Imtiaz Ahmed

SECURITY ISSUES IN SOUTH ASIA-US RELATIONS: NEW CONTEXT, NEW BEGINNING

Abstract

The domain of security has become more complex but at the same time, more central to the lives and livings of the common masses. Any recourse to state-centric view of security is bound to meet with limited success because of resultant insecurity on a number of fronts. These are: i) insecurity of sub-national forces resulting from vigorous practice of majoritarianism; ii) societal insecurity as a consequence of misgovernance and weak and polarized civil society; iii) the feeling of insecurity among the mass people in the context of poor access to basic needs within the boundaries of their original habitat and the consequential internal displacement of people, intra-state conflict, cross-border migration and inter-state-conflicts -- all arising from the blind replication of modern development activities; and iv) post-nuclear insecurity that has roots in the attempt of India and Pakistan for developing their respective nation states in the image of the modern West. The article argues in favor of substantial transformation of the state of

Imtiaz Ahmed, Ph.D. is Professor of International Relations, University of Dhaka. An earlier version of the paper was presented as Background Paper for the Sub-Conference on America's Role in South Asia as part of the Asia Foundation's project on America's Role in Asia, Dhaka, 27-29 March 2000

relations between the countries, both within and outside the region, to meet the newer security challenges. The areas where the new US administration might need to act judiciously are nuclearization, democratization, terrorism and environmental issues. In most cases, US administration ends up using outdated policy tools and at times, policies act in contradictory fashion. The article, therefore, makes a plea for rethinking and reinventing policy tools.

The domain of *security* in post-colonial South Asia, more conventionally if not somewhat proudly referred to as 'national security,' has come under attack from four critical directions in recent times. The first one relates to the vigorous practice of majoritarianism, one that has contributed to the growth of militant minorities or sub-national forces in almost all of the South Asian states. The second one relates to the protracted violence and civil disorder in the society, resulting from misgovernance and weak and polarized civil society. This has tended to reproduce violence and misconduct of all kinds, including violence against women, campus violence, violence between and within political parties, drug trafficking, trafficking of women and children, etc. The third one relates to the increased experience of feeling insecure in reproducing everyday needs, including food and other basic needs, by members of both majority and minority communities within the boundaries of their original habitat, an experience incidentally arising from the blind replication of modern developmental practices. The state of insecurity in this area has not only contributed to the internal displacement of people and intra-state conflicts but also cross-border migration and inter-state conflicts. The last and the most recent attack on the notion of national security have come from the nuclearization of South Asia.

If the first two are a direct consequence of the *mode of governance* nurtured and reproduced by the South Asian states, the latter two can be squarely attributed to modernity or more precisely, the *mode of development* cultured and pursued by these states.[1] Practices within these modes and their impacts not only call for a drastic reorientation, even reconceptualization, of the age-old notion of national security but also demand that the state of relations between the countries, both within and outside the region, transform substantially to meet the newer challenges. Put differently, security issues in South Asia-US relations are not only informed by *newer context* but also are in a state requiring a *new beginning*. A closer exposition will make this clear. Let me begin with the most recent state of insecurity in this region, resulting from a precise mode of development ironically catered somewhat willfully by the South Asian states.

I
Modernity and Post-Nuclear Insecurity

Modernity has bedeviled South Asia far longer than the West has had nuclear weapons. A particular kind of modernity took root in this part of the world, largely as a result of the colonial experience. By the beginning of the twentieth century South Asia had become what Nirad C. Chaudhuri sarcastically referred to as, *"the provincial edition of the civilisation of Europe, palely reflecting like the moon, its borrowed light from the great sun beyond."*[2] This was as true in politics and

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[1]   For a close understanding of the different modes, see, Imtiaz Ahmed, "Rethinking National Security: The Issue of Refugees in Bangladesh-India Relations," *Theoretical Perspectives*, Dhaka, Vols. 4 and 5, 1997-98, pp.167-175.

[2]   Nirad C. Chaudhuri, *The East is East and the West is West* (Calcutta: Mitra & Ghosh Publishers, 1996), pp.4-5.

economics as it was in science and technology. Nuclear development, therefore, is a logical culmination of India and Pakistan's craze for developing their respective nation states in the image of the modern West.

Let me put the current debate in a proper perspective. India's policy to go nuclear had little to do with China's nuclear development. In fact, India's nuclear programme has roots in the pre-independence period. The Indian Board of Atomic Energy Research was established by 1946, under the direction of the able modernist, Homi J. Bhabha. Even the otherwise pacifist Jawaharlal Nehru was much impressed by Bhabha's quest for development. Soon after independence, he wrote to his Defence Minister, Baldev Singh, that not only did the *"future belong to those who produce atomic energy,"* but *"Defence [is] intimately connected with this."*[3] No modernist, and more so a dependent one, could have put it better.

The first Pokharan test came in the wake of India's long and somewhat over-driven investment in nuclear Research & Development (R & D). There is hardly any difference between the secular Congress Party, under whose auspices the first test took place in 1974, and the communal BJP, which gave the green signal for the six tests in May 1998. Both chose to nuclearize India and fashion its development in the image of the modern West.

Friends and foes of a nuclear India, both within the country and abroad, were mesmerized by the BJP-led event, which only complicated things further and had some disturbing consequences. Let me explain. Policy-watchers in Delhi have pointed out that the BJP gave the green signal to

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[3] Ct. from Imtiaz Ahmed, "Nuclear South Asia: Now I am Death," *Studies in Political Economy*, Ottawa, No. 57, Autumn 1998, p.38.

the nuclear scientist Kalam and his team the very same day they won the confidence vote in parliament. This observation is given credence in view of the heavily leaked secret that, lest investment on nuclear R & D become difficult to carry through, the tests were to be carried out before the CTBT deadline of September 1999. In light of this the timing of the BJP was impeccable. But that is not all.

A lot has been made of BJP's election manifesto: that they have long advocated making India a nuclear power. Less understood is that for a communal party like BJP making India nuclear is all that matters. In pre-independence politics, the idea of 'national resurgence' had meaning for all political forces, secularist and communal alike. In the post-independence phase, however, because it is directed towards an alien power or nation, 'national resurgence' loses its centrality for secularists, but not for communal forces. Knowing well that the nuclear tests would result in a national euphoria, which would only give credence to *Hindutva* and the power of BJP, the government could ill afford not to act. Post-independence nationalism, given its inherently communalized and fragmented nature, thereby came to rely on the deadliest machines on earth – *nuclear bombs* – to re-energize itself!

Immediately after the nuclear test, Gujral, Gowda, Rao, Sonia Gandhi and even influential Left politicians all joined the euphoria. In fact, Gujral, Rao and some members of the Congress went so far as to claim a share in the national pride. If there was any difference in their response from that of the government, it was restricted to congratulating the nuclear scientists and not the government or to taking exception to BJP's position that India did it because of China! In the public mind, however, their joining the euphoria simply amounted to congratulating Vajpayee and his 'courageous' government.

Much of this enthusiasm dissipated, however (and here lies the folly of the secularists), *following* Pakistan's nuclear test. The vibrant criticism of the BJP plan for the nuclearization of South Asia, which is now in full swing (incidentally joined by Gujral as well), comes a bit late.[4] The BJP has already scored its points. Only economic hardship or an out-and-out reckless leadership could now undercut BJP's political gain from conducting these tests.

Pakistan's threat to conduct its own tests was predictable, although many in India (including some nuclear scientists) thought that Pakistan was bluffing. It did not take long for Indians to realize that no new Einstein is required to produce nuclear bombs. What is required is the sheer drainage of resources and the transferring – even smuggling – of nuclear technology and materials. The hyped-up photo sessions of Kalam, Qadeer, and the like were somewhat pathetic, almost paralleling the mythicized hero of a Bollywood/Lollywood[5] sequence!

Again, to put the debate in a proper perspective, Pakistan's nuclear programme developed independently of India's - although it is true that its tests were a direct response to those conducted by India. While the 1971 break-up of Pakistan and 1974 Pokharan test may have *accelerated* the process, Pakistan's nuclear programme also has a long history. In this context, the position of the pro-nuclear community in Pakistan was most likely strengthened by having India as its enemy. It could easily impress upon its supporters around the world to at least tolerate Pakistan's nuclear programme and at most to

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[4]   According to polls taken last year, 73 per cent of Indians polled now oppose making or using nuclear weapons. Moreover, some 250,000 people demonstrated against Indian nuclear tests in Calcutta on the Hiroshima Day on 6 August 1998.

[5]   Bollywood/Lollywood is the South Asian version of Hollywood.

help with supplies of technology. The hostile situation also allowed successive governments in India and Pakistan to convince their people of the need to spend vast sums of tax dollars on nuclear development.

Whether the bulk of the Indian and Pakistan populations have become stronger and more secure or poorer and insecure as a result of their respective nuclear tests remains an open question. Critics in both these countries, however, are less unsure of its impact. As one Indian critic noted, *"One year after Pokharan-II, the Bomb has comprehensively failed to raise India's stature, strengthen our claim to a Security Council seat, expand the room for independent policy-making, or enhance our security."*[6] And in the context of the post-test Emergency declared by Nawaz Sharif, one Pakistani critic commented: *"The State of Emergency continues with all fundamental rights suspended. The irony of the state turning against the very people whose lives its securing through nuclear weapons is too much for me."*[7] The coming of martial law in Pakistan could only add to the frustration. On the more critical side, however, the nuclear tests have made the region more dangerous and insecure. Two factors stand prominent in this context.

Firstly, India and Pakistan are the only two nuclearized countries in the world having the distinction of fighting three direct wars in the last fifty-three years of their existence as independent states. Moreover, both the countries are still in a state of animosity, trying to contain each other's threat by opting for higher military expenditure and more sophisticated

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[6] Praful Bidwai, "The Naked Nuclear Emperor: India on the First Anniversary of Its May 1998 Nuclear Tests," in Robert D. Green, *Fast Track to Zero Nuclear Weapons* (Cambridge, Massachussetts: The Middle Powers Initiative, 1998), p.82.

[7] Personal correspondence with the author. The critic wanted to remain anonymous.

arsenal. The latest conflict over Kargil has only added to the fear of an all-out nuclear conflict in the region. It is not surprising, therefore, that on 11 June 1998, barely two weeks after Pakistan and one-month after India exploded their respective nuclear devices, *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* moved its "Doomsday Clock" five minutes closer to midnight.[8] The security concern of the two countries, therefore, is no longer national it has become international.

Secondly, the consequences of a *nuclear accident* in the like of Chernobyl or a *nuclear war* between India and Pakistan in the otherwise populated South Asia are likely to be dreadful and devastating. One recent study on the subject showed that a nuclear detonation of 15 kiloton (the kind of bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945)[9] over Bombay would kill between 160,000 to 866,000 and a detonation of 150 kiloton (typical of more modern hydrogen bombs) would kill between 736,000 to 8,660,000.[10] Similar would be the consequence if nuclear bombs were dropped over any other large, densely populated South Asian city, such as Lahore, Dhaka, Karachi or Delhi. A quest for national security has otherwise become an element of insecurity and regional concern.

The above factors are good enough to indicate the upgraded and much-talked about US concern in this region. But while the emphasis of the United States has so far been to convince and also (*albeit* mildly) pressurize the two countries to sign and ratify the CTBT and discourage them from deploying nuclear weapons there is an urgent need for a

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[8]   See, Robert D. Green, *op.cit.*, p.21.

[9.]   150,000 died in Hiroshima.

[10]   For a closer exposition see, M.V. Ramana, "Bombing Bombay? Effects of Nuclear Weapons and a Case Study of a Hypothetical Explosion," *IPPNW Global Health Watch*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Report Number 3, 1999.

thorough appreciation of the conditions that had promoted nuclear development in the region. Indeed, if the conditions remain intact, no amount of CTBT will detest the two countries from further improving upon their nuclear strength and putting the region on the brink of nuclear disaster. I will have more to say about this later.

II
Maldevelopment and Environmental Insecurity

There is economic as well as social cost for blindly reproducing 'development' in the image of the modern West. In fact, modern development, apart from being highly elitist and capital-intensive in this part of the world, is beset with critical prejudices that are often detrimental to the environment. The latter includes things from building dams and highways to the extensive use of fertilizers and pesticides in the agriculture. Often such development takes place at the expense of the lives and the habitat of the minority community and/or the poorer section of the majority community.

The issue of environment, however, goes beyond the organization of modern development. Floods, famines and large families combine and create an environment not conducive for the sound and sustainable habitability of the population. But the gap between such direct ecological factors (save, of course, the issue of large families) and the consequence of modern development is not that great. There is a growing literature that suggests that much of the environmental problems that we are now facing have resulted from *man-made structures.*[11] Even in the case of divine's

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[11.] See, Mary M. Kritz, "Climate Change and Migration Adaptations," *1990 Working Paper Series*, Population and Development Program, Cornell University, No.2.16, 1990; Vandana Shiva, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (London: Zed Books,

wrath, like floods and droughts, often the dire consequences are the results of crude human exploitation of the nature.

What we have here is a situation where modern *(mal) development* contributing to the collapse of environmental security. In fact, there are three, *albeit* inter-related, variations of the collapse of environmental security. The first is the lack of *water security*, or more precisely, the lack of having fresh water, which results from the drying up of rivers and waterbeds. Dams built for hydroelectric purpose pose a real threat in this context. Use of chemical fertilizers is another. This is because such fertilizers require a good deal of water to make them work but in the process also contaminate water, making pure water even more scarce. Put differently, the use of chemical fertilizers, which has now become a norm in the growth of crops, particularly the High-Yielding Varieties,

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1989); Michael Renner, "National Security: The Economics and Environmental Dimensions," *Worldwatch Paper*, Worldwatch Institute, Washington, No. 89, 1989.; Alan B. Durning, "Poverty and the Environment: Reversing the Downward Spiral," *Worldwatch Paper*, Worldwatch Institute, Washington, No.92, 1989; Jodi L. Jacobson, "Environmental Refugees: A Yardstick of Habitability," *Worldwatch Paper*, Worldwatch Institute, Washington, No. 86, 1988.; Lester Brown, "Redefining National Security," *Worldwatch Paper*, Worldwatch Institute, Washington, No. 14, 1977.

There is also a growing (counter) literature, which downplays the negative impact of environment, arguing that the 'environmentalists' have deliberately blown the thing out of proportion or have put forward a worst-case scenario. See, Daniel Deudney, "The Mirage of Eco-War: The Weak Relationship among Global Change, National Security and Interstate Violence," in Ian H. Rowlands and Malory Greene (eds.), *Global Environmental Change and International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1992); S. Fred Singer, "Warming Theories Need Warning Label," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June, 1992; and C. Boyden Gray and David B. Rivkin, "A 'No Regrets' Environmental Policy," *Foreign Policy*, No.83, 1991.

In confronting such views, Jeremy Leggett made an interesting observation:

In evaluating military threats throughout history, policy response
has been predicated on a worst-case analysis. The standard
military yardstick must also apply to environmental security.

See, Jeremy Leggett, "Global Warming: The Worst Case," *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, June 1992, p.33.

(HYV) creates conditions of water insecurity. Often the lack of water security leads to conflicts or 'water wars.'[12]

The second variation is *land security*, related directly to the degradation of soil and the incapacity of the population to harvest any further. In this connection, it may be pointed out that the farmers are totally at lost in confronting the dilemma that they have lately been put into regarding the use of fertilizers: *Without chemical fertilizers, no HYV crops. With chemical fertilizers, no sustainable land for long to grow crops!* In fact, land security is threatened by the continued use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. One researcher has shown that in the past about 30,000 rice varieties were cultivated by the farmers in South Asia, whereas today, thanks to modern techniques and the desire for uniformity, only 15 varieties are cultivated.[13] In the long run, this could only result in the insecurity of the farmers, which they could choose to transform only by changing their original place of habitat.

The last variation is the lack of *food security*, arising partly from a combination of water and land insecurities, and partly from an excessive growth of population.[14] It may be pointed out here that food insecurity may grow with an overabundance of water (the flood factor) as well as with the lack of water (the drought factor). If the country is big, the victims are *internally displaced*, living a life with little or no compensation and an uncertain future and a source of social and intra-state conflict. The situation is even worse when the

[12.] Joyce R. Starr, "Water Wars," *Foreign Policy*, No.82, 1991.

[13.] Jamal Anwar, *Bangladesh: The State of the Environment* (Dhaka: Coastal Area Resource Development and Management Association, 1993), p.55.

[14.] Paul R. Ehrlich, Anne H. Ehrlich, Gretchen C. Daily, "Food security, Population, and Environment," *Population and Development Review 19*, No.1, March 1993; and Lester Brown, *op.cit.*

country is small in size. Since such victims cannot move to other parts of the country, they end up becoming *environmental refugees* in neighbouring states. But since neither the state providing refuge nor the state producing them is ready to accept them as citizens, the bulk of them end up becoming *stateless persons* and an issue of inter-state conflict. A case or two will make both the outcomes clear.

Indian Institute of Public Administration, on the basis of a detailed study of 54 large dams, came to the conclusion that on the average, a large dam in India is responsible for displacing 44,182 people. This prompted Arundhati Roy to undertake a calculation of the number of people displaced from the development of 3,300 large dams in post-colonial India. As she put it in simple arithmetic terms:

> To err on the side of caution, let's halve the number of people. Or, let's err on the side of *abundant* caution and take an average of just 10,000 people per Large Dam. It's an improbably low figure, I know, but...never mind. Whip out your calculators.
>
> 3,300 x 10,000 = 33,000,000
>
> That's what it works out to 33 *million* people. Displaced by big dams alone in the last fifty years.... At a private lecture, N.C. Saxena, Secretary to the Planning Commission, said he thought the number was in the region of 50 million (of which 40 million were displaced by dams) (emphasis original).[15]

Although estimates from each and every large dam on the displacement of people clearly show that the loss outweighs the gain, still there is no stopping on the part of the Indian state from building large dams. Critics blame it on the nexus between politicians, bureaucrats and dam construction

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[15] Arundhati Roy, *The Greater Common Good* (Bombay: India Book, 1999), p.10.

companies, each siphoning off a hefty share from the cost.[16] But the more critical side of dam construction is the social composition of those displaced. In fact, in most cases the majority of the displaced are the tribal people and the underprivileged *Dalits* (the latter account for only 8% and 15% of India's population respectively).[17] In the Sardar Sarovar dam alone, for instance, the displaced tribal people constituted over 57% of the total displaced. It may be mentioned that the World Bank also got interested in this project and provided loans in 1985. Only a protracted struggle of the victims and their supporters for some eight years could finally stop the World Bank assistance for the dam in 1993. While this did not make the Indian government abandon the project, it did provide the victims a kind of confidence that there are people in the world who really care about their life and living. More on this later.

Equally noteworthy is the case of the Kaptai dam in Bangladesh. In the late 1950s Pakistan decided to harness the water resources of the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) mainly to accelerate the process of industrialization in what was formerly known as East Pakistan.[18] To this end, a hydroelectric dam was constructed on the Karnafuli River in Rangamati between 1957-1962 with US financial and technical assistance. The construction of the dam created a huge lake at the north and east of the dam at a place called Kaptai. The total cost of the project came to Rs. 2.4 million.[19]

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[16] *ibid.*, pp.19-20.

[17] *ibid.*, p.10.

[18] For a closer exposition, see Imtiaz Ahmed and Amena Mohsin, "Dam, Nation, Damnation: The Kaptai Dam and the Hill People of Bangladesh," Centre for Alternatives (mimeo), July 1999.

[19] Ct. from Jenneke Arens, "Foreign Aid and Militarization in the CHT," in Subir Bhaumik, et.al. (eds.), *Living on the Edge* (Calcutta: SAFHR & CRG, 1997), p.49.

The dam, however, failed to benefit a large portion of the people of the country, particularly those residing in the vicinity. While the dam benefited some members of the majority community (the Bengalis), providing them with electricity and protein, it created havoc in the lives of the Hill people, particularly the Chakmas residing in that area. In fact, the dam submerged an area of about 400 sq. miles including 54,000 acres of cultivable land making up 40% of the district's total acreage. About 90 miles of government roads and 10 sq. miles of reserve forest also went beneath the water. It made nearly 10,000 Chakma ploughing families having proprietary rights, and 8,000 Chakma *jhumia* families (practicing shift and burn mode of cultivation) comprising more than 100,000 Chakmas *landless and homeless*. It also affected about 8,000 Bengali (mostly poor) settlers and 1,000 Marmas.[20] It may be mentioned that no social impact study of the dam was made before its construction. The government hastily drew up a rehabilitation plan that was neither envisaged earlier nor properly executed.

An acute sense of depression and frustration soon gripped the whole Hill region. A substantial number of Hill people decided to leave CHT. In fact, in 1964, nearly 40,000 Hill people, mostly Chakmas and direct victims of the Kaptai dam, crossed over to India and after being placed here' and there finally settled in the Indian State of Arunachal Pradesh not as citizens but *stateless people*. Sometime in early 1980s, however, they became targets of the local population and also of the State government, both wanting them to pack up and leave Arunachal Pradesh. Only an injunction of the Indian Supreme Court in 1996 allowed them to reside in the State. The status of statelessness, however, continued as before.

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[20] M.Q. Zaman, "Crisis in CHT, Ethnicity and Integration," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Bombay, 16 January 1982, p.77.

Large dams are not the only items reproducing environmental insecurity. Let me explain this by reflecting on the 1998 deluge in Bangladesh. A serious concern throughout the 1998 flood period has been the lack of work for the many of the affected. This is indeed an irony, for while there is so much of work to do in the affected areas, many of the affected are practically without work for months. At one point of time, there was lack of work in almost all of the affected areas. And this continued to be so as late as November (that is, 4-5 months after the flood first began), although the extent of the no-work syndrome was greater in the most affected areas that mostly border the banks of the mighty Brahmaputra and Jamuna.

At the time of flood, however, the testimony of having no work on a massive scale, somewhat ironically, lies in the low price of essential goods. The price of rice in Kurigram (an affected area), for instance, came around Taka 14 per kg, markedly lower than the price of rice in Dhaka or even in Benapole (around Taka 20 and 24 per kg respectively). While in normal circumstances this would have been a cause for celebration for the Kurigramites, it was actually the result of the no-work syndrome or the lack of purchasing power that had prevailed for many months in those areas.

But why is there no work to be found? I guess the part of the answer lies in the governmental introduction, *albeit* under pressure from international donors and the modernist scientific community, new cropping pattern in the country, which effectively replaced the age-old method practiced in Bangladesh. As Nazrul Islam noted,

The cropping pattern [in Bangladesh] was intricately adjusted to the deltaic conditions. Through a process of natural selection, the people of Bangladesh developed the amazing varieties of *bona*

aman, which can grow twenty feet tall or even higher to withstand deep flooding. These miraculous paddy stalks just float in water and can grow up to a foot in twenty four hours just to keep pace with the fast rising level of flood water. These capabilities of *bona aman* are yet to be matched by anything produced by modern plant breeding. Bangladeshi farmers also developed *ropa aman* to adjust to the brief time period that is usually available between *aus* harvest and arrival of floodwater.[21]

With the introduction of the HYV,[22] the flood centric varieties, like *bona aman* and *ropa aman*, became less attractive and financially rewarding to the farmers. The HYV, given its dependence on fertilizers and controlled irrigation, can hardly survive in the midst of big floods. Since many of the affected, under active governmental support, left the former cropping pattern for the latter, it is not surprising that they are left without work and consequently with meagre purchasing power once the flood comes in and drowns their HYV crops. In a situation like this, they can do one of the following things.

Firstly, they could start using their savings. The governmental machinery is absolutely inefficient in this respect, particularly when it comes to the issue of savings of and for the poor. In Bangladesh, this task has been performed with some success by the NGOs. In fact, this is precisely what the major NGOs, including the Grameen Bank, opted for, providing the long-time borrower the full access to her/his past savings. But then again, this has an obvious limitation, for the volume of such savings for each individual or household is not that great.

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[21] Nazrul Islam, "Flood Control in Bangladesh: Which Way Now?" in Imtiaz Ahmed, ed., *Living with Floods: An Exercise in Alternatives* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1999).

[22] It may be mentioned that the area under HYVs increased from 14% in 1973 to 54% in 1993. Moreover, over 90% of the *boro* crop are now in HYVs.

Secondly, they could migrate. This could be of two types, internal as well as external. In the month of October, a random survey conducted by an NGO found that 9% of the village households in the flood-affected areas are totally looked after by women, implying that their husbands had left the villages in search of work.[23] Another survey carried out on the floating population of Dhaka during that time found that 20% of them were recent migrants. Of the in-migrants, fifty-two percent indicated 'lack of work,' while eight percent mentioned 'prevailing hunger situation' as reasons for coming to Dhaka.[24] But this is only one side of the migration.

In 1998, with unprecedented floods in both Bangladesh and India (particularly in West Bengal and Assam), migration (I suspect) crisscrossed both ways. Given the prompt availability of international relief in Bangladesh, one should not be surprised if some distressed people from Malda and Murshidabad, the two hard-hit areas of West Bengal, were found crossing over to Bangladesh. And the case no doubt was the opposite when relief failed to reach the flood-affected border areas of Bangladesh timely and substantially. Moreover, it is not unlikely that population pressures this side of the border and well-established networks on the other side of the border make more Bangladeshis settle down in India than the other way round.

But the above mainly pertains to the issue of water insecurity arising from massive flood. The 'drought factor' is no less precarious. Take again the case of HYV and the need

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[23.] Oxfam, Dhaka, conducted the survey.

[24.] Hossain Zillur Rahman, "Early Warning on Post-Flood Coping: Findings on In-Migration to Dhaka." Paper presented at the National Seminar on *The Deluge of 1998*, organized by Nagarik Durjog Mokabila Udyog, CIRDAP auditorium, 31 December 1998.

for pesticides and controlled irrigation. Much of the success related to HYV production rested on the shift from dependence on high-risk monsoon crops to reliance on low-risk irrigated crops grown in the dry season from November to May.[25] But this shift could be made possible mainly by combining HYV cultivation with expanded irrigation using groundwater and shallow tubewells (STWs).

Excessive pumping of groundwater, particularly in dry season and that again if it continues for two consecutive seasons could bring disaster by emptying the aquifers and making the groundwater table to fall. Critics believe that the fall of the groundwater table is the main cause for the recent dramatic increase of *arsenic* in water.[26] It is not difficult to see that HYV cultivation could lead to land degradation not only for the use of fertilizers but also, and at times more importantly, for having a bad luck of not being accompanied by sufficient river-inundation for replenishing the underground aquifers. The consequence is quite predictable and that is, once land becomes degradable the farmers react almost in the manner of facing an excessive flood.

The scenario outlined above is otherwise a representation of the complex combination of water, land and food insecurities. The immediate victim often respond by leaving his/her original habitat and becoming a displaced person at home and a source of intra-state conflict or an illegal refugee across the border and a source of inter-state conflict. Unless 'development' is put on a new course in this part of the region there is no respite from maldevelopment and environmental

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[25]   Peter Rogers, Peter Lydon, David Secler and GT Keith Pitman, *Water and Development in Bangladesh: A Retrospective on the Flood Action Plan* (Arlington: ISPAN, 1994), p.17.

[26]   Nazrul Islam, *op.cit.*

insecurity. The urgency of this effort lies not only in connection to the process of globalization but also, and more importantly, in connection to the hotly debated environmental concern in the West, including the United States. I will return to this issue shortly.

But 'development' is only one side of the matter; equally important is the factor of governance or lack of it in reproducing insecurity in South Asia. As indicated earlier, two areas are particularly critical in this context.

III
Majoritarianism and Sub-state Insecurity

At the present stage of statehood, the mode of governance can be either 'regimented' or 'democratic.' Apart from having both military and civilian compositions, regimented regimes are generally of two distinctive types, authoritarian and totalitarian.[27] Democratic regimes, on the other hand, are less varied, with all having civilian control, although certain amount of variation in precise shades and colours is always there. What distinguishes regimented regimes from the democratic regimes is the fact that the latter is more conducive to the goals of human freedom than the former. Such differences, however, must not blind us from the fact that a common element binds them together, and that common element is the *will of the majority*. Indeed, modern states, whether regimented or democratic, are all modern 'majoritarian' states, which are principally organized and

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[27] There is sharp difference between authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. The former, in the backdrop of being a 'weak state,' relies heavily on coercive machineries, while the latter enjoys 'blind consent' of the people and the state is not necessarily weak. Of course, in the land of blind, a person with one eye is the king!

reproduced by way of constructing the *nation* and the *nationalities*.

In the case of regimented regimes, such organization is more deliberate and often crude, marked by a policy of using and reusing things and ideas to 'unify' the majority section of the people nationally. Such things and ideas range from religion to race on the one hand, while, on the other hand, from governmentalized schooling to social engineering.[28] But once these things and ideas mature, directed as they are to the majority section of the people, they tend to alienate those who do not fit the 'unifying' categories. The minority communities thereby come to life!

In the case of democratic regimes, however, the organization of majoritarianism and the national is more related to electoral politics, where parties, *albeit* somewhat structurally, are forced to woo the majority section of the people to win elections. In a socially fragmented society, often the party or the candidate settles for the easiest way, and that is, heat up communal, ethnic, racial, linguistic or religious feelings.[29]

This is precisely what has happened in Sri Lanka. The introduction of universal suffrage in 1931 could be a good starting point to reflect on the matter, as K.M. de Silva noted:

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[28] See, Imtiaz Ahmed, "Sri Lanka Today: Governmentality in Crisis," *BIISS Journal*, Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies, Dhaka, Vol.14, No.4, October 1993. See also his, "Facing the Will of the Majority: Muslim Minority in De-Secularized Modern India," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, London, Vol. XV, Nos. I & II, January and July 1994.

[29] For a closer exposition, see, Imtiaz Ahmed, *The Efficacy of the Nation State in South Asia: A Post-Nationalist Critique* (Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1998).

In 1931 [election], candidates in most constituencies resorted to the conventional appeals to caste and religious loyalties, apart from other parochial considerations which a largely illiterate and unorganized electorate...*could most readily understand and respond to.* With the introduction of universal suffrage, the Buddhists came into their own. The great majority of the Sinhalese candidates were Buddhists *or claimed to be Buddhists because it was now advantageous to do so* (emphasis mine).[30]

It was a short journey from here when, following independence, the Senanayakes and the Bandaranaikes, *albeit* in different degrees, resorted to policies of attracting the majority of the electors, who were incidentally Buddhist-Sinhalese, so as to win and run the government. In this quest for *governorship*, nationalism, now garbed in Buddhist-Sinhala idiom, became a powerful tool.

In fact, it had become the business of the 'popularly-elected government' to organize the terms of reference of nationality and nation building. So dominant was its role that by mid-1950s nation building in Sri Lanka began to be considered solely in terms of the definition provided by such a government. Indeed, in 1956, under SWRD Bandaranaike, not only was Sinhala made the sole official language of Sri Lanka but measures were also taken to support the Buddhist faith and Sinhala culture at the state level. Although the question of language has changed since then, *albeit* under 'violent' pressure from the Tamil community, which had forced the country to accept Tamil as one of the two official languages, the constitutional provisions for the special status for Buddhism is still there.

What is unique in all these developments is that suddenly all Sri Lankans were *made* conscious that they are no longer

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[30] KM de Silva, *Problems of Governance* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1993), p.4.

just 'people' but either 'Buddhist-Sinhalese' or 'Tamil-Hindus' or 'Muslim-Tamils,' etc., and the fact of being one or the other determined their fate and prospect in the island.[31] Nationalist consciousness otherwise began to be constructed in a way, which, while favouring the 'Buddhist-Sinhala majority,' put a burden on the latter to 'govern' and 'lead' the rest of the society, almost in the fashion of Kipling's "White Man's Burden."

The alienation of the non-Buddhist-Sinhalese, particularly that of the 'Hindu-Tamil minority,' therefore, remained rooted in the nationalist discourse that unfolded in the island. The success of the Buddhist-Sinhala identity only undermined the interests of the Hindu-Tamils to the extent that between 1956 and 1970 there was a drop from 30 to 5 % in the proportion of Tamils in the Ceylon Administrative Service, from 50 to 5 in the clerical service, 60 to 10 in the professions (engineers, doctors, lecturers), 40 to 1% in the armed forces and 40 to 5 in the labour forces.[32]

It does not take much imagination from here to contemplate *how* the Hindu-Tamils would react. Indeed, the 'Tamil Tigers' arose out of a nationalist discourse and a mode of governance well-disposed towards the 'Buddhist-Sinhala majority,' one which has been organized, nurtured and meticulously followed in post-independence Sri Lanka. Not long after such developments, the (Sri Lankan) Hindu-Tamils impressed their plight upon the 'Hindu majority' of India, a factor that soon contributed to the state of misgiving and

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[31]   Elizabeth Nissan and R.L. Stirrat, "The generation of communal identities," in Jonathan Spencer, ed., *Sri Lanka: History and the Roots of Conflict* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.32.

[32]   This was calculated by a trade union of Tamil Government servants, the *Arasanga Eluthu Vinaya Sangam*. See, Walter Schwarz, *The Tamils of Sri Lanka*, Report No.25 (London: The Minority Rights Group, 1988), p.10.

suspicion between India and Sri Lanka. Indeed, under such orchestrated circumstances, the organization and reproduction of conflict and violence become difficult to contain. The alienation of the Tamils, the power of 'Tamil Tigers' and acts of terrorism, including the gruesome murder of Rajiv Gandhi, are all intrinsically related to one another.

The case is no different for other nation states of South Asia. Today, 'Muslim Pakistan,' 'Hindu India,' 'Buddhist Sri Lanka,' 'Muslim Bangladesh,' 'Hindu Nepal,' all suggest the simultaneous organization of the power of the 'majority community' and the alienation of the 'minorities' or sub-national forces, incidentally with consequences that are often detrimental to national security. The Muslim alienation in India, particularly of the Kashmiri Muslims, is a good case in this context.

The violent conflict in Kashmir and the Hindu-Muslim riots elsewhere in India are product of an identical process related to the organization and development of the modern Indian state. Indeed, both Kashmiri and non-Kashmiri (Indian) Muslims feed on each other's misfortunes and achievements, and this, not just for sharing a common religion but more critically for sharing the 'pride and prejudices' of India's *national security*.

Few seem to realize that there is an intrinsic relationship between the development of the modern state and the development of the modern security forces, including the military. This is true not only with respect to the organization and development of the security forces as an institution but also, and more importantly, with regard to the question of organizing and defining the *security problematique* of the country.[33] In fact, not only the security forces become *manned* by the members of

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[33] This is true for all post-colonial states, see Imtiaz Ahmed, "Sri Lanka Today: Governmentality in Crisis," *BIISS Journal*, Dhaka, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1993, p.488.

the majority community (much above its percentage in the country's population), but interestingly the majority community itself becomes the 'purpose' for the organization and development of the security forces. Consequently, *national security* becomes a thing of the majority, predisposed towards the task of organizing and reproducing the latter's hegemony. India's case is no exception.

In Kashmir, for instance, the entire situation has been turned into a 'law and order' situation, which apart from limiting the scope for conflict resolution, has *militarized the society*, with the forces of the majority community pitted against the minority community or *vice versa*. To take one example, until 1989 there were 36 companies of Indian security forces fighting 300 Kashmiri militants, but by March 1993 the figure rose to 300 companies of Indian security forces and one division of the Indian army fighting 10,000 Kashmiri militants.[34] In this context, one critic aptly pointed out:

> Our political elite is so out of tune with the ground reality that it does not even recognize how Indian military presence fuels Kashmiri alienation.[35]

Kashmiri Muslims are increasingly finding the security forces resembling an 'occupation army,' rehearsed and skilled to uphold the *pride* of 'modern India' while keeping its *prejudices* against national minorities, namely Indian Muslims, in tact. Indeed, it is this military-fuelled Kashmiri alienation, more than anything else, that is now hastening the process towards the construction of yet another 'independent' *nation-state* in South Asia.

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[34] Ct. from Gautama Navlakha, "Kashmir: Time for Rethinking," *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 6, 1993, p.2442.

[35] *ibid.*, p.2442.

The battered position of the Kashmiri Muslims, not to mention their violent struggle, has definitely put a toll on the over-all Hindu-Muslim relationship in the country. If the Muslim community is increasingly viewing the security forces with suspect that they cater only to the 'security' of the majority community,[36] the Muslims (and now, the Sikhs) have also come under the suspect of the majority community, if not the state, for not being forthcoming in things related to the country's national security.[37] The current *saffronisation* only deepens the animosity between the 'Hindu majority' and the non-Hindu minorities.

The alienation of the Muslim Kashmiris in India opens up space for various forces, not only to mess around but also to have a critical role in the region. This could come in two ways. One could come from the interest of some states (both within and outside the region) in the issue. The policies of Pakistan and the United States, although qualitatively different, are good instances in this context. The second one could come from the forces of national and international *terrorism*. It may be noted that alienation, violence and militarization (as we have found in the case of Sri Lanka) breed terrorism, the latter often organized and reproduced with little or no connection to sovereign states and governments. While playing a role (possibly of a 'mediator') in the former, the United States obviously would be interested in the development of the latter. More on this later.

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[36] See, N. Ram, "Hindutva's Challenge," *Seminar*, 402, February 1993, p.26.

[37] Once I over-heard a statement at the Delhi Airport in front of the Immigration Desk, which best summed up the condition of the minorities when it comes to things related to national security. One restive person, seeing that the Immigration Officer was taking so long in admitting a Sikh passenger to the country commented: "They (the Sikhs) have made their lives difficult in India."

IV
Civil Society and Societal Insecurity

Two critical things emerged from South Asia's encounter with colonialism. Firstly, colonialism gave birth to *a polarized political milieu* on a countrywide scale. This is best reflected in the struggle between the colonial government and the colonized subalterns. At a particular moment of history, this took the form of a struggle between the 'colonial' and the 'nationalist' forces, the organization of which led to the polarization of things in both 'public' and 'private' spheres of life, like, education, historiography, music, even dress worn by individuals! This polarization, in so far as it restricted political maneuvers and civil expressions, was destined to polarize other areas as well. Indeed, with the demise of colonialism becoming imminent, South Asia saw a proliferation of *polarized politics*, starting with religion but slowly encompassing other areas as well, like, language, culture, complexion, gender, in fact, all those areas which once enjoyed a pluralist past.

Equally critical is the second milieu, which in a sense is both the cause and the symptom of the first. Indeed, in the face of polarization, the colonized subalterns could do little other than resort to *violence* in the campaign to redress the wrongs done by the colonial power. It is this situation that prompted Mahatma Gandhi to plea for non-violence, but ironically such a situation, in the wake of its precise structures, with little or no space for civilized response, was destined to reproduce further polarization and violence. And it is indeed in the midst of violence and polarized politics that the colonized subalterns finally got rid of the colonial power. But then something else also got transformed.

In the wake of the struggle against colonialism, the area that is commonly referred to as 'civil society' also got

polarized and violent. Put differently, civil society in South Asia, unlike that of the West, could no longer boast of its civilizing and consenting roles. In fact, colonialism reconstructed civil society to such an extent that the latter soon got into the business of organizing and reproducing violence and intolerance in the like of the political society. This reconstruction tainted political parties, voluntary associations, intellectuals, media, schools, sports clubs, all that civil society represented. The latter, in its polarized and violent form, simply went on reproducing *societal insecurity* on a protracted scale. It did not take long for morbid symptoms to play havoc in the lives and livings of the masses.

Something of the above could be found in the spectacular rise in the production of illicit drugs in Pakistan, for instance. In fact, in 1984 Pakistan produced only 50 metric tons of opium, but by 1987 opium production rose to 135-160 metric tons.[38] The increase in opium production since then remained steady, reaching 155 metric tons in 1994-95.[39] More alarming, however, has been the spectacular rise in the production of heroin in Pakistan. It now ranks as the fourth major heroin producer in the world.[40] Two outcomes, both deadly, are almost inevitable here.

One is the relationship between illicit drug production and its trafficking. In fact, those unable to profit from governmental corruption, but at the same time prefer easily-managed, comfortable lifestyle, readily succumb to activities

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[38] For a closer exposition, see, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Menace of Drug Trafficking in South Asia." paper presented at the International Seminar on *Ethno-Sectarian Conflicts and Internal Dynamics of Regional Security in South Asia*, organized by School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, on 2-4 September 1996, p.3.

[39] Ibid., p.3.

[40] Ibid., p.4.

related to illicit drug production/trafficking. It is estimated that drug trafficking fetches around 300% profits in domestic markets and over 1000% profits in the international markets.[41] In fact, in a recent anti-drug campaign the government of Pakistan froze the assets of 19 drug barons, whose 'known' assets ranged between Rs. 15 million and Rs. 886 million. The latter only indicates the amount of wealth that can easily be amassed by these activities. Put differently, the economy of return dictates that many would risk their lives and venture drug production/trafficking.

The second outcome is even more worrying. Illicit drug production/trafficking accelerates the flow and use of small arms. In fact, the use of small arms remains a potent instrument in the very organization and reproduction of illicit drug production/trafficking. Such arms are readily used by the drug traffickers for protecting their self-proclaimed terrain and group affiliations. All kinds of small arms - pistols, Kalashnikov rifles, machine guns, even grenades and mines - are now available in Pakistan's so-called underground market, some of which are traded by the drug traffickers themselves both within and outside the country.

It may be of some interest to know that the government of Pakistan is partly to be blamed for such proliferation of small arms in the country. To take one instance, in early 1989 Pakistan transported 20-30 trucks a day of heavy weapons and ammunition from the arms depots in Landi Kotal and Peshawar to support the resistance groups in Afghanistan.[42] Some of these weapons, however, not only landed in wrong

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[41] Ibid., p.8.

[42]. See, Jasjit Singh, "Small Arms Proliferation in South Asia," in Stefan Melnik and Wolfgang Heinz (eds.), *The Human Rights Community and Conflict Resolution in South Asia - The Applicability of European Examples* (Brussels: Friedrich Naumann Foundation, 1996).

hands in Afghanistan but also returned to Pakistan via the hands of drug/arms traffickers. Ironically, Pakistan police and the military must now fight against those very arms they once helped to supply.

The combination of illicit drug production/trafficking with the easy availability of small arms is a deadly one. It tends to criminalize the society, indeed, to a point where extortion, looting and even violent killing of people are viewed more as norms than exceptions in the life of a society. The following are some of the crimes committed in Pakistan in just one year in 1995:

- Over 2,000 people were killed in violence in Karachi.

- 180 people died from supposed encounters with the police in Punjab.

- The graph of serious crime in Islamabad showed an upward trend.

- Extortion was found to be widespread and a largely accepted practice in Karachi.

- The number of proclaimed offenders and criminals seeking refuge in and operating from the tribals of NWFP exceeded 1,100 by official admission.

- A gang of highway men blocked the Islamabad-Muree road and looted the travelers. The operation covered around 100 vehicles and continued for about 90 minutes.

- On one day in November the total number of prisoners in all jails was 124,361, with 71,082 of them convicts. The number that had been in the jails for a part or whole of the year was 300,000.[43]

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[43]. For a closer exposition, see *State of Human Rights in 1995* (Lahore: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 1996).

But then Pakistan is no exception. In fact, India since
1969, with 4-5 good years in between, produced on the
average more than one riot every day.[44] The consequence is a
telling one, as Jim Masselos pointed out with reference to the
Bombay riots of 1993:

> During the eight days of severe and ten further days of less
> severe rioting in January 1993 at least five hundred and fifty
> people were killed and Rs. 4,000 crores of property destroyed.
> Trading losses in business were estimated at Rs. 1,000 crores;
> the loss of gross value of output of goods and services at Rs.
> 1,250 crores, loss of exports Rs. 2,000 crores, and loss of tax
> revenue at Rs.150 crores.[45]

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[44]   Number of communal riots in India:

1954......84		1971......321
1955......75		1972......240
1956......82		1973......242
1957......58		1974......248
1958......40		1975......205
1959......42		1976......169
1960......26		1977......188
1961......92		1978......219
1962......60		1979......304
1963......61		1980......427
1964....1070		1981......319
1965.....173		1982......474
1966.....144		1983......500
1967.....198		1984......476
1968.....346		1985......525
1969.....519		
1970.....521		

The above has been cited from, Iqbal A. Ansari, ed., *The Muslim Situation in India*
(Dhaka: Academic Publishers), 1989, pp.230-231. It may be pointed out that in the
eighteenth century as a whole, there is evidence of only four communal riots. See,
Herbans Mukhia, "Communalism and the Indian Polity," *South Asia Bulletin*, Vol.XI,
Nos. 1 & 2, 1991, p.66.

[45]   Jim Masselos, "The Bombay Riots of January 1993: The Politics of Urban
Conflagration," in John McGuire, *et.al.*, eds., *Politics of Violence: From Ayodhya to
Behrampada* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1996), p.112

As for Bangladesh, to take one instance, incidents of violence against women doubled in recent times, from 628 in 1995 to 1553 in 1997.[46] This, however, included only those cases that were reported and therefore, are much less compared to actual occurrence of violence against women. Both the fear of being ostracized socially and the fear of retaliation by the perpetrator have prevented many women victims from reporting their cases.

And Sri Lanka? What else can one say? In the first four months of 1991 alone, the government figure showed that over 1,000 soldiers, rebels, and *civilians* (both Sinhalese and Tamils) died in war-related incidents.[47] The state of chaos there only reminds us of Gandhi's pre-partition statement: "Eye for eye makes the whole world blind!" With none of the key actors having the sagacity to blink for a moment, Sri Lanka seems to be falling into a black hole of no return. The situation in Nepal is no better either.[48] In essence, in each of these countries, civil society has become less a place for civilizing role to flourish. Many do not see this to be the right place for them and their children to live, grow and prosper.

Such a situation, among many other things, has led to the development, of what can be best referred to as a *migrant milieu* in all the South Asian countries. To recapture the contention, two things have a direct bearing on the rising trend

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[46] See, *Human Rights in Bangladesh 1997* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1998), p.99. For a closer exposition on related issue, see, Imtiaz Ahmed, "Conflict Resolution in Bangladesh: Time for Restructuring Politics," *Liberal Times*, New Delhi, Vol. IV, No.1, 1996.

[47] R. Bruce McColm, *Freedom in the World: Political Rights & Civil Liberties 1991-1992* (New York: Freedom House, 1992), p. 414. See also, Imtiaz Ahmed, communal Conflict in Modern Sri Lanka: Search for a Resolution," *International Journal of Peace Studies*, Missouri, Vol.1, No. 2, July 1996, pp.85-100.

[48] See, *Himal South Asia* (Kathmandu). Various Issues.

in the legal and illegal migration of South Asians across the world, including the United States:

Firstly, *the want of efficiency* in civil life. In the wake of having a violent and polarized civil society, South Asian nations failed to nurture efficiency in all spheres of public life. This is as much true in getting products out of the factory line as it is in getting children finish their school-year on time. Or, for that matter, paying electric bill could be as much a hassle as trying to get a new electric line. With a more efficient civil society in the imagination, that is, of developed societies, many find it futile to continue living in the otherwise *inefficient* South Asia.

Secondly, *the absence of freedom* in both civil and political societies. The reproduction of violent and polarized civil society has contributed to the making of an immensely powerful and brutal political society (government, state security, etc.). This has not only created structures of regimentation within the government but also has governmentalized the civil society, jeopardizing in the process *freedom* of both thought and action. A space that guarantees even a part of that freedom becomes the natural attraction for many young, frustrated South Asians. Put differently, societal insecurity breeds transcontinental migration,[49] not all of which, however, is welcomed by the United States. But then, can it help?

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[49] For a closer exposition on this issue, see, Imtiaz Ahmed, *The Construction of Diaspora: South Asians Living in Japan* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 2000).

V
Conclusion

There is no reason to suspect the changed context. The domain of security has become more complex although admittedly more central to the lives and livings of the common masses. Any recourse to view security in the light of the national state or state-to-state relationship is bound to meet with limited success. This is not because globalization has made the notion of 'sovereign state' virtually irrelevant but rather because the nation and the state are no longer in the position to guarantee the security of the people. What new beginning can we then expect from the United States in the light of the new context? I will limit myself to the four areas discussed earlier.

1. In the aftermath of nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, the United States has settled for sanctions on selective items, mostly in the area of high/super technology, and, as indicated earlier, pressurizing the two countries to sign and ratify the CTBT. Nothing much will come from them, however. In fact, in so far as sanctions are concerned, it is worth pointing out that the policy is a direct offshoot of Cold War (that is, US–former Soviet animosity) and as such is of little significance in the context of South Asia-US relations. The parameters here are totally different. Firstly, the relationship between South Asia and the US is not based on a long drawn out competition or a race for dominance between the two. And secondly, the goals of both India and Pakistan are essentially set against each other and this remains the case despite India's claim that it seeks to deter threat from China. In fact, since their nuclearization at this stage remains directed against each other, India and Pakistan are less in need of high/super technology of the kind the United States would hesitate to

provide Russia at the time of the Cold War or for that matter even now. Other kind of trading sanctions could easily be circumvented through loopholes in US laws and circumstantial amendments.

The signing of CTBT obviously got a set back at the US failure to ratify, and possibly will not be pressed much until the time of US ratification which is not to be expected in another two years or until the new administration has settled in well. This provides a breathing space for both India and Pakistan, whose scientists must now race to transform the feat of underground tests to computer simulation to keep their programme going *ad infintum*. This is, however, premised on the view that the two countries are looking for a sophisticated deterrence with second strike capability, which incidentally is a lost cause because of culture, common border and topography. But reason has seldom dictated things.

The US must realize, therefore, that the nuclearization of South Asia cannot be rolled back simply by sanctions and CTBTs. A cue possibly can be taken from the anti-nuke demonstration of 250,000 strong in Calcutta in August 1998, barely three months after Pokharan II.[50] But then, it is limited by the fact that it does not address the conditions that had promoted nuclear development in the region. Put differently, if children are tutored in the fission and fusion of atoms and neutrons there is no earthly reason for them not to think of building the Bomb! And this is particularly so when education is highly governmentalized and uniformed and in the service of the state. Unless plurality and 'peace education' are set in there is little chance for overcoming the state of post-nuclear insecurity in the region. The US might do well in reinventing

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[50]. See, footnote 4.

and reprioritizing its policies and policy initiatives in the region if it is serious in the campaign for a denuclearized South Asia.

2. US concern for environmental insecurity in the region is somewhat problematic. It is either directly or indirectly tied up with developmental projects, some of which are so ill planned and out of tune with the environment that they create havoc in the lives of the local inhabitants. We have already cited the instances of the large dams built on the Narmada River and in the Kaptai. Another more recent example in Bangladesh would be the Flood Action Plan(FAP), which has received generous support from the US and the World Bank, but is already facing opposition from the locals and environmental scholars and activists.[51] US policymakers probably will argue here that if the governments of the region submit proposals and invite them to invest than save 'safe profits' why should they be concerned. It is here that a fundamental change is required on the part of the US.

This has already come about in some ways. The World Bank, for instance, did stop funding the Sardar Sarovar dam on the Narmada River and Arun III project in Nepal, but incidentally both came about after stiff opposition from the locals and the critics. The late withdrawal, in fact, gives a bad name for it implies that the donors have not done their homework or have rolled back simply because of protest and fear of violent acts. Keeping the role of the government of this region in perspective, particularly the state of corruption in some of the governmental agencies, it would be wise for the US to initiate direct dialogue with civil and environmental groups before funding for developmental projects are

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[51] . See, Imtiaz Ahmed, ed., *Living with Floods: An Exercise in Alternatives* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1999).

finalised. Non-governmental agencies, including institutions like the Grameen Bank, could play an active role in this context. This could also initiate a process for replacing environmentally harmful mega-projects with environment-friendly micro-projects. It seems that the issue of environment in the United States is destined to take a central stage in the next presidential election and possibly beyond. Our only hope is that it will not be contained within the narrow boundaries of its domestic concern.

3. Blind insistence on democratic rule and that again restricted to periodic elections is bound to reproduce sub-national insecurity in South Asia. Blind insistence on 'good governance' will also not do much.[52] To contain threats from sub-national insecurity, the United States would be wise to combine its plea for democracy in the region with *democratization*. Democratic values and democratic practices need to be ingrained in structures reproducing democracy, and this is something that is lacking in the region in the wake of excessive governmentalization of things and weak civil society. Put differently, *democratization* and *degovernmentalization* should be insisted upon and given importance as much as the practice of changing the government through democratic means in US foreign policy objectives.

A fresh look at terrorism is also required, not in the sense of rationalizing its birth and operation, which is totally out of the question, but in the sense of it being promoted by both regimented and democratic regimes alike. One good case is the recent killing of 40 innocent Sikhs in Kashmir on the eve of Clinton's visit to India. Claims by both India and Pakistan

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[52]   For a closer exposition see, Imtiaz Ahmed, "Governance and the international development community: making sense of the Bangladesh experience," *Contemporary South Asia*, Oxford, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1999, pp.295-309.

may be wrong, for forces free from governmental connections may have carried out the murder with the intention of producing results that are less valid and reasonable. As indicated earlier, not always is terrorism connected to sovereign states and governments, often forces that are alienated, isolated and even schizophrenic go on to reproduce it. And this is probably true in Kashmir as it is elsewhere.

4. On the issue of societal insecurity the United States must urgently take initiatives at the national, regional and international levels to curb the proliferation of small arms. Indeed, with the balance of nuclear terror in place, sub-nationalist groups in South Asia will increasingly have recourse to small arms. A proliferation of small arms is bound to occur. No nuclear bomb can stop the sub-national aspirations of Kashmiris, Baluchis, Muhajirs, Assamese, Sikhs, or many others throughout South Asia, and the accompanying violence. It would be folly to think that suppressed individuals and dominated groups would give up their life-long struggles just because India and Pakistan went nuclear. Moreover, without the option of a direct war, now that both are declared nuclear powers, there will be a temptation on the part of both countries to help each other's dissenters by routing small arms through unregulated channels. As with the smuggling of other goods, the illegal flow of small arms is bound to create ruptures within both nuclear and non-nuclear South Asian states, jeopardizing societal security in the region. In this context, a "Non-Small Arms Proliferation Treaty" would go a long way in reproducing a relatively peaceful environment in the region and in the world. United States should lead the region and the world in such a venture.

This is also one area where South Asian expatriates living in the US could play an active role, creating lobbies to support gun control not only in the United States but also across the world. We have already indicated the relationship between societal insecurity and transcontinental migration. Unless the US gives attention to the conditions responsible for societal insecurity and goes beyond the simple policy of containing international or more appropriately South Asian illegal migration there is little reason to believe that it will succeed in the latter. Let the new context usher in a new beginning in South Asia-US security relations.