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POWER POLITICS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION AFTER THE COLD WAR

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Ocean along with its littoral and hinterland states, commonly known as Indian Ocean region, is practically a super-region comprising a number of geographical regions or sub-regions. The super-region contains more than fifty countries and "one-third of human race representing one of the biggest mosaics of culture, ethnic and linguistic diversity in the world marked by variations in socio-economic conditions and political systems".¹ Five pivotal areas can be identified in and around the Indian Ocean. Those could be East Africa including the islands of Mauritius, Seychelles and Madagascar, the Horn of Africa and Red Sea countries, South-west Asia to include the Persian Gulf states and the Arabian Peninsula, South Asia and the South-east Asia and Australia. There are eleven hinterland countries like Nepal and Afghanistan which are landlocked but can still be referred to as belonging to the Indian Ocean region.² The Indian

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1. Syed Anwar Husain, *Super Powers and the Security in the Indian Ocean : A South Asian Perspective*, Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1991, p. 1.
 2. Bhupinder Singh, *Indian Ocean and Regional Security*, BC Publishers, Punjab, 1983, p. 2.

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Ocean area is surrounded on three sides by landmasses. However, it has three major entry points in the South-east, west and south-west, i.e., the Straits of Malacca, around the Cape of Good Hope, and the Suez Canal.

All the states and societies of the Indian Ocean area share many common concerns and interests. They want peace, and stability in the region and economic development in their respective countries. But many of them have conflicting interests and varying foreign policy orientations. These often provide the interested outsiders the opportunity to pursue their own interests in the Indian Ocean region. All the Indian Ocean littoral countries except Australia belong to the under-developed or developing world. Most of them were part of colonial empires. Many of them are nascent nation states. Instability in these countries is a constant recurrence due mainly to economic backwardness. Beyond the littoral states, the landmasses in the north are dominated by two giants i.e., Russia, the successor of former Soviet Union and the present communist China.

The extra-regional powers have always been attracted towards the Indian Ocean for a number of reasons. It is the largest warm water ocean and almost the whole surface remains navigable throughout the year. Most of the important sea-routes connecting the East and the West pass through the Indian Ocean. There also exists important land link between the Indian Ocean and the Afro-Eurasian land-mass through the old silk route. The natural and mineral resources and the raw materials of this super-region are crucial for the advanced industrialized countries of the world. The region contains two-third of world's oil reserves, 60 percent Uranium and major portion of other strategically important minerals.³ The super power rivalry in post-war period added

3. Davendra Kaushik, *The Indian Ocean—A Strategic Dimension*, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1983 New Delhi, p. 1.

extra-importance to this region like most other parts of the world. The long-drawn Indo-Pakistan and Sino-Indian rift, the conflicts in the Persian Gulf, the Middle-East and the Afghan crisis further enhanced the politico-strategic importance of the region. Thus the move by some littoral countries to make the Indian Ocean a "Zone of Peace" was generally opposed by the big and super powers. However, the former Soviet Union supported the concept of 'Zone of Peace' in different international fora mainly after 1977 presumably to embarrass the US and to ensure the security of its southern flank by making the Indian Ocean denuclearised.⁴

In the context of such background, the world has witnessed epoch-making changes in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The end of cold war ushered in a new era and marked a distinct phase in the history of human civilization. The intensity and suddenness of the changes have shaken the whole world. The post-war political and security equations have become obsolete. Bitter enemies in many cases turned into trusted friends and vice versa. The dormant nationalistic and religious aspirations are finding expressions often accompanied by violence. There has been a triumph of market based economics and the dominant regional powers have now become more assertive. All these changes have naturally affected the politico-strategic equations in the Indian Ocean region. These, therefore, call for a study in the changed scenario.

The present study is limited to the sub-regions like South Asia and South-east Asia mainly. It would have inputs from the extra-regional powers like the US and China. The Central Asian Muslim Republics have been brought in the study as they are likely to impinge on the power balance of the region. The study would see the interactions and power distribution of the major actors like China, India, US, and Pakistan in different subregions of Indian Ocean after the cold war where the super power rivalry is no

4. Syed Anwar Husain, op. cit, pp-105-109.

longer valid but the regional dominance by the regional powers is likely to increase. Although this is an era of economic cooperation and market economy, one can not remain oblivious of the power politics of the dominant economic and military powers because projecting one's power and pride is a historical truth if however, one can afford it and geopolitics dictate it. Doubt arises, at the end of the cold war, if peace is achieved or the seeds for future conflict are already germinated.⁵

The above mentioned contentions, however, lead to a number of questions. How greatly these developments and events have altered the post-war scenario in the Indian Ocean area? Has India become an unchallenged arbiter in the sub-region of South Asia or it is challenged by China and Pakistan? Does Indian interest collide or supplement that of China or Pakistan in South Asia or in South-east Asia? What other variables and dynamics figure prominently in the politico-strategic considerations of this region in the post cold war period ? How does the security equation come about when the main actors like India, China, Pakistan interact with the actors in the flanks in the Central Asian Muslim Republics, South-east Asia and the US. An endeavour is made in this paper to answer the questions posed above. The politico-security environment in the Horn of Africa, the Persian Gulf and Australia would however, not be covered separately in the present paper.

SOUTH ASIAN ENVIRONMENT

Actors in the area

South Asia comprising seven countries namely, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka is often

5. Fijay Madan (Lt General), "The Likely United States Policy in South Asia and its Impact on India, Pakistan and China", *India Defence Review*, Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, January 1994, p. 9.

characterized as an Indo-centric region. However, the age-old rivalry between India and Pakistan and the significant military might of the latter have turned itself into the second most important power of South Asia. Stephen Cohen's concept of 'pentagon of power' in the context of South Asia⁶ brought the powers like the United States, the erstwhile Soviet Union, China, alongside India and Pakistan to this region and had diminished the role of these two regional powers in waging war or making peace with each other independently. With the demise of the cold war, none of the extra regional powers are now interested to polarise and divide India and Pakistan. They prefer to develop balanced relationship with both. After the cold war, the external powers are no longer locked in a hostile relationship in the area. Again while arms supplies to Pakistan has generally been cut off, no substantial arms-supply has begun to India, either. However, the pertinent point here is that India has come out as the predominant actor followed by Pakistan in South Asia. India is to be viewed as a dominant power in this sub-region just as the US, Soviet Union (former) and China are viewed in their respective areas.⁷ Other smaller states are again apprehensive of this predominance.

India's Security Perceptions and her Monroe Doctrine⁸

Before we delve into the major issues in South Asia, an overview of the Indian strategic vision in the region may not be

6. Bhabahi Sengupta, "India's South Asia Policy in 1990s", *South and South East Asia in the 1990s—Indian and American Perspectives* (Edited by V. Suryanarayan) Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, pp. 56-57.
7. Iftekhharuzzaman, "Disarmament in South Asia : Issues and Impediments", *Bangladesh, South Asia and the World*, (Edited by Emajuddin Ahamed and Abul Kalam), Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1992, p. 276.
8. James Monroe (1758-1831), fifth President of the United States in his annual message of Dec. 2, 1823 (subsequently known as Monroe Doctrine), expressed disapproval of European intervention and affirmed America's

out of place. This is called for here because India as shown, is already the predominant military and economic power in South Asia. The basic policy of Indian strategy has been to deny the role of extra-regional powers in the affairs of South Asia. It is also a strong advocate of the idea of 'Zone of Peace' in Indian Ocean region. Indian communities' interests overseas had also led India to adopt two complementary policies i.e., broadened economic and cultural linkages with Indian Ocean states and an enhanced maritime projection capability. According to Indian perception, security of small states in the Indian Ocean region having a substantial population of Indian origin is a legitimate concern for India. 'Indian foreign policy is sensitive to the fate of the Indian communities that stretch from East Africa to Fiji'.⁹ The Indian strategic environment and its defence interests have compulsions in the development of a substantial military capability. Its policy objectives could be the protection of the Indian mainland, its island territories and adjacent sea lines of communications and the promotion of commercial interest. In addition, Indian defense policy seeks to protect the Indian nationals in regional states, ward off extra-regional influence in the Indian ocean and enhance its role as a major Asian Power.¹⁰ Indian strategic objectives could be the prevention of the possible interference of the superpower and the great powers, to acquire sufficient naval capability, to deter the

intention of not to interfere in the internal affairs of other nations. The message also contained a statement that the Americans were not to be considered open to further European colonization.

Principles stated by James Monroe President of USA, (1817-25) were that the USA would not allow European nations to interfere in the affairs of Latin America.

9. Stephen Philip Cohen, "The Future Indian Security Role in the Asia-Pacific-Indian Ocean Region", *India-US Relations in a Changing World* (Edited by Jasjit Singh), IDSA, New Delhi, 1992, p. 75.
10. TR Ford, "Indian Ocean Demands More Attention", *Strategic Digest*, IDSA, February, 190, p. 1942.

super power deployment of credible naval and military force near its island territories, to intervene militarily if requested by the island republics in the Indian Ocean and the protection of its vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).¹¹ A carrier-centred Indian naval force could support the Indian Ocean states in ensuring their security.¹²

India means business in the Indian Ocean region. It would like to come out as a major Asian power and the supreme power in South Asia. Keeping its vision fixed, India in the long run perceives China as the greater threat than Pakistan. China has demonstrated military superiority over India in the region in 1962. It is more than a match for India in demographic terms. It has built an impressive industrial and technical infrastructure which has its impact not only in conventional military build-up but also in nuclear capability. In this context, Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, an Indian strategist has argued, "The appropriate and logical point of reference to define India's strategies would be in relation to the People's Republic of China. This is not only because China is placed in a geostrategic situation to provide the greatest challenge to the development of India as a global, Asian and regional power, but also because China itself has set for itself a framework of reference to the super powers (and in the time perspective, year 2000)".¹³ K. Subramanyam, another leading

11. William L. Dowdy and Russell B. Trood, *The Indian Ocean Perspective on Strategic Area*, Himalayan Books, New Delhi, 1987 pp. 311-312. EEZ is an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea, subject to the specific legal regime established, under which rights and jurisdiction of the coastal state and the rights and freedom of other states are governed by the relevant provisions of the UN convention on the law of the sea. EEZ shall not extend beyond 200 nautical miles from the baselines from which the breadth of the territorial sea is measured.
12. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, "Indian Naval Diplomacy", *Indian Defence Review*, Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, January-March 1995, p. 56.
13. Mohamad Ayoob, *India and South East Asia—Indian Perceptions and Politics*, Routledge, London and New York, 1990, p. 29.

strategic thinker states, "In the longer run it is China which will count more (than Pakistan) in Indian security calculations".¹⁴ Implicit within the broader vision, India wants to achieve supreme power status and a predominant position in South Asia to be duly recognized by smaller neighbours in South Asia.¹⁵ India's foreign policy has been projected as Indira Doctrine in line with America's 'Monroe Doctrine'. The doctrine pre-supposes assigning right to intervene in the affairs of neighbouring countries if internal disorder threatens India's security. The doctrine considers South Asia as an Indian backyard.¹⁶ An eminent South Asian scholar succinctly puts the scenario as, "One of the biggest dilemmas of South Asian politics is that India conceives of her neighbouring countries as lying within the defence perimeter and being integral to the security of India while India's neighbors themselves regard India itself as the source of their insecurity against whom it is necessary to organize their own security, sometimes on an extra-regional basis".¹⁷ And as such South Asia is troubled by an over assertive Indian postures towards its neighbours.¹⁸ Nehru proclaimed that India was the successor of British Raj and would therefore, play a significant role in the world starting with South Asia. India sees South Asia as one strategic unit and considers the security of her smaller neighbours integrally related to her security. India tries to create such a notion through bilateral treaty relations with Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Bangladesh. Articles 8, 9 and 10 of Indo-Bangladesh Treaty put the Indian perception

14. *Ibid*, p. 30.

15. Md. Nuruzzaman, South Asia without Nuclear Bombs, *Journal of International Relations*, Dhaka University, January-June 1994, p. 165.

16. Iftekhharuzzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

17. M. Abdul Hafiz, Brigadier (Retired), "Evolving a Security Perspective for Bangladesh", *The Daily Star*, June 30, 1994.

18. Iftekhharuzzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 276-278.

in a codified form.¹⁹ Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1949²⁰ and Indo-Nepalese Treaty of 1950²¹ are also cases in point. 'Countries of the South Asia view India as a multi-faceted threat. Bhutan is effectively subservient to India. Only Pakistan is trying to contain Indian power'.²² Pakistan would not therefore, like to acknowledge India as pre-eminent or dominant. Pakistan proclaimed itself as the largest Muslim country and wanted to fight the Muslim interests everywhere. The strategic vision of India could be studied in the context of the relations India cultivates with the neighbours specially the Muslim countries.

Islamic connection

Intra-state ethnic disputes within India, the bilateral disputes between India and her bordering countries, on the one hand, and the foreign policies of the Muslim countries outside the South Asia like Malaysia and Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, other

19. Amena Mohsin "Bangladesh-India Relations-Limitations and Options in an Evolving Relationship", *Bangladesh South Asia and the world* (Edited by Emajuddin Ahmed & Abul Kalam), Academic Publishers, Dhaka, 1992, p.68.
20. The Cohen-Bhutanese Treaty of 1949 was signed on 08 August 1948 in which the most significant aspect was the entire retention of article 8 of 1910 Treaty. It constitutes the article 2 of the Treaty of 1949. According to the article, Bhutanese Govt. agreed to "be guided by the advice of the Govt. of India in regards to its external relations". For details see Partha S. Ghosh, "India-Bhutan—An Unequal Alliance", *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*, Monohar Publications, Delhi, 1989, p. 139.
21. Cohen-Nepalese Treaty of 1950 was signed in July 1950 which recognized Nepal's independence but incorporated mutual defence clauses that include a provision for regulating arms imports. The Treaty stipulated that, "neither Govt. shall tolerate any threat to the security of the other by a foreign aggression" and if the threat arose the two Govts will "consult with each other and devise effective countermeasures". For details see Partha S. Ghose, "India-Nepal-the Systemic Divergence", *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*, Monohar Publications, Delhi, 1989, p. 105.
22. Stephen Philip Kohen, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

Central Asian Muslim Republics, on the other, have crucial bearing on Indian policies. Since India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have the second, third, and fourth largest Muslim populations in the world after Indonesia, the external Islamic factor significantly influences the South Asian politics. Khomeini's Islamic revolution, the Palestinian Intifada, the successful liberation war of the Afghan Mujahideen and the liberation and survival struggles of the Central Asian Muslim Republics have provided impetus to the Kashmiris for their right to self-determination. The Islamic resurgence encourages similar involvements in South Asia and aggravates Hindu-Muslim tensions in India.

As already pointed out, Pakistan is the most important actor in South Asia to challenge Indian predominance. After the loss of United States as her ally, Pakistan now embarks upon cementing ties on the basis of Islamic solidarity. Pakistan established Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) with Iran and Turkey in 1986, which was further expanded when the five Central Asian Muslim Republics joined it in 1991. This might lead to the upgradation of ECO into a loose confederation stretching from Pakistan to Turkey with military cooperation. This might undo India's military preponderance in South Asia. It would be subsequently shown in the paper that the mere possibility of Pakistan forming a larger Islamic bloc worries India. India has been perceived as a threat to her security by Pakistan ever since these countries got freedom from the British colonial power. Needless to mention that it has already fought three wars with India since its birth. General Krishna Rao in his book, *Prepare or Perish* has indicated some of the major points of disputes between the two countries. These are communal riots, mass migration, river waters, distribution of assets, integration of states, Kashmir and Kutch disputes, military alliances, collaboration with China, support to Kashmir and Punjab insurgencies, hostile propaganda

and nuclear ambitions.²³ However, among the issues, Kashmir issue is at the core of all the disputes between India and Pakistan. It has given rise to a seemingly unending proxy war and unless the Kashmir issue is resolved, the nuclear tangle between the two powers can not be sorted out. Cohen argues that "the road to accession to the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) runs through Kashmir".²⁴ Given such complexities in relations between the two neighbours, one may not see any light at the end of the tunnel in the foreseeable future. It is to be noted that the nuclear issue and the proxy wars complicate the relations to an unimaginable extent.

Nuclear Issue

The nuclear programmes in India and Pakistan are identified with nationalistic feeling. Nationalism is the single important driving force for both the powers in the pursuit of the nuclear programme. Both the nations take it as national pride. Pakistan's strategic viewpoint is that India is her main threat although India's main concern is China.²⁵ Since the late 1970s both India and Pakistan are involved in latent nuclear war. In 1990s, the prospect of a conventional war is accompanied by nuclear threat and counter threats that could finally break out into an all-out war. Such simulation has been well covered by Gen Sundarji in his book *Blind Men of Hindustan*.²⁶ Both the countries are non-

23. KV Krishna Rao (General), — *Prepare or Perish*, Lancers Publishers, 1991, pp. 355-360.

24. Partha S. Ghose, "Nuclear Rivalry in South Asia-Strategic Imperatives and National pride", *Conflict Studies* 274, Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, September 1994, p. 16.

25. Brahma Chellaney, *The Challenge of Nuclear Arms control in South Asia, The survival*, IISS, Autumn 1993, pp. 127-129.

26. K. Sundarji (General), *Blind Men of Hindustan-Cohen-Pak Nuclear war*, UBS Publishers' Distribution Ltd., New Delhi, 1993. The book in a simulated setting brings out the likely action and reaction of the major actors like Pakistan, India and China, the likely effects, and the likely security environment that may exist in the event of the breakout of a nuclear war in the region.

signatory to the NPT. Pakistan as an alternative to the NPT floated the idea of Nuclear Free Zone for South Asia (SANFWZ). The crude objective of the proposal was to contain the suspected development of nuclear weapons by India. The proposal envisaged that the concerned states would not produce or acquire atomic bombs or threaten to use them against a member country of the region.²⁷ The proposal also envisaged five nations' discussions involving the US, the former Soviet Union and China. India opposed the proposal for two reasons. The proposal didn't take into account China as a nuclear power and that Pakistan had achieved nuclear capability.²⁸ Nuclear arms race between the two South Asian giants, according to some Indians, has resulted in a qualitative change in the strategic relationship between India and Pakistan and between India and China. Now there is however, a nuclear deterrence which can check a conventional war breaking out between Islamabad and Delhi. General Sundarji, in an interview with *The Times of India* on January 3, 1991, observed, "Nuclear capability is a great leveller. I am sure Pakistan is much more self-assured today". Stephen P. Cohen has also observed, "My own speculative view is that nuclear proliferation will stabilize the India-Pakistan relationship to the degree that nuclear weapons have introduced caution into US-Soviet and Soviet-Chinese relations".²⁹ Although nuclear proliferation reduces the possibility of a conventional war breaking out between the two neighbours, nonetheless the real war i.e., the proxy wars drag on.

Proxy Wars

Both India and Pakistan have found proxy wars as the most cost effective weapon to be used against each other. Some kind of

27. Md. Nuruzzaman, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

28. "Talks with US as Nuclear Ties at crossroads", *The Hindu*, November 22, 1991.

29. Bhabani Sengupta, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-66.

confidence building measures, some kind of mutually assured nuclear destruction probability and the low-key role of the major powers in siding overtly with either Pakistan or India and better Sino-Indian rapprochement, have also to a great extent minimized the prospect of an all-out conventional war breaking out between the two major actors of South Asia. However, the specter and fighting of low intensity conflict are eating into the vitality of both the countries. In fact, almost all the states of South Asia are fighting the low intensity conflict in their territories. Most of these wars have trans-border ethno-religious implications. It gives rise to instability, and tensions in the relations of these states. In India, violent struggles for independence among the Muslims in Kashmir, Sikhs in the Punjab and the Assamese speaking Hindus of Assam are located in the sensitive and strategic locations. India mainly accuses Pakistan of abetting such struggles. In Pakistan, the Sindhi nationalist movement for an independent Sindhistan is becoming visible and violent. Pakistan is again blaming India for fomenting such movement. In Sri Lanka, a savage fighting is going on between Hindu Tamil speaking minority demanding an independent Tamil Elam and Buddhist Sinhalese speaking majority. In Bangladesh, the Chakma tribal insurgents are seeking independence although insurgency has greatly subsided recently.³⁰ These are also some of the problems of national integration. This shows, according to Lucian Pye,³¹ the identity or penetration crisis. This calls for better national integration and political development. However, these can not only be seen as the problem of national integration or political development. These get further compounded due to the involvement of the actors

30. Raju G. C. Thomas, "South Asia in the 1990s", *Adelphi Paper* 278, July 1993, pp. 19-20.

31. For details see Lucian W. Pye, *Aspects of Political Development*, Little Brown, Boston, 1966.

from across the border. There is a danger that such proxy wars have the potential of turning into a full scale war. A pertinent point to be kept in mind here is that India is common to all the countries of South Asia involved in fighting the low intensity conflicts.

Power Equation

India sees Pakistan and China as two fronts. The Indian Ocean is the third front and her natural area of interest. India can be seen to be striving for preeminent power position in this sub-region. The factors that impinge on it are the upgradation of the American naval facilities in Diego Garcia, the proximity of South Asian region to South-west Asia, Pakistan's nuclear capability, China's friendly or unfriendly attitude towards India and her nuclear capability and the collusion of South Asian countries with China. India remains the predominant power in South Asia. It is however, challenged by Pakistan. The emerging power of China would continue to tilt the balance in favour of Pakistan. America is also likely to counter-balance the Chinese effect in the region. The entire scenario would, however, be clearer once we see the interaction of the actors in other parts of the region.

CHINA IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

Chinese Projection as a Power

In this region, China can be studied mainly in terms of the relations it has with India and South-east Asian countries. China has a great desire to become at least a dominant power in Asia. Presently she has undertaken massive economic reforms. Her economic growth is phenomenal. China's share of its economy in the field of foreign trade surpassed that of Japan (in GNP terms). "By August 1994, China's foreign exchange reserve stood at US \$ 36 billion and there is talk of China working towards full currency

convertibility".³² China's defence spending is increased to give PLA the long term power projection capabilities.³³ Although according to an expert³⁴ the phenomenal increase in the Chinese defence budget is at times, misleading, but it still carries lot of implications when we see that PLA's budget increased about 140 percent over the past six years, from around \$ 2.5 billion (US) in 1988 to \$ 8 billion in 1994. China's 1995 defence budget reportedly increased her planned expenditure by \$7.5b or 21% from the previous year.³⁵ China has the third largest nuclear weapons arsenal, including 80 plus intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBM)³⁶ and 20 plus inter-continental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).³⁷ Its air force has 180 aircrafts capable of delivering nuclear bombs, and it has one nuclear armed submarine with 12 ballistic missiles. The new generation of Chinese warships - the Jinawei class frigates and Luhu class destroyers are capable of operating as the new true blue water force.³⁸ China's navy is in transition to become a blue water navy and is having the objective

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32. CV, Ranganathan, "China, the 'Asian Miracle' and India-China Relations", *Indian Defence Review*, Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, October-December 1994, p. 10.
 33. Afsir Karim, "China's Strategic Stance", *Indian Defence Review*, Lancer Publishers, April 1994, p. 7.
 34. Karl W. Eikenberry, "Does China Threaten Asia-Pacific Regional Stability", *Parameters*, US War College Quarterly, Spring 1995, pp. 84-97.
 35. Michael Leifer, "Chinese Economic Reform and Security Policy", *Survival*, IISS, Summer, 1995, p. 49.
 36. IRBM—A ballistic missile with a range capability from about 1500-3,000 nautical miles. Missiles with a range between 2775-5400 km are 85-20, Pershing 2 and cruise.
 37. ICBM—Ground launched ballistic missile capable of delivering a warhead to a target at ranges in excess of 5,500 km. However, according to the Chinese the missiles having ranges over 8,000 km are called ICBMs. For details see Rajiv Nayan, "Missiles of China, Pakistan and India", *Indian Defence Review*, Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, October-December, 1994, p. 73.
 38. Afsir Karim, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

to become a world class Pacific power in the twenty-first century.³⁹ China continues to build her blue water navy and modernize her airforce to support her rapid deployment force'.⁴⁰ China is a rising power with enormous growth potential, although it may not be regarded as a serious threat in the mid term to Asia pacific stability. To substantiate it further Professor Yasheng Huang comments that the security implications of China's economic growth will be quite profound. His argument is that China would be able to significantly increase her military capabilities as is already shown and the Chinese leaders would feel more emboldened to project Chinese forces overseas.⁴¹ "The consequences of China's economic growth for China's neighbourhood in South, South-East Asia are profound and the politics of Asia has been reshaped".⁴² 'China will continue to grow stronger militarily and early in the next century it would be a leading economic power.' Shambaugh's assessment is that its influence will increase accordingly.⁴³ Although in the mid or short run China would involve herself in the Spratly Island type of disputes but in the long run one cannot rule out the possibility of involving herself in the operations she had undertaken against India in 1962 and against Vietnam in 1979. This is an assessment made based on historical animosities and the growing economic and military strides China is making at the moment.

39. Michael Leifer, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

40. David Shambaugh, "China's Security Policy in the Post Cold War Era" *The survival*, IISS, Summer 1992, pp. 100-104.

41. Professor Yasheng Huang, "China's Economic Development Implications for its Political and Security Roles", *Adelphi Paper* 275, IISS, London, March, 1993, pp. 54-57.

42. CV Ranganathan, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

43. Milind Shanker, "China the Emerging Superpower" *National Defence College, India Journal*, November 1994, p. 164.

China vis-a-vis the Region

China's ability to influence events in the Indian Ocean region is however, still limited, although she would like to reassert herself after the collapse of the Soviet Union. China would continue to take active interests in the Indian Ocean region for geographical, political and ideological reasons, although her posture has undergone certain changes recently. Generally, the Chinese have been maintaining the influence in the region in the form of naval power projection and by providing military and economic aid to a good number of countries. China could derive two broad advantages by influencing events in the Indian Ocean region. First, due to its geographical proximity with Indian Ocean states, China has a demonstrable interest in the events taking place adjacent to its borders. Secondly, since most of the states of the region fall in the category of less developed countries she claims to have congruity of interests with them. Such linkages serve to define Chinese interests.⁴⁴

Presently although there is a shift in her external orientation specially towards South and South-east Asia, but in the long run she would like to project herself as a global power. It is already capable of influencing (as will be shown subsequently) events in South Asia, South-east Asia and as far as Saudi Arabia, and the Persian Gulf. It provides missile technology and probably nuclear know-how to the countries of the region. Pakistan's relationship with China could well extend into the production of IRBMs. China sold liquid-fueled East Wind 3 missiles to Saudi Arabia in 1988.⁴⁵ China is reported to have sold CSS-2, an intermediate range missile to Saudi Arabia and supplied M-11 missile to Pakistan.⁴⁶

44. Sridhar Krishnaswami, "Beijing's Policy in Cohen-China". *The Hindu*, 18 November 1991.

45. Syed Anwar Hossain, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

46. Rajiv Nayan, "Missiles of China Pakistan and India", *Indian Defence Review*, Lancer Publishers, October-November, 1994, p. 75.

Pakistan has a vision of a strategic region consisting of Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia. Pakistan is a good channel for the transfer of missile technology from China to other relevant countries. Pakistan's collaboration with China in missile development is of special significance to the Indian defense planners.⁴⁷ China has been providing both military and economic aid to the Indian Ocean states like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Somalia Tanzania and Mauritius. 'The Chinese have naval facilities at Karachi and Mozambique. Iranians used Chinese Silk-worm missiles in 1987-88 Persian Gulf War'.⁴⁸ China has shown interests in improving the littoral states' naval capabilities. It has supplied missile boats to Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Egypt, Pakistan and Bangladesh and submarines to Egypt.⁴⁹ India should be concerned about the growing security/defence relationships between China and the countries around India.⁵⁰ It has also substantial bilateral economic interaction with the states of the region.

With the end of the cold war, and the reduction of the US forces in the region, the traditional regional rivalries between China and Japan, China and Vietnam, China and India, China and Russia are likely to resurface. Conflicting territorial claims between China and Japan, China and Vietnam and China and India could precipitate a more assertive China.⁵¹ China has resented the new world order of former President Bush. She would

47. RR Subramanian, *India Pakistan China-Defence and Nuclear Tangle in South Asia*, ABC Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, p. 83.

48. Syed Anwar Husain, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

49. Selig S. Harrison & Subramanyam-*Super Power Rivalry in the Indian Ocean*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1989, p. 224.

50. Jasjit Singh, "India's Strategic and Security Interests", *Cohen-US Relations in a Changing World*, Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, Lancers publishers, New Delhi, 1992, p. 91.

51. David Shambaugh *op. cit.*, p. 89.

like to see a multipolar world than a unipolar world with declining US global power and China's ability to resist external interference in different regions.⁵²

China has an advantage to the extent that Russia has reduced her Pacific fleet by one-third, withdrawn forces from Mongolia and Afghanistan, and destroyed the IRBMs east of the Urals mountains. All these are good news for the Chinese defense planners as China does not have to prepare itself for a massive conventional onslaught from the North. However, the reduction or absence of the Soviet forces have also worrying implications for China. The Central Asian Muslim Republics, after having become independent might work as catalysts to destabilize the China's north-western provinces. Other implications of emergence of these states would be discussed subsequently specially in relation to the South Asia and Indian Ocean region in general. As would be seen in the later paragraphs China is trying to mend her fences with India and trying to encourage peaceful settlement of all bilateral contentious issues through dialogue. It may be so that China seeks some respite under the pretext of dialogue.

China-India Issues

South Asia is an independent strategic entity as already shown. China's suzerainty over Tibet was accepted by the British Raj under Anglo-Russian convention of 1907. India's military occupation of Ladakh in 1948 and Sikkim in 1949 was considered as a threat to the security of Tibet and to Chinese Sinkiang. China moved her military forces in 1950 to counter India's military action in Ladakh and Sikkim and became watchful on India's activities in Nepal, Bhutan and North East Frontier Agency. China thus got involved in South Asian power struggle

52. *Ibid*, p. 92.

by ensuring the security of Tibet.⁵³ Nehru had formally accepted China as a South Asian power by signing an agreement with China in 1954. It mainly recognized the Tibet region of China. But in anyway China doesn't recognize the borders inherited from the British. She claims more or less all the territories of Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh and a significant territory in Ladakh. China also claims some of the passes in Himachal Pradesh and the central sector of India. The Chinese do not recognize Sikkim as part of India, nor the special relationship of Bhutan with India. ⁵⁴ China offered a package deal which would allow Arunachal Pradesh to India, keeping the vital strategic link, Aksai Chin with her. It was rejected by India. India seeks recognition of its control over Kashmir and Sikkim which China does not oblige. One can, therefore, conclude that the border issues between China and India are rather complex. In such a scenario an Indian viewpoint gives us the clue in understanding the threat environment more precisely. In spite of improvement in diplomatic relations, Chinese forces continue to threaten Indian security both in conventional and nuclear fields.⁵⁵ We can however, see the imperatives and compulsions of both India and China in the rapprochement process which is on at the moment.

Some of the Indian compulsions could be cited. India hopes to undermine the Sino-Pakistani relationship, lessen its dependence on Russia, and reduce tension on its border with its largest neighbour. Better relations with China would also be an indication for improved relations with its South Asian smaller neighbours. Compulsion for China could be that it would like to

53. Noor A. Hossain, "India's Regional Policy : Strategic and Security Dimensions", *The Security of South Asia-American and Asian Perspectives* (Edited by Stephen Cohen) Vistaa Publications New Delhi 1987, pp. 37-39.

54. Gen Krishna Rao. *op. cit.*, pp. 381-384.

55. Rahul Roy Chowdhury, "The Chinese Navy and Indian Security", *Indian Defence Review*, Lancer Publishers, New Delhi, January 1994, p. 54.

recognize India as the dominant power in South Asia. Added to that China would like to see better regional cooperation in South Asia. China would like to reduce tensions on its borders at the moment. It needs a stable and progressive society internally and a peaceful and comparatively friendly environment outside both at the global and regional level. China perceives that better relations between India and itself would restrict Russian bid for dominance in the sub-continent and in the Indian Ocean region.⁵⁶ Better Sino-Indian relations, however, would not preclude cultivating good relations between China and other smaller South Asian neighbours. China is one important extra-regional military power which is trying to disengage itself from involving directly in the internal conflicting issues between India and other small nations of South Asia. This may not necessarily follow that the contentious issues would be resolved because those are intricately related to the regional history, culture, economy and political developments. The smaller states would, however, continue to count on support from China, which again would not allow India to dominate its smaller neighbours simply for the reason that it would have to improve relations with India.⁵⁷ The triangular relationship between India, China and South-east Asia can also be seen as we see such relations in South Asian environment keeping India and China constant.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

Chinese and Indian Interests

Historically, strategically and economically, both China and India have enough interests in South-east Asia. The region is

56. Nilufar Chowdhury, "Sino-Indian Quest for Rapprochement : Implications for South Asia", *BIISS papers*, No. 10 Dhaka, 1989, pp. 33-35.

57. *Ibid*, pp. 52-53.

located close to both India and China and the area is considered to be the meeting place of Indian and Chinese cultural influences. Both Indian and Chinese cultural practices are prominent as there are a good number of inhabitants of Chinese and Indian origin in the region. Almost all the countries specially the littoral states of the Indian Ocean have been fighting the insurgencies and they have been encountering tremendous difficulties in achieving national integration. Such a state of affairs usually invites the extra-regional powers. Both India and China have been directly or indirectly involved positively or negatively in the process of political development of the states of the region. Let us specially examine why South-east Asia is important to India. Both India and the countries of South-east Asia fought against the colonial rule of the British Raj. There is, therefore, a congruence of nationalistic movements in both the areas. Indian political elites specially Jawaharlal Nehru, thought that future of India was indivisible from future of Asia and specially from Southeast Asia. Secondly, Southeast Asia deserves special strategic importance to India since India's nationalist elite was concerned about India's eastern flank and sea-ward approaches specially through the Straits of Malacca. India, therefore, lays lot of importance to the Indian Ocean for the defence of Indian peninsula. Island territories of India in the Bay of Bengal lie only 90 miles from the Straits of Malacca. K. M. Pannikar, an Indian strategist wrote in 1945: "The Gulf of Malacca is like the mouth of a crocodile, the peninsula of Malaya being the upper and the jutting end of Sumatra being the lower jaw. The entry to the Gulf can be controlled by the Nicobar Islands and the narrow end is dominated by the island of Singapore". Thirdly, the emergence of China as a major power which borders both India and Southeast Asia, is a cause of great concern to India. There is a general feeling of insecurity from Chinese predominance with the countries of South-east Asia. As already mentioned, India would like to take

advantage of this situation. Fourth, the presence of people of Indian origin in the countries of South-east Asia specially in Burma, Malaysia and Singapore also influences, though not greatly, in determining India's policy towards South-east Asia. Chinese thinking also stands on the similar plane. In the fifth place, South-east Asian countries have a booming economy.⁵⁸ Some of them fall into the categories of Newly Industrializing Countries (NICs).⁵⁹ India is already engaged in joint ventures with the ASEAN countries which is 42 percent of her total overseas ventures.⁶⁰ To be more precise, according to another expert, out of 222 total Indian joint ventures, about 86 are located in the ASEAN region.⁶¹

Strategic Perceptions

While the interests of both the powers are historically, demographically and economically relevant, it could be studied in the security arena as well. China's modernization programme, rapprochement between China and Russia leading to lesser military threat to China's northern border, China's aggressiveness over the control of Spratly islands in the South China Sea, can not keep India oblivious of China as a threat in the long run. In South-east Asia, Indonesia and Malaysia have expressed concern about China's prospective role, while India has made recent moves

58. Mohammed Ayoob, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-21.

59. Among the developing countries exporter of manufactures few stand out because of their export size & growth performance, They are called the NICs (Newly Industrializing Countries).

60. Prakash Suri (Brigadier), "Need for a New India-ASEAN Equation : A Framework for Prosperity and Regional security", *National -Defence College*, India Journal, November 1994, p. 41.

61. Ganganath Jha, "India's Relations with the ASEAN-the Latest Phase", *Understanding South Asia*, (Edited by SD Muni). South Asian Publishers, New Delhi 1994, p. 76.

to cultivate Rangoon to offset its military links with China.⁶² The great Coco island naval facilities in Myanmar just 50 nautical miles north of Andamans is being upgraded with the help of the Chinese. This would permit sea and air surveillance of the Bay of Bengal, China could use the Myanmar naval facilities to have a foothold in the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean.⁶³ It will be subsequently shown that Indonesia is also concerned about India's growing military power specially around South-east Asian archipelago. All these are only indicative of regional competition in this region in the post cold war scenario. After the retreat of Soviet-American power, ASEAN countries are now concerned about the dominance of the local regional powers like India, China and Japan.⁶⁴ This can be substantiated by the fact that India's perspective force structure planning in the year 2000-2010 would be 3 aircraft carrier (1993 - 2), Nuclear submarines 6 (1993 - 1), Attack submarines 16 (1993 - 10), destroyers 24-32 (1993 - 4) and sea Harrier aircrafts 40 (1993 - 10). India has already developed the strategically important port Blair situated close to the Malacca strait.⁶⁵ We can also see the viewpoints of one Indian strategist, "Southeast Asia sits strategically between the Pacific and Indian Oceans, controlling major trade routes and sea lanes used by merchant ships and navies. Peace and stability in the area and good will of its nations are vital to Indian security. From

62. Kamrul Hasan Sheikh, "The Post Cold War Security Environment : A New Regional Disorder", UN Published Paper Submitted to the Defence Services Command and Staff College, Dhaka on 19 June 1995.

63. Milind Shankar, (Air Commodore) "China, the Emerging Super power : Protents for India" *National Defence College, India Journal*, November 1994, p. 152.

64. Raja Mohan, "The Future US Security Role in the Asia-Pacific -Indian Ocean Region," *Cohen-US Relations in a Changing world*, (Edited by Jasjit Singh) Lancers Publishers, New Delhi, 1992, p. 37.

65. Khalid Munir Khan (Brigadier), "Strategic Importance of Indian Ocean and Policy Options for Pakistan", *Pakistan Defense Review*, June 1993, p. 36.

the South-east Asian point of view, India is important as their region is placed between India and China, the two giants of Asia. It is, therefore, natural that the roles of India and Southeast Asia will have a major impact on each others foreign and economic policies" He further says, "Besides economic cooperation India and ASEAN should cooperate in security matters also. When India is no longer averse to naval cooperation with the USA it could easily cooperate with ASEAN, as a group to support the cause for peace, stability and development in the Indian as well as Pacific Oceans."⁶⁶ Both India and ASEAN countries can not ignore each other's geo-strategic interests without jeopardizing each other's national or regional interests. 'China pushed ahead its naval build up in South China sea to counter India's naval build up in the Indian ocean'.⁶⁷ Apart from territorial claims, the two powerful navies could grow 'a sense of rivalry over their spheres of influence in the Indian Ocean'.⁶⁸ In Indian perception, Chinese increase in influence in Southeast Asia could embolden China also to challenge India in its doorsteps in South Asia. China is pursuing a hot and cold policy towards India alternately on the border issues. It therefore, does not rule out renewed confrontation with India.⁶⁹ In spite of move towards rapprochement, border issues, have a potential for conflict.⁷⁰ Why should therefore, India not try to counter China in Southeast Asia also when it has an ambition to develop as a predominant regional power? Moreover, if China goes unchallenged in Southeast Asia, then India's flanks get threatened.

With the end of bipolarity, multipolarity has become more evident specially in Asia. The increasing economic, political and

66. Prakash Suri (Brigadier), *op. cit.*, pp. 34-41.

67. Ganganath Jha, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-72.

68. Rahul Roy Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

69. Mohammad Ayoob, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

70. Milind Shankar, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

military weight of China, Japan and India have come into focus. India has gained preeminent position in South Asia and has considerable influence in Indian Ocean region. Again militarily New Delhi has to be concerned about the Chinese SLBM force and the possibility that China might soon cruise the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, India attempts to acquire the deterrent capabilities vis-a-vis China raises suspicions with Indonesia. This logic presupposes the Indian's attempt to dominate the Southeast Asian archipelago.⁷¹ In 1965 war India faced two fronts i.e., Pakistan and China. At the same time Indonesia aligned itself with China and Pakistan and opened a third front. It also renamed Indian Ocean as Indonesian Ocean. Indonesia "laid claims on Nicobar islands, and stepped up hostile activities around Andamans and Nicobars."⁷² Although a Pakistani strategist Khalid Munir Khan over-plays India's ambitions, it however, carries some signals when he says, "India wants incorporation of secessionist portions of Mother India (Example Sri Lanka, Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh as a first step, to be followed by reestablishment of influence over an area extending from Indonesia to Afghanistan)". He quotes K. B. Vaidya's observation to substantiate his point. "Even if we do not rule the waves of the five oceans of the world, we must at least rule the waves of the Indian Ocean".⁷³ India is seen as one of the six power centres of the world today along with China. India should not only be considered as a South Asian regional power. India's perspectives and role on strategic and security matters could be understood better within southern Asian framework rather than south Asian.⁷⁴ However, as long as

71. Mohammad Ayoob, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-48.

72. Subrahmanyam, "India's Security, the North and North-East Dimension", *Conflict Studies* 215. The Centre for Security and Conflict Studies, October 1988, p. 5.

73. Khalid Munir Khan (Brigadier), *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

74. Jasjit Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

China remains embroiled in setting its own house in order both politically and economically, as long as it can not go for further rapprochement with Russia, as long as China could not have improved relations with Vietnam, India can feel a little relaxed on Chinese influence in Southeast Asia.

The moment China comes out of these difficulties, it is likely to become more assertive and start putting its weights on Southeast Asian affairs. It is already in the way to have a credible blue water navy. China should not be seen as an external actor in Southeast Asian affairs. It is historically, demographically and strategically almost intimately involved with the affairs of South East Asia as already shown. Power equation therefore, gets affected between India and China since both the powers are involved in the area. Both India and China have to counter each other both in South and Southeast Asia. This power equation gets further affected with the inputs coming from another flank i.e., Central Asian Republics.

CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS

Pakistan's Interest

Central Asian Muslim Republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union have added newer dimensions in the security scenario between India and Pakistan in the region.⁷⁵ For historical, cultural and strategic reasons, the events in the Central Asia have potential to affect the environment in China, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.⁷⁶ It is therefore, likely to change the security complexion of the region at least indirectly, if not directly. Both India and Pakistan are now involved in wooing the Central Asian countries

75. Raju G. C. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

76. Rajan Menon and Henry J. Barkey, "They Transformation of Central Asia : Implications for Regional International Security, *The Survival*, IISS, Winter, 1992-93, p. 68.

to take their side by establishing mainly trade and commercial relationship. There is a rise of Islamic fundamentalism, as the western press calls it, in the region. It could otherwise be called the Islamic revivalism which binds together the peoples of the region inhabiting mainly Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, the disputed Kashmir province of India and the adjacent Muslim provinces of China. Pakistan's desire to develop special relations with the Central Asia is mainly guided by three factors. It finds an Islamic identity in the region. Secondly, Pakistan wants to exploit its peculiar geographical location between South Asia and Central Asia Republics. It would like to offer its sea ports at Karachi and Gwadar in the Arabian Sea to those Republics as their outlet to the markets of South Asia, South-east Asia and Africa. Thirdly, Pakistan would like to gain a foothold in the region for entrepreneurial class and business community.⁷⁷ Another factor that could interest Pakistan is its acute rivalry with India. Pakistan would like to challenge the well established trade and cultural links of India with the Central Asian Republics. Strategically, Pakistan would like to develop the strategic depth in those countries against India in case of future war in the region.⁷⁸

Effects on India-Pakistan Relation after the Cold War

It can be deduced that the scope of rivalry between India and Pakistan has widened after the Central Asian Republics became independent states. The specter of special Pakistani relations with the Republics is hardly welcomed by India. Religion, geography and culture of the region all go against the interests of India. The area is India's western flank. Success of Pakistan is likely to put

77. Rashid Ahmed Khan, "Pakistan's Relations with the Central Asian Republics : Problems and Prospects", *BIISS, Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1994. pp. 243-245.

78. Anthony Hyman, "Power and Politics in Central Asia's New Republics", *Conflict Studies* 273, Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, August 194, p. 17.

India into a disadvantageous position strategically. Kashmir is a constant irritant for India. Kashmiris are emotionally and ethnically related to the peoples of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics. The sentiments of broad majority Muslims of India have been badly hurt by the "Chauvinistic Hindu fundamentalism". The linkages are not far to make a chain reaction. India, therefore, would go all out to prevent the pro-Pakistani coalition of Islamic states in the region. In that direction, some shape has already taken. Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is such an organization linking ten Muslim states. As a regional grouping of Muslim Republics of ex-USSR with their neighbours like Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan, would spell far-reaching geopolitical implications apart from its being mainly an economic grouping.⁷⁹ The possible upgradation of ECO into a loose confederation involving military cooperation and arms transfers could undo India's preponderance in South Asia.⁸⁰ The new Central Asian Republics are a new roster to Indian concerns they may not be an imminent threat but as possible ones. Central Asian states are capable of manufacturing armaments and nuclear KAZAKHASTAN could tilt the India Pakistan strategic balance towards the latter. Again, Pakistan's close proximity with the nuclear powered Muslim Republics and Pakistan's bid in marshalling such resources may compel India to come out more overtly and offensively to go nuclear. There is, therefore, a possibility that South Asia may witness more nuclear related parleys, explosions and threat to nuclear war.

Effect on China

China's security environment is shaped by global, regional and internal forces. The changing scene in Central Asia is one of the

79. *Ibid*, p. 11.

80. Raju G. C. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

external influences on China.⁸¹ The rise of nationalism or fundamentalism so to say, in Central Asian Muslim Republics could also affect the Chinese.⁸² China is concerned about the spill over effects on her Qinghai-Uighur and Gansu Provinces and Xinjiang-Uygur autonomous region. A Free Uygustam Party aims to create a Uygur state in Xinjiang. This is what China fears most. There is a concept of territorial integrity between the Chinese and Central Asian leaders. There are territorial disputes between China and Kazakhstan and Kyrghistan. China also carried out nuclear explosion in 1994 close to Kazakhstan border.

Likely Outcome

The idea of nationalism, territorial disputes, nuclear armaments and the sensitivities in the politically volatile areas like Afghanistan, Kashmir and Ajerbaijan could have spill over effect in the geostrategic equation of South Asia. Hence the major actors like China, India and Pakistan once again come into play. Strategically or economically all these players can not but see the Indian Ocean region as their main area of interest where they collide with each other if at all. Thus the economic, political and military potentials of Central Asian Republics would either strengthen or weaken the main actors of this region. On the whole the new independent states in Central Asia could alter the scope of rivalry between India and Pakistan.⁸³ This equation is also tied up with the inputs coming from the most powerful extra-regional actor i.e., America.

81. Milind Shankar, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

82. David Shambaugh, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

83. Raja Menon and Henry J. Barley, p. 81.

AMERICA IN THE REGION

Background

Diminishing British potency coupled with the end of French colonial rule over Madagascar in 1958 prompted the US defence planners to foresee a possible power vacuum in the region. Interest in the Indian Ocean also got heightened by the changed scenario after the Vietnam War, which gave birth to the Nixon Doctrine. The doctrine generally favoured the roll back of overseas bases and commitments. Zbigniew Brzezinski described the north-western Indian Ocean Gulf areas as the 'arc of crisis'. This was further substantiated by the Carter Doctrine which replaced the moribund Nixon doctrine. "Any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force", declared President Carter. Instead of demilitarization, Carter Doctrine opted for military means. It showed a great departure in America's strategic posture after the Vietnam War. America responded by having more access facilities, the upgrading of Diego Garcia, expansion of fleet rotations and the formation of Rapid Deployment Force (RDF).⁸⁴ One point is crystal clear that US interest in the Indian Ocean is primarily aimed at securing amongst other resources oil from the Persian Gulf. This would also include the protection of oil route to North America, Western Europe and Japan. US military build-up in the Indian Ocean is for using it as a staging point to ensure the oil passage clear and safe. It is amply clear that the United States would not compromise on the supply of oil from the Middle East and Persian Gulf countries. Former President Richard Nixon in his book 'Real War' has made it clear that the United States (US)

84. William L. Dowdy and Rusel B. Trood, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

would go to any extent including the use of military means in ensuring the free flow of oil extracted from the Persian Gulf and routed through the Indian Ocean. One can, therefore, clearly establish that the US would remain militarily committed in the region at least for the reason of ensuring the free flow of oil.

Likely American Involvement After the Cold War

Let us now examine the changed scenario after the cold war. According to Prof Samuel P. Huntington, America has three principal strategic interests in the world today.⁸⁵ These are, (1) to maintain the United State as the premier global power, which in the coming decade means countering the Japanese economic challenge,(2) to prevent the emergence of a political-military hegemonic power in Eurasia and (3) to protect concrete American interests in the Third world, specially in the Persian Gulf and Central America. The last two points are important to some one concerned in the strategic interests of different extra-regional powers in this region. During the Cold war, the US was interested in preventing the Soviet Union from achieving total hegemony in Eurasia. However, epochal changes have taken place in the international system after the cold war. These could be global economy, global movement towards democratic political systems and market economies, intensification of national and ethnic identities, decline in military power and rise of economic powers and the rise of locally dominant powers in many regions. The present world can best be called 'Uni-multipolar' in the sense that it is multipolar as well as it has one superpower i.e., the United States of America. There could be six other major powers i.e., Russia, Japan, China, Germany, the UK and France. Following them are the emerging powers of the third world, among which

85. Samuel P. Huntington, "America's Changing Strategic Interests", *Survival* (Vol XXXIII, No. 1) IISS, January/February 1991. P. 8.

India is currently the most predominant power in 'asserting regional dominance'.⁸⁶ The Gulf War and the events afterwards indicate that the potential aggressors may acquire weapons of mass destruction and missiles to deliver them. There are potentialities of armed conflicts flaring up in the Indian Sub-Continent and the Middle East. Events in former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union clearly indicate that long suppressed ethnic tensions lead to violence and threaten the international security.⁸⁷ Now the third world is freed from the super power rivalry, as such the regional predominant actors will assume a more assertive role. How could America check all such regional actors is indeed a big question. Militarily, it would be a highly difficult task for America to check each and every dominant regional actor since the present US administration is busy in keeping her own house in order. It may, therefore, resort to diplomacy and economic moves more actively.

Former US President Bush talked about a new world order, specially after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. The President referred to the post cold war structure as the test case or model for a new World Order. The US wanted to prove that it was still the indispensable world power after the war. This was the test case for Bush where he played with diplomacy to form a 28 members anti-Iraq coalition and sort out Iraq militarily. However, the big question remains whether the US will play the same role under the framework of New World order, if its vital interests are not threatened. Moreover, its military might has to decline since economically it is no more a super power. Japan or for that matter Germany has become a threat to it economically. According to Prof Huntington, the US would turn out to be simply a major

86. *Ibid, op. cit.*, p. 6.

87. Richard N. Gardnes, "International Law and the Use of Force : paper II". *Adelphi papers* 266, (*New Dimensions in International Security*), Winter 1991/92, p. 84.

power like others.⁸⁸ Paul Kennedy's famous thesis, although challenged, carries lot of sense, when he depicts that "taking on excessive commitments worldwide has sapped the domestic industrial economic vitality of the US".⁸⁹ Even in the Gulf War for finance it had to depend on Japan, Germany and other Gulf countries. It just cannot afford to finance another Gulf War. According to Paul Kennedy, "America requires not just military capability (and) national will, but also a flourishing and efficient economic base, strong finance and a healthy social fabric"⁹⁰. Domestic economic condition of the US deteriorated after the Gulf war. Third World countries, especially the countries of the region should be concerned about the motive and role of the US, in the post cold war era. In the absence of strategic balance between the two superpowers the regional third world countries might lose their strategic importance to the only superpower. Strategically patron-client relationship and economically centre-periphery relationship have also undergone changes. Most of the Third World countries would be unable to pay the costs of any war. United States, as such, is unlikely to intervene in any contentious issues unless its vital interests are threatened. Again the New World order envisages that the developing countries and the regional organizations should cater for the security needs of the West.⁹¹ As such, it would be seen that the regional dominant powers would come to the forefront. Such powers would take advantage of such a vacuum and dictate terms to the smaller neighbours around. Smaller neighbours may find themselves helpless in garnering the support of either the super power or of the major powers.

88. Samuel P. Huntington, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

89. Raja Mohan, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

90. Md. Golam Mostafa, "The Gulf War and the New World Order; Implications for the Third World", *BISS Papers*, No. 14 Dhaka, July 1992, p. 42-43.

91. *Ibid*, p. 66-67.

Power Equation

It can be seen that American military presence would continue in the Indian Ocean region mainly for the oil. As far as South Asia is concerned America is likely to adopt a stand off policy. It would resort more to diplomacy and economics. It would however leave the leadership role to India. It fits into the United States' overall policy. America does not consider Pakistan anymore a front line state. More so, Pakistan has got linked up with the Central Asian Muslim Republics. America is concerned about the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the area. A strong India would be a countervailing force against China. Although presently there is a rapprochement between India and China but that may not hold good in the long run. China is likely to become more than a major power by the turn of the century. As already mentioned, one of the stated strategic objectives of America in the coming days would be to prevent the emergence of a politico-military hegemonic power in Eurasia. It is less probable for the Americans to involve themselves militarily in the regional conflicts unless its vital interests are threatened.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The power-politics of the Indian Ocean region in the changed scenario can be best understood by the interaction of the main actors like India, China, Pakistan and the US. India is the predominant power in South Asia. It is, however, challenged by Pakistan. Pakistan is trying to develop better relations with the Central Asian Muslim Republics. This is likely to give strategic depth to Pakistan and may be useful economically. India can not but remain watchful on this development. There is a possibility of an increase in the nuclear demonstration by India and Pakistan. India is likely to step up its nuclear activities and research. However, nuclear deterrence may preclude the possibility of a conventional war breaking out between these two contenders.

China is a predominant power in the region which challenges India both militarily and economically. China has geopolitical interests in both South and Southeast Asia. It provides economic and military aid to the smaller states of the whole Indian Ocean region. India is therefore, concerned about the limitation it can impose on its becoming the predominant power in the region. The US has its interests in the region mainly in the form of keeping its oil lifeline open. So the US military presence in the Indian Ocean area will probably continue in foreseeable future. However, as the economic supremacy of the US is declining, it is unlikely that it would entangle itself in all the disputes of this region. Nevertheless, when its vital national interests will be threatened, it would not hesitate to intervene militarily. The US would possibly leave the regional localized issues to the dominant regional powers like India or the regional organizations to sort out or settle. US today is more likely to intervene through diplomacy and economic means. America wants India to become the predominant power in South Asia. This may help the US in containing China in the region. Pakistan may not get the sympathies any more from the US because of its hobnobbing with the Muslim Central Asian Republics. There is, of course, less possibility of the major powers taking side either with India or Pakistan overtly. China is anxiously waiting to take advantage of the vacuum created in the region after the Cold War. China and India are locked in Southeast Asia, South Asia and Central Asia given there is a void of super power rivalry in the region. In the final analysis, it is seen that China is building massively. India is recognized as the predominant power in South Asia and it would also like to project its power in the Indian Ocean region. India, however, is challenged by Pakistan. US military presence would remain mainly to tilt the balance in favour of India apart from ensuring free flow of oil.