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India as a Regional Security Provider:
From Activism to Forced Diffidence

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European University Institute
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
Global Governance Programme

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Abstract:

India's economic rise and concomitant expansion of its military capabilities has engendered calls for New Delhi to assume greater responsibility in the management of regional security, especially in its immediate vicinity. But while India's growing role as a security provider in East and South-east Asia as well as in the larger Indian Ocean region is garnering a lot of attention, it is in India's immediate neighbourhood that New Delhi finds itself constrained to an unprecedented degree. This paper examines India's role as a regional security provider by looking into four categories of security governance (assurance, prevention, protection and compellence). It argues that India's role as a regional security provider will remain circumscribed by the peculiar regional constraints India faces.

Keywords:

India, South Asia, Regional Security, Security Governance

India's economic rise and concomitant expansion of its military capabilities has engendered calls for New Delhi to assume greater responsibility in the management of regional security, especially in its immediate vicinity. Indian policy-makers have asserted that India is willing to take on this role. Indian Prime Minister, for example, has asserted that India is all "set to emerge as a net provider of regional security" (Pandit 2013). Indian Defence Minister too has underlined that the Indian Navy has been "mandated to be a net security provider in the Indian Ocean region" (Pandit 2011). The rest of the world has also taken note. The 2010 US Quadrennial Defense Review underlines that as India's "military capabilities grow, India will contribute to Asia as a net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond" (Quadrennial Defense Review Report 2010).

But while India's growing role as a security provider in East and South-east Asia as well as in the larger Indian Ocean region is garnering a lot of attention, it is in India's immediate neighbourhood that New Delhi finds itself constrained to an unprecedented degree. This paper examines India's role as a regional security provider by looking into four categories of security governance (assurance, prevention, protection and compellence). It argues that India's role as a regional security provider will remain circumscribed by the peculiar regional constraints India faces.

Threats and Security Policy

The rapidly evolving security environment facing India continues to pose significant challenges to the nation's policy makers. A combination of internal and external as well as state and non-state based threats have emerged that have complicated Indian security (Bajpai and Pant 2013; 1-15). Internally, Indian security is challenged by a plethora of insurgencies which are a product of a range of factors including a desire for greater autonomy and resentment over inequality and injustice. Externally, India's immediate neighbourhood continues to be the theatre of the most serious challenges.

Scholars of Indian security have for the most part focused on India's external threats, especially from China and Pakistan. A rapidly rising China may pose the greatest military threat to India if relations with it do not continue to improve and if, in the long run, the two countries cannot come to an agreement on the border, on the future of Tibet, and the sharing of river waters. In addition, as their economies grow, the two Asian giants could find themselves in competition over international status and over key resources including food and energy (Pant 2012). With Pakistan, India has already fought four wars (1948, 1965, 1971, 1999) and has been involved in a series of crises (1986-87, 1990, 2001-2, 2008) under the shadow of nuclear weapons. The quarrel over Kashmir remains live, the two countries are increasingly worried about the sharing of river waters, there are unresolved conflicts over Siachen, Sir Creek, and India's water projects on the Indus rivers, and Pakistan continues to be a haven for terrorists who want to attack India (Cohen 2013).

The other significant challenge externally is the turmoil around India's periphery. Instabilities within Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Burma, and Sri Lanka impinge on India's security. A policy of "splendid isolation" is not an option in this environment, and India's strategic community recognizes that India must engage its immediate neighbourhood more meaningfully and become a net provider of security. How this is to be done, on the other hand, is less clear. Over the past two decades, as India's economy has grown and as the country has invigorated its relations with the US, Southeast and East Asia, Africa, and even Latin America, it has neglected South Asia – a neglect that could come back to haunt it.

However, the most vital threats to Indian unity, stability, and well-being are internal. Internally, the Indian State is witnessing a gradual collapse in its authority and control. New Delhi has to deal with at least three challenges. The first is right-wing Islamic and now Hindu terrorism. The second is left-wing Maoist revolutionary violence in central and eastern India, especially in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, and West Bengal. The third is separatism in India's borderlands. While Sikh separatism in the Punjab was stamped out by the mid-1990s, Kashmir

and various states in northeastern India continue to be sites of separatist violence led by well-armed and elusive insurgent groups.

India has been a target for Islamist extremism for the past decade, with some estimates suggesting that at the height of insurgent activity in Iraq from 2006 to 2008, India was second only to that unhappy country in the number of lives lost to terrorism (Sengupta 2008). In the initial years after the events of September 11, 2001, the Indian government and the Indian media had claimed that no Indians were linked to Al Qaeda or to any other Islamic groups plotting terror. This myth was soon exposed with the revelation that every major Islamist urban terror cell India since 1993 has had a preponderance of Indian nationals. India is clearly both a target and a recruitment base for organizations like Al Qaeda.

Much like Al Qaeda, the most prominent terrorist group in India today, the Indian Mujahideen, is a loose coalition of jihadists bound together by ideological affiliations and personal linkages, with its infrastructure and top leadership scattered across India (Swami 2008). Indian security forces are increasingly focused on terrorists operating in the major cities. If recent events are anything to go by, India's fight against religious extremists may soon be considerably complicated by the rise of shadowy right-wing Hindu terrorist groups.

The Maoist insurgency too has spread from a marginal, containable threat to one that has been identified by the former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as the "greatest internal security threat" facing the nation (Kumar 2007). The Maoists – aka Naxalites – have taken the fight to the vast hinterland of impoverished villages in central and eastern India. The Indian Home Ministry lists more than 150 districts as being 'Naxalite-affected' and the combined force of the Maoist insurgents has been estimated as somewhere between ten and twenty thousand armed fighters plus at least fifty thousand active supporters (Robinson 2008). The Indian government has made some significant gains in the military fight against the Maoists but is still struggling to come up with a comprehensive response.

The third great internal challenge is separatism, and here the insurgency in Kashmir still stand as the biggest threats to Indian unity. The Kashmir problem, from the point of view of India's security managers, has risen and fallen. From 2002 to 2009, it would be fair to say that local disaffection and insurgent violence abated. In addition, there was a feeling that India and Pakistan were inching towards a resolution of their conflict over the state. That assumption was not an altogether idle one. The governments of India and Pakistan were in regular dialogue over Kashmir not just formally but also informally in the so-called back channel talks between high-level envoys (Coll 2009). Former Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf publicly made a commitment to the international community on ridding his military and intelligence services of the jihadi elements within them. Meanwhile, Jammu and Kashmir enjoyed two reasonably free and fair elections. Tourism, particularly internal tourism, moribund since the early 1990s, resumed, and the separatists found themselves isolated. But the ground situation in Kashmir keeps the Indian government perpetually on guard as no Indian government is in a position to allow Kashmir's secession from India for fear of triggering further separatism in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual nation and for fear that Hindu-Muslim relations in the rest of India would be dealt a body blow. Indeed, Indian democracy, beset as it is with various ills and weaknesses, could hardly survive the conflagration that might result from Kashmir's secession. The situation in Kashmir therefore continues to be an uneasy stalemate.

The problems of India's northeast also continue to be stalemated. Insurgencies and violence continue to disrupt daily life and governance, particularly in Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland in spite of both counterinsurgency operations and negotiations. As in Kashmir, alienation from the rest of India culturally, a feeling of neglect economically, political resentment, malgovernance at various levels, sub-ethnic conflict within states (with local majorities and minorities in contention), and of course the collateral and sometime direct violence associated with the military's counterinsurgency operations, all these continue to bedevil the northeastern states. Insurgency is helped by administration that does

not penetrate the countryside, by terrain, by easy access to small arms, and by refuge in neighbouring countries.

The continuing turmoil in Kashmir and the northeast underscore the fragility of India. The Indian media and elite prefer to focus on India's rise, ignoring the parlous state of the domestic realm given the growing threat of Islamist (and now also Hindu) extremism, Maoism, and separatist insurgency. The Indian state's writ does not run over large chunks of territory, and the very idea of India is in question (Khilnani 1999). Law and order, which must be the substructure of a just and liberal democratic order, degrades by the day. Frustration with poor governance is at an all-time high. Amidst the growing ferment and upheavals, the Indian state often stands as a mute spectator, unable to act against violence and those who perpetrate it. Maladministration, dithering and incompetent leadership, and an uncivil civil society are making large parts of India ungovernable. So overall, the security challenges that India faces are growing increasingly complex at a time when India's material capabilities are certainly at an all-time high.

India's Sources of Power

By all accounts, India is on a self-sustaining trajectory of economic growth. This may seem hard to believe, given that its economy was in such dire straits in 1991 that the government was forced to pawn 67 tons of gold to the Bank of England and the Union Bank of Switzerland, in order to shore up its dwindling foreign exchange reserves of a measly \$2 billion. The distance that the country's economy has travelled since then could be gauged by the fact that, in November 2009, with the nation's foreign exchange reserves standing at US\$285 million, India decided to buy 200 tons of gold from the IMF (Rajghatta and Sinha 2009).

The financial crisis of 2008-09 did not impact India as severely as it did some of the countries in the West. In that period, the country experienced slower exports and lost some liquidity but, overall, its economy has weathered the storm and remains highly resilient. Though there has been a slowdown in the rate of economic growth primarily because of domestic political turmoil, there are few who question the ability of the Indian economy to continue growing in the near future. As regards the stimulus behind this growth pattern, the World Bank argues that as a net importer of goods India has sustained growth by utilizing domestic demand. In contrast, export-based economies, such as China's, are far more dependent on global consumer demand, so the Bank suggested that India's growth rate might even outpace that of China (Shah 2010). This would make India's the fastest growing large economy in the world. In addition, its position might also enable it to benefit from increased capital investment and clout, as a result of the slowing of growth in the East Asian region.

If the global balance of power is indeed shifting from the Atlantic to the Pacific, then the rise of India, along with China, is clearly the indisputable reality that few can dare to dismiss any longer. As a consequence, India is now being invited to the G8 summits, is being called upon to shoulder global responsibilities from the challenges of nuclear proliferation to the instability in the Persian Gulf and is increasingly being viewed as much more than a mere "South Asian" power. After decades of marginalization due to the vagaries of Cold War, its own obsolescent model of economic management and the seemingly never-ending tensions with Pakistan, India is finally coming into own with a self-confidence that comes with growing capabilities. Its global and regional ambitions are rising and it is showing aggressiveness in its foreign policy that had not been its forte before (Pant 2008; 1-15). There is clearly an appreciation in the Indian policy-making circles of India's rising capabilities. It is reflected in a gradual expansion of Indian foreign policy activity in recent years, in India's attempt to reshape its defense forces, and in India's desire to seek greater global influence. Sustained rates of high economic growth over the last decade have given India greater resources to devote to its defense requirements.

According to the United States National Intelligence Council Report titled “Mapping the Global Future,” by 2020, international community will have to confront the military, political and economic dimensions of the rise of China and India. This report has likened the emergence of China and India in the early 21st century to the rise of Germany in the 19th and America in the 20th, with impacts potentially as dramatic. The CIA has labelled India the key “swing state” in international politics and predicts that by 2015 India will emerge as the fourth most important power in the international system. According to the assessment of Goldman Sachs, by 2040, the four largest economies will be China, the US, India and Japan. India will overtake the G-6 economies faster than earlier expected and India’s GDP, in all likelihood, surpass that of the US before 2050, making it the second largest economy after China.

India has indeed come a long way. Its economy is one of the fastest growing in the world; it is a nuclear weapon state, a status that is being grudgingly accepted by the world (Pant 2011); its armed forces are highly professional, on way toward rapid modernization; and its vibrant democratic institutions, with the world’s second-largest Muslim population, are attracting global attention at a time when democracy promotion is being viewed as a remedy for much of what is wrong with a large part of the globe. However, the most significant attribute of today’s India is an attempt to carve out a foreign policy that is much more confident of Indian’s rising stature in the international system.

While some were proclaiming the end of history with the fall of the Berlin Wall, in many ways it was the beginning of history for Indian foreign policy, free as it was from the structural constraints of a bipolar world order. It lost its political, diplomatic, and military ally with the demise of the Soviet Union and its economy was on the threshold of bankruptcy. There was domestic political uncertainty with weak governments unable to last for a full five year term as a plethora of internal security challenges were becoming more prominent. The ignominy of having to physically lift bullion to obtain credit pushed India against the ropes and the national psyche was at its most vulnerable. It was against this background that the minority government of late P.V. Narasimha Rao had to formulate its economic and foreign policy to preserve Indian interests in a radically new global environment. And slowly, but surely, the process began that continues to unfold till date as India has tried to redefine its place in the international system in consonance with its existing and potential power capabilities.

Both India and the international system are undergoing profound changes, complicating the interplay between India and the international system. With India’s rise, there are new demands on India to play a larger role in regional and global governance. While traditionally India always tried to be cautious in carving out a role for itself on issues of global governance, on regional security issues India has, more often than not, been an assertive player.

Security Governance Policies

Assurance Policies

The non-intervention principle has always been one of the main official strands of Indian foreign policy. Historically, even as it berated the West for interfering in what it perceived to be internal matters of other sovereign states, New Delhi has never been shy of intervening in what it considered its own ‘sphere of influence.’ In justifying the use of force to evict Portugal from Goa in 1961, India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru underlined that “any attempt by a foreign power to interfere in any way with India is a thing which India cannot tolerate, and which, subject to her strength, she will oppose” (Nehru 1961; 113-115). It has been suggested that though the Indian version of Monroe Doctrine, involving spheres of influence, has not been fully successful in the past, “it has been an article of faith for many in the Indian strategic community” (Mohan 2004/05; 127).

When it comes to the subcontinent, Indian policy-makers have often suggested that New Delhi has a special responsibility to maintain peace and order in the subcontinent. This, not surprisingly, shaped

the perception of India's immediate neighbors in South Asia about India's commitment to the principle of non-intervention as most of them have found themselves at the receiving end of Indian interventions. Two most notable examples include sending troops into East Pakistan to liberate Bangladesh in 1971 and keeping peace in Sri Lanka in 1987.

As India's economic resources have increased since early 1990s, it has tried to play a larger role in foreign economic reconstruction. The most significant of these regional endeavours is India's economic outreach to Afghanistan (Pant 2010; 133-153). India launched an extensive assistance program in Afghanistan immediately after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001 and pledged US \$750 million toward reconstruction efforts most of which was unconditional. Out of this more than US \$450 million has already been utilized and the projects range from humanitarian and infrastructure to health and rural development, training of diplomats and bureaucrats. India is today the fifth largest provider of development assistance to Afghanistan and Afghanistan has been the second largest recipient of Indian development assistance, with its official US \$2 billion dollar commitment exceeding Indian help to any other country except Bhutan (Mullen 2013).

Sri Lanka has been another regional state where India has tried to play a role in the reconstruction of the war ravaged nation. The conclusion of the armed conflict saw the emergence of a major humanitarian challenge, with nearly 300,000 Tamil civilians housed in camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). In 2009, India announced a grant of more than 80 million US dollars for relief and rehabilitation in Sri Lanka. India has initiated a well-organised programme of assistance to help these IDPs return to normal life as quickly as possible and has been advocating the need for them to be resettled to their original habitations. Even as the anti-Sri Lanka mood in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu is getting more belligerent, the Indian government at the centre has increased its annual grant to the island nation in its budget. The allocation has gone up to more than 80 million US dollars for 2013-2014 from around 30 million US dollars in 2011-2012 (Karthick 2013).

New Delhi has also been actively assisting with economic reconstruction in areas which are affected by natural disasters. Although India itself had suffered great damage in the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami, it declined foreign aid offers and itself extended considerable assistance—16 naval vessels, 21 helicopters, and a total of 1,800 troops to Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Indonesia. India also joined the international military assistance core group led by the United States. This was an attempt to impress on the international community its desire to get involved in the affairs of East Asia as a major player by its willingness to bear responsibility for the stability of the region. Ahead of the 2006 Israeli-Hizbollah War, the Indian Navy evacuated 2,280 Indian, Sri Lankan, and Nepalese civilians from Lebanon, once again becoming a provider of regional public goods in South Asia.

Prevention Policies

Prevention policies encompass issues such as democratization, mediation of conflicts and immigration. India holds the principle of non-interference in other states' internal affairs dear and so has been reluctant to make democracy promotion as a core strand in its foreign policy despite being the largest democracy in the world (Cartwright 2009; 403-28). Given India's regional dominance, India tends to become a factor in domestic politics of the regional states. There is also a sense that any attempt by New Delhi to overtly talk of democracy promotion would alienate sections in regional states, further jeopardising democratic consolidation.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that, in many ways, India is the central issue around which Bangladeshi political parties define their foreign policy agenda (Pant 2007; 231-49). This should not be a surprise given India's geographic, linguistic, and cultural linkages to Bangladesh. Over the years political parties opposing the Awami League have tended to define themselves in opposition to India, in effect portraying Awami League as India's "stooge." Moreover, radical Islamist groups in Bangladesh have tried to buttress their own "Islamic identity" by attacking India.

India realizes that it is perceived in Bangladesh as being close to the Awami League; consequently New Delhi has made some efforts to rectify this situation. When the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP)-led coalition of Begum Khaleda Zia assumed office in 2001, Indian officials sent a special emissary to Dhaka to assure the new government that New Delhi had no political favorites in Bangladesh and that its internal affairs were not India's concern. But this failed to make any long-term impact on the new political alignment in Bangladesh. The same is true of Nepal where New Delhi is perceived as being closer to the Nepali Congress. As a result, India has avoided taking sides in Nepal's politics and reached out to all political groupings, including the Maoists.

India has bilateral disputes with most regional states and have tried to use bilateral platforms for their negotiated settlement, not encouraging third-party mediation. Taking this principle forward, India has resisted to be a party to disputes among regional states though it has officially always been in favour of negotiated settlements. Yet, in the case of Afghanistan-Pakistan bilateral disputes, India has been very vocal in favour of Afghanistan as the issues that concern Kabul about the use of terror as an instrument of policy by Pakistani military also impinge directly on India Indian security (Pant 2010).

India shares a border with Bangladesh running through the Indian states of West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. This border is longer than the one India shares with China. Indian officials have alleged that continued illegal immigration from Bangladesh has altered the demography of India's border areas resulting in ethnic imbalance, electoral irregularity, and loss of employment opportunities for Indian nationals. In fact, in the late 20th century the massive influx of refugees fleeing persecution in East Pakistan (as Bangladesh was known before independence) was one of the major reasons India assisted the Mukti Bahini guerrillas fighting for liberation from Pakistan. According to some estimates around 15–20 million illegal immigrants from Bangladesh have crossed over to India over the last several decades.

The northeastern states in India are particularly vulnerable to population movement: less than 1% of the region's external boundaries are contiguous with the rest of India whereas 99% are international boundaries. Bangladesh has complained that the overwhelming numerical superiority of Indian security forces along their long common border has spurred the killing of innocent Bangladeshi nationals by India's paramilitary Border Security Force (BSF). According to some estimates the ratio of Indian to Bangladeshi security forces deployed along the border is 2.5:1. Exchanges of fires between the BSF and its counterpart, the Bangladeshi Rifles are now a regular feature along the border, often resulting in inhumane treatment of each other's forces. Bangladesh also argues that the land boundary delimitation agreement signed in 1974 between Indira Gandhi and Mujib-ur-Rahman has yet to be implemented, with 6.5 kilometres of unmarked borderland in need of clear demarcation.

Ineffective border management has also emerged as a major irritant in India-Bangladesh relations because of concerns about smuggling, illegal immigration, trafficking in women and children, and insurgency. India's plan to erect a 2,886-kilometre fence along its border with Bangladesh, with an additional 400 kilometres in the state of Mizoram, is nearing completion. However, there is no evidence that fencing will be effective in checking infiltration in the area, where for historical reasons there are around 57 Bangladeshi enclaves in Indian territory and around 111 Indian enclaves inside Bangladesh. In many ways the border with Bangladesh is more difficult for India to manage than the border with Pakistan. The Indian army has little presence on the eastern border which is patrolled almost exclusively by Indian paramilitary forces. New Delhi's concerns are not only about demographic changes but also about the security threat posed by anti-India radicals and insurgents who sneak in along with economically deprived Bangladeshi migrants. India is trying to come to a bilateral settlement of the issue and a Land Boundary pact has been agreed by the two sides in principle.

The border between Nepal and China is largely sealed and as such the border inhabitants among the two countries have not been able to obtain adequate benefit at the local level. India has been trying to develop linkages along its regions bordering Nepal. A transport agreement was signed between Nepal

and India in 2004 for the regulation of passenger vehicular traffic through five border crossing points, including Mahendranagar, Nepalgunj, Bhairahawa, Birgunj and Kakarbhitta. In order to connect the different border districts of Nepal with Indian cities like New Delhi, Kolkata, Patna and Varanasi, a provision was made for plying 53 buses on the agreed routes from each side. The nationals of Nepal and India had expected to be able to travel freely and unhindered either way on vehicles for specific purposes such as to get married, attend religious functions, go on pilgrimages and participate in study tours (Jha 2013). The agreement was expected to bring a new dimension to relations between the two countries, but that scheme has not worked satisfactorily.

New Delhi has agreed to help Kathmandu in increasing the capacity of Nepal's Armed Police Force and expand India's Borders Security Forces to control criminal activities along the open border. In addition, India offered technical and material assistance to strengthen the immigration setup along the border should Nepal request such assistance. India has been requesting Nepal to sign the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty and a revised Extradition Treaty, which the Nepali side is keen to defer because of the ongoing political flux (Adhikari 2013).

Protection Policies

Protection policies include a number of areas including health, organised crime, terrorism, and environmental degradation. India has been a longstanding victim of terrorism. India faces a structural problem given as its location is located in one of the world's most dangerous neighbourhoods — South Asia — which is now the epicentre of Islamist radicalism with India's neighbours harbouring terrorist networks and using them as instruments of state policy. Pakistan has long backed separatists in Jammu and Kashmir in the name of self-determination and India has over the years been a major victim of the radicalization of Islamist forces in Kashmir which have been successful in expanding their network across India (Swami 2006). Any breeding ground of radical Islamists under the aegis of Pakistan has a direct impact on the security of India, resulting in a rise in infiltration of terrorists across borders as well attacks. This has had an impact on the India-Pakistan rivalry in Afghanistan as well. It is vital for both India and Afghanistan that the latter should never again emerge as a safe haven for terrorism and extremism. A friendly Afghanistan where religious extremism continues to flourish is seen by Pakistan as essential to keep the pressure on India in Kashmir by providing a base where militants could be trained for fighting against the Indian forces. The mujahideen fighting in Kashmir have not only drawn inspiration from the Afghan resistance against the Soviets but has also drawn resources and materiel support from Pakistan. Kashmiri militants were among the thousands of "volunteers" from various Islamic countries that participated in the war against the Soviet forces. They went back indoctrinated in a version of Islam that destined their victory over the "infidels" as well as with important knowledge of guerrilla warfare. India rightly perceived that the victors of mujahideen against the Soviet Union would fundamentally alter the direction of Islamic extremism as Afghanistan would end up playing a crucial role in the shaping of an Islamic geopolitics sitting as it does astride the Islamic heartland involving South and Central Asia as well as Middle East.

While India would like to ensure that Afghanistan does not become a springboard for terrorism directed against India once again, the resurgence of the Taliban and Pakistan's ambivalent approach towards this growing menace remains a major headache for India. In recent times, the pattern of medieval Islamist ideology challenging the writ of the state is more evident along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border where the resurgence of the Taliban is manifest in myriad ways. The Taliban forces have attacked Indian nationals working in reconstruction and development projects in different parts of Afghanistan in an effort to intimidate the Indian government. There is significant evidence that training camps of various militant groups continue to operate in different parts of Pakistan (Gall 2014). The terror strikes in Mumbai in November 2008 only confirmed Indian suspicions that sections of Pakistani political and military establishment have no interest in renouncing terrorism as an instrument of their foreign policy

India has been supportive of all efforts, particularly in the UN to combat terrorism and has played a leading role in shaping international opinion and urging the international community to prioritize the fight against terror. It is signatory to all the thirteen UN Sectoral Conventions on Terrorism. It has been supportive of all measures within the UN General Assembly, the sixth Committee and the UN Security Council. It has supported UN Security Council Resolution 1269 and 1368, which clearly identify terrorism as a threat to international peace and security. In addition, India has supported and fully implemented Resolutions 1267, 1333 and 1363 relating to terrorism by the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan. It has piloted the comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) in the UN with the objective of providing a comprehensive legal framework to combat terrorism. At the regional level, India is a party to the SAARC Regional Convention on Suppression of Terrorism 1987 and has enacted the enabling legislation in the form of the SAARC Conventions (Suppression of Terrorism Act) 1993 (Pathak 2007). India has also criminalised terrorist financing in accordance with international standards, as a member of the Financial Action Task Force, the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing and the Asia-Pacific Group on Money Laundering (Lakshman 2014).

India is one of the most vulnerable countries in respect of the effects of climate change and therefore has an enormous stake in a global accord. It has been suggested that India was one of the earliest to draw attention to the relationship between environmental protection and development, arguing that economic development for the vast mass of humanity was vital if the environment was to be protected and that the industrial powers had historically been the greatest cause of environmental distress (Sengupta 2013; 389-414). India has been ranked at a low 155th position by the 2014 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) in a global list of 178 countries that places countries on how well they perform on high-priority environmental issues (Times of India 2014).

In the climate change debate, India has chalked out a position consistent with the stance it took in the 1972 Stockholm conference on human environment, namely, the responsibility of the industrial, chiefly Western, powers in creating environmental problems. Since then, in successive conferences on climate change, India has defended the position that there must be differentiated responsibilities in controlling carbon emissions, that those who created the problem must commit themselves to verifiable reductions in emissions, and that the rich must also provide technology and funding for the poorer countries if the latter are to reduce their carbon dependence. New Delhi has worked with others in the developing world, including China, as well as with non-governmental organizations in the developed world to sustain its case. At the regional level, India has used SAARC to underscore the need to strengthen and intensify regional cooperation to preserve, protect and manage the diverse and fragile eco-systems of the region including the need to address the challenges posed by climate change and natural disasters. India along with other South Asian states adopted the Delhi Statement on Cooperation in Environment in 2009 which identifies many critical areas that need to be addressed and reaffirms the commitment of member states towards enhancing regional cooperation in the area of environment and climate change.

Public health remains another area of policies of protection. India has tried to work with its neighbours in tackling some of the challenges emanating on this front with limited success. After the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003, India along with member states of SAARC made a commitment to strengthen cooperation in dealing with the pandemic. It signed the 2005 Islamabad Declaration on Health and Population which proposed the creation of a SAARC Disease Surveillance Centre and Rapid Deployment of Health Response System. However, because of bureaucratic inertia and resource crunch, these initiatives have not been fully implemented (Ahmed 2013; 84). Though a regional strategy on HIV and AIDS was enunciated by India as part of the regional grouping in 2006, the region has failed to implement it effectively as well. The SAARC members have also decided to set up a surveillance centre at New Delhi-based National Institute of Communicable Disease (NICD) to monitor the spread of avian flu in South Asia.

Compellence Policies

By contributing nearly 100,000 military, police and civilian personnel as part of more than forty-five operations so far, India has played a vital role in UN peacekeeping activities. Along with Bangladesh and Pakistan, India has been one of the top three sources of peacekeeping contributions. Many important UN operations like those in Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea–Ethiopia, Kosovo, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Sudan have had the presence of Indian troops and police personnel. This is despite significant domestic demands on Indian security forces to tackle insurgencies in different parts of the country. Like other contributing states, India has also faced the dilemma of using force when the ground situation warranted without undermining the neutrality of the UN blue helmets. While not shying away from undertaking robust measures, India has, as a matter of principle, emphasized the danger of mixing traditional features of peacekeeping—like non-use of force and non-partisanship—with peace enforcement and peacemaking as tended to happen during the post-Cold War phase (Murthy 2010; 214-16).

While India has been a great votary of the UN globally, within South Asia it has tended to resist external intervention. Instead, it has relied more heavily on the use of force. Till the 1980s, New Delhi was forceful in asserting its per-eminence in South Asia even with military interventions and firmly rejected any extra-regional interference. It viewed western intervention in the region as inimical to its interests though it could not keep great powers out of its periphery. India's regional security doctrine has been summed up aptly by Hagerty: "India strongly opposes outside intervention in the domestic affairs of other South Asian nations, especially by outside powers whose goals are perceived to be inimical to Indian interests. Therefore, no South Asian government should ask for outside assistance, it should seek it from India. A failure to do so will be considered anti India" (Hagerty 1991; 351).

This doctrine explains Indian political and military intervention in Sri Lanka from 1983 to 1990 to end the Sri Lankan civil war between the Tamil minority and the Sinhalese majority. This included a failed counterinsurgency campaign that India waged in the island nation. Other regional episodes that underscore this tendency include the 1988 deployment of a parachute battalion to prevent an attempted coup by mercenaries in Maldives and the 1989-90 trade blockade of Nepal after Kathmandu decision to buy weapons from China. The notion that power projection is alien to India's strategic thinking overlooks the fact that India has not hesitated to "sort out" its neighbours when New Delhi felt that its interests were threatened. While some contend that such interventions were only undertaken at the request of the host nation's government, a close reading of several instances, such as the 1971 war with Pakistan and 1987 intervention in Sri Lanka, suggests that coercion played a role in bringing some of these requests about.

With over 1.3 million men and women in uniform, and an additional one million in reserve, the Indian armed forces constitute the third-largest volunteer war-fighting force in the world. Sustained rates of high economic growth over the last decade have given India greater resources to devote to its defense requirements. India has emerged as one of the largest arms buyers in the global market in the last few years and has made more than US \$435 billion of arms purchases in 2009-13 (The Economist 2013). In the initial years after independence in 1947, India's defence expenditure as a percentage of the GDP hovered around 1.8%. This changed with the 1962 war with China in which India had to suffer a humiliating defeat due to its lack of defence preparedness and Indian defence expenditure came to stabilize around 3% of the GDP for the next 25 years (Singh 2001, 22-23). Over the past two decades, the military expenditure of India has been around 2.75% but since India has been experiencing significantly higher rates of economic growth over the last decade compared to any other time in its history, the overall resources that it has been able to allocate to its defence needs has grown significantly. The armed forces for long have been asking for an allocation of 3% of the nation's GDP to defence. This has received broad political support in recent years though this ambition is still far from realisation.

India has asserted its military profile in the past decade, setting up military facilities abroad and patrolling the Indian Ocean to counter piracy and protect lines of communication. As its strategic horizons become broader, military acquisition is shifting from land-based systems to airborne refuelling systems, long-range missiles and other means of power projection with all three services articulating the need to be able to operate beyond India's borders.

Yet fundamental vulnerabilities continue to ail Indian defence policy. So while the Indian Army is suggesting that it is 50 percent short of attaining full capability and will need around 20 years to gain full defence preparedness, naval analysts are pointing out that India's naval power is actually declining. During the 1999 Kargil conflict, operations were hampered by a lack of adequate equipment. Only because the conflict remained largely confined to the 150 kilometre front in Kargil sector did India manage to get an upper hand, ejecting Pakistani forces from its side of the Line-of-Control (LoC). India lacked the ability to impose significant military costs on Pakistan not only during the 2001-02 Operation Parakram - the military mobilization against Pakistan after the December 2001 terrorist attack on Indian Parliament – but even after the Mumbai terror attacks of November 2008 because of the unavailability of suitable weaponry and night vision equipment needed to carry out swift surgical strikes. The Indian public continues to be proud of its military but are sceptical about the political will to use it effectively.

Assessment

Till late 1980s even though India had limited material capabilities, it asserted its pre-eminence within the sub-continent by primarily relying on compellence to manage regional security. New Delhi was keen to control the internal affairs of its neighbours to further its regional security interests and pursued a highly interventionist policy, despite its aversion to a policy of external intervention by other global powers.

Paradoxically since the 1990s, with its economic rise and as its capabilities have grown, constraints have also increased on India's interventionist approach. Smaller states in the region have managed to constrain India's ability to emerge as an effective regional security provider. For long, the dominant narrative with regards to South Asia has been how the India-Pakistan rivalry has constrained Indian foreign policy options in the region and prevented the region from attaining its full potential. That is now rapidly losing its salience with China's growing dominance of the South Asian landscape. The country's rising profile in South Asia has been evident for some time now. What has been astonishing is the diminishing role of India and the rapidity with which New Delhi has been ceding strategic space to Beijing in the subcontinent. This quiet assertion of China has allowed various smaller countries of South Asia to play the country off against India. Pakistan's 'all-weather' friendship with China is well known, but the reach of China in other South Asian states has been extraordinary. Bangladesh and Sri Lanka view India as more interested in creating barriers against their exports than in spurring regional economic integration. Instead of India emerging as facilitator of socio-economic development in Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan, it is China's developmental assistance that is having a larger impact.

As a consequence, despite being the pre-dominant regional power, India is no longer capable of setting the regional agenda. Given this predicament, India today seems more comfortable to share the burden of regional security management with external actors, in particular the US. On most regional issues ranging from terrorism emanating from Pakistan, political decay in Nepal and Bangladesh as well as domestic strife in Sri Lanka, New Delhi is much more comfortable with the idea of working with the US and other western powers than it has ever been before. There is recognition that India can no longer pursue a unilateral policy of compellence as in the past because of structural and domestic political reasons. Sharing the burden of managing the regional security environment provides India the best means of retaining some leverage on regional issues.

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