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INDIA'S REGIONAL POLICY MAKING IN POST COLD WAR SETTING

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***Abstract.** India's aspiration to a 'rising power' status, particularly in the post Cold War period, particularly her increasing global engagement and responsibilities continues to be largely dependent upon the level of her engagement in the strategically vital neighbouring region of South Asia, which in turn, continues to be influenced by historical legacy and intra-regional linkages. In spite of being the major regional player, Indian policy making in South Asia has continued to be rather static and conservative due to a large number of factors. Since such policymaking has failed to ensure a greater degree of regional stability, certain alternatives could be adopted to change regional status-quo.*

***Keywords:** India, foreign, south Asia, regionalism, strategy, security, diplomacy.*

Introduction

Like any other policy making, the foreign policy making process is inherently a dynamic one determined by a number of factors. India's aspiration to a 'rising power' status, particularly in the post Cold War period, has not been an exception to this trend. As some analysts have argued that acting under cross-pressure, India's foreign policy appears to vacillate between appeasement and aggression, rather than converging onto the assertion of national self-interest¹. Another scholar had gone to the extent of characterising India as a 'proto-imperialist' power, which, because of its pervasive influence in its neighbourhood in South Asia, has acquired the status of 'second tier imperialist' power.² Though these are somewhat extreme views, it has to be admitted that while India has been a mildly revisionist state at the level of the international system, its regional agenda for the past several decades has been to buttress the regional status quo for the simple reason that the current configuration of regional capabilities suits it.³

India's status as a 'rising power' has led it to reorient and reformulate its relations with the global powers. This has been particularly so since the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union which continued to be the most important strategic partner of India since the signing of the bilateral treaty in 1971 till its collapse in 1991. Two major aspects of 'rising India' have been India's economic growth since the onset of the liberalization process since 1991 and its expanding military links. India's economic growth has also been part of the success story in enhancing India's global reach. Since the onset of the liberalisation process, the economic growth has been more or less steady helping in integrating India within the global economy. For long India has championed the demands of the developing and underdeveloped countries and had projected the interests and aspirations of the global South in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations. The global recession and its severe impact upon the US and European economies in recent years have also enhanced the economic clout of Asian economies like China, and to an extent, India in this respect. The clearest indication of this was the replacement of the G8 by G20 which included developing countries like India.

Another indicator of India's rise is the expanding horizon and outlook of the Indian defence forces. There is a conscious attempt to reduce the old dependence on Soviet/Russian military hardware and armaments and diversify India's purchase of defence equipments and hardware. Apart from the US, defence firms from the European countries and Israel are emerging as important suppliers to the Indian defence sector. Collaborative ventures, research and joint exercises are more frequent and diversified than in previous decades. Of particular importance is the expanding horizon of the Indian navy which is

1 Mitra, S. K.; Schöttli, J. The New Dynamics of Indian Foreign Policy and Its Ambiguities. *Irish Studies in International Affairs*. 2007, 18: 21.

2 Dutt, S. *India and the Third World: Altruism or Hegemony?* London: Zed Books, 1984, p. 13.

3 Sahni, V. The Protean Polis and Strategic Surprises: Do Changes within India affect South Asian Strategic Stability? *Contemporary South Asia*. 2005, 14(2): 219.

fast developing into a major force in the Indian Ocean region and even beyond. Regular naval exercises held with the US navy and the navies of the Southeast and East Asian countries have taken the Indian navy beyond the shores of India. The Indian navy is also engaged, unilaterally, or in partnership with other navies, in counter-terrorism activities; anti-piracy missions and also humanitarian exercises. The Indian navy is in the process of transforming its brown-water/green-water navy into a blue water navy.

The evidence from the late twentieth century, however, suggests that the regional space is becoming increasingly important in power transition and power projection capacity for any developed or developing power. In other words, an emerging power like India is unlikely to emerge as a systemic player at the global level without first consolidating and pacifying its own region through a process of positive transformation, into a zone of growth and peace. This makes it relevant to properly analyse the impact of India's policy making in the South Asian region⁴.

1. South Asian Regional Dynamics

A combination of historical problems along with the painful experiences associated with the partition and decolonisation of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 vitiated the prospects for effective regionalism during the early decades in the post colonial period. Moreover, the South Asian countries were also busy with the task of nation building, which was (and continues to be) a difficult task given the existing state-society gap in all South Asian countries making violence the primary characteristic determining state-society relations in the region. The linkages between the South Asian countries with the West, determined by the 'centre-periphery' paradigm during colonial period was again reinforced substantially through dependency on the North for credit and technology transfers. There was, thus, little scope for a vigorous regional economic interaction.

The South Asian region is also an 'Indo-centric' region because of the strategic location of India straddling the region, her geographical size and extent, her vast population and her superiority in terms of military, economic and soft power. But this has not resulted in unambiguous acceptance of her 'hegemony' on the part of the South Asian countries. In fact, the projection and exercising of Indian hegemony in the region has been a complex and evolving affair, not uniform in character and often contested. India's South Asian neighbours have continuously sought to deny or negate this preeminence by seeking to limit India's regional hegemony. This has resulted in regional rivalry and tension expressed through steady rise in military expenditure and defence spending, including the overt nuclearisation of the regional rivals, India and Pakistan.

4 Rajagopalan, R.; Sahni, V. India and the Great Powers: Strategic Imperatives, Normative Necessities. *South Asian Survey*. 2008, 15(5): 7.

The region in this sense could be also characterised as a 'security complex' constituting a subsystem of the global community of states that for reasons related to historical, geo-strategic and socio-cultural linkages have an interlinked security architecture.

Table 1. South Asia: Basic Characteristics⁵

Country	Territory (sq km)	Population (2010) (in million)	Gross National Income(GNI) per capita (PPP 2008 \$)	Selected human development indicators		
				Life Expectancy at birth(yrs) (2010)	Adult literacy Rate(% age 15 yrs and older) (2006-2007)	Infant mortality rate (per 1000 live births) (2007)
Afghanistan	652,230	26.01	1419	44.6	28.1	149.2
Bangladesh	143,998	146.06	1587	66.9	53.0	39
Bhutan	38,394	0.70	5607	66.8	54.0	14
India	3,287,263	1182.11	3337	64.4	66.0	44
Maldives	298	0.32	5408	72.3	97.0	26
Nepal	147,181	28.04	1201	67.5	57.0	39
Pakistan	796,095	166.52	2678	67.2	54.0	31
Sri Lanka	65,610	20.65	4886	74.4	91.0	23

5 Data compiled from various sources: UNDP Human Development Report 2010; *Human Development in South Asia 2009: Trade and Human Development in South Asia*. Karachi: The Mahbub ul Haq Human Development Centre & Oxford University Press, 2010; Website of the Asian development Bank [interactive]. [accessed on 20-09-2011]. <<http://www.adb.org/>>; CIA World Fact book [interactive]. [accessed on 20-09-2011]. <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>>.

Table 2. Military Expenditure Database for South Asia (2001-2010) in constant US \$ million (2009)⁶

Country	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Afghanistan	–	–	153	156	142	154	226	198	250	–
Bangladesh	841	816	818	822	833	897	944	932	1024	1137
Bhutan	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
India	22557	22487	22,989	26,679	28,196	28,365	28,765	32,106	35,819	34,816
Maldives	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Nepal	106	141	157	187	207	194	180	188	210	207
Pakistan	4,108	4,414	4,714	4,911	5,101	5,160	5,182	4,888	5,039	5,160
Sri Lanka	1,186	981	883	983	910	1,051	1,287	1,474	1,480	1,280

One should, however, remember that the, “Indian self fashioning in South Asia is more as a hegemon in the Gramscian sense of the term, a consensual leader rather than as a military or an economic power intent on dominating neighbours.”⁷ Moreover, its ‘hegemonic’ status has not remained uncontested or unquestioned. One author argues that: “Hegemonic stability requires of the major power to offer economic and security advantages to other countries, a task which India has not risen to. India’s ability to extend capital, aid, market access, and technology, in spite of their easier adaptability, has been severely circumscribed by its own requirements for the ambitious development programmes it has embarked upon, neither have other countries of the region been willing to grant India that role.”⁸

India’s South Asian neighbours have sought to counter India’s hegemony in three major ways: (a) by minimising economic relations with India; (b) by inviting extra-systemic involvement; and, (c) by internationalisation of disputes with India.⁹

In characterising India’s South Asian policy one must, however, adopt a cautious approach before jumping to any quick conclusion, and more importantly, in trying

6 Source: The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) website [interactive]. [accessed on 27-09-2011. <<http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>>].

7 Krishna, S. *Post Colonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka, and the Question of Nationhood*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 28.

8 Anoop, S. S. *Regional Integration in South Asia: Chasing a Chimera? Regional Studies*. Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies. 2000, XVIII(4): 123.

9 Basrur, R. M. *India’s External Relations: A Theoretical Analysis*. New Delhi: Commonwealth Pub, 2000, p. 91.

to firmly place it under the rubric of any theoretical explanation. Understanding the complexities involved in Indian policy making requires one to remember the colonial legacy inherited by the new nation state restricting her attempts to initiate foreign policy making on a clean slate since 1947. As one scholar argues that during the Nehruvian period Indian foreign policy making was, at best, ambiguous.¹⁰ Much of this ambiguity actually arose because of the inherited legacy of colonial policy making.

2. Evolution of India's South Asia Policy Making: a Brief Overview

Under British colonialism, there were certain attempts to project India as the major strategic centre of Britain's Afro-Asian empire. Viceroy Lord Curzon (1899-1905), for instance, going beyond Viceroy Lord Mayo's (1869-1872) conception of an 'informal empire,' often taking a strong line against the strategic thinking of the policymakers in London, highlighted his grand vision of treating India as the, "important strategic location with major resources and the point from which British interests in the Middle East, South East Asia and China could be controlled."¹¹ Indian foreign policy-making in the colonial period was mainly under the guidance and control of the British government, but one should remember that the Government of India's (GOI) Foreign and Political Office exercised substantial control over the Asian and African affairs. Government of India, for instance, had its representatives called Agents or Commissioners stationed in Burma (Myanmar), Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Malaya and South Africa until 1947. The Indian nationalists, particularly the Indian National Congress (INC), since its formation in 1885, developed an ambivalent relationship with this sort of foreign policy projection. On the one hand, there was rejection at one level of the colonial state's power projection as an 'imperialist scheme' which must be rejected after independence. The Indian National Congress, in fact, would attempt to 'territorialise' their conception of independent nation state by being critical of the colonial imperialist policies pursued in Asia from the Indian base. On the other hand, the assertion that India would continue to play a leading role in Asian affairs, if not in the world, not as a military power, but as a benevolent leader, continued to be expressed in nationalist thinking on foreign affairs. The nationalist leader Bal Gangadhar Tilak's representation to the American president Wilson and the French president Clemenceau at the time of ongoing Versailles Conference after the end of the First World War, for instance, mentioned that "with her

10 Misra, A. India at 50: Democracy Nationalism and Foreign Policy Choices. *Asian Affairs*. 1999, 30(1): 51.

11 Vasudevan, H.; Sarkar, A. Colonial Dominance and Indigenous Response. In: Kumar Ray, J. (ed.) *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization. Vol. 10, Part 6. Aspects of India's International Relations 1700-2000: South Asia and the World*. New Delhi: Pearson Longman, 2007, p. 29; For further details on pre-colonial and colonial influences on India's evolving strategic culture see, Vivekanandan, J. *Interrogating International Relations: India's Strategic Practice and the return of History*. New Delhi: Routledge, 2011.

vast area, enormous resources, and prodigious population she may well aspire to be a leading power in Asia if not in the world.”¹²

Re-engagement with Asia, as far possible on Indian terms, was, thus, very much a part of Nehru’s foreign policy agenda. Speaking in the Constituent Assembly of India on 8th March 1949, Nehru said: “When we talk of Asia, remember that India, not because of any ambition of hers, but because of the force of circumstances, because of geography, because of history and because of so many other things, inevitably has to play a very important part in Asia...India becomes a kind of meeting ground for various trends and forces and a meeting ground between what might roughly be called the East and the West...If you have to consider any question affecting the Middle East, India inevitably comes into the picture. If you have to consider any question concerning South-East Asia, you cannot do so without India. So also with the Far East...Even if you think in terms of regional organizations in Asia, you have to keep in touch with the other regions. And whatever regions you may have in mind, the importance of India cannot be ignored.”¹³

Nehru’s ‘Asianism’, however, did not really have its focus upon South Asia. India, in fact, consciously avoided growth of multilateralism in South Asia and put more emphasis on bilateralism with other countries. Regional relations, particularly with Pakistan and Sri Lanka, continued to suffer disputes over contested territories (the status of Jammu and Kashmir), treatment of minorities (Hindu Bengalis in East Pakistan and Tamils in Sri Lanka) and water sharing, in spite of various bilateral agreements being signed from time to time. Indian foreign policy was to develop a greater regional focus only under Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri (1964-1966) who increased India’s engagement with South Asia.

Regional policy pursued during the 1970s and 1980s (with a brief period of Janata Party government at the Centre from 1977 to 1980) under the premiership of Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi became more activist and often interventionist in nature. According to one analyst it was this ‘civilian militarism’ followed by both Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi beginning with the Bangladesh war (1971) and ending with the intervention in Sri Lanka in 1987 that bolstered Indian presence in the region.¹⁴

Certain changes were evident in the Indian regional policymaking since the 1990s. Such changes were a part of the shifting outlook of India’s external relations.¹⁵ The ‘crossing of the Rubicon’ decision was largely an attempt to adjust to the shifting paradigm of the global order in the post Cold War period and also to the onset of the globalisation process. In terms of greater engagement with the South Asian neighbourhood, the clear articulation came from I.K.Gujaral, in his capacity as the foreign minister and later on the prime minister in the United Front government (1996-1998). Eponymously known as the Gujaral Doctrine, the policy consisted of a set of five main principles essentially

12 Vasudevan, H.; Sarkar, A., *supra* note 11, p. 47.

13 Cited in Appadorai, A. (ed.) *Select Documents on India’s Foreign Policy and Relations: 1947-1972*. Vol. 1. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 21.

14 Gupta, S. India Redefines its Role. *Adelphi Paper 293*. IISS, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 37.

15 For details see, Chakrabarti, S. *Cooperation in South Asia: the Indian Perspective*. Kolkata: KP Bagchi, 2008, p. 12–20.

focussing upon India's non-reciprocal approach towards betterment of relations with smaller South Asian neighbours helping in creating an atmosphere of mutual goodwill and trust in the region.

The 'Gujral Doctrine' was controversial when it was first unveiled but became the basis for neighbourhood policies of latter governments, cutting across political divisions. There seems to be a general consensus that New Delhi must act non-reciprocally towards its neighbours and create stakes for its neighbours in the success of India.¹⁶

3. Major Trends in the Post Cold War Period: India's Concerns

In the post Cold War period, one could identify at least four major trends influencing the evolving regional dynamics. First, internationalisation of South Asian regional dynamics has been one major feature in the post Cold War years. While this is not new, the nature and the intensity of such influence has certainly increased to the level of being considered as a major factor. The prime regional organisation in South Asia, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) currently has nine external observers: Australia, China, European Union (EU), Iran, Japan, Republic of Korea (South Korea), Mauritius, Myanmar, and the U.S.A. The SAARC, in recent years, has also sought to diversify its operations by establishing linkages (bilateral and multilateral basis) with external countries or organisations particularly located in Southeast Asia and East Asia.

Direct involvement of external agencies at bilateral level has also markedly increased in South Asia. The US and the NATO's involvement in Afghanistan along with other external players have made the Afghan theatre truly global since 2001. Amidst all talks within policy making circles about an imminent US withdrawal from the country, the US Vice President Joe Biden, while on a visit in Afghanistan in January 2011 commented, "If the Afghan people want it, we (United States) won't leave in 2014."¹⁷

The US engagement with Pakistan has also continued in spite of it generating significant backlash in the country. According to the results of an opinion poll conducted by the Pew Global Initiative, just 12% express a positive view of the U.S with most Pakistanis viewing the U.S. as an enemy, considering it a potential military threat, and oppose American-led anti-terrorism efforts.¹⁸ In a recent statement the Chairman of the US Joints Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mullen said that the Pakistan's spy agency, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), directly supported and abetted the Haqqani network of militants in North Waziristan. In a report to Congress in April 2011, the Obama

16 Mohan, R. C. *The Making of Indian Foreign Policy: The Role of Scholarship and Public Opinion. ISAS Working Paper No. 73.* Institute of South Asian Studies, University of Singapore. 13th July 2009, p. 12.

17 Partlow, J. Biden: U.S. would support Afghans beyond 2014 target. *The Washington Post*. 11th January 2011 [interactive]. [accessed on 15-01-2011]. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/10/AR2011011002389.html?sid=ST2011011303015>>.

18 'U.S. Image in Pakistan Falls No Further Following bin Laden Killing'. Pew Global Attitudes Project. Pew Research Center [interactive]. [accessed on 02-10-2011]. <<http://www.pewglobal.org/2011/06/21/u-s-image-in-pakistan-falls-no-further-following-bin-laden-killing/>>.

administration had complained that the Pakistani Army had “no clear path” toward defeating the insurgency inside Pakistan.¹⁹ Popular demonstrations in Pakistan on 23rd April 2011 halted NATO supply shipments to Afghanistan on Saturday after thousands of protesters rallied on the main road to the border to demand Washington stop firing missiles against militants sheltering in the country. In September 2010, Pakistan had closed the Afghan border for 20 days to protest a NATO helicopter strike inside its borders. In spite of these hiccups, the US engagement is going to continue because of the strategic importance of Pakistan.

Sri Lanka, on the other hand, witnessed the involvement of Norway and some other European countries in the attempted peace process between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) during the period of civil war. Currently, however, the sanctions imposed by the European Union and the criticisms from several European countries regarding the government’s poor human rights records have led to deterioration of relations with the western countries.

Nepal, which also witnessed external involvement during the peace process with the Maoists, also seems to be getting increasingly wary of such influences. Analysts have become critical of Nepal’s over-dependence on foreign powers on the question of economic assistance over a period of time, and her foreign as well as domestic policies being largely influenced by external considerations.

Interesting to note that while the South Asian countries are becoming increasingly wary of western influence, there has been relative silence on the considerable enhancement of the Chinese influence in the region. In 2007, for instance, since the Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse visited Beijing to pave the way for a massive programme of soft loans and some military assistance, Chinese influence has continued to grow steadily in that country. Chinese military help proved to be crucial for the Sri Lankan forces finally managing to crush the LTTE insurgency. The most talked about Chinese involvement in Sri Lanka is of course the upcoming Hambantota Complex in the home district of President. The Hambantota complex with its deep sea port, its own international airport at Weerawila, its own oil storage facilities and refinery, its own tourist hub, its own international conference hall and its own sports stadium, would be a state of the art project when completed. Chinese help has also been provided for the construction of the coal power plant at Norochcholai the first phase of which was completed recently and the work on second phase has started.

Similar to Sri Lanka, since 2002, China has pledged nearly \$1 billion in aid to Afghanistan. In 2008, a state-owned Chinese firm provided the largest single foreign direct investment in Afghanistan amounting nearly \$3.5 billion to develop the Aynak copper field in Logar province. China remains in the running to develop the Hajigak iron ore deposit in Bamiyan province, west of Kabul. Recent bilateral agreements have focussed on expanding economic cooperation, ensuring favorable tariffs on Afghan exports, and creating scholarships for technical training programs across a

19 Perlez, J.; Khan, I. Deadly Drone Strike by U.S. may fuel anger in Pakistan. *New York Times*. 22nd April 2011 [interactive]. [accessed on 24-04-2011]. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/23/world/asia/23pakistan.html?scp=2&sq=pakistan&st=cse>>.

range of critical fields: commerce, communications, education, health, economics, and counternarcotics. China has also made some very limited contributions to the training of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). In 2009, China also conducted a mine-clearing training course for officers from the ANSF.

Considering the fact that China formally established ties with Bangladesh only in 1975, the growth in partnership has been relatively steady and smooth. China is currently Bangladesh's biggest trade partner and one of the leading investor in infrastructure projects. China is also the largest and most important provider of military hardware and training to the latter's armed forces.

Chinese engagement with Nepal has also continued to grow during this period in spite of concerns showed by India. The Chinese Peoples' Liberation Army Chief Chen Bingde, in fact, while on a recent visit to Nepal, said that, "Involvement of third party in bilateral aspects of Nepal-China relations will not be acceptable to China."²⁰

The second important development has been the rising importance of the South Asian diaspora in regional foreign policy making. The South Asian diaspora numbers around thirty million people worldwide. Prior to the Second World War they were mostly located in Southeast Asia, South and East Africa, the Caribbean, Mauritius and Fiji. In the post 1945 period, there has been rapid escalation in the numbers settling down in the Western world and in West Asia.²¹ This phenomenal growth, alongside recognition of the global economic, political and social significance of the South Asian diaspora, has enhanced its importance in the policymaking circles of the South Asian countries. This has been helped by the fact that given the developments in communications, the more recent migrations have given a degree of 'connectedness' between the diaspora and the homeland quite unthinkable even a few years ago. One indication of this is the creation of separate ministries dedicated to the diaspora and foreign migrant workers in most countries in South Asia. The Bangladesh Government established the ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment in 2001. The Indian government created the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) in 2004. Originally established in May 2004 as the Ministry of Non-Resident Indians' Affairs, it was renamed as the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (MOIA) in September 2004. The Sri Lankan government created the Ministry of Foreign Employment Promotion & Welfare (MFEPW) in 2007. The Pakistan government established the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis in 2008. South Asian diaspora also seems to be taking greater interest and more initiatives in matters related to the region.

The third major factor has been increasing regionalisation of India's South Asian policy making. The new forces shaping public opinion and influencing foreign policy are not limited to the national theatre. There is no doubt that different regions of India had always had some influence on the nation's foreign policy towards some of the

20 Source: Third Party involvement in Nepal-China relation unacceptable: PLA Chief [interactive]. [accessed on 24-02-2011]. <<http://www.telegraphnepal.com/headline/2011-03-25/third-party-involvement-in-nepal-china-relation-unacceptable-pla-chief>>.

21 Rai, R.; Reeves, P. 'Introduction'. In: Rai, R.; Reeves, P. (eds.) *The South Asian Diaspora: Transnational Networks and changing Identities*. USA: Routledge, 2009, p. 2.

neighbouring and ethnically kindred countries. The influence of Tamil Nadu politics on India's policy towards Sri Lanka is well known. Equally significant has been the considerable influence exercised by the elite groups in eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, having political influence and often enjoying connections and family ties with elite families in Nepal, on New Delhi's ties with Nepal.²² Non-official close interactions between communities in West Bengal and Bangladesh also fall within this category. To an extent, this has been because of the fact that there is continuous spill over of internal and domestic issues because of intra-regional linkages in terms of ethnic and religious connections cutting across the state borders.

In South Asia, it has also been argued, that geopolitics has to be seen as not simply occurring in a disconnected fashion at the international level, but rather as influencing and creating deeper social and political structures and orientations within states.²³ South Asia is fertile ground for geopolitical influence in the domestic sphere with contested sovereignties; ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities spilling across borders; and insecure political classes. The geopolitical interests and needs of regional and extra-regional states have increasingly had a deep impact on the shaping process of internal identities leading to internal conflicts of various types. Religious extremism and terrorism is the most easily identified connection. Extremism Leftist movements have also tended to spill over and develop intra-regional linkages.

The fourth major factor has been the increasing premium that is being accorded to the process of strengthening economic relations as a vital element in foreign policy making. Nehru, in fact, had once himself commented in the Indian Parliament that foreign policy is the outcome of economic policy, and until India has properly evolved her economic policies, her foreign policy will be rather vague, rather inchoate and rather groping.²⁴ But the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) involvement with the process of economic diplomacy remained somewhat limited before the onset of liberalisation in 1991.²⁵

But this policy has not really been South Asia centric. The prime regional organisation the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) is yet to make any substantial impact even after 26 years since its creation. In spite of the introduction of trade liberalisation schemes like the SAPTA (SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement, 1995) and SAFTA (South Asia Free Trade Area, 2004), the level of intra-regional trade continues to remain low, hovering between 4 and 6 percent only (see *Table 3* below).

22 Mohan, R. C., *supra* note 16, p. 9.

23 Ollapally, D. M. *The Politics of Extremism in South Asia*. UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 3.

24 Chakrabarti, R. *The Political Economy of India's Foreign Policy*. Calcutta: K.P Bagchi & Co, 1982, p. 18.

25 Sridharan, K. Commercial Diplomacy and Statecraft in the Context of Economic Reform: The Indian Experience. *Diplomacy & Statecraft*. 2002, 13(2): 62–68.

Table 3. SAARC Intra-Regional Trade (% age of global trade)²⁶

2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
5.37	5.24	6.20	5.80	6.02	5.13	5.21	4.33	4.20	4.31

One of the major causes of poor intra-regional trade in South Asia is because of India's low key involvement (see *Table 4* below). India in fact, prefers to have bilateral trade agreements with her South Asian neighbours and already enjoys free trade agreements with South Asian neighbours like Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Initiatives to bolster South Asian economic integration, thus, continue to remain mostly confined to policy brief/papers and expert committee recommendations rather than getting translated into action.

Table 4. India's Trade with Saarc Countries (2009-2010) (In \$ Million)²⁷

Country	Export from India	Import to India	Total Volume of Bilateral Trade	India's Total Trade	% age share
Afghanistan	463.55	125.19	588.74	467124.31	0.13
Bangladesh	2433.77	254.66	2,688.44	467,124.31	0.58
Bhutan	118.86	153.11	271.98	467,124.31	0.06
Maldives	79.86	3.63	83.49	467,124.31	0.02
Nepal	1,533.31	452.61	1,985.93	467,124.31	0.43
Pakistan	1,573.32	275.94	1,849.26	467,124.31	0.40
Sri Lanka	2,188.01	392.19	2,580.20	467,124.31	0.55

Within Asia, India's major economic initiatives are mainly directed through the 'Look East Policy' which seeks to expand India's links with the countries located in Southeast Asia and East Asia along with her burgeoning influence in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean zones. Joint economic initiatives involving South Asian countries like the South Asian sub-regional grouping, the Kunming Initiative, the BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation), the

26 Data compiled from IMF Direction of Trade Statistics Yearbooks.

27 Export Import Data Bank, Ministry of Commerce, Government of India website [interactive]. [accessed on 28-09-2011]. <<http://commerce.nic.in/eidb/iecntq.asp>>.

Mekong- Ganga Cooperation, the BCIM (Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar) Economic Cooperation, the IOR-ARC (Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation) are mostly attempts to create extra-regional economic linkages between South Asia and Southeast Asia and East Asian countries rather than enhancing regional cooperation within South Asia specifically. Much more vigorous regional economic initiatives are, however, required as poverty and underdevelopment continues to affect large sections of the regional population which require intensive regional collaboration. Indian soft power approach could play a decisive role in this regard.

4. Human Security Concerns in South Asia

Chronic poverty and underdevelopment continues to be the most obvious and pernicious threat to human security in the region. With 20 per cent of the world population and constituting only about 5 per cent of the world area and that too with high rate of density, teeming millions in the region continue to wallow in poverty and destitution, which in turn gives rise to numerous socio-political ills. The need for enhancement of regional human security is particularly being felt in the context of the region recently experiencing the process of globalisation. The process of globalisation has resulted in greater unevenness mainly benefiting the developed world, while in the developing world; the benefits have accrued only to a few developing countries. Even in the developing countries enjoying the benefits of globalisation such impact have not necessarily been felt across the spectrum. The process of undertaking globalisation has involved a combination of structural changes and shifting emphasis from the state to the market with the objective of closer interaction and interconnection between the domestic and the global economy. This, however, has also not been a case of unmixed blessing. Moreover, large sections of the already impoverished population have found themselves, most often, at the receiving end of such policies. Large sections of the already impoverished population have found themselves, most often, at the receiving end of such policies. Thus, in spite of experiencing economic growth, South Asia, continues to be one of world's most underdeveloped regions.

Environmental/ecological security issues, particularly associated with the lopsided development projects, have become another major paradigm within the field of Non-traditional Security in recent years. According to the UNHCR World's State of the Refugees Report of 1993, environmental degradation was identified as one of the four major causes of refugee flow along with political instability, economic tensions, and ethnic conflict. It has been argued, for instance, that severe environmental scarcities often contribute to major civil violence. Poor countries are particularly vulnerable to this violence, because larger fractions of their populations depend for their daily livelihoods on local renewable resources. In the case of South Asia, for instance, it has been argued: "Environmental-induced conflicts are not independent and isolated occurrences but instead are part of broader regional conflicts based on territorial dispute, cross-border migration, differing security perception and ethnic and religious animosity in which

environmental issues can become additional sources of sub-national or inter-state conflict.”²⁸

Haphazard and unrestricted industrialisation programmes along with indiscriminate destruction of the regional fund resource base has generated an environment crisis situation in South Asia, which turn has threatened the livelihood of millions. In the agricultural sector, for instance, still the major source of livelihood and occupation for the majority, environmental degradation has become a major concern. Recent estimates indicate that in South Asia, 42 per cent of the land is affected by one or other factors that cause land degradation. Half of the region's dry lands face the threat of desertification, with as much as 63 million hectares of rain fed cropland and 16 million hectares of irrigated land having been lost due to it, especially in India and Pakistan. Among other countries, it is estimated that nearly one-third of the land in Sri Lanka has been subjected to soil erosion. One-fourth of Pakistan's total land area is facing serious threats of water and wind erosion. In parts of Bangladesh and northern India, soils have become acidified and salinised. The steep terrain of Nepal is susceptible to soil erosion and landslides. As per Global Assessment of Soil Degradation (GLASOD) estimates, 6 per cent of Afghanistan's land is very severely affected and 10 per cent is severely affected due to anthropogenic activities.²⁹

5. Constructing an Alternative Regional Agenda in South Asia?

Given the rising levels of traditional and non-traditional security concerns (and merger of the two), alternative visions, advocating more holistic pattern of development, are being offered from certain quarters, some of which are receiving official sanctions and elite level endorsement. In the region of South Asia, one alternative vision has been offered by Bhutan through its official endorsement of the concept of ‘Gross National Happiness.’ In spite of problems involved in its process of implementation, theoretically the concept of ‘Gross National Happiness.’ is measured by the peoples’ sense of being well-governed, their relationship with the environment, satisfaction with the pace of economic development and a sense of cultural and national belonging. In this connection, greater focus on evolving a common and cooperative human security oriented foreign policy agenda through consensus building could be one positive development. Recent attempt to project an alternative *security problematique* in Southeast Asia through regional consensus building efforts to ‘Asianise’ the paradigm of human security in order to make it more appropriate for regional application, could perhaps be emulated in South Asia in this regard.³⁰

28 Sinha, U. K. Environmental Stresses and their Security Implications for South Asia. *Strategic Analysis*, 2006, 30(3): 613.

29 *South Asia Environment Outlook 2009*. United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), 2009, p. 13.

30 Sucharitanarugse, W. The Concept of “Human Security” extended: “Asianizing the Paradigm”. In: Tow, W. T.; Thakur, R.; Hyun, I. (eds.) *Asia's Emerging Regional Order: Reconciling Traditional and Human Security*. New York: United Nations University, 2000, p. 49–61.

Is it possible for India to construct a regional foreign policy agenda on the basis of a human security paradigm? The most unique feature of this new concept is its incorporation of socio-economic development within a framework of security discourse, thereby making both concepts more holistic and acceptable to the South Asian community. Human security has emerged as a political leitmotif or guiding vision for policy framing in many nation-states trying to evolve their foreign policy agendas which would be more suitable in grappling with myriad security related issues in the post Cold War world. It has been argued that in order to emerge as a successful guiding vision, a political leitmotif requires to fulfil three functions: (a) explanation and orientation; (b) coordination and action related decision guidance; and (c) motivation and mobilisation.³¹

Developing a specific human security agenda as a part of a country's foreign policy goal, fit to be implemented, however, continues to be a difficult task. The projection of human security as 'freedom from fear and freedom from want' is perfect as an ideal to be achieved but is too abstract as a policy to be implemented, particularly by nation-states in their capacity as international actors. One country that has taken much initiative, especially since the 1990s, to evolve a human security oriented foreign policy agenda is Canada. Apart from such significant steps including the signing of the Lysoen Agreement with Norway in 1998 with its emphasis on enhancing human security, promoting human rights, strengthening humanitarian law, preventing conflict and fostering democracy and good governance, Canada also made pioneering efforts to set up the Human Security Network (HSN) in 1999. In the Asian context, Thailand from Southeast Asia is a member of this network. Japan, in particular, has also been particularly successful within Asia in adopting a human security oriented foreign policy.

There have, however, been exceptions. The debate on human security is relatively new to Asia in spite of the historical heritage of traditional pre-colonial philosophies concerned with statecraft highlighting the importance of state sponsored welfare activities. As most nation-states within the region have emerged as independent entities after decolonisation since the end of the Second World War, and are still struggling with the process of nation building, state-centric security paradigm still continue to be dominant in the foreign policy formulations of the governing elites. Multilateral and normative concepts of security have not yet found much resonance in South Asian countries within the respective decision making circles.

The possibilities of India developing a foreign policy agenda based on its conceptualisation and interpretation of human security would therefore involve much difficulties. New developments since the end of the Cold War and globalisation related inter-linkages, have, however, generated fresh opportunities for India to come out of the state centric straitjacket mentality and give more scope to consensual and multilateral dimensions of foreign policy framing. At the global level also Indian bilateral and

31 Werthes, S.; Debiel, T. Human Security on Foreign Policy Agendas: Introduction to Changes, Concepts and Cases. Debielm T.; Werthes, S. (eds.) *Human Security on Foreign Policy Agendas: Changes, Concepts and Cases*. INEF Report 80/2006. Institute for Development and Peace, University of Duisburg-Essen, 2006, p. 12–13.

multilateral engagements, which have become much extended in recent years, also continue to focus on peaceful and consensual approach towards various issues. Though Indian foreign policy making process does not yet specifically use human security as a defining goal, much of the issues it is concerned with do fall within the agenda of human security. Whether the Indian policy makers would be willing to take up the challenge or display enough dexterity in implementing it, however, remains doubtful.

Conclusions

South Asian regional dynamics, thus, continue to evolve facing old as well as fresh challenges without much stability. This, however, does not mean that the regional has remained trapped within a conflict prone set-up. The year 2008, for instance, witnessed a spate of democratisation in South Asia. In February 2008, Pakistan reverted to civilian rule. In the same year, Bhutan formally established a democratic government. In 2008, elections were also held successfully in Nepal for the constituent Assembly after years of political turmoil and Maldives also ushered in multi-party democracy.³² Democratisation, however, has not proven to be a panacea for all problems. Democracies, sadly, do go to war against each other and could have tension-filled relations. Internal security related problems and external threats continue to plague India as well as her South Asian neighbours to a greater or lesser degree. India's regional policy, in this connection, continues to be largely state-centric, oriented towards maintenance and heightening of traditional security which often runs contradictory to the policy options of her neighbouring countries. As one analyst argues: "First, India's policymakers have not been able to articulate an alternative grand strategy for the country to replace its prior commitment to nonalignment. A country that hopes to play a major role in global affairs cannot be so bereft of ideas to guide its foreign policy. In effect, India's policymakers need to spell out a new vision of a global order barring a vague preference for multipolarity."³³

The terms of engagement, however, continue to change and evolve. It has been argued, for instance, that, in recent years, the Indian policymakers, "seek to marry normative goals and behaviour to policies furthering the national interest, broadly defined as extending from traditional to human security for its citizens."³⁴ In doing this, one option could be the greater use of the substantial non-government, multi-track diplomatic and business networks which already exist within the region. The adoption of a human security-oriented foreign policy agenda is another option for the Indian policymakers to consider. Without such alterations within the policy making structure, it

32 Behuria, A. K. Preface. *South Asia: The Quest for Regional Cooperation*. New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2009, p. ii.

33 Ganguly, S. Structure and Agency in the Making of Indian Foreign Policy. *ISAS Working Paper, No. 116*. 21, November 2010, p. 11.

34 Kumar, R. India as a Foreign Policy Actor - Normative Redux. *CEPS Working Document No. 285*. Centre for European Policy Studies(CEPS). February 2008, p. 26.

is difficult to foresee significant improvement in regional relations which, in turn, would act as a dampener to India's increasingly ambitious global aspirations.

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INDIJOS REGIONINĖ POLITIKA PO ŠALTOJO KARO

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Santrauka. *Indijos siekis užimti „stiprios jėgos“ poziciją, ypač po Šaltojo karo, išplėtė jos globalius išipareigojimus ir atsakomybę. Tačiau jos globalų statusą labiausiai formuoja strategiškai svarbi Pietų Azijos, kuri vis dar išgyvena istoriškai susiklosčiusius santykius ir jų padarinius, kaimynystė. Dėl Indijos geostrateginio dominavimo šiame regione Pietų Azija tradiciškai vadinamas „Indo-centrinis“ regionu. Tačiau kaimyninės Pietų Azijos valstybės toli gražu nelinkusios dėl šio fakto vienareikšmiškai pripažinti Indijos „hegemonijos“. Indijos regioninės hegemonijos formavimas ir realizavimas – sudėtingas procesas, dėl jos dažnai konkuruojama. Apibūdinant regioninę Indijos politiką negalima daryti skubotų išvadų, ypač bandant taikyti jai kokį nors teorinį modelį. Siekiant suprasti Indijos politikos struktūrą ir jos niuansus būtina prisiminti, jog nauja valstybė paveldėjo kolonijinę praeitį ir iki 1947 m. negalėjo formuoti naujos užsienio politikos, taip pat daugybę problemų, su kuriomis kuriama valstybė susidūrė po dekolonizacijos. Užuoat bandžiusi užimti pagrindines pozicijas regione, Indija Pietų Azijoje laikėsi status quo politikos ir iš esmės konservatyviai susitelkė į tradicinę*

diplomatiją, o ne į galingą savo švelniųjų gebėjimų potencialą. Reikšmingai politikos proceso kaitai būtinos rimtos nestandartinės idėjos ir vizijos. Tai pirmiausia turėtų būti nevyriausybinių iniciatyvos ir, jei tai bus įgyvendintina, regioninė politika turėtų orientuotis į žmonių saugumą. Alternatyvios politikos vykdymas gali sukelti esminius status quo pokyčius šiame regione.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *Indija, Pietų Azija, regionalizmas, strategija, saugumas, diplomacija.*

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