diverse kinds of conflicts. There are on going ethnic, regional, ecological, linguistic and border related tensions within the states as well as between the state in South Asia. The nature of conflicts has a wide range starting from ethnic conflicts within states to inter-state disputes over lack of demarcation of mutually acceptable frontiers between states, viz. India - Pakistan, India - Bangladesh. These wide ranging conflicts in turn have acquired new dimensions in the context of globalisation especially in certain issues such as cross border terrorism, flow of arms/ drugs that have arrested international attention. Similarly, the flow of refugees across borders due to the inability of a concerned state to protect the rights of its ethnic minorities is also arresting international attention. The flow of Tamils of Sri Lanka in to Tamil Nadu, Chakmas of the Chittagong Hills Tracts of Bangladesh to the North East Indian state of Tripura,

Nepali, Bhojpuri from Bhutan into Nepal and India are cases in point. The magnitude, depth and dimensions of conflicts in South Asia have had an adverse impact on the quality of governance, development and inter-state ties in the region. India, a combination of factors such as historical circumstances that drew the boundaries of these states under colonialism, geo-strategic aspirations of the post colonial states to exercise control over vital strategic regions, an inherent urge of the marginalized social groups to fight for self determination and struggles to capture scarce resources towards developmental purposes among the rival states have cumulatively contributed to the complexities of conflicts on South Asia and hamper the smooth operation of SAARC.

The region is at a loss to understand and adjust with the varied and complex implication of the end of the cold war. The one superpower situation on the one hand and the growing economic fortification on the other are shrinking the prospects of resilience and manoeuvrability available to the South Asian countries earlier. It is indeed unfortunate that even under such pressures and uncertainties, the countries of the region have not been able to put their act together and advance regional understanding and cooperation. Perhaps, the respective internal chaos and disintegration is not allowing them to think boldly and constructively, perhaps the countries and the region lack visionaries and statesman; perhaps, the politicians in command of the respective state structures are preoccupied with the avenues of cooperation and short term gains denied to them by the mighty and powerful at the global level.

On the other hand, India, wedded to western liberal institutions, though with minor adjustments, has not been able to establish its relative advantages in meeting the people's requirements. The economic conditions of the two most populous nations thus remaining utterly unsatisfactory, and that in contrast with the spectacular economic performance of some of their small Asian neighbours with meager natural endowments, both are seeking fresh remedies. Besides, the common ailments like covetousness and corruption even among the top echelon, gross inefficiency and irresponsiveness of the officialdom, increasingly poorer performance of all state institutions, with the resultant loss of credibility by the leadership and the erosion of

people's faith in a better future, raise pertinent questions about the suitability of either set up.

Any study of peace and stability in South Asia has to take into account the behaviour of India or what others perceive the behaviour of India. The neighbours very much feel the self-awareness of India's pre-eminence and India's quest to assert itself in the affairs of the region. Every Indian neighbour, except perhaps Bhutan and Maldives, is involved, at least, in one dispute with India like sharing of river waters, tension relating to the border, ethnic-religious conflicts, territorial dispute, nuclear policy or the desire to get declared as a champion of peace, involvement in one another's internal problems, to mention a few. Each state in South Asia perceives a threat to its territorial integrity from their neighbour in the region, India in particular. The fear of Indian dominance keeps them away from cultivating closer bonds based on common historical and cultural homogeneity. Smaller South Asian states felt that they are confronted with India which is imperial in outlook and difficult to persuade.² It is true that India has problems with all its neighbours in South Asia but that is because India alone shares land or maritime borders with other states in the sub-continent. The core geographic location and ethnic religious, pluralism³ made India the common factor in any study of inter-state relations in South Asia. The dispute that marred India's relationship with Pakistan is different from its difficulties with Nepal or Bangladesh or Sri Lanka. This fact needs to be recognized while making analyses of the nature, trends and shifts in bilateral relations in South Asia. What should be borne in mind in this context is that the success or failure of regional co-operation in the region depends on the positive or negative nature of India's bilateral interaction with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. There exists no major difficulties in India's bilateral relations with Bhutan and Maldives. All of the South Asian states except Pakistan have already been brought within the matrix of an Indian security system which is regional rather than national in scope. In some cases, this is through formal agreements, in others through the unilateral extension of the Indian system to neighbouring states⁴. Obviously only Pakistan posed a challenge to the Indian Doctrine of regional security. Thus the major hurdle to this united but rather unique form of regional security has been Indo - Pak relation.

India and Pakistan are the traditional rivals in the region. So the basic question of regional co-operation is the question of Indo-Pak understanding. The relations between India and Pakistan are the keystone for South Asian co-operation of any kind⁵ and the relations between those two countries suffer from the crucial dichotomy of unmitigated personal warmth and undivided national suspicion and animosity.⁶ A fundamental and long-term improvement in relations between these two countries needs to be achieved for the viability of regional co-operation in South Asia. What is required is a reconciliation of the basic contradictions with regard to political values, political frameworks, international perceptions and attitude.⁷

The Indo-Pakistan strife over Kashmir continues to get remarkably worsened and certainly not significantly better. Owing to the sensitivity of the issue, there is a great deal of suspicion between the two largest countries in South Asia. In the more recent past, the delay in arriving at an agreement on South Asia preferential trading arrangement which has now been ratified was mainly due to Pakistan's reluctance to place faith in a matter where India was involved. Worse still, this mistrust between two of the leading countries within South Asia has even provoked the eruption of conflict and confrontation. To get over this chequered and embittered tangle between India and Pakistan is no easy task.

While on the post-War European scene there had loomed a common threat and a common hostile ideology, the countries in South Asia have faced no such common antagonistic or threat perception. Similarly, unlike South East Asia, South Asia did not entertain fears from countries such as China or Japan or the ideology of Communism, which could have brought them together like the ASEAN countries.⁸ In South Asia, not only was such a common threatening ideological force perceived, India herself, which is geographically at the core of South Asia, is looked upon with fear and suspicion by the smaller countries within the region. There is a lurking fear that India nurses hegemonic ambitions and could subsume the smaller neighbours. This had militated against smoother cooperation in South Asia.⁹

Any discussion of how much SAARC has achieved since its inception is immaterial from the perspective. What is important in retrospect, however, is whether SAARC has taken any firm steps to fulfill the objectives proclaimed in the charter or it not then whether it is in the process of doing so.

On the other hand, the use of the goal achievement criteria in assessing the performance of SAARC is useful in separating the rhetoric from the reality of progress made through co-operation. As in all organizations, SAARC functions through objectives which are both explicit and tacit in character. According to the charter, the organization's scope of activity is clearly centred around the goals at accelerating economic growth and promoting social and cultural development through collaboration in various fields of activities. But, in working out the modus operandi of the organization, political leaders have accepted that in as much as politics plays a crucial role in shaping the future growth of the SAARC, the process of cooperation must also provide a dividend which must result in ameliorating the political condition within the region. Even though the social and cultural dimensions have a stronger base for cooperating in the region due to historical factors it is the progress in the political and economic arena which will in fact determine the overall efficacy of the organization.

To state in mutedly, the achievements of SAARC in the political realm have been very limited, the original boldness with which political leaders initiated the process of cooperation a decade ago has yet to be matched by programmes which can draw the regional body close to its ostensible objectives. In working out the modalities of cooperation, SAARC has only succeeded in establishing an acceptable political understanding for proceeding with the debate for cooperation, but has not been able to agree on political condition which would be acceptable to all the parties for implementing the core economic objectives which are inherent in the general scheme of regionalism. As a result, organizational activities to date have been caught in the vortex of a 'spill-around' process where the scope of regional stakes have increased significantly, by without increasing the level of regional decision making or moving beyond the state, encapsulating strategy of what might be conservatively termed as veiling only with non-contentious issues.¹⁰

The achievement of SAARC is not possible as ever since both the countries felt threatened by each other. The story of Indo-Pak relations has been mainly a story of conflict. It was expected that the Simla pact of July 1, 1972 would usher in a new era in the Indo-Pak relations. Although Simla pact did not include any formal

undertaking for war avoidance, it, however, pledged to normalize relations and settle disputes peacefully.

The Simla Pact remained a non-starter. Even today, after 30 years of this agreement, there is no sign of rapprochement. Threat of war looms large and even there is irresponsible talk of the use of nuclear weapons. Pakistan has, for the last few years unleashed low-cost proxy war against India by training and financing terrorist outfits to kill innocent people, create terror and destroy properties in Kashmir, Punjab and some other parts of India. Such activities create animosity and not friendly relations. In fact, Pakistan is waging war against India in all but name.

India's desire to live in peace with Pakistan has not been reciprocated, India's the then Prime Minister, I. K. Gujral and Nawaz Sharif, the then Prime Minister of Pakistan made sincere efforts to come to some settlement but Pakistan's governmental machinery has aborted these attempts. Thus the future of South Asia seemed to rest entirely on India and Pakistan.

All South Asian countries have to play their due role in determining whether the region will remain locked in conflictual relations or progress towards regional co-operation. For more than fifty years now, the still volatile Indo-Pakistani antagonism is the major obstacle. Yet, in view of India's pre-eminent position in the region, its attitude is the most important determinant of South Asia's future.

Thus, although nature has created the Indian sub-continent as a single strategic whole, and although relevant parts of the subcontinent have been a single strategic area for long periods in the past, during the past four decades inter-country relations throughout South Asia have been poised by conflicting perceptions of thereat, which have been of four main types. First, one South Asian country feels threatened by another directly, and believes itself to be the victim of actual or potential aggression by the other. In the second type a South Asian country under threat from a country outside South Asia suspects the latter has an accomplice or a proxy within South Asia. The third type is the intrusion of super power rivalries into South Asia in forms which make, or seem to make one South Asian Country an enemy of another. The most pernicious type is the fourth in which two or more of the first three types interact with each other and reinforce all of them.

The clearer and the most durable example of the first type is the relation between India and some of its neighbours. If for no other reason— though there are other too—the disparity between the size of India and the size of most of its neighbours, the latter harbour a perception that they feel threatened by India. Pakistan has felt so ever since East Pakistan broke away, with India's help, to form Bangladesh. But India itself has not been entirely free of it. Within weeks of becoming independent, India came under attack from Pakistan over Kashmir. India believes that it was Pakistan again which was the aggressor in the 1965 war between the two countries, and many Pakistanis agree with that.¹⁰

Pakistan is also an example of the second type of that perception. It feels threatened by the Soviet Union. But it also suspects that India might act on behalf of the Soviet Union, and for the Soviet Union's reasons even if not for India's own. Sri Lanka also feels this fear to some extent. Both Pakistan and India are also examples of the third types. In the implacable confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, Pakistan is or is perceived to be on the side of the United States and India on the side of the Soviet Union. Through these actual or perceived roles of the two main South Asian countries and their mutual antagonisms, the global cold war between the two super powers extended down into South Asia. So did the Sino-Soviet cold war through India's connection with the Soviet Union and Pakistan with China.

These cold war extensions are examples of the fourth and worst type. Worst because they form a vicious cycle. In fact two vicious cycles, cause and consequence aggravating each other within each cycle and between them. Pakistan feels threatened by India and for the reason, though not only for that reason, turns to an alliance with the United States. India sees a threat in the alliance more than it sees one in Pakistan alone, and throws itself open the special relationships which the Soviet Union has developed with it. That aggravates Pakistan's insecurity and it seeks an even deeper American embrace and the cycle repeats itself. So does the other cycle. As relations between the United States and the Soviet Union become more bitter, so do the relations between India and Pakistan and as these latter relations deteriorate each of these two countries allows itself more willingly to get drawn more tightly into the ever rising bitterness of the global cold war.¹¹

So long as this goes on, South Asia can never resume being a single strategic whole, and unless it does, South Asian regional co-operation will remain superficial. Neither India nor Pakistan will allow economic cooperation between them to grow beyond a point as long as they are unsure of continued peace between themselves, and such is the pre-eminence of these two countries of the region that will also not go very far unless it goes far enough between India and Pakistan.¹² Therefore if South Asian regional cooperation is to grow, the barriers of real or perceived hostility which divide the region up will have to come down.

The most obvious thing in this respect is that their own relations with each other are more within the jurisdiction and compliance of the South Asian countries themselves than are the actions of the global actors and their impact upon this region. The second and more important reason is that it is the dissensions between the South Asian Countries themselves which creates opportunities for the super power conflicts to intrude into this region. These dissensions provide not only opportunities for the intrusions, they are the basic cause, and this is the third and most important reason.¹³

The cleavage between India and Pakistan is the best examples of one which has continued to exist as a creature of the mind long after it vanished as a real issue. It is also the best example of the use made by extra regional powers of the gateway given by the mistrust between India and Pakistan. From the moment they became independent, India and Pakistan became embroiled in a war over Kashmir. Whether the causes of the war were created by the two countries themselves or a trap set for both by someone else has been a subject of various interpretations. But no one doubts that if they had mutually decided to settle the dispute, no one could have prevented them from doing so, and that if they had settled it the subsequent course of relation between them could have been very different.

Since they chose, not to settle it and the war dragged in, and also aggravated all the other issues outstanding between them as a result of the partition of India in 1947, the whole complex of their domestic and external policies acquired a certain predominant slant which particularly influenced their policies, but the whole way of their looking at things and their relations with the major external powers. As this slant persisted it caused two things to happen. It created an opening for external powers

and their interests to intrude into South Asia and having gained entry to strengthen the slant since it suited them to strengthen it.

Secondly, it inhibited the autonomy of action of both the countries, though not perhaps to same extent in the two countries. Initially India and Pakistan might have been guided by their own reasons in adopting the kind of relations they accepted with the major powers but certain compulsions gradually grew out of that which gave the major powers and added capacity to manipulate events in South Asia and diminish the autonomy of action of South Asian actors.

So, the dissensions between India and Pakistan first became an opportunity for external intervention, and then gave the interveners opportunity to expand their intervention, and then become a cause of further intervention. The South Asian countries concerned became less and less able to check this process, because within some of these countries strong interest arose which acquired a stake in the continuation of intervention. These interests often did not represent a majority opinion within their country but were able to ensure continuation of the intervention despite the heavy price the country concerned had to pay for it.¹⁴

Similar questions, some economic, some related to security perception, are being raised in other South Asian countries just as there is renewed examination of the political and military consequences which India faces as a result of its relationship of mistrust with its neighbours. The central point about this widespread questioning is that whether mistrust of India by its neighbours and the reverse mistrust by India are founded on fact or fiction the fact is that they exist and are strong enough to persuade the whole South Asian region to go on suffering the political, economic and strategic distortions they have imposed upon the policies of all the countries of the region. Therefore, the fears must be accepted as real and tackled as such, both in their economic and political manifestations. Any proposal, such as India's that Pakistan should not allow US military bases on its soil, which seeks to reassure India against superpower military intrusions into South Asia, is inadequate if it does not simultaneously reassure India's neighbours against military, political or adverse economic intrusions by India. Similarly, any proposal, such as Pakistan's no war pact proposal to India, is inadequate if it does not also pressure India against extra regional intrusions which in the given context became a threat to India. Therefore, the

mistrust arising from the inadequacy syndrome must be comprehensively tackled because the mistrust itself is comprehensive; it affects all neighbours and all aspects of their relation with India and also SAARC rule security.

Asymmetry is not peculiar to the South Asian region. It exists globally. Though some 200 members states of the United Nations are politically sovereign equals, in all other respects they are unequal. In varying degrees, asymmetry is found among the countries in various regions and sub-regions resulting in various kinds of arguments for mutual accommodation and understanding. The most striking positive political phenomenon in the contemporary world is, indeed, the emergence of grouping of nations formed with a view to promoting national interests through regional and sub-regional cooperation. A new dimension has thus been added to another contemporary world trend namely the growing interdependence of the nation states through mutually beneficial cooperation. Among the countries of South Asia asymmetry is placed in sharp relief as a major factor in shaping their security perceptions for a number of reasons. Important among them are : The vast superiority of India in economic and military strength and the misgivings in the minds of her neighbours as to how India would use this enormous strength in her relations with the neighbours. Unresolved bilateral problems have fuelled these misgivings. The continuing trend of widening disparity in economic and military respects between India and her neighbours excepting Pakistan has accentuated the fear complex among India's neighbours.

The slower pace of India's neighbours in developing sound political institution capable of countering and containing the turbulent centrifugal forces inherent in the state of underdevelopment.

Differences in ideology, political and social structure and regime perceptions of national interests, are also applicable, even to India, as observed in her changing foreign policy postures following regime changes and their bearing on relation with neighbours. An apt example is the Indo-Bangladesh agreement on sharing of the waters of the Ganges which underwent many changes which are perceived by Bangladesh to be regimes changes in India, thus hindering growth of stable bilateral relations.

Peculiar manifestations of the "big-small neighbours" complex is also a point in this connection in the form of a fear psychoses for both the big and small neighbours. The symmetry in economic development seems to take on a different complexion when viewed in the regional perspective.

Thus in these cases the mistrust, asymmetry hamper progress of the SAARC and it is no wrong to say that Indo-Pak antagonism is the major obstacle for the successful operation of the SAARC.

Until the mid 1980s, South Asia was notoriously the largest section of the world's population which had been unwilling or unable to produce a regional organisation. This was mainly because of prevailing Indo Pakistan mutual suspicions or more generally, because of Indian beliefs that such an organisation would be a device for concerting anti-Indian coalitions or, by contrast, the fear held by all the neighbours of India that it could become an instrument for promoting India's regional hegemony.

Moreover, conflict and cooperation are also the outcome of the geo-political realities of the region. One of the most important geo-political realities of the region is, of course, India's population resources, economic and military power, as compared to those of its South Asian neighbours. Equally important is the centrality of India's position in South Asia. While most of the other South Asian countries are not associated with each other through common borders, almost all of them have common borders with India, either by land or sea.

Their international relation in South Asia comprises mainly relations with India. The constant presence of a number of grievances against India in most of the South Asian countries is largely the result of the situation. So is their apprehension that India harbours hegemonistic designs in the region. When India pleads for collective self-reliance and warns against allowing external powers any foothold in the region, as it often does, this regarded as a proof of such designs. Thus, while India would like all the South Asian countries to cooperate in the political field in order to prevent the region from being involved in the power politics of the major external powers, most of India's neighbours welcome the latter's involvement in South Asian affairs with a view to safeguarding their own autonomy vis-à-vis India. This keeps India also

wary of the designs of its neighbours, even the smallest of whom can pose a threat to its security, it prepared to allow itself to be used as a base for a great power hostile to India.

Apart from these geo-political realities, history has contributed in a good measure to the long prevailing atmosphere of disrupt in the South Asian region. This is particularly true of the relationship between India and Pakistan. The greatest obstacle to the rapid growth of Pakistan as a result of the then partition of India in 1947, after bitter and bloody struggle, in the atmosphere of mistrust which has cast a deep shadow of suspicion and distrust in the relationship between the two countries since their birth as two independent states.

The South Asian policies of the external powers, particularly the United States and China, further add to tensions in the region. Being unhappy with India's foreign policy based on its own independent view of world affairs and seeking to restrict the role of external powers in South Asia as far as possible they have consistently sought to limit India's role in South Asian by bolstering up the anti- There is, thus, no doubt that the existence of these differences between India and its neighbours creates serious hurdles in the path of the speedy growth of such cooperation.

India prefers a comprehensive peace, friendship, cooperation and treaty with Pakistan for providing a solid foundation to the future course of their relations. India wants treaty aimed at promoting beneficial bilateralism in all aspects of Indo-Pak relations. A mere no-war pact can be no remedy to the irritant that characterises Indo-Pak relations. India believes that a comprehensive Indo-Pak treaty alone can solve the real problems of their relations and usher the two countries into an era of peace, friendship, harmony, and cooperation. India views a treaty with Pakistan as a culmination of the process of normalisation, whereas Pakistan views the no-war pact as the first step which will pave the way for future normalisation in due course of time. As such, there exists a gap between the perceptions of the two countries.

So far as the irritants are concerned, India believes that some of the current Pakistani policies and moves constitute major hindrances in the way of full normalisation of relationship between the two countries.. These are : Pakistan's import of disproportionately large quantities of highly sophisticated and

technologically advanced offensive weapons. Secondly, Pakistan's nuclear programme which from all indications constitute the ability to enrich uranium, possessions of the nuclear trigger, open talk of Islamic bombs and assertion of Pakistan's right to manufacture nuclear weapons - all indicate that the Pakistan is following a weapon-oriented nuclear programme. Thirdly, Continued Pakistani support to anti-India elements, particularly to the extremists in Panjab, the North-East and Kashmir who continue to get help and training in Pakistan. Fourthly, Pakistan's unwillingness to open trade relation with India, as reflected in its decision to import Americans instead of Indian wheat. Fifth, Pakistan's attempts to forcibly occupy Siachen Glacier. Sixth, The continuance of anti-India propaganda by several Pakistani leaders and sections of the press. Seventh, Sino-Pak relations with their known anti-India character. Eighth, Pakistan's apprehension that Indian emphasis on bilateralism is aimed at imposing its hegemony on Pakistan. Ninth, differences over the provisions of the Indian draft of a peace-friendship cooperation treaty and the Pakistani draft of a no-war pact.

And finally, Pakistan's encouragement to anti-India activities in Kashmir and its continued desire to activate the Kashmir issue in all international forums.

All these irritants, believes India, are keeping the Sino-Pak dialogue over no-war pact peace treaty limited and unproductive. Pakistan on her parts regards India's unhelpful role in the Afghanistan crisis, growing strength of India's power, India's refusal to sign NPT and later, the CTBT, India's nuclear structural interferences in Pakistan etc. as the major hindrances in the way of full normalisation of their relations. The existence of mutual suspicions, fears and disagreements continue to keep the process of Indo-Pak normalisation slow and limited even during the era of their mutual relations in which the leaders of both the countries fully realized the need for full normalisation. Only by adopting a mere positive approach, by exposing their mutual anxieties and concerns and by adjusting there national perceptions and correlating them to the political and strategic imperatives of South Asia and the world at large, the two countries can overcome the existing era of continued suspicions and fears. what Mr. N. T. Kaul observed in his article, 'India in South Asia' (World Focus, Fourth Annual Number, November – December, 1983), while analysing the scope of Indo-Pak normalisation as a part of drive for peace and stability in South Asia, holds

true even today. To quote him, "Unless therefore, Pakistani rulers are willingly ready and sincere to enter into a long term agreement with Indian leaders to stop their subversive activities and encourage more peaceful and fruitful ventures there is little likelihood of any lasting peace and friendship between the two countries. At the same time, it is necessary that any suspicion in the minds of the Pakistani people about India's intentions and motives regarding Pakistan be removed. "It is for the purpose there is every need to maintain and develop further the present system of increased contacts between the two countries both at the formal governmental as well as non-governmental informal people's level".¹⁵

Strategic schism is an inexorable offshoot of this intricate and incongruous regional predicament. Asymmetry in security parameters of South Asian states and the differing perceptions of threat to systemic security, regimes security and territorial integrity constitute major obstacles for the growth of strategic harmony in the region. There is a fundamental dissonance between India and other South Asian states about the question of security : "while the former regards the entire region as forming its security parameter and wants latter to collaborate with it in keeping the external powers out of the regions political and military affairs, the latter welcomes the presence of the external powers because they see the principal threat to their security in India."¹⁶ Consequently, while the fear of the neighbours' 'ganging up' to enfeeble India's regional pre-eminence is an ever present phobia afflicting Indian diplomacy, a recurrent nightmare that frequently distorts Indian assessment envisions a South Asian neighbour becoming "a Trojan horse of an extra-regional power threatening India's strategic interests".¹⁷

Inevitably, despite frequent lip service to the common ideal of non-alignment, South Asian states have perceived widely divergent foreign policy. Major global powers who display a marked tendency to fish in troubled waters have also played a significant part in aggravating South Asian Cleavages. As a commentator observes : "Complicating further the evolution of strategic consensus in the region has been the pronounced propensity of the superpowers - the Soviet Union, the United States and China to evaluate South Asian regional groupings in the context of their global strategic moves".¹⁸ In particular, the two core countries of South Asia, India and Pakistan, have followed conflicting Diplomatic paths whereby the South Asian

strategic divide appears to be an extension of the global East-West bipolarity. Thus, dichotomous international linkages not only vitiate the political atmosphere in South Asia but also constitute a grave impediment for mutually beneficial and corporative coexistence.

Furthermore, a variety of longstanding bilateral disputes pollute the South Asian environment. At the root of the crisis gripping South Asia, is of course, the acute Indo Pakistan animus. The genesis of this antagonism can be traced to the traumatic partition which simmered the subcontinent, brought Pakistan into existence, and left a legacy of enduring bitterness. The almost intractable problem of Kashmir, the attendant issue of the Siachen Glacier, the sordid history of a number of wars and the horrors which inevitably accompany the same, mutual recriminations regarding ill-treatment of minorities and recurrent accusations about 'interference in internal affairs', a spiraling arms race typified by an incessant quest for nuclear capability - all these are merely outward manifestations of the ingrained attitude of mistrust and hostility which afflicts Indo-Pakistan relations. The basic reason for the estrangement between the two principal South Asian nations is quite obvious : While India has persisted with its 'big-brotherly' psyche displaying an apathetic attitude towards the fears and sensibilities of its sensitive sibling, Pakistan has remained inflexibly intransigent about acquiring a "parity relationship" with India in terms of Political Strategic status and military armed strength. Consequently, the desire to utilize SAARC as a vehicle for 'one-upmanship' is not only an irresistible temptation but also a major constraint for the credibility and effectiveness of the organization.

India - Pakistan conflictual situation provides the greatest challenge to the entire range of issues on the new world order agenda - the asymmetry of intention on the nuclear issue, the ferment bid by Islamabad to sponsor terrorism across international borders, its destabilization efforts in Punjab and Kashmir, shielding of human rights abuses under the guise of national sovereignty and the presence of deep rooted and ingrained hostility towards each other that has always kept tensions at high levels, and increased defence spending and the propensity to use force to settle disputes.

In fine, SAARC has been bogged down due to several reasons. These are, among others, the divergent perceptions of the two countries, demographic

configuration of the two countries that renders each the so-called legitimate right to intervene, and above all the question of identity. Needless to say, India has always been a dominant factor in South Asian politics. Regardless of the historical period, the geopolitical environment or the socio-economic conditions, the country always occupied the central stage in the area.

The disintegration of the center of power after World War II, and the final establishment of seven foreign states in South Asia (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives) did not diminish the importance of India. First of all, new and independent India dominated the whole area geographically. She is the only country that is either contiguous to, or has a large coastal line with all the other six states, while none of them have any common borders with each other. Her geographical centrality is accentuated all the more by the important fact that there is no other country, equally big in size and sufficiently close by, to counter the predominant Indian position.

The leverage, at least theoretically that India has over the other countries of the region is therefore, exceptionally powerful. Land locked countries like Nepal and Bhutan, for example, can hardly survive economically without India's cooperation. Most of what they produce is marketed in India, and most of what they consume comes from India, not to speak of the fact that nothing can ingress to or egress from there to other countries without India's approval. Bangladesh is heavily dependent for water on India's Gangetic plain and Pakistan's main source of water supply for the agriculturally rich Punjab emanates from rivers that originate in or pass through India. Though the insular character of the two island states (Sri Lanka and the Maldives) makes them less vulnerable to Indian pressures, their proximity at the vast Indian coastline and the strong ethnic Indian presence in the two areas, nonetheless, makes them heavily dependent on India.

The regional ramifications of gigantism are far reaching.¹⁹ The leverage that India has over her neighbours is considerable. In fact, this is more significant in international relations than in the domestic sector. On the positive side, this makes it possible for her to protect neighboring countries against external threats, to assist

them economically, and to permit them to benefit from the educational, medical and even employment facilities that exist in India. In fact some do.²⁰ On the negative side, Indian 'gigantism' has engendered considerable fear and mistrust among the neighboring countries which is inherent in the asymmetrical situation.

The third characteristic feature is the subcontinent's geographical unity and religio-cultural-ethnic diversity. Its unity stems from the fact that the subcontinent is 'indisputably a geographical unit' which is marked out by nature as a region by itself,²¹ and which has features that clearly separates it 'as a whole from the surrounding regions.'²² 'It is no exaggeration,' confirmed Sir Richard Starchy, 'to say that it is possible to go from the Bay of Bengal up to the Ganges through the Punjab and down the Indus again to the sea, over a distance of 8,000 miles and more, without finding a pebble, however small.'²³

Historical experience shows that friendly relations can be easily evolved between nations geographically separated by great distances. The reason is obvious : there is no quarrels over controversial borders, or distribution of river waters, or ethnic cross-border linkages, or other typical contentious issues between neighboring countries that overshadow their relationship. On the other hand, the likelihood of immediate neighbours falling out with each other is greater when their constant need is to reach a compromise on everyday problem or, in certain cases, to solve disputes inherited from the past is not matched by an adequate ability to negotiate peacefully and successfully.

In the world, there are certain things which can't be changed. Among them are some facts of geography like India's central position in South Asia, its having a land border with or direct access by sea to all the other countries of the region, which do not have such borders between themselves, and its vast site and resources. This situation can't be altered or remedied. All concerned must recognize these facts and adjust themselves to it – India as much as its neighbours. Each has to keep in mind the susceptibilities of the other, arising out of the facts of geography.

The South Asian political environment has been further vitiated by geo-political factors that have unleashed an arms build - up in India with aid from Soviet Russia and in Pakistan with aid from the United States. They have deepened the fear psychosis in mutual relations. Though till now the region as such has been spared direct super power intrusion, super power presence at times bordered on the region with the Russian presence in Afghanistan and the increasing presence of both USA and USSR in the Indian Ocean. Apparently the strategic interest of each super power is to see a balance of power in the region which at least would not be more favorable to its adversary.

History, asymmetry and geo-politics have combined to produce some awesome contradictions: As members of the UN and the non-aligned movement, the countries of the region are committed to goals and principles which are directly antithetical to the anachronistic security doctrines as a legacy of the colonial era which underlay the present bipolar power configuration with all its frightening implications.

One such is the continuing great power domination. A modern variant is the extension of the concept of the sphere of influence. Side by side with their own spheres of influence commanding strategic areas and materials, the super powers find it an expedient strategy to boost selected countries as "regional powers" under one name or other. India has the unique privilege of being treated as one of them by both super powers.²⁴ Though India has been prudent and cautious and has not claimed such a status for itself, the mini arms race between India and Pakistan, with its unclear undertone,²⁵ increasing expenditure on arms by both and allegations and counter allegations against each other, naturally have the effect of deepening the distrust, fear and suspicion that already vitiated the South Asian political environment and distorted inter - state relations.

As the foregoing analysis shows, the security perceptions of the countries in the region are currently focused almost entirely or preeminently on external threats as perceived by them. Threats to the national security of a developing country which are rooted in domestic causes, like the problems of national cohesion, poverty, disease, illiteracy, are not adequately reflected in their security and strategic concerns.

The harsh geo-political realities cannot but have their impact on the developing countries including countries in the South Asian region. In all likelihood each of them has tried to raise its defense capability as much as its resources permitted. To the extent the South Asian countries had to depend on external aid in building up such defense capability, this region became further polarized between the two power blocs. This particularly affected relations between India and Pakistan.

In sum, the geo-political environment beyond doubt favoured the existing bipolar power configuration in its various manifestations. It distorted the security perceptions of the developing countries. Combined with regional and domestic factors, it produced a security dilemma, clouding an objective perceptions of the paramount importance of the overall nation building process to the security interests of all the states in the region. It would be unrealistic to expect any easy or immediate change in this scenario.

Indeed, SAARC, embracing a quarter of the world's population is an important step in this direction and offers a unique opportunity for meaningful cooperation in nation building efforts and the creation of a climate of mutual confidence, trust and understanding essential for peace, stability and progress in the region.

The basic factor behind the slow growth of regional co-operation in South Asia is not economic, but political. As Jigme Wang Chuk, the king of Bhutan, observed at the first SARC summit (1985) : 'In the geopolitical realities of our region it would be unrealistic to ignore the primacy of the political factor, as in the final analysis, it will be the political environment of the region which will determine the shape and scope of regional cooperation in South Asia'.

As in the economic field, so in the political, the basic element is the centrality of India's position in the region and its vast size, population, resources and economic and military power as compared to those of its South Asian neighbors. This keeps almost all the South Asian neighbors of India apprehensive of the latter's supposedly hegemonistic designs in the region. India's plea for collective self-reliance in the region and warning against allowing external powers any foothold are interpreted by them as born out of such designs. This leads to a peculiar situation in the region. While India wants all the South Asian countries to cooperate in the political field in

order to safeguard the region's autonomy and security vis-à-vis major external powers, most of India's neighbors are constantly on the look out to forge political and other linkages with those very external powers in order to counter balance India and safeguard their own autonomy and security against possible encroachment by India. This makes India apprehensive about the designs of its neighbours though it has not much to fear from any one. But even the smallest neighbor, in league with a great power or as the latter's base, can seriously jeopardize India's security. This keeps India constantly on its toes and had in the past led to the forging of its special relationship with one of the then super powers. All these have created a situation which cannot be described as conducive to the growth of regional cooperation.

Political and security factors such as Pak entry into western sponsored military alliance system, Indo – Russian alignment, Indo – China and Pak-China relations have, to a large extent, influenced the foreign policy perceptions of the major states of South Asia and India – Pakistan relations in particular.

Diversity of opinion prevails from country to country in the region regarding the security issue. While India, the core state, is inclined to evolve a security framework in regional terms, the majority among the rest of the states tend to be guided more so by interregional rivalries and fear perceptions, leading to trans – regional linkages. Thus, Pakistan's security frame has been conditioned by its antagonism towards India and of late, by Afghan issue. Nepal and Bhutan have the problem of weak buffer states. Bangladesh is moved by powerful emotion of nationalism, independent identity, being almost surrounded by India. Sri Lanka is an Island Republic, whose orientations have been not only bound by its status as a south Asian state but also by the great power politics in the Indian Ocean.

Thus, while some states in the region have in the past pursued policies that have admitted various forms of foreign interests, India, in line with its policy of opposing foreign powers in the regional affairs and partly motivated by its close ties with Russia, has been opposing it. Nevertheless, it too had to conclude a friendship treaty with the erstwhile Soviet Union, which although not ostensibly a defence pact, had acted as one and was a source of weaponry supply to it. In later years, however India came closer to USA also. Thus, the situation changed to a great extent. Besides Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have also been displaying a pro-west

inclination, while Nepal has been showing desires to consolidate links with external power including China and United States. Maldives, the only South Asian state without any bilateral – regional differences, has close ties with certain extra regional powers including the United States.

Nevertheless, the states of the region have, on occasions also displayed some collective and cooperative orientations in their external relationships. For example, in 1950's, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka cooperated in promoting Colombo powers and later the Afro-Asian movement. Most of the states of South Asia are members of Non alignment Movement and subscribe to its objectives.

It follows, therefore, that the states in South Asia, despite some collective initiative have more or less exhibited asymmetrical and competitive attitudes towards each other. They have not been able to settle their territorial disputes, boundary disputes and disputes over sharing of river waters. They have failed to evolve a common regional policy in the United Nations regarding declaring South Asia as a Nuclear Weapon Free Zone or a common stand on the nonproliferation treaty. Instead, they have engaged in efforts to win supports for their goals from nations outside the region. Pakistan, for instance, has been canvassing for the support of West Asian countries in its dispute with India over Kashmir. The latter, no doubt, have been voicing sympathy for Pakistan's position, but have not attempted to intervene in any tangible way. Even on occasions, Pakistan has been raising questions of safety of minority rights in India in international forums like Organization of Islamic Countries(OIC). The two neighbours were unable to respond coherently to Afghan imbroglio or Iraq's aggression against Kuwait, the neighboring gulf region, nor on multilateral intervention in theory but American intervention in practice. Likewise, Sri Lanka has been trying to elicit support from the countries outside the region with respect to India's intervention in its internal affairs.²⁶

To avoid hypocrisy, the overriding role of power considerations, geo-strategic and economic constraints have to be underlined, as ideological aspects are to be thought only of secondary importance. This can be illustrated by the strategic relations both Pakistan and India evolved during the heyday of the cold war. It was an authoritarian Pakistan, ruled by martial law for many years that took sides with the US, the leading democracy and advocate of human rights. On the other hand, India

despite its proud heritage of being the 'world's largest democracy, established strategic links with the former Soviet Union, the very antithesis to a free, democratic system.

Although only of minor relevance in formulating the basic concept of foreign policy, a common ideological outlook, however, can play an important role in implementing such a concept, or to put it in modern commercial language, in marketing one's own foreign interests. It is well – known that to a large degree diplomacy depends on symbolic gestures and rhetorical appeal to values shared by both countries or the respective group of countries. Here, the ideological component of a country's foreign policy profile can be highly instrumental. To give one recent example, the changed international system after the break up of the Soviet Union and the end of the bipolar bloc confrontation forced India to design a new 'marketing strategy'. Projecting itself as a champion of non – alignment had lost its rhetorical appeal. Rather, a new ideological coinage was needed. It was soon offered by a recently awakened obsession, to which some US and Western politicians feel victim, by having discovered a vaguely defined 'Islamist threat' as the new 'ideological evil'. Fear of a well – organized, internationally operating terrorism, an increasing number of terrorist attacks on highly symbolic targets like the World Trade Center in the US, seemed to give credence to such a perceived threat. Consequently, India projected itself as a free and democratic bastion against Islamist terrorism which had already spread to Indian soil in the Kashmir Valley with the help of Pakistani collaborators.

This leads to another assumption. One may deduce that for India, as well as for Pakistan, the hostile neighboring country is needed as a negative example to clearly define one's own ideological image. The adversary is projected as the opposite pole in order to impress common ideological bonds on like minded or would be strategic partners.²⁷

Most states have ideological underpinnings of some sort. Ideology, in a broad sense, is "a set of closely related beliefs or ideas, or even attitudes, characteristics of a group or community."²⁸ "It provides the believer with a picture of the world both as it should be....."²⁹ For states in South Asia, particularly for India and Pakistan, the ideological foundations of their respective states were inherent in the very nature of the movements that led to their emergence.

When India and Pakistan were partitioned on the basis of religious affiliation it was not the two nation theory as such which led to a basic ideological antagonism between the two countries. Rather it was the ideological antagonism framework within which India and Pakistan formulated their respective political, philosophical, constitutional and normative principles. The ideological antagonism turned into a conflictual bilateral factor because of its subsequent instrumentalisation by both countries in their domestic politics and foreign policies.

Another source of conflict in South Asia has been created by the antagonistic security strategies. This conflictual factor has also been of utmost importance.

One way of co-existing with a hostile neighbor is by turning one's back to each other and looking at the opposite direction. Strategic alignments, foreign relations and economic ties are being forged with neighboring countries bordering on the opposite boundaries. Overall geo-strategic orientation and foreign interaction are diverted from the inimical neighbor, while a heavily guarded border ensures a well-protected rear. A telling example of such a strategy was given by the two German states, shielded from each other by the proverbial 'Iron Curtain'.

Quite the reverse of this strategic approach, however, has been followed by India and Pakistan. What may be described as their basic security dilemma is the fact that their very security strategies are bound to make them clash with each other.

When the viceroy of British – India finally handed over power to the two new states, independent India joined the international community as the legal successor to British – India, while Pakistan, in terms of international law, was recognized 'only' as a new state. Perceiving itself as the right heir of a former colonial power, the Indian Union also took over the imperial security strategy. Accordingly, the entire subcontinent - from the Himalayan barrier in the north to the adjoining areas of the Indian Ocean in the South was considered by India as its legitimate security sphere. No outside power, no non regional international actor was to be allowed to interfere in Indian's sub - continental sphere of influence. It was only much later that this security was formally announced. This was done on the occasion of legitimizing

India's interference in Sri Lanka's Tamil conflict in 1983. First termed the 'Indira Doctrine', it has since been changed into the 'South Asian Doctrine'.

Pakistan, on the other hand, soon learned its lesson during the first Kashmir war. In spite of being strong in terms of population, territorial size and resources, it nevertheless could not match by itself India's over whelming might. Instead, it had to cope with the geopolitical disadvantage of living next door an over shadowing neighbour. The only way to compensate this imbalance was by aligning with outside powers. Analyzing its foreign policy and security strategy through out the decades, one encounters what might be called the 'strategic leitmotif' of Pakistan to establish friendly relations with strategic partners, be they the US or China or Saudi Arabia, in order to counter balance India's great military force, it's playing the role of a regional power and its aspirations to a higher international states. Pakistan's risky arms policy of secretly obtaining a nuclear deterrence has been inspired by the same leitmotif.

Consequently, instead of backing off from each other, both hostile neighbors went on a collision course. Where India considered non alignment to be the best guarantee of its national sovereignty , Pakistan opted for an alignment. This, in turn, was perceived by India as a fundamental threat to its security. Unable to overcome this basic security dilemna, both countries have ended up by stockpiling nuclear deterrents in their hidden basements, purchasing fighter aircraft and developing or acquiring ballistic missiles as carrier systems.

India and Pakistan have been locked in mutual hostility for long and arms race is endemic in their relationship. Conventional arms race was tolerated, even aided and abetted, by great powers including the United States. But their nuclear options and capabilities are seen from different perspectives. Indeed, the nuclear arms competition between the two countries not only heralded a more dangerous dimension to their enmity but also was detrimental to global arms control and disarmament regime. At least, this is the position that Washington takes in regards to its non-proliferation policy in South Asia. Security is the principal motivation of India's and Pakistan's nuclear options, like any other country possessing or aspiring to possess nuclear weapons. As for India, it was the war with China in 1962 that spurred the drive towards attaining nuclear capability.

India officially downplays the Pakistan factor in justifying its nuclear capability. As an Indian author has written, India's main strategic goal " is to build a small but credible nuclear arsenal; in India's nuclear planning, Pakistan occupies a subordinate position. However, it is the India Pakistan equation that comes to the forefront. The reason is that the thing does not belong to South Asia in a strict geographical sense and it is an acknowledged NWS in the existing non – proliferation regime. Moreover, New Delhi's threat perceptions from China lose some justification in view of the important advances in Sino – Indian relations in recent years. For New Delhi, however, these are no consolation. Rather, the fact that China is a legitimate NWS, and India is a potential nuclear force, reinforces Indian resolve to carry its nuclear option. Also, from this point of view, New Delhi thinks that the standard American practice of targeting India and Pakistan regarding proliferation is "misguided and even insulting".³⁰ In short, at present both India and Pakistan are nuclear – capable countries and it is feared that any future war between them may not remain confined to conventional fighting. This fear is reflected in the statement made by the then CIA Director, James Woolsey, while testifying before a Senate committee on 24 February 1993. He said: "The arms race between India and Pakistan poses perhaps the most probable prospect for future use of weapons of mass destruction including weapons."³¹

Moreover, in the Indian opinion South Asia is not a "distinct zone but a sub-region and an integral part of Asia and the Pacific."³² For all intents and purposes, therefore, the nuclear issue has become another boniest contention between the two South Asian adversaries. Both sides put forward differing perspectives of the problem as to befit their perceived security interests. So far as the NPT is concerned, Islamabad has frequently offered to sign it if India also did so. But since India has categorically refused to join the treaty, Pakistan's sincerity in making the offer largely motivated by American pressure, cannot be tested with any certainty. India has regarded the Pakistani offer as a bluff, 'but it is a bluff New Delhi has been unwilling to call.'³³

However, the regional situation in South Asian politics may undergo a change if India and Pakistan, both regarded by military analysis as threshold nuclear powers with the capability to develop nuclear weapons, actually acquire such a capability,

such an eventuality would, beyond doubt, raise the level of threat to the security of the region. But even that would not diminish the rationale for regional cooperation. Those countries would command more destructive power. But nuclear powers have not so far used nuclear weapons against one another for fear of mutual destruction. India and Pakistan cannot do so either without destroying themselves.

Hopefully, the perception of such a common danger may herald a radical change in the chemistry of their relations, making it more conducive to good neighbourly relations and friendly co-operation. Of course, the leaders of both countries deny having any intention of developing nuclear weapons and reiterate their commitment to the peaceful uses of the nuclear power. In any event, for industrially and technologically advanced India waiting to enter the "high-tech" age and for Pakistan, enjoying comparative prosperity with the highest per capita income in the region, military confrontation at this stage appears to be totally irrational.

Globally viewed, though the acquisition of nuclear capability by the so called threshold nuclear powers would mean a further proliferation of nuclear power, its impact on global security would be rather marginal. No greater threat could conceivably be posed to international security than what already exist in the huge and deadly nuclear arsenals in the possession of the two power blocs and the continuing vertical proliferation by them.³⁴ Admittedly, the emergence of new nuclear powers adds a new dimension to the stature of international security and power configuration. But their nuclear capability is unlikely materially to affect the present power configuration in the foreseeable future.

The relations between India and Pakistan are the keystone for South Asian cooperation of any kind and it is these two countries that have in fact turned to one or the other of the super powers for the supply of war material and modern weapons to meet their defence requirements and, to be more explicit, to meet the threats of war they seem to perceive from each other. Under the circumstances, it is difficult for other countries to take seriously their possessions against the intrusion of super power politics in the region. Neither the Simla Agreement of 1971 between India and Pakistan nor the subsequent discussions between them on their respective proposals

for a treaty of peace and friendship and a no war pact seems to have removed their mutual fear and suspicion.

India was the first to test a nuclear device at Pokharan in 1974. Pakistan has since pursued a determined policy of nuclear research aimed at devising its own process of enriching uranium in such a way that it could be used both for peaceful purposes and for making weapons. Pakistani leaders have made periodic claims of their nuclear status technology: "...We will go for nuclear status even if we have to eat grass."³⁵ Kofi Annan argued that the nuclear tests had highlighted the indo-Pak tensions and call Kashmir an international problem of grave concern.³⁶ Both India and Pakistan have refused to sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty or to accept international inspection of their activities related to research and development in the field of nuclear power.

The nuclear tests conducted by India (and Pakistan) in May 1998 raised troubling questions about the strategic future of South Asia. In India, the heated debate that followed tended to present nuclear weapons in extreme terms, either as source of instability and conflict or as harbingers of peace and stability in the region. The debate reflected, if anything, very little appreciation of the reality of nuclear weapons. (Basur 1998). This in itself seemed to bear out Stephan Cohen's wary comment in the mid nineties that "several half doctrines, more appropriately half backed doctrines, have circulated in the higher levels of the Pakistan military and among Indian civilian planners (Cohen, 1995 : 23). The National Security Council (NSC) which is entrusted with the task of strategic planning was created after the nuclear tests of 1998. Recent reports indicate that the NSC is still some distance away from formulating a coherent nuclear strategy owing to serious differences among strategic experts on its advisory board. For all these reasons, there is room for apprehension that India's nuclear future is an uncertain and even dangerous one.

Pakistan continues to fear that India had hegemonies intensions in South Asia, Particularly in relations with Pakistan (The Tribune, August 5, 1985). It views the fast growing power of India as a dangerous development for the security and integrity of Pakistan. India's secularism and its advocacy of people to people

relations is viewed as attempts at the cultural invasion of Pakistan. Further, Pakistan, particularly due to the Soviet intervention and continued presence in Afghanistan, viewed growing Indo-Soviet friendship and cooperation as a danger signal for its security. As a way out, Pakistan regards the acquisition of U.S. weapons, development of highly close ties with China and U.S.A., and the strengthening of Pakistan by developing its own nuclear technology including the ability to manufacture weapons, as the sine quo non of Pakistan's security and developmental needs. The continued desire to secure Kashmir further makes Pakistan adopt a very cautious approach towards relations with India. It, therefore, wants a sort of no war pact with India which will reduce the security threat to Pakistan from its eastern borders but which will not in any way check its drive to strengthen its military might and to acquire full nuclear technology. Pakistan wishes to have perceptibly reduced level of hostility with India but would like to be left alone to pursue its options of defence and economic linkages away from it. While Pakistan is keen on concluding a simple agreement to exchange guarantees on non-use of force, it wants to leave aside the basic question of how the two countries stand in relation to each other in the context of the world and the security environment of the sub-continent.

In an interview to "The Muslim" – a Pakistan daily, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi gave a categorical assurance to Pakistan that India had no designs against any of its neighbours, especially Pakistan. He however, called upon Pakistan to stop acquiring highly sophisticated offensive weapons and respond positively to India's fresh initiatives to establish confidence and trust between the two countries. The quantum jump in the level of arms technology in the regions, resulting from Pakistan's present policy of importing U.S. weapon can only work to the detriment of the people. Hoping that a more positive response would be forthcoming from Pakistan, the Prime Minister advocated the need for bringing about a sort of de-escalation, step-by-step approach for normalization. This, he said, was necessary for making successful the forthcoming ministerial level Indo-Pak joint commission talks on the issue of no-war pact / treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation. He cautioned against a nuclear arms race in the Indian sub – continent, saying that it would only subject both the people to crust fate on earth. The rivalry between India

and Pakistan in developing nuclear power has thus added a newer dimension to the problem of security in the South Asian region.

Ethnic movements have challenged the constitutional legitimacy of virtually all the states in South Asia.³⁷ Ethno-nationalist movements have not only created serious security problems but have very often spilled over into bordering states thereby creating major inter-state conflicts, although, such conflicts have not always been violent. Ethnic movements have however, occasioned the use of arms between conflicting nation – states in South Asia, or have threatened to give rise to violent conflict between them. India and Pakistan fought two wars over Kashmir. India and Pakistan went to battle over the liberation of Bangladesh, and the war came after a bloody civil war that resulted from political repressions of Bengali ethno nationalism by the west Pakistani political elite.

The claims by the Pakistani establishment of clear evidence of collusion between various anti state ethnic movements in Pakistan and the Indian state cannot be explained by commonality of ethnicities or group solidarity across borders. Such cases illustrate a fundamental point: Nation State often develop independent stakes in ethnic conflicts and inter state-conflicts stemming from secessionist or separatist ethno nationalism need not necessarily result from ethnic or group solidarity across territorial boundaries of nation-state. The vertical dimension of ethnic competition or conflicts that is virtually common to all ethnic disturbances in South Asia, because the ethnic communities have defined themselves against the territorial nationalism of the state.

Inter – ethnic group relations in South Asia continue to be fragile not only due to the arbitrariness of the state, but due to the manifest structural limitations in the power of communities to build social capital. This is adequately reflected in the great variations that often exist between intra and inter – segmental networking in South Asia. South Asia is in serious jeopardy by separatist ethno – nationalism and the states are required to organize their strategies to safeguard borders from internal dissolution and external intervention.

Ambivalence is a basic characteristic of the multifaceted issue of ethnic mobilization. Its tendency is to escalate to separatist movements and its potential to spill over at the regional level. Its ambivalent nature is caused by the fact that the ethnic crisscrossing of the national boundaries between India and its neighbouring countries can work both ways : it may support regional cooperation and, at the same time, is likely to hamper it. Demographic and ethnic problems tend to cause disharmony among the South Asian States, but they also work in a positive way by contributing to building regional consciousness and cooperation.

It is conducive to intra regional cooperation insofar as it opens up informal channels of communication and people – to – people contacts when direct interaction between the state governments is deadlocked because of burning conflictual issue. On the other hand, it aggravates strained relations between inimical neighbours when the concerned ethnic group draws support, both material and moral, from its contiguous ethnic group outside the state to be able to cooperate among themselves. The South Asian governments have to look beyond their respective national interests and identity priorities on a regional rather than strictly national basis. If this is impeded by ethnically based polarization in their own multiethnic societies then governments naturally tend to give priority to their national concerns. This is in particular the case when a government suspects its neighbouring country of aiding and abetting an ethnic separation movement across the border. Consequently, it will resort to a confrontational attitude vis-à-vis its neighbour, as is presently demonstrated by the renewed tension between India and Pakistan on account of the Kashmir conflict. In this context the optimistic assumption that old conflict in the region have lost much of their edge, unfortunately, has to be corrected. It seems to be the tragedy of the South Asian states that their cautious effort to overcome the manifold obstacles and move towards regional cooperation are frustrated by long-standing conflicts. Ethnic separatist movement seems to be particularly prone to lying dormant for sometime, but may flare up again as a consequence of political group mobilization and overall political transformation in their respective state.

The phenomenon of ethnic conflicts is also linked to the core issues of the Indo-Pakistani antagonism, i.e. the elites' ideological perceptions of the concept of 'nation' - how does the central leadership define and by what means does it

promote 'nationality' and 'national integration' in multiethnic states. In essence, the controversy revolves around the relationship between 'nation' and 'state'.

It has been observed that 'Nation' is the cultural embodiment of the state. One complements the other to the extent of being virtually synergized. Threats to the nation state emanate from within as much as assail if from without. As regards, the threats from within, ethnic heterogeneity – under-scoring sectional localities – is one of its major concomitants'.³⁸

Ethnic conflicts arise when the multiethnic personality of such a state - centric nation is not adequately expressed in its power structure and its political system. If it is reduced to the virtual dominance of the major ethnic group, then the very rationale of the 'nation' is jeopardized and provokes political self-assertion of minority ethnic groups. In South Asia in general, and in India and Pakistan in particular, the discourse of the substance and spirit of 'nation' is beset with strong emotive invocations. It is viewed as a potentially explosive issue because it offers large scope for maneuvering and mobilizing the people. Furthermore, it can be used by the central leadership of its domestic opponents for manipulative purposes. The controversy on the 'secular' or 'pseudo secular' nature of the Indian state is a telling example.

In this context, it was rightly stated that internal factors are the most problematic obstacles to regional cooperation. Just to take one example, the issue of cross-national ethnic and religious minorities poses enormous difficulty for the states within the region. For example, no South Asian Country is able to defend its claim of domestic jurisdiction while dealing with the struggles of ethnic and religious minorities. Even when each South Asian Country is most reluctant to interfere in the domestic affairs of another country, and each entertains its claim of domestic jurisdiction, contemporary events have repeatedly proved that ethnic minority explosions not only strain bilateral and multilateral relations but sometimes even create inter state crises.³⁹

Discussing the ambivalent repercussions of nation-building and ethnic mobilization, one soon ends up by analyzing the causes for conflict between the South Asian States. Since the Indo-Pakistani antagonism is the core obstacle to

regional Cooperation, two basic determinants of their conflictual relationship are outlined below.

Given the ethnic composition of South Asia, and the manifest non-coincidence of national and state boundaries of this region, it is doubtful whether the geo-political vision of the contemporary South Asian State system will ever achieve the desired security of ethnic stabilization of the sub-continent in new millennium. The relationship between ethnic identity assertion and security will therefore, continue to remain indeterminate both for and in spite of the state.

To sum up seven of the eight South Asian states have inter-state ethno political problems which are now the principal source of inter-state tensions and conflicts in the region. India has ethno political problems with each of the five neighbours with whom it shares international borders. Pakistan has serious ethno political problems with Aftganistan. Nepal and Bhutan have a latent ethno political cause of tension. Inter-state relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh are strained by an ethno political issue. This ethno political issues hamper the success of SAARC.

Throughout the late fifties and early sixties the influx of refugees from Pakistan to India continued to be a source of trouble. For Indo Pak relations even in 1971, a large number of Hindus and Muslim refugees crossed over to India after a military coup down and massacre war let loose in East Pakistan by the Government of Pakistan. The influx of refugees became an important reason for the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan in December, 1971. Thus, after partition, the refugee problem came to be a source of big strain of Indo-Pak relations. Even after 50 years of partition the problem of illegal migration of refugees from Sindh (Pakistan) into India continues to be there.

India, being the territorially biggest, population wise the largest, development wise technologically and industrially the most developed country of the South Asia, displayed and continues to play a big role in the successful operationalisation of SAARC programmes for cooperation and development among the member states. India has accepted the SAARC as a voluntarily organized association of sovereign equal states for consolidating and expanding regional cooperation for development.

India firmly believes that SAARC spirit can help the countries of South Asia to develop and to resolve their bilateral issues outside the SAARC platform.

However, India's role in SAARC is bound to remain limited because other countries, with the exceptions of Bhutan and Maldives, fear India and have bilateral disputes with India. Pakistan at the SAARC platform gave a call for limiting the arms race in South Asia, and yet it has been instrumental in generating an arms race by importing or getting high technology weapons from the United States in the name of parity or balance with India. India has a very long sea coast to protect, longest border with China - a country opposed to India's interests, and a big land border with Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. As such, its defence requirements are bigger than Pakistan and yet Pakistan wants parity with India. Indo-Pak conflict despite the new hopes generated by Rajiv - Benazir is a reality of South Asia. Indo-Srilanka conflict over the withdrawal of IPKF from Sri Lanka, Indo-Nepalese differences conflict over the trade and transit treaty Indo-Bangladesh conflict over Farakka and Chakma Refugee issues, the continued problem of terrorist activities, smuggling and drug pedaling etc., all combines to make SAARC environment unhealthy for the growth of regional cooperation. In July 1989, Sri Lankan boycott of SAARC Foreign Ministers' Conference reflects that brittle nature of SAARC fabric. Sri Lanka has failed to realize the difference between bilateral relations and regional relations and this constitute a danger signal for SAARC.

India's predicament regarding its role in SAARC results from the fact that if it decides to play a leadership role, it is charged of being a hegemonistic power, and if it keeps restraints and plays an equal role, the SAARC fails to function. Just as ASEAN countries have realized the natural leadership role of Indonesia in ASEAN, the SAARC countries must also accept India's role as the biggest and relatively most developed country of South Asia which alone can serve as the nucleus for the development of SAARC and thus the question of regional power status creates an irritation between the member countries of SAARC other than India ultimately hampering the successful operations of SAARC.

As is well known, the Kashmir issue has difficult historical, religious, ethnic, socio-political and economic dimensions. Several attempts to resolve it over the last five decades have not been successful. The US also supports the Pakistani

viewpoint that Kashmir is a core issues resolution of which has to be part of a comprehensive approach to other issues. It clearly suggests that Kashmir issue could not be treated in isolation from other problems between India and Pakistan which include nuclear proliferation also.⁴⁰ Pakistan also believes that unless the Kashmir problem is first resolved it would be fruitless to proceed with establishing any bilateral cooperative measures to defuse bilateral tension with India. Since for Pakistan, India constitutes the basic security threat and therefore, it insists that Kashmir and the nuclear question are closely linked and resolution of Kashmir issues is a necessary pre-condition for the nuclear disarmament in South Asia.

In fact, both India and Pakistan strongly support their national positions on Kashmir. India's position since 1947 is that Kashmir's accession to India in 1948 cannot be challenged and questioned anywhere. India also supports the view that any issue between India and Pakistan should be resolved bilaterally according to the provisions of the Simla agreement of 1972 and emphasizes that it should not be made international. On the contrary, Pakistan not only challenges the accession but also demands that a plebiscite should be held to ascertain the wishes of the people of Kashmir as per the Resolution of the United Nations. Although, throughout the cold war period the US also held the view that Kashmir was a disputed territory but it never questioned the validity of its accession to India. But the post cold war era seems to have brought changes in the US perception about Kashmir due to its strategic location.

The core of the continuing dispute between Pakistan and India has been Kashmir where vast resources have been drained from the budgets of both countries by two large armies facing one another for decades over a disputed boundary. Like all complicated and perennial problems, the problem of Kashmir may have become trapped in hackneyed definitions and misdefinitions.

It is because of a divided and disputed boundary in Kashmir that we have had two large armies facing one another in anger, referring to each other as enemy. And it is clear that the resulting arms race and elite rivalry has greatly impoverished the general budgets of both Pakistan and India. If it has benefited important sections of the political and military elites of both countries, it has done so only at the expense of the general welfare of the masses. So long as the arms race continues, the

economies of both countries are likely to remain severely distorted, and there may be little genuine prospect of improvement in mass welfare or the large scale economic development of either country.

The paradox of Kashmir is that in all the debates, bargaining and negotiations in the decades which proceeded 1947, nobody on any side predicted that it was going to be Kashmir, of all things, which would become the cardinal problem in the future of the peoples of the subcontinent. There seems to have been discussions about everything else, about this majority and that minority, about undivided Punjab and United Bengal, about joint electorates and protected electorates, absolute Centre – province relations, about this constituent Assembly or that, about a weak centre and a strong centre, and so on and so forth. But nobody seemed to have talked about Kashmir. How is it that in all these discussions none of the founding fathers of Pakistan or India even once predicted what was really going to become the crucial problem? Were they so lacking in foresight that none could anticipate that within a matter of months, it would be Kashmir that was going to be the base, interminable and pivotal problem facing the subcontinent for the next five decades? That it would be Kashmir which would lead to a large standing armies facing the another in anger, causing the economic impoverishment of the entire subcontinent? Kashmir has become the security pivotal and interminable problem. As things stand today we ourselves keeps us prisoners of superficial definitions of who we are or might be.

The subcontinent could evolve its political identity over a period of time. On the pattern of western Europe, with open borders and tariffs to the outside world, with the free movement of people, capital ideas and culture. Large armed forces could be reduced and transforms in a menace that would enhance the security of each nation. The real and peaceful economic revolution of the masses of the subcontinent would then be able to begin which is.⁴¹

Kashmir has been the most major issue and a bone of contention between India and Pakistan. The partition gave rise to many disputes and problems. All of these disputes except the dispute over Kashmir were solved gradually through mutual negotiations one through the mediation of World Bank and another through Arbitration. Despite a series of lengthy, firing and patient attempts by many

individuals, nations and organizations, a solution to the Kashmir issue acceptable to both India and Pakistan has yet to emerge. Since 1947, it has been a major irritant in Indo-Pak relations.

India, since 1948, has been maintaining that Kashmir is an integral part of Indian Union and its accession to India is full and first. For India, Kashmir problem means the issues of securing the liberation of Pakistan occupied Kashmir. Pakistan, however, still advocates that the future of Kashmir is yet to be settled in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir. As such there are present strong Indo Pak differences over the issue and Kashmir constitutes a determinant of the bilateral relations between these two South-Asian countries. A reviews of Indo-Pak relations since 1947 shows the its impact on the SAARC has been disproportionate and as such, the SAARC appears to be too dim.

Even without further effort one can easily state that the role of the great powers in the regional conflict in South Asia has been both vital to and inseparable from of the regional roots of the conflict. Whereas the regional roots lay in the history of the evolution of Indian and Pakistan as independent entities, in the status incongruence in the subcontinent, in the Kashmir dispute, etc., the two parties to the conflict received the confidence and actual capacity to enter into hostility with each other from their respective allies and supports amongst for the great power. The great powers, on the other hand, found the South Asian conflict an essential regional component of their own conflict as signified in the cold war. They, therefore, found it irresistible to feed and reinforce the regional roots of the South Asian, The great power involvement was so deep and pervasive that one is tempted to believe that the great powers, in pursuance of their global and regional objectives would have invented a conflict in South Asia if none had existed.

As has been discussed above United States has remained an intrusive and external power in the relations between India and Pakistan. It has always taken advantage of this growing hostility between the two countries for its own national interests and carried towards Pakistan to ensure its dependence. United States strategic imperatives placed Pakistan in the category of an ally in a global

confrontation and India in the low priority bracket of a potential regional power."⁴² If the United States was really interested to normalize relations between India and Pakistan, it would not have resumed military aid to Pakistan after the 1965 war and meted out an equal treatment to both India the victim and Pakistan – the aggressor in the 1965 and 1971 wars. Its complete identification and tilt towards Pakistan reached its height in the 1971 war. In all international forums the United States has been always on the side of Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. Had it been really interested, it could have made supply of military aid conditional on Pakistan abandoning the Kashmir issues or accepting an Indian compromise on this issue.⁴³ But to force Pakistan to such a stance would mean abdication of all the imperatives of Pakistan remaining an accomplice in the United States' global strategic system. This does not mean that the United States was not averse to continuation or repetition of wars between India and Pakistan, which entitled the possibility of India's exposure to Soviet influence.

This policy of balancing one against the other was the old game of the cold war phase – the guiding principle of the international sovereign state system and balance of power. Of course, this policy stance was more the cause than the consequence of India's tilt towards the Soviet Union. As a result, the United States policy, instead of restraining Pakistan has widened Pakistan's appetite for more arms and ammunition to spend to India from a position of strength. Had India expressed its nuclear option like China, a new power relation would have emerged.

It can be said that the main strategy of militarily arming Pakistan by the United States is more the cultivation of Pakistan as an ally than containment of India's growing power.⁴⁴ and opposition to the rise of a strong independent centre of power in Asia.⁴⁵ It has been seen that notwithstanding all changes in the configuration of power relations in the global system. Pakistan has survived as an ally in the United States' global system. Pakistan's intimacy with China in an era of Sino-US rivalry, its dependence on the Soviet Union, the military and security pacts like SEATO and CENTO during the close of seventies though irked the United States but the strategic importance of Pakistan to America's global interest particularly in the west Asian region led America to treat Pakistan as it did. The advocacy by some of a theory of 'scrupulous detachment' by the policy makers of the United States to Indo-Pak

rivalry,⁴⁶ sounds sense but is vastly undone, because of the play of real politic in the United States; strategic outlook.

So long Pakistan does not cease to be a partner in the United States' global strategy, the United States would remain as a preponderant factor in Indo-Pak relations. Though there has been a de-escalation of nuclear brinksmanship between the Soviet Union and the United states achieved recently at Geneva. the possibility of de-escalation of national interests at global level between the super powers is far from remote. Hence Pakistan will count as a frontier state to the to the United States.⁴⁷ In any conflict between India and Pakistan the United States is to maintain a posture of neutrality and non-partisan stand would be too costly a conclusion. The removal of this external factor exacerbating the bitter conflict between India and Pakistan largely depends on India working out a good relationship with the United States not at the risk of closing Soviet Union's goodwill which India should have not by tarnishing its non aligned identity. Its susceptibly leaning towards the Soviet Union could be corrected establishing a good relationship with both the United States and China not causing apprehensions in the Soviet Union about the bonafides of India's friendship.

India fully realized the importance of normalization of relations with Pakistan for keeping South Asia free from power rivalry, arms race and super power interferences. India further fully realized that normalization with Pakistan beside helping her to concentrate fully on internal socio economic development, strengthen her vis-à-vis China. The ability of China and to some extent of the USA fully to exploit Indo-Pak conflict/confrontation for keeping Pakistan dependent for security and its defence needs, ultimately limits India's ability to concentrate on her internal development. By pumping huge quantities of sophisticated and advanced technology weapons into Pakistan, the USA, is indirectly forcing India to spend large sums on military purchases from the Soviet Union and other countries like France and England. India, wants a normalization in relations with Pakistan as a means for checking the impending arms pace. India is greatly concerned about the "possibility of third party linkage" in form of foreign military bases in Pakistan and the possible fall out on India's strategic interests. India is, therefore, keen to pursue Indo-Pak, talks over no-war pact/treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation.

The third broad Indian strategy was to eliminate or reduce Chinese influence on the states of the region. Though India has consistently frowned upon any abnormal external presence in South Asia, China's presence has been increasingly singled out as the most bonafied of all of them to India's national interests. Much of Indian diplomacy is, therefore, geared to the task of monitoring Chinese presence in the region, competing with her northern neighbouring in the areas, and eroding her influence wherever possible.

In this connection, Indian diplomatic strategy and the pressure exerted by India have varied from country to country. Great pressure has been exerted on those nations dependent on India, while it has been more indirect and more subtle on those nations which were less dependent.

The SAARC is essential for accelerating the economic development for building individual and collective self-reliance and also for enhancing the SAARC countries' bargaining strength in multilateral forums. The SAARC has created forum to evolve unified policies regarding women, children and transference of technologies of agriculture and to set up a food bank.

Indian goods have proved to be very competitive in Pakistan where demand for consumer products is relatively high. At one stage, when cheap and industrial products started reaching Pakistan, it was felt that these would convey a picture of India to Pakistan which was different from what they had been made to believe. Also imports from India in some cases started hitting the local industrial sector that is why some items were completely banned. That is why Indo-Pak relations have remained paged at low levels.

The fruitful implementation of the efforts to further strengthen the Indo-Pak normalization and development of more cooperative economic and cultural relations came in June 1983, when the first meeting of Indo-Pak Joint Commission was held at Islamabad. In this meeting foreign ministers of the two countries not only exchanged the instruments of satisfaction pertaining to the establishment of the joint commission but also more significant progress on substantive matters.

The commission set up four sub-commissions on (a) economic matters dealing with industry, agriculture, communication, health, science, and technology,;

(b) Trade, education, culture, space, social science, (c) Travel tourism. The success towards the institutionalization of Indo-Pak economic trade and cultural relations is indeed an important breakthrough. It has brightened the hopes that through mutual accommodation and good will, the two countries shall be in a position to narrow down further differences over the issue of no war pact and a treaty of peace and friendship. As a result of negotiations through sub-commissions it was agreed to exchange the visits of businessmen and industrialists for identifying opportunities for collaboration between them.

The state of economic warfare between the two countries has now partially ended. Although Pakistan has been able to do without trade with India and India, in spite of much hardship to her people and damage to her economy, has been able to hold her own it is not a situation from which either could continue to derive satisfaction for long. If trade policies in the two countries were determined by economic considerations, the flow of goods and commodities between them would undoubtedly have been much larger than in the past year. Peaceful and happy relations between them would certainly help in the process.

In view of recent changes in the global economic system, there is considerable scope for India and Pakistan to collaborate in the economic field. India and Pakistan cannot remain aloof from the trends of world wide economic liberalization and globalisation. The economies of India and Pakistan are complementary in more than one way. The SAPTA agreement between the member countries of SAARC provides ample scope for bilateral and regional cooperation in the field of trade and consumers. At present, Pakistan, is importing several items from other countries at a relatively higher cost. Those items could be imported from India on cheaper rates. For instance, Pakistan could import fibres, textile machinery, consumer goods and intermediaries and it can export pig iron, scrap, wheat, and long-staple cotton to India. At various SAARC meetings Pakistan has disclosed that in all 571 items could be imported from India. Various items, at present, are routed through Afghanistan or via West Asia. Similarly though Pakistan is a large tea importer, it imports little from India despite the lower price, superior quality and lower transport cost. The false notions hitherto held, in this regard have to be discarded.

Specific long-term agreements between India and Pakistan would certainly help in discouraging wasteful expenditure. Joint economic and commercial ventures between the two countries would not only boost the morale of the business community of both the countries but also be conducive to accelerate the pace of economic activity. If the government of India and Pakistan agree to lift out moved restrictions and prepare a cost-effective economic strategy, cross-border trade and investment will flourish.

The economic reform programmes of the SAARC present a blue print for considerable impetus for improvement of economic relations between India and Pakistan. Both the countries are also under IMF – led economic adjustment which signifies that among other things 100 percent foreign ownership is allowed in most industries. These developments will certainly encourage viable economic relations between India and Pakistan.

There is no doubt that there are important economic reasons behind the slow progress of SAARC particularly in the field of trade, industry and finance. There has been a feeling among the elite of most of the members of SAARC that cooperation in these fields would mainly benefit India and not the other countries of the region whose interests might indeed suffer as a consequence of it. In view of India's size, population, resources and level of economic development as compared to those of the other South Asian countries such apprehensions are quite natural. In this connection it may be recalled that the areas now included in Pakistan as well as Bangladesh constituted the rural hinterland of the industrial base of undivided India. This was true even with regard to those products like cotton in Pakistan and jute in Bangladesh which was produced in bulk in those areas. However, it is not beyond human ingenuity to device measures to safeguard the interests of India's smaller neighbours against the plausible adverse effects on them of such cooperation. It is also to be noted that the smaller countries will gain immensely by gaining access to a much larger market that can be provided by their own territories if the entire region of South Asia becomes available to them for free sale of the goods and services. The problem created by the growth of vested interest in close economic relations with the West, in certain influential sections of the bourgeoisie in several South Asian

countries, because of high profits they earn from such relations, may be difficult to overcome

There is also a greater realization of the importance of economic development and the potential of free trade as under lined by the SAARC commitment to work for SAFTA within the stipulated time. This is a very interesting trend which depicts the changing perception of the relatively smaller SAARC member states who are no more apprehensive of the dominance influence of India and are interested in speeding up cooperation in trade and transit. Describing the trend, Muni says that the 'Big is no longer awesome and ugly instead it is becoming beautiful.⁴⁸ In such an environment of enhanced trust and understanding amongst the regional players, SAARC can increasingly provide an effective mechanism for effective and durable cooperation benefiting all the countries of the region.

Given all these, it seems that there had tremendous potentiality of regional cooperation among the South Asian countries benefiting each for there respective development. But unfortunately, it is due to the strained relationship between India and Pakistan that the SAARC has been a regional organization with a low capability. Since most of the time SAARC forum is infected with bilateral and contentious issues between India and Pakistan, it has lost and is loosing its credibility.

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