

Comprehensive security : the South Asian case

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**Comprehensive Security:
The South Asian Case**

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ABSTRACT

This paper takes an overview of the various dimensions of security in South Asia. It begins by examining the concept of ‘comprehensive security’ as it is distinguished from conventional security. The paper argues that the attempts to widen the concept of security by including human and environmental concerns is unnecessary, confusing, incoherent and, ideologically and strategically driven, particularly in the context of the “New World Order” and globalisation. Exploring the subject of South Asian security, the paper also argues that traditional concerns of security like inter and intra-state conflicts, nuclear tensions and terrorism will continue to dominate. The regional security implications of the persisting conflict between India and Pakistan as well as the unresolved boundary question between India and China are also discussed. Attention is also given to the fact that the forces of ethnic, religious and ideological extremism in almost all the South Asian countries continue to threaten internal stability and regional security. While discussing these traditional security issues, the paper also takes note of the newer and non-military aspects of the security concerns of the South Asian countries arising out of environmental degradation, demographic pressures and movements and energy shortages.

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COMPREHENSIVE SECURITY: THE SOUTH ASIAN CASE¹

Introduction

There exists a basic conceptual anomaly in attempts to distinguish state security from the broader and comprehensive understanding of security that includes human and environmental dimensions. The Westphalian state, when broken into its basic components, includes territory, people, sovereignty and government. The security of the state therefore, means the security of all these components individually and collectively, including the security of the people and anything else that affects that security, such as environmental degradation and disasters. If the security of any of the essential and basic components of the state is affected, the security of the whole of the state is affected too. Therefore, the underlying assumption that runs through the efforts distinguishing state security from human security or comprehensive security is about the nature and character of the state, where the state is not expected to be inclusive or representative enough of all its components, primarily the human component. There is a clear divide between the established and evolving states, between the developed and the developing states in this assumption. Seeing the developed State as providing comprehensive security, it was argued that

in the developed states, the State was seen as major source of security and threat: the military strength of the state protected its people against outside threats; its police force protected them internally; and its social security programmes protected them against ill health, unemployment and extreme hardship.²

Notwithstanding the conceptual coherence of the State with regard to its essential components, the experience of the past several decades suggests that in practice, both the developed as well as new and evolving states have pursued their security with far too greater emphasis on the defence of their territories, sovereignties and governments. In doing so, greater reliance has been put upon military and defence related activities. People, their rights and their needs, their lives and their progress have often been partially or completely neglected. Peoples' security has been taken for granted since it is inherent in the conceptual

¹ This is the revised and enlarged version of a paper originally submitted to the Delhi Policy Group, New Delhi, India, for a regional conference on "Comprehensive Security For South Asia", in January, 2001.

² Greg Mills, "The 21st Century Security Agenda: The End of 'Defence' as We Know It?", in *Strategic Analysis*, April 1997, pp. 173-89.

creation of the state. Due to the dominant thrust of the Cold War related conflicts and arms races, territorial and political aspects of security constituted the principal concern of security policies and security studies. People got divided along ideologies and military blocs. For the protection of these concerned territories, political systems and the allies of the military blocs, people were called upon, even forced to sacrifice their lives and liberties.

Conceptual Shift

The inadequacy of state-centric military security started coming into focus as the Cold War patterns of conflict gave rise to newer concerns and their costs started becoming unaffordable in terms of human suffering and development. Early signs of this shift were discernible in the call for The UN General Assembly Special Sessions on “Disarmament and Development” and the publication of reports by international commissions headed by Willy Brandt and Olaf Palme.³ This led to scholarly questioning of the traditional security framework with a plea that such a framework for studying security needed to be revised and enlarged to include conflicts and concerns other than those of inter-state wars.⁴ Barry Buzan's study drew attention to the fact that the state, while being recognised as a security provider, was also a source of fear and insecurity for its own people.⁵ Ayoob even argued that the state in the Third World pitted against its own people as a source of threat and insecurity, in the process of evolving and consolidating itself.⁶ There was also the beginning of conceptualisation of comprehensive security by this time and the incorporation of the new concept into policy programmes. Japan took the lead in this respect and the debate was carried forward into Southeast Asia, which is the principal area of Japan's aid, investment and foreign policy commitments in the developing world.⁷ Japan subsequently enlarged upon

³ Willy Brandt's report was *North-South: A Programme for Survival; Report of the Independent Commission on International Development Issues*, London 1980. The Palme Commission's report was *Common Security: A Programme for Disarmament; The Report of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues*, London, 1982.

⁴ Richard Ullman, “Redefining Security”, in *International Security*, Vol.8, No.1, 1983; Joseph Nye, “The Contribution of Strategic Studies: Future Challenges,” *Adelphi Paper 235*, IISS London, 1989; Jessica Mathews, “Redefining Security”, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 68, No.2, 1989, pp. 163-77.

⁵ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear* (Hamel Hempstead: Wheatsheaf, 1983).

⁶ Mohammad Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament: State-making, Regional Conflict and International System* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

⁷ Robert W. Barnett, *Beyond War: Japan's Concept of Comprehensive National Security*, Washington 1984; Alan Rix, “Japan's Comprehensive Security and Australia”, in *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 41, No. 2 August 1987; Noordin Sopiee, “Malaysian Doctrine of Comprehensive Security”, in *Journal Of Asiatic Studies*, Vol. XXVII, No. 2, 1984; Muthiah Alagappa, “Comprehensive Security Interpretations In ASEAN Countries”, in Robert A.

the concept of “human security” by emphasizing its dual aspects of “freedom from fear and freedom from want”.⁸ The UNDP Development Report in 1994 sharply focussed attention on nine areas of human security that ranged from food and health security to personal, community and political security. Contrasting state security with human security, the report said:

For too long the concept of security has been shaped by the potential for conflict between states. For too long, security has been equated with threats to a country’s borders. For too long nations have sought arms to protect their security. For most people today, a feeling of insecurity arises more from worries about daily life than from the dread of a cataclysmic world event. Job security, income security, health security, environmental security, security from crime, these are the emerging concerns of human security all over the world.⁹

Europe (particularly the Scandinavian countries and Germany) and international financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF, also subsequently joined in attaching components of comprehensive security in their respective programmes of developmental assistance. This has also led a number of Western Foundations to encourage, through liberal funding, such studies that went beyond the traditional notion of security and emphasized human and environmental aspects of security as well. In such studies, the focus has particularly been on the developing countries. Special programmes have been designed to generate and analyse data and critically scrutinize various dimensions of human and comprehensive security. Canada is the latest proponent of human security with the emphasis on making this as the principal concern of its foreign policy. The Canadian approach to “human security” seeks to integrate its developmental domain with the military security domain. Thus while accepting economic, environmental and political rights aspects of human security, it also focuses on issues like landmines and humanitarian intervention. Based on the lessons of Kosovo, Canada has been arguing in the UN Security Council “to extend the peacekeeping mandate to include protection of civilians in conflicts”.¹⁰

Scalapino, Seizaburo Sato, Jusuf Wanandi and Sung-joo Han (eds.) *Asian Security Issues: Regional and Global*, Research Papers and Policy Studies, No. 26, (Berkeley, University of California, 1988).

⁸ Statement by Yukio Takasu, at the International Conference on “Human Security in a Globalized World”, Ulan Bator, May 8, 2000. <http://www.cpsindia.org>.

⁹ There is a growing body of literature on “Human Security”. See for instance, “Redefining Security: The Human Dimension”, in *Current History*, No. 94, May 1995.

¹⁰ See the Canadian Foreign Minister Lloyd Axworthy’s interview in *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, www.cpsindia.org. For the official Canadian Foreign Ministry’s paper on “Human Security: Safety for People in a Changing World”, see <http://www.dfait.maecigc.ca/foreignp/HumanSecurity>.

The shift from the traditional concept of security, which emphasized military and political aspects of state security, to comprehensive and human security, which takes into its ambit the economic, developmental, humanitarian and environmental aspects of security, has gained a definite momentum with the end of the Cold War. The attempts to widen the security agenda were driven by two important strategic developments. One was the decline in the possibility of global wars, at least among major powers. A greater sense of security emerged among the countries of Western Europe, North America and Japan, and in this group, the former Soviet Union also started to be included “once Gorbachev assumed power (there) and embraced an explicit demilitarisation of the Cold War”.¹¹ The second development was the spread of internal ethnic and political conflicts, especially in the developing world. In a way, these conflicts were the results of nuclear deterrence and proxy wars encouraged by the Cold War adversaries. But there was also growing awareness among people all over the world about their expectations and rights vis-à-vis the state. The identity movements that were a reaction to being ignored and ill treated by the respective states, started getting better organised and becoming violent. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) began to track the spread of these internal conflicts while American security documents began identifying them as a growing security menace for the world. It was necessary to take into account the causes and consequences of these internal conflicts which led security analysts and researchers to the problems of governance, economic and political discrimination, suppression of cultures and violations of human rights by the states in the process of fighting internal conflicts. Governance, economics, humanitarianism and the environment became part of the agenda of Security Studies.¹²

In the broadening of the security framework, the phenomena of globalisation have made a significant contribution. Globalisation as a process has increased “human mobility and interaction” tremendously. As a consequence, it has: (a) weakened the boundaries and salience of the state and sovereignty; (b) “ignited identity as a source of conflict” and enhanced sub-state groups and their operations; (c) “anointed the concept of non-physical security” by introducing concerns for the protection of information, technological assets,

¹¹ Barry Buzan, “Rethinking Security After the Cold War”, in *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 32, No. 1, 1997, pp. 5-28.

¹² John Chipman, “The Future of Strategic Studies: Beyond Grand Strategy”, *Survival*, IISS, London, Vol. 34, No. 1, 1992, pp. 109-31; Ronnie Lipschutz (ed.), *On Security* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1995).

financial flows, etc., and; (d) diversified threats.¹³ The traditional concept of security is not resilient enough to address and to deal with these new dimensions. The thrust of globalisation also includes the expansion of markets and the movement of goods and services. For this, peace and order in the world are preconditions that can be better ensured by de-emphasizing military related matters. The introduction of social and ecological standards for manufacturing processes and the use of green technologies under globalisation have reinforced the relevance of human and environmental dimensions in security assessment.

The objective conditions created during or after the Cold War for compelling a review and a re-conceptualisation of security cannot be ignored. However, the way in which the traditional concept of security is redefined as human and comprehensive security also deserves closer scrutiny. The broadened definition of security has both conceptual and analytical problems. To begin with, there is considerable incoherence in the various dimensions of broadened definition that include issues ranging from security of trade transactions, information flows, gender equality, child abuse, and good governance to ecological degradation and sustainable development.

Security as traditionally defined is relatively simple. As more levels of analysis and issues are brought in, the attempt to broaden security becomes increasingly complicated. By specifying referent objects other than the state, security can easily encompass a wide range of things. It is possible to argue that the security of many actors is intimately linked and that it is not profitable to study any given type of actor in isolation but rather as part of a whole. An easy mistake to make is to regard all threats to human well-being as threats to security. By taking such a route, it is possible to become hopelessly confused as anything and everything 'bad' becomes a 'security concern'.¹⁴

Some of those who strongly advocate a widening of the security concept, such as Barry Buzan, even admit that "progressive widening endangers the intellectual coherence of security, putting so much into it that its essential meaning becomes void". Buzan confesses that "I am a widener, but have been sceptical about the prospects for coherent

On the environmental dimension of security, see Raimo Vayrynen, "Environmental Security and Conflicts: Concepts and Policies", in *International Studies*, Sage, New Delhi, Vol. 35, No. 1, 1998, pp. 3-21.

¹³ Victor D. Cha, "Globalization and the Study of International Security", in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 37, No. 3, May 2000, pp. 391-403.

¹⁴ Lloyd Pettiford, "Changing Conception of Security in the Third World", in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 2, London, 1996, pp. 289-306.

conceptualisation of security in economic and environmental security.”¹⁵ Besides the overall incoherence of the newly added dimensions of security, some of the concepts within these dimensions have also become politicised due to frequent usage by leaders and power brokers in their strategies of domestic and international support mobilisation. For example, the concepts of “sustainable development”, “good governance”, “democracy”, “human rights” (individual or collective, political and individual freedom or right to basic needs?), etc., may be mentioned in this respect. These concepts are attractive and have acquired a special place in the political lexicon of ruling elites both in the developed as well as developing countries. They also figure prominently in various multilateral resolutions and documents. But about their exact meaning, there is considerable divergence from one leader to another and from one country to another. Their precise contents are also so subjective that their analytical (empirical) and policy relevance have lost meaning.¹⁶ At times, on policy and analytical levels, there are also conflict and incompatibility between one concept and the other of the broadened security framework; such as between “economic growth”, “equal distribution of wealth” and “sustainable development”.

Ideological and Strategic Biases

Besides its conceptual incoherence, the broadened framework of human and comprehensive security also seems to suffer from a strategic bias. It is unmistakably directed towards the developing countries. Since the developed Western world has ensured welfare, prosperity and social stability for its citizens, it is the state in the Third world that is held responsible for failing to provide required human security to its people. The Third World states are accordingly pressurized to follow the comprehensive security agenda. While the developed states continue to consolidate their military security, the developing states are asked to concentrate on human and ecological security by diverting resources from defence expenditures. For instance, the US has justified its military build-up to fight on two and a half fronts in different parts of the world simultaneously. It can also carry out innovative expansion in nuclear and missile defence, like the development of National and/or Theater Missile Defence (NMD/TMD). Even under the newly evolved non-proliferation regime of

¹⁵ Buzan, “Rethinking Security After the Cold War”, op. cit. Also see Giacomo Luciani, “The Economic Content of Security”, in *Journal of Public Policy*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1989, pp. 151-73, and Daniel Deudney, “The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security”, in *Millennium*, London, 1990, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 461-76.

¹⁶ Pettiford, “Changing Conception of Security in the Third World”, op. cit. n. 11.

NPT, and CTBT, the recognised nuclear weapon powers have privileges that are denied to others. The message inherent in the calls to the developing countries for lowering defence expenditures, adherence to non-proliferation regime and implementation of comprehensive security agenda is that the developing states should remain confined to their respective territories and peoples, leaving the management of global security to the major powers. And in pursuing such management, intervention may be justified in the name of “humanitarian” causes. We have noted above the Canadian argument for the justification of humanitarian intervention in the interest of human security. This will also restrain any move on the part of any of the ambitious or “rogue” developing states that would disturb the prevailing global power hierarchy and nuclear order.

The expanded security agenda is the result of globalisation and “capitalist expansion”.¹⁷ We have noted above the involvement of the capitalist world and associated institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. Taking note of the ideological linkages between capitalism and human security a Pakistani security analyst commented that “discourses about ‘human security’ play a key role in mystifying the consequences of capitalist expansion as well as in creation of new markets in capital poor countries”. She further adds:

Despite the link between foreign policy and development issues, in the context of human security, donors usually ascribe mal-development to the selfish policies of particular governments, rather than to international structures. Hence when human security issues are promoted, it is with unstated idea that governments have failed and that at issue is governance rather than the binds in which governments find themselves upon taking over.¹⁸

In this respect, the imposition of social and environmental conditionalities on trade flows and the linking of non-proliferation and arms reduction policies and sanctions with economic aid and technology transfers also need to be recalled. One, however, does not need to stretch the argument of capitalist expansion as the world at large has come to accept this as the only road to development and prosperity, at least in the absence of any other alternative.

¹⁷ Edward J. Amadco and Tariq Banuri, “Policy, Governance and the Management of Conflict” in Banuri (ed.), *Economic Liberalisation: No Panacea*, Oxford, 1991.

¹⁸ Saba Gul Khattak, “Security Discourse and the State in Pakistan”, in *Alternatives*, Vol. 21, No.3, July-September, 1996, pp. 341-62.

But the question of the imperatives of globalisation for expanded security agenda needs to be looked at carefully. The globalisation imperative clearly underlines the global nature of human security and environmental protection. Then why the burden of implementing the wider security agenda be put only on the weak and vulnerable states in the developing world? For balanced economic development in the poorer countries, favourable terms of trade and conditions for smooth flow of capital and technology need to be ensured by the international community. This is not much in evidence even where state transactions are involved.¹⁹ Similarly, with regard to internal identity, ethnic and ideological conflicts, there are globalised networks of support and sustenance in the areas of arms, finances and political backing. While the affected state in the developing world is held responsible for mal-governance, very little is offered by the international community to share the global part of the burden. This is equally true in the field of preserving global ecological balance. In fact, there is hardly any emphasis on the global component of efforts in ensuring the enlarged framework of security. Nobel Laureate Oscar Arias is not off the mark when he says:

Disparities in the global order create tensions and conflicts that transcend borders. The global neighbourhood offers no sanctuaries. No shelters are available to insulate people from disease, poverty, nuclear holocaust or environmental catastrophe. These problems and threats are not individual crises; they are all elements of the great crisis confronting the global neighbourhood. It is a crisis that demands global solutions and global unity. Without these solutions, human security will not be possible.²⁰

The protest against globalisation is growing in the developed world. The latest example of this protest, i.e., against the G-8 summit held in Genoa (Italy) in July 2001, may be mentioned here. It may be hoped that as this protest gains strength and momentum, the parameters and implications of globalisation on human concerns will start correcting the biases underlying a widened notion of security.

In view of the conceptual difficulties and inherent bias of human and comprehensive security, it may be advisable to keep in mind two suggestions when operationalising the

¹⁹ Heikki Patomaki, "Good Governance of the World Economy", in *Alternatives*, Vol. 24, No. 1, January-March 1999, pp. 119-42.

²⁰ Oscar Arias, "Economic and Disarmament After the Cold War: Human Security: Our Common Responsibility", in *Disarmament*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1996. (Reproduced in *Strategic Digest*, July 1997.)

expanded framework of security. One was offered by Ayoob when he diagnosed state formation process as the root of insecurity in the Third World. He said:

I am aware of the link between the political realm and other societal realms, ranging from the economic to the ecological. However, I have adopted the position that issues such as economic deprivation and environmental degradation do not automatically become part of the security calculus of Third World states; they do so only when they gain enough prominence to be able to produce political outcomes that can threaten the survival or effectiveness of the states and regimes.²¹

Under the second suggestion, emphasis may continue to be laid on the traditional approach to security while paying due attention to the areas of economic, societal and ecological development separately, for the overall stability and order in a given country or region. Pettiford's conclusion in this respect after a study of Central American security problems is worth keeping in mind here.

The traditional concept of security does not show itself amenable to stretching. Stretching causes the concept to lose meaning without offering any compensating advantage. Thus rather than redefine security, as traditionally understood, it might be enough to recognise its limitations in terms of when and where it should be applied, and to investigate its linkages to other areas of International Relations. Traditional security could then continue to exist alongside more serious considerations of problems of more serious interest to Third World states, such as environmental problems and survival within the world economy, using non-realist tools of analysis.²²

The point he is underlining is not the neglect of questions and concerns related to human security, but why should they necessarily be brought, for policy or analytical purposes, under the ambit of security? If the state is seen as neglecting the human developmental and security aspects, the state should be reprimanded for that and be asked to correct its behaviour. Enlargement of the scope of security studies may not be the logical and effective remedy for this.

South Asian Security - Persisting and Emerging Traditional Concerns

²¹ Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Predicament*, op. cit., p. 190.

²² Pettiford, "Changing Conception of Security in the Third World", op. cit., n. 11.

When we look at South Asian security issues, we find that while these issues have not been unconcerned or unaffected by the broadening of the security agenda, traditional concerns of military security and inter-state conflicts continue to be relevant.²³ Its telling evidence was available during the recently held (July 14-16, 2001) Agra summit between India and Pakistan. The summit leaders promised to work for peace and cooperation to address the concern for growing poverty and human misery in the Indian subcontinent, but they broke their negotiations, even without signing a Joint Statement, because of their persisting differences on Kashmir; a territorial, political and traditional security issue. There are two important factors that contribute to these persisting concerns, namely, the unresolved territorial issues and the nuclearisation of India and Pakistan.

The largest unsettled border exists between India and China. China is not only sitting on a large chunk of territory in India's Northwest, Aksai Chin, since the mid-fifties, but it also lays claims on about 90,000 sq. km. of Indian territory in the sensitive Northeast region. In addition to this, China also gained about 5000 sq. km. of Indian territory in the Jammu and Kashmir region after these Pakistani-occupied lands were ceded to China by Pakistan in 1963 when the two countries concluded their boundary agreement. The Sino-Indian boundary also runs through Nepal and Bhutan. China settled its boundary issue with Nepal in 1961, but the position on trijunctions of India, Nepal and China were accepted as provisional until the settlement of the Sino-Indian boundary. One of the trijunctions, which in Nepal is known as Kalapani (on the Kingdom's northwest end), is currently a point of dispute between India and Nepal. There were reports that China had encouraged the communist groups of Nepal in 1995 to raise the question of ownership of Kalapani with India because Indian security forces are firmly established to face China in this tiny corner. The Sino-Bhutanese border is not settled yet. There were mutually conflicting claims in Bhutan's eastern, western and the central sectors. Some of these disputed claims have been resolved between the two countries through quiet negotiations over the past more than a decade, but the boundary issue has not been completely settled as the two countries do not have any formal diplomatic relations. Perhaps, the Sino-Bhutanese issue will also be resolved along with the settlement of the Sino-Indian border.

²³ Navnita Chadha Behra has made a strong plea in favour of widening the security agenda in South Asia by underlining the fact that the hiatus between the people and the state in South Asia is growing fast and that the

This unresolved border is a point of tension between Asia's two giant neighbours. More so as China has settled its border question with almost all other South Asian neighbours, with the exception of Bhutan. China went to war with India on the border question in October 1962. There were also subsequent minor skirmishes between the two along the border. Since 1988, a Joint Working Group has been set up between the two countries to deal with the border issues but progress has been very slow and unsatisfactory. However, there are encouraging signs that the two sides have been proceeding meaningfully to address the practical aspects of the vexed problem. In 2000, the two sides exchanged maps to demarcate the Line of Actual Control. This was a concrete move towards the final resolution of the issue. The two sides have also put in place various confidence-building measures under the 1996 Agreement of Peace and Tranquillity on the Border.²⁴

There is no likelihood of the two countries going to war with each other over the border issue, but tension on this count remains. More so as there are occasional reports emanating from India's northeastern states of encroachments and troop movements along the border by the Chinese.²⁵ The problem is that if the border remains unsettled and Sino-Indian relations get vitiated by rivalry and competition between the two countries in the Asia-Pacific region, or on account of any deterioration on the Tibetan issue, the possibility of conflict between them cannot be ruled out.²⁶ The parameters of this competition have been sharpened as a consequence of India's abdication of its nuclear ambiguity in and assumption of the status of a nuclear weapon state in May 1998. Since then, China has started taking India as a serious source of security challenge following the declaration by India's then Defence Minister George Fernandes that India's nuclear status was declared with the aim of deterring the threat from China. As a result, some western analysts now consider that that the

state modelled on the European pattern cannot serve South Asian needs. See her "Discourse on Security: A Contested Terrain" in her forthcoming book on the subject.

²⁴ Ambassador Ranganathan's paper on Sino-Indian relations, presented at the Jammu Conference of Asia-Pacific Studies Association, October 2000.

²⁵ In a recent statement, India's Army Chief, Gen. Padmanabhan, spoke of tensions on the Sino-Indian border on account of Chinese activities related to the building of military infrastructure along the Line of Actual Control at a time when negotiations on demarcating this Line had just begun. *The Hindustan Times*, January 15, 2001.

²⁶ Sujit Datta, "China's Emerging Power and Military Role: Implications For South Asia", in Jonathan D. Pollack and Richard H. Yang (eds.), *In China's Shadow: Regional Perspectives on China's Foreign Policy and Military Development*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, Ca. 1998, pp.91-114; Mark W. Frazier, "China-India Relations Since Pokharan II: Assessing Sources of Conflict and Cooperation", *Access Asia Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2000. Srikanth Kondapalli, "Negotiating Borders or Bordering on Negotiations: Predicaments in Indian and Chinese Policies", in P. Sahadevan (ed.) *Conflict and Peace- Making In South Asia*, Lancer Books, New Delhi, 2001, pp. 308-345.

“probability of war with India is considerably increased” from the Chinese side.²⁷ Some fiction writers in the West have also conjured scenarios of a serious conflict between India and China involving the use of nuclear weapons.²⁸ In other scenarios of conflict between India and Pakistan, China has figured as a saviour of the latter. The persistence with which China has aided and abetted Pakistan’s military build-up, including in the field of nuclear and missile development, is a matter of serious friction between India and China. Several reports have appeared in the US about China’s transfer of nuclear and missile technology, as well as nuclear material to Pakistan, either directly or through third countries like North Korea. We shall come back to the nuclear issue later.

A really explosive territorial dispute exists between India and Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir. One third of the State of Jammu and Kashmir is under the military occupation of Pakistan and regular military conflict has raged between them in the Siachin sector since 1984. India and Pakistan have gone to war with each other four times in Kashmir, the latest of which took place in July 1999, when Pakistani forces encroached the mountain heights in the Kargil sector of Kashmir. The intention was to gain territory through the use of force to compel India to make compromises on Siachin and to put India to a military disadvantage in Kashmir. Indian forces had to undertake difficult and intense military operations to repel the Pakistani occupation of Kargil.²⁹ US diplomatic pressures and determined Indian operations eventually forced the Pakistani forces to withdraw from Kargil. The former US President, Bill Clinton, claimed that he played a significant role in forcing Pakistan to withdraw.

Kargil took place in the background of nuclear explosions by India and Pakistan in May 1998 and their declaration to become nuclear weapon states. The newly acquired nuclear status might have emboldened Pakistan to undertake a conventional military operation to gain territory in Kashmir, on the assumption that India would be deterred from retaliating. Kargil demonstrated that a limited war was still a real possibility between the two countries. This was reiterated by India’s Defence Minister and Army Chief after the conflict had settled down. Addressing a seminar on Asian Security in January 2000, Defence Minister George Fernandes said:

²⁷ Charles F. Doran, “The Structural Turbulence of International Affairs”, in *Survival*, Vol. 41, No. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 146-7.

²⁸ Humphrey Hawksley, *Dragon Fire* (New Delhi: Rupa Books, 2000).

²⁹ K. Subrahmanyam et. al., *The Kargil Report*, New Delhi, 2000.

War remains a possibility among nuclear weapon states below the nuclear threshold. But the danger of escalation to nuclear exchange should make us rethink about initiating even a conventional war. We had understood the dynamics of limited war, especially after India declared its nuclear weapon status nearly two years ago. Nuclear weapons did not make conventional war obsolete; they simply imposed another dimension on the way warfare could be conducted. The Kargil war, therefore, was handled within this perspective with results that are there for every one to see. Pakistan on the other hand had convinced itself for decades that under the nuclear umbrella, it would be able to take Kashmir without India being able to punish it in return.³⁰

If Pakistan's preoccupation with Kashmir, with a view to changing the territorial status quo there, is not abandoned, a conventional war between India and Pakistan remains likely and possible. The critical question to be addressed in this regard is how such a war can be kept limited so that it does not reach the nuclear threshold. It is possible that in such a war, India will have to fight defensively because any major advance by Indian forces into Pakistani territory, or perhaps even into occupied Kashmir, may make Pakistani Generals or rulers so panicky that they may resort to the use of nuclear weapons. This provides a nuclear rationale for both India and Pakistan to seek a compromise solution to the Kashmir issue based on the 1972 -Line of Control. A peace process has been initiated by India with regard to Kashmir and there have been preliminary, but positive responses from Pakistan. The Indian Prime Minister who took the initiative with regard to this peace process has also made it clear that India is willing to explore "unconventional" and "bold" possibilities to seek a lasting peace in the subcontinent.³¹ India's Prime Minister also invited General Musharraf for talks in Agra. The July 2001 summit in Agra proved abortive but there were signs that the process initiated will not be given up.

However, the atmosphere between the two countries was vitiated in the context of post-September 11 developments. India, reacting strongly to the attack by Pakistani terrorists on the Indian Parliament on 13 December 2001, threatened to wage war if Pakistan was not to stop cross border terrorism against India. The international community in general and the US in particular has forced General Musharraf of Pakistan to categorically state that Pakistan's *jehadi* forces will be curbed and will not be allowed to carry on their terrorist activities

³⁰ As cited in, Jasjit Singh (ed.), *Asia's New Dawn: Challenges To Peace and Security* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, September 2000), p. xvi. Also see Jasjit Singh "Limited Wars", in *Strategic Analysis*, October 2000.

³¹ Prime Minister's "Musings", *The Hindu*, December 27, 2000.

outside Pakistan, including in Jammu and Kashmir. The US is trying to bring down tensions between India and Pakistan to avoid war and restart peace process. It remains to be seen how this peace process will restart and how long it will take the two countries, if at all, to establish normal, peaceful relations with each other on a lasting basis.

As mentioned above, the 1998 nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, and their declared intent to weaponise their nuclear programmes have radically altered the strategic situation in South Asia. Both countries have been driven to acquire nuclear weapons by two principal factors, namely, status incongruence and security. For India, there was concern that the gradual phasing out of the global nuclear regime and pressures to sign the “everlasting and universal” Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Nuclear Testban Treaty (CTBT), would lead to a situation in which it was permanently left out of the nuclear hierarchy. Addressing the Munich Conference on February 7, 1999, India’s National Security Adviser and Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Brijesh Mishra said in defence of India’s newly acquired nuclear status : “In both testing and calling for total elimination, the message we were putting out was that India would not acquiesce in being discriminated against. To those who read the message we were saying that either every country should get rid of its nuclear weapons or else we would acquire them too”. This in turn would allow India the possibility to play its legitimate role in world affairs, commensurate with its size and power potential. India therefore had to exercise its nuclear option to break that logjam and to challenge the discriminatory and unequal nuclear hegemony.³² Once India did this, there were not many options for Pakistan to remain behind because Pakistan suffers from status incongruence in relation to India.³³ Pakistan has clearly said so and has even promised to accede to the CTBT if India did so.

With regard to the security aspect, India’s main concern is with the rise of Chinese power and assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific region. In the absence of any reliable security support to India to face this challenge, which disappeared with the collapse of the former

³² For an explanation of India’s nuclear tests, see K. Subrahmanyam, “Nuclear India in Global Politics” and Prem Shankar Jha, “Why India Went Nuclear”. Both these articles appeared in *World Affairs*, July-September 1998, Vol. 2, No. 3. Also see Amitabh Mattoo (ed.) *India’s Nuclear Deterrent: Pokharan II and Beyond*, Har-Anand Publications, New Delhi, 1999, and George Perkovich, *India’s Nuclear Bomb: The Impact on Global Proliferation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000. The most detailed treatment of India’s Nuclear policy may be found in Ashley Tellis, *India’s Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal*, Oxford, New Delhi, 2001 (originally a Rand Corporation Study).

³³ For a detailed discussion on Pakistan’s status incongruence vis-à-vis India, see S.D. Muni, “South Asia”, chapter in Mohammad Ayoob (ed.), *Conflict and Intervention in the Third World* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

Soviet Union, and increasing indication of a strategic equation developing between Russia and China during the latter half of the 1990s, India has to develop its own deterrence. Security concern vis-à-vis China was identified as a main factor by Indian Prime Minister in his communication to US President Bill Clinton on the question of India's nuclear tests of May 1998. The official Indian explanation given for the tests clearly underlined the security dimension when it said:

It is because of the continuing threat to India by the deployment, overtly or covertly, of nuclear weapons in the lands and seas adjoining us that we have been forced to carry out these tests, so that we can retain a credible option to develop these atomic weapons, should they be needed for the security of India...India has been subjected to aggression by one nuclear state and to the threat of use of nuclear weapons by another. Our security concerns, therefore, go well beyond South Asia.

Pakistan's tests were a reactive security response to India's tests. However, Pakistan had started developing its nuclear weapons programme since 1972, following a massive defeat at the hands of India in the conventional war of 1971 that led to the emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign, independent nation.³⁴ This was done by Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto, who ever since the sixties had held a firm view that in the face of a conventionally superior India, Pakistan's security could not be ensured without nuclear weapons.

The nuclearisation of South Asia has complicated regional security in many ways. It has widened the security framework of South Asia by extending it to China. In a way, China was always an integral part of South Asian security concerns, not only because of its border conflict with India in 1962, which even threatened to affect other regional neighbours like Nepal and Bhutan, but also because of its sustained moral, political and material support to Pakistan in the latter's military engagements with India during 1965 and 1971. China has also been helping to build up Pakistan's conventional military capabilities and providing support in its nuclear and missile programmes. Secondly, it has raised the risk of an accidental nuclear war between India and Pakistan as both these countries have yet to develop credible command and control systems for their nuclear weapons.

³⁴ Wiessman, Steve and Korney herbert, *The Islamic Bomb: The Nuclear Threat to Israel and Middle East*, Times Books, New York, 1981. Also see Ashok Kapur, *Pakistan's Nuclear Development* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), and Maj. Gen. D.K. Palit and P.K.S. Namboodari, *Pakistan's Islamic Bomb* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1979).

Following their nuclear tests, both India and Pakistan have committed themselves to the development of a “minimum nuclear deterrence” which will prevent the kind of nuclear arms race witnessed in the context of US-USSR rivalry during the Cold War.³⁵ However, many analysts believe that the possibility of such a race exists in South Asia since the number of nuclear warheads required by each country is not known; particularly so because India’s “minimum deterrence” will have to match the challenge from China while Pakistan has to compare itself with India.³⁶ Besides the possibility of a nuclear arms race in South Asia, the nuclearisation of South Asia has also complicated the nature of any possible conventional conflict between India and Pakistan. The factor of uncertainty about the nuclear threshold of a conventional conflict has been mentioned above. Several important Pakistani former and present decision makers have defined Pakistan’s conventional threshold for nuclear war with India in somewhat ambiguous terms. It is said:

Although the precise contingencies in which Pakistan might use nuclear weapons have not been articulated or perhaps even defined by the government, the assumption has been that if the enemy launches a general war and undertakes a piercing attack threatening to occupy large territory or communication junctions, the “weapon of last resort” would have to be involved. That possibility cannot be ignored and hence acts as a deterrent.³⁷

In this analysis, the extent of “territory occupied” or the theatre of “piercing attack” remain unexplained. It is not clear if any Indian advance in the Jammu and Kashmir region would also prompt Pakistan to use nuclear weapons or only a violation of the agreed international border would do so. In the same article, the Pakistani analysts cited the example of 1989-90 when an assumed possibility of Indian air raids on “training camps allegedly established in Azad Kashmir” for Islamic mercenaries and terrorists operating in India across the Line of Control was considered a sufficient reason for resort to nuclear weapons. It was admitted in the article that Pakistan ramped up its nuclear weapons programme in view of the

³⁵K. Subrahmanyam, op.cit, Amitabh Mattoo, op.cit.

³⁶ For one of the latest arguments along these lines, see Amit Gupta, “India’s Draft Nuclear Doctrine”, in *The Round Table*, London, No. 355, 2000, pp.353-64. Also see Strobe Talbott, “Dealing with the Bomb in South Asia”, in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2, March/April 1999.

³⁷ Agha Shahi, Zulfiqar Ali Khan and Abdul Sattar, “Securing Nuclear Peace”, in *The News*, October 5, 1999. This article was published just a week before the military coup in Pakistan that replaced Nawaz Sharif’s government with that of Gen. Musharraf’s rule. One of the authors, Mr. Agha Shahi, was Pakistan’s foreign minister under previous governments and another, Mr. Abdul Sattar, was made Foreign Minister by Gen. Musharraf within a few days of the publication of this article.

possibility of such “air raids”. Thus, terrorist operations, conventional conflict and a nuclear conflagration vis-à-vis India are closely related to each other in the Pakistani perception.

The answer to the possibility of inter-state conflict lies in settling the territorial disputes and in building mutual confidence. This is evident in the context of India-China relations. The two countries are still far away from resolving the vexed territorial dispute and it may take a good deal of give and take on both the sides to arrive at a settlement.³⁸ But, Indo-Pakistan relations in this respect is much too complex. All previous attempts to build mutual confidence as a step to solving the Kashmir issue have been frustrated so far. General Pervez Musharraf even refuses to agree to any confidence building measure with India while insisting on the resolution of the Kashmir problem.³⁹ The question of peace and cooperation between India and Pakistan goes far beyond the territorial dispute and is interwoven with questions of Pakistan’s ideology, the place of the military in its political system and the relentless urge for military and power parity with India among Pakistani ruling elites.⁴⁰ General Musharraf also mentioned soon after assuming power that the resolution of the Kashmir question may not even bring about lasting peace between the two countries.

Internal Conflicts

The significance of war between India and Pakistan, conventional and/or nuclear, which may involve China, has not declined. But security concerns arising out of internal conflicts have come to the forefront, particularly during the last decade or two. Internal conflicts have been a major security threat to states in the Third World during this period although there are scholars who believe that this trend is now on the decline. According to the well-known scholar on minorities and conflicts, Professor Ted Gurr, ethnic warfare is “on the wane”. An assessment of such conflicts in 1999 showed that out of a total of 59, only 7 of them were escalating, 29 had remained constant and 23 had started de-escalating.⁴¹ In

³⁸ Neville Maxwell, “The Sino-Indian Border: A Scenario for Settling this Vexatious Issue”, in *World Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 3, July-September 2000. In his earlier work on the subject, Maxwell has found only India at fault. In this article also, he argues for a “paradigm shift on the part of India” without saying much about China’s responsibility. But territorial issues of the border dispute have been discussed at length in this article.

³⁹ He repeatedly asserted this position in his press conference after the Agra summit in Islamabad on July 20, 2001.

⁴⁰ S.D. Muni, “South Asia”, chapter in Mohammad Ayoob (ed.) *Conflict and Intervention in the Third World*, op. cit., n. 30. Also, see Stephen P. Cohen “The Structural Dimensions of Conflict in South Asia”, *RCSS Policy Studies* 2, RCSS, Colombo, 1997.

⁴¹ Ted Robert Gurr, “Ethnic Warfare on the Wane”, in *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2000, pp. 52-64.

South Asia, with the exception of the Maldives, which has had no serious internal threat after the externally supported abortive coup in 1988, all the countries have been facing internal security threats.

Major South Asian internal threats include the insurgency in Kashmir and Northeast India, the sectarian violence (between Shias and Sunnis) and the Mohajir movement in Pakistan, the Tamil insurgency in Sri Lanka, the Maoist insurgency and Hill-Terai conflict in Nepal, sectarian conflict in Bangladesh and the revolt of the southern Bhutanese (of Nepali origin) in Bhutan. The constraints of time and space do not permit a systematic analysis of all these conflicts here. But some of the important factors that have contributed to their precipitation and sustenance may be identified for further discussion.

All these conflicts fall within the framework of Ayoob's *The Third World Security Predicament*, in the sense that they are the consequences of the "state-making" processes in South Asia. However, Ayoob's explanation, though relevant is not adequate because he does not go into the question of the character of the state that is formed in South Asia. The region has witnessed the rise of the sectarian state in all the South Asian countries, hence precipitating marginalised and discriminated minorities. The Tamil Sinhala conflict in Sri Lanka, the Shia-Sunni and the Sindhi/Mohajir and Saraiki conflicts in Pakistan, the Hill-Terai conflict in Nepal and the Nepali-Bhutanese conflict in Bhutan are all reflections of this development. In India, the state remains secular and federal but strong sectarian tendencies have developed in the political process since the early eighties. Our hypothesis here is that a secular, democratic and federal polity can contain such socio-political conflicts that emerge out of alienation, discrimination and deprivation.

Besides the state formation processes, these conflicts are also the result of bad governance and economic under-development. All the areas of conflict occur in the peripheral regions of the respective South Asian states. These regions have suffered from government neglect and indifference. As a result, in some cases, the demand for an overhaul of the political system is being made as in the case of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. The cry of separatism, such as in Sri Lanka or in India (Kashmir and the Northeast) is also the result of the experiences of long standing neglect and discrimination. South Asian states are themselves responsible for the "state-making" and bad governance factors. In dealing with these conflicts, the South Asian states have generally adopted a law and order approach, often

using excessive and indiscriminate force. This has aggravated and complicated the conflicts further through the violation of human rights. At times however, political and developmental initiatives have also been taken to soften the conflict or to make them more manageable. India can be singled out for a comparatively more positive approach in this respect with occasional and partial successes.

It would however be unfair to hold the South Asian states *entirely* responsible for the internal conflicts. There is a powerful external dimension to all the intense and persisting internal conflicts. This external dimension has three aspects. One emanates at the level of the global system as such. There has been an explosion of identity, awareness and aspirations at the global level due to the process of globalisation and several technological advances in the fields of communication, information and exchanges. South Asia could not, and has not, remained unaffected by this explosion. People are now more conscious of their rights, privileges and expectations and are demanding that they be addressed. The states on their part are locked in the global economic system of trade, capital flows, technology transfers, etc., where it is not easy to generate required resources to meet the burgeoning expectations. Then there is infusion into the developing countries of the world order ideologies of identity assertion, self-determination, human rights, weakening of state and sovereignty which fuel the separatist and ethnic conflicts.

The second aspect of the external dimension is the conscious exploitation of internal conflicts by the external forces for their specific political, ideological, cultural or strategic purposes. India's support to the Tamil militancy in Sri Lanka during its initial phase⁴² or the sustained support provided by Pakistan to insurgency and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, and in the Northeast, may be included in this category. The insurgency in India's Northeast during the sixties and seventies also received ideological and material support from China. Underlining Pakistan's strategic motives in supporting militancy in Kashmir, an American analyst wrote recently:

Pakistan has two reasons to support the so-called mujahideen. First, the Pakistani military is determined to pay India back for allegedly fomenting separatism in what was once East Pakistan and in 1971 became Bangladesh. Second, India dwarfs Pakistan in population, economic strength and military might... The U.S. government estimates that India has 400,000 troops in

⁴² S.D. Muni, *Pangs of Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict* (New Delhi: Sage, 1993).

India-held Kashmir - a force more than two-thirds as large as Pakistan's entire active army. The Pakistani government thus supports the irregulars as a relatively cheap way to keep Indian forces tied down.⁴³

The third aspect of the external dimension in South Asia's internal conflicts is the support for these conflicts from international sub-state groups.⁴⁴ This would include the role of not only arms suppliers, drug peddlers and money launderers but also of Diaspora and religious fundamentalist groups, particularly Islamic groups and organisations. The Tamil militant group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka will not be able to sustain itself if it did not get huge financial support from migrant Tamil refugees and populations settled in the Western countries and Australia. Similarly, insurgency and terrorism in Kashmir would die out very quickly if the Islamic jihad based in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and supported by fundamentalist groups in the Arab countries, were not involved in it. Yet another dimension of the sub-state external group's support to internal conflicts in South Asia is that many of the South Asian insurgents have established effective networking amongst themselves so as to reinforce their efforts. The LTTE's linkages with the Peoples' War Group in India's Andhra Pradesh, the sandalwood smuggler and his gang in Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border region and the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and Bodo insurgent (like Bodo Liberation Tigers Front) groups in India's Northeast have come to light. There are also unconfirmed reports of Nepal's Maoists getting arms and financial support from the LTTE through the Indian Northeast groups on the one hand and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)-supported *Jihadi* groups on the other.⁴⁵ There are also reports that Maoist forces of the four South Asian countries, namely, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have established a mechanism to coordinate their activities to advance their respective goals.⁴⁶

It is therefore clear that the internal threats to security in South Asia have complex dimensions and cannot simply be seen as the result of state failure. South Asian states are of course partly responsible in creating and perpetuating the threats by leaving them unresolved. There are indications that the South Asian states have started becoming sensitive to the socio-

⁴³ Jessica Stern, "Pakistan's Jihad Culture", in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 6, pp. 115-26.

⁴⁴ Rohan Gunaratna, "Transnational Terrorism: Support, Network and Trends", in *Faultlines*, Vol. 7, November 2000, pp. 1-28.

⁴⁵ Caches of arms meant for the Maoist insurgents in Nepal have been recovered from Nepal's border with India and China.

⁴⁶ *Indian Express*, July 4, 2001.

economic and political dimensions of these conflicts and are taking initiatives to address them accordingly. India's resolution of the Punjab insurgency, initiatives for peace in the Northeast and Kashmir and Sri Lanka's abortive attempts at adopting a new Constitution to ensure devolution of power to the Northeast province may be mentioned here. In most of the South Asian countries, national Commissions for Human Rights have also been constituted to deal with human rights abuses in general as well as in the zones of internal conflicts. Sri Lanka has even started punishing security forces for gross violations of human rights such as in causing the 'disappearance' or killing of alleged terrorists in their custody. For the past few years, India has also been trying to sensitise its security forces towards human rights violations during operations against rebels. These are positive but still very weak indications on the part of individual South Asian states, and with an exception here or there, far from making a real dent in the process of ensuring internal security. The human dimension of internal conflicts and security desire much more effort and commitment on the part of the South Asian states than what is in evidence so far.

The spill over of internal conflicts from one country into the neighbouring countries, or the involvement of the latter in internal conflicts of the former, discussed above, imply that the South Asian states need to cooperate with each other in meeting this security challenge. There are moves at the bilateral level in this respect. Security cooperation between India on the one hand and Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar individually on the other, has been explored in recent years. But achievements have not been satisfactory so far. The concept of cooperative security, which also includes responses to internal conflicts, may be an attractive proposition but with India-Pakistan relations being what they are, it does not sound practical in the foreseeable future, unless of course, there is a dramatic turn in these relations. The failure of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) to deliver concrete results in the agreement to suppress drug trafficking and fight terrorism may be recalled here. In fact, both India and Pakistan have a strong case to collaborate in dealing with the challenge posed by the *Jihadi* groups and their Pakistan/Afghanistan-based sources of support. While these groups have created serious instability in India, the grave potential danger posed by them to Pakistan's internal peace and stability is also being realised.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ Jessica Stern, op. cit. Also see "An Unholy Alliance", cover story in *Newsline*, Karachi, June 2000, and Ahmed Rashid's *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the Great Game In Central Asia*, IB Tauris, London, 2000.

The internal conflicts in South Asia, as elsewhere, have an extra regional dimension and have not remained unaffected by globalisation. The international system and the international community, therefore, have to extend all possible help to the South Asian states in meeting the internal security challenges. There are areas where such support is evidently needed, as in fighting terrorism. But that is of a general nature with some specific aspects to it like banning a particular organisation that is fighting a given South Asian state. The US, Russia and the European Union have also promised to cooperate with India and Sri Lanka in dealing with the terrorist menace. How effective such co-operation would be remains to be seen. There are stray indications that the application of the principle of self-determination in ethnic and separatist conflict situations is being moderated and reviewed.⁴⁸ The international community will have to take clear and sustained policy measures to support reforms (related to political system and governance) and reinforcement (of legitimacy and credibility) of the state in South Asia rather than encouraging tendencies that weaken them. There is a need to help these states perform on the development and economic fronts so that they can address the problems of rising expectations generated in their respective societies. We have noted above that such political processes that strengthen democratic, federal and secular functioning of the states deserve support and endorsement.

⁴⁸ Strobe Talbott, "Self-determination in an Interdependent World", in *Foreign Policy*, No.118, Spring, 2000, pp.152-64. While Talbott makes a positive point of cautious approach to the principle of self-determination, a British Minister recently stated his preference for self-determination in the case of the Tamil ethnic conflict, to the considerable unease of the Sri Lankan government. Amile Etzioni had written years back that "self-determination" is a faulty concept in relation to the established nations. The Non-Aligned Movement accepted this principle only in cases of colonial and subjugated countries and not for the alienated communities in legitimately established states.

Newer and Non-military Threats to Security

South Asia is becoming sensitive to a range of non-military and newer security concerns. Three of them, namely, the threat from environmental degradation, the increase in population movements and energy security, have assumed considerable significance. With regard to environmental degradation, there is serious concern about the denuding forest cover in South Asia due to intense commercial “logging”, and the shrinking of the glacial cover in the Himalayas due to global warming. These two changes threaten to disturb the ecology of the whole region. The loss of the forest cover has dried out the resource base of the poor who depend on the forests for their livelihood. This has also adversely affected the cycle of the monsoons and therefore the agricultural pattern. The melting of the Himalayan ice cover will adversely affect the river systems of South Asia and the availability of fresh water. It is estimated that by 2030 many of the rivers originating from the Himalayas will become dry. The melting of the ice in the Himalayas will also lead to a rise in the sea level. According to assessments by the World Bank, a one-metre rise in the sea level will submerge all of the Maldives and nearly half of Bangladesh’s rice-land area.⁴⁹ Many South Asian countries, particularly India, are also becoming acutely aware of the hazardous consequences of urban and industrial pollution.

To fight environmental degradation, many environmentalists in South Asia are playing an active role by raising popular consciousness and pressurizing their respective governments to evolve strategies of “sustainable development”. In Bhutan an impressive and effective programme of reforestation has been carried out. In India, even the army has taken many initiatives to contribute towards the preservation of environmental security.⁵⁰ These national efforts by themselves cannot meet the challenge of environmental security. A bigger battle needs to be carried out at the global level to preserve and to sustain the world’s ecological balance. Divergent national and regional perspectives and priorities in dealing

⁴⁹ Arun Kumar Singh, “South Asian Ecological Concerns: An Overview”, a paper presented at the India-Nepal Dialogue in New Delhi on January 11, 2001. For a comprehensive treatment of security implications of environmental issues, see Shaikat Hassan, “Environmental Issues and Security in South Asia”, *Adelphi Paper* 262 Autumn 1991, IISS, London. Also see Ibrahim Hussain Zaki, “Protection and Security of Small States”, *United Nations Association of Maldives (UNAM) Chronicle*, Male, Vol.2, No.1, 1995, pp.7-12; Maldivian Ministry of Information and Culture, *Maldives: Foreign Policy Perspective*, Male, 1995; Mohammad Humayun Kabir (ed.) *National Security of Bangladesh in the Twenty-first Century*, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Dhaka, 2000, particularly the contributions of Muhammad Shahedul Anam Khan, A.M.Choudhury and also of Afsan Chowdhury.

with this global issue have made this fight weak, notwithstanding some notable initiatives like the setting up of the Global Environment Fund and the adoption of the Kyoto protocol.

Migration and demographic changes (both of the size and composition of populations) in countries have become another matter of concern and anxiety. In South Asia, the movement of people across borders has resulted not only from persisting conflict situations but also from ecological disasters like floods and earthquakes and economic compulsions. India has been one of the largest and most frequent recipient of refugees from neighbouring countries. The largest number received was estimated to be about ten million during the internal conflict in Pakistan's then eastern wing in 1971. This was one of the important factors that led to India's military involvement in the Pakistani crisis resulting in the emergence of an independent and sovereign Bangladesh. The atrocities committed by the Pakistani military, which gave rise to this exodus have now come to light through Pakistani sources in the Humood-ur Commission Report. Pakistan also had to host nearly four million refugees from Afghanistan when the then Soviet Union militarily intervened there in 1979-80. The continuing conflict even after the Soviet withdrawal keeps the inflow and presence of Afghan refugees in Pakistan a sensitive and disturbing issue. Even the UN is becoming increasingly unhappy about the lack of adequate support from Pakistan in its dispatch of assistance to these refugees. Although on a smaller scale, the issue of having nearly 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in Nepal is exercising the diplomatic skills of the two countries over the past ten years. Academic attention to the security implications of refugee movements in South Asia is being increasingly focused.⁵¹

India has also suffered large-scale migrations from Bangladesh and Nepal. This is motivated by economic reasons. While such migration from Nepal is permitted under the Treaty of 1950 between the two countries, that from Bangladesh is taking place illegally. It was only recently that Bangladesh accepted the reality of such migration. The movement of people has been slow and gradual, but over the years, it has emerged as a conflictual issue between India and Bangladesh. Migration not only strains the economic resources and administrative structure of the host country but it also leads to political instability and ethnic

⁵⁰ Michael Herbottle, "New Role for the Military: Humanitarian and Environmental Security", in *Conflict Studies*, November 1995, pp. 14-16.

⁵¹ For one of the early attempts in this regard, see S.D. Muni and Lok Raj Baral, *Refugees and Regional Security In South Asia*, (New Delhi: Konark, 1996).

polarization, and creates potential for security threats.⁵² The Global Trends Report produced by the American intelligence community in 2001 underlines the fact that in South Asia water scarcity and the movement of people will constitute two major sources of conflict.

South Asian states have preferred a law and order approach in tackling the challenge posed by illegal migration. India has emphasized border management, either through tight monitoring, as is being attempted on the India-Nepal border or by creating barriers such as barbed wire fencing on the Indo-Bangladesh border. Such approaches have proved to be time and money consuming, without being able to yield desirable results. The issue can be handled by closer cooperation between the country of origin and the country of destination. In this cooperation, besides border management issues, the questions of economic development and job creation in the areas from where migration takes place, need to be addressed seriously. South Asians, including Indians, have been migrating to the developed countries for better economic opportunities. Therefore, the problem of migration has also to be looked into from a developmental perspective in order to achieve a lasting solution.

The question of development in South Asia is closely linked to the supply of energy as this region is energy deficient. The demand for energy in South Asia will grow significantly in the years to come, more so in India's case for being the largest and the fastest developing country. Although India consumes less energy on a per capita basis in comparison with the developed countries, it is the sixth largest consumer of energy by global comparison. The rate of India's energy consumption will grow further as it maintains and increases its present growth rate of 6-7 percent. India depends on oil to meet more than 30 percent of its energy requirements. Nearly 65 percent of its requirements are imported; mostly from the Persian Gulf. Thus by 2025, when India's energy requirements grow many fold, its dependence on oil from the Gulf will become too heavy. The problem therefore, is not only of diversifying the sources of supply of oil, coal and gas for India at affordable prices, but also of protecting the supply routes and supply lines.⁵³ This applies equally to other South Asian countries. In fact the oil requirements of Nepal and Bhutan are taken care

⁵² See writings of Partho Ghosh, *Migrants and Refugees in South Asia: Political and Security Dimension*, North East Hill University (NEHU) Publications, Shillong, 2001; Myron Weiner, "Rejected People and Unwanted Migrants: The Impact of Migration on the Politics and Security of South Asia", a paper presented at a seminar at MIT Cambridge, December 1991.

⁵³ Rahuldeep Singh and Ardhendu Sen, *India's Energy Security: 'Quo-Vadis'*, a paper presented at a seminar in New Delhi, January 10-11, 2001. India's Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) is doing commendable work in looking at various aspects of India's energy security.

of by India under special bilateral arrangements. Pakistan is politically and geographically closer to the Gulf sources of oil. Bangladesh has now decided to get its gas reserves properly harnessed for domestic purposes. Although Bangladesh is still hesitant in supplying gas to India, the economic incentives and globalisation pressures may eventually persuade it to shed this hesitation. India is looking for alternative sources of fossil fuels, but importing oil from Central Asia presents geographical and political difficulties. Two possible and convenient land routes for the import of oil passes through Pakistan and China, India's two adversarial neighbours. India is exploring the possibility of getting Central Asian oil through Iran and the proposal of getting Iranian oil through a pipeline passing through Pakistan. India has also initiated moves to secure energy supplies from Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Myanmar.⁵⁴

With the exception of India, all other South Asian countries are deficient in food production. Even in India, food does not always reach the poorer and more vulnerable sections of society even though production of food is in surplus of requirement. Existing storage capacities and the distribution network leaves much to be desired. South Asian countries decided to ensure regional food security through SAARC but even after a decade of efforts in this direction, there have not been satisfactory results. Besides the problems of storage and distribution network, hurdles in proper trading and exchange arrangements also come in the way of providing food to the deficit areas in the region.

In addition to being concerned about the security implications of environmental degradation, population movements, energy and food requirements, the security community in South Asia, particularly in India and Pakistan, is also becoming sensitive to the security implications of information technology.⁵⁵ In the field of economics, "financial stability and sound macro-economic balance" are emerging as "critical elements of national security", especially in the context of a globalised world, and particularly after witnessing the serious consequences of the financial crisis in the East and Southeast Asian neighbourhood during

⁵⁴ Cooperation in the field of energy constituted an important part of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Vietnam and Indonesia on January 7-14, 2001.

⁵⁵ See for example Maj. Gen. Yashwant Deva, "Threats of Cyber Security in the Wake of Pokharan-II", in *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 13, No. 2, April-June 1998. Also see Ajay Singh, "Developing an Information Warfare Strategy", *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 13, No.4, October-December 1998, and in the same issue also see article by Col. Gurmeet Kanwal, "Cyber Warfare: War in the Mega Media Age".

1997-99.⁵⁶ Security implications of political and governmental instability, corruption, administrative inefficiency and intelligence failure are also being increasingly attended to in the literature on security. In the area of health, the spread of AIDS and addiction to drugs are becoming major challenges to human security in South Asia.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion makes it clear that the framework of comprehensive security is fairly wide and each of its components need adequate scrutiny and analysis for a proper understanding. In any comprehensive understanding of security challenges facing a given country or region, the “human security” aspect cannot be ignored. However, one must not overlook the global political and strategic implications of the manner in which the “human security” aspect gets projected in some cases. In South Asia, there is no doubt a growing need to address the “human Security” dimension and to redefine national and regional security in comprehensive security terms. But as we have seen above, the traditional security challenges are still so powerful and dominant that they will continue to absorb greater attention from the policy makers and analysts. The resources tied up with traditional security concerns may not be released to address the developmental concerns of human security until the former concerns are resolved. The difficulty in the domain of analysis here may not be with the “human” aspects of security, but with the urgent need to deal with them separately, under security studies, from developmental and public policy studies.

Depending on a given context and a specific situation, any part of the human security component may assume serious proportions to become a pressing security issue. South Asia has witnessed that before, for example, in the movement of refugees between India and Pakistan in 1971, and between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the 1980s. But then at that time, these issues emerged as parts of the traditional security concern. In another situation like the Maldives, environmental security may weigh heavily on the policy planners, but then the environmental issue is truly global and the scope of country specific solutions is limited. Thus in our understanding, rather than draw boundaries and create categories, security challenges must be perceived in a manner where all the basic components of the state are

⁵⁶ Sanjay Baru, “Economic Determinants of National Security and Defence Budget”, in *Indian Defence Review*, Vol.14, No.1, January-March 1999, pp.18-27. Institutions like ICRIER (New Delhi) and RCSS (Colombo) have produced a number of seminar papers on issues related to the economic dimension of security.

affected, rather than being narrowly focused, like human versus territory or sovereignty. The neglect of human and environmental components of state security is undesirable, but the answer to this should not be in swinging the pendulum to the other extreme. In the South Asian situation, a balanced approach is still the need of the hour.

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Another dynamic affecting South Asian security is determined by the interaction of the regional states with external powers or adjacent regions. In this regard, three factors are important: Afghanistan. Regional stability in South Asia and the success of modernist and moderate forces in Pakistan is of vital importance for the adjacent Gulf/Middle East region, which is once again facing a period of turbulence and violence. Sino-Indian relations. However, in case India moves ahead with deployment, Pakistan will be obliged to follow suit. In that event, risk reduction mechanisms will be required to prevent unauthorized or accidental use of nuclear weapons. The Nature of Southeast Asian Security Challenges. by Jürgen Rüdiger. First draft, please don't quote. Paper Presented at the Third Europe-Southeast Asia Forum "Southeast Asian Security: Challenges and Structures," a Conference Jointly Organized by Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Berlin, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jakarta, and the Federal Ministry of Defence, Berlin. The still most contested issue is the demarcation of maritime borders in the South China Sea where at least six claimants "China, Taiwan, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei" have occupied atolls and islets in the Spratly archipelago and erected military installations. The South China Sea is believed to be rich in natural gas, oil and fish, although there are. 3. 94 Asia-Pacific Security. 'Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Between the ASEAN Nations and the People's Republic of China'. This agreement aims to establish a Free Trade Area between China and ASEAN's six oldest members by 2010 and with ASEAN's newer members by 2015. Bilateral Cooperation Agreements. 98 Asia-Pacific Security. South China Sea Code of Conduct. China has long preferred to settle territorial disputes in the South China Sea on a bilateral basis. However, as a result of ASEAN's reaction to Chinese 'creeping assertiveness' in the South China Sea in 1992 and 1995, China's territorial claims became in effect 'multilateralized'. South Asian Voices (SAV) is a leading online policy platform for strategic analysis on South Asia, hosted by the Stimson Center in Washington, D.C. South Asian Voices Visiting Fellows Asma Khalid, Chirayu Thakkar, Fizza Batool, and Saurav Sarkar present their research and policy recommendations on some of the subcontinent's [!]. January 28, 2021 - SAV editorial staff Views 0. Regional Affairs.