

Internal Conflicts and Opportunistic Intervention by Neighbouring States: A Study of India's Involvement in Insurgencies in South Asia

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Abstract

Countries in South Asia being religiously, ethnically and culturally diverse are naturally prone to intrastate conflicts and tensions. The inability of their ruling elites to neither grant nor guard the political and economic rights of minority groups cause discontent and conflicts. India being a powerful country and occupying central position in the region could help its neighbours to overcome their problems. Conversely, it can exploit them to its advantage in order to extract various concessions and impose its dictates on them. This article discusses the case of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan and finds that India chose the latter course and used support of terrorism as a tool of its foreign policy to advance its interests in the region.

Key words: South Asia, India, Terrorism, Conflict, Insurgencies, Support, Intervention.

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Introduction

South Asian Countries (SACs) share numerous commonalities such as civilisation, culture, traditions and historical experiences that can coalesce them towards regional integration. But, South Asia is also perhaps the most dissimilar region on the planet. It is, in fact, ‘a world in miniature’ being diverse religiously, ideologically, politically, culturally, and ethnically.¹ Likewise, regional states in South Asia are also different. For instance, India has six main religious communities and ethnic diversity with around 780 sub-dialects written in 66 different scripts, 122 main dialects (spoken by over 10,000 people) and 22 scheduled (official) languages.²

Each SAC has at least a single, dominant religious group in majority. Hindus constitute 79.8 per cent and 81.3 per cent of the population in India and Nepal, respectively, while Muslims make up 96.28 per cent and 89.1 per cent of the population in Pakistan and Bangladesh, respectively, and 100 per cent in case of Maldives. Buddhists form 70.2 per cent and 75.3 per cent of the population in Sri Lanka and Bhutan, respectively. Hindus are the largest minority in Bangladesh (10 per cent), Sri Lanka (12.6 per cent), Bhutan (22.1 per cent), and Pakistan (1.6 per cent) followed by Christians (1.59 per cent). Muslims constitute the largest minority in India (14.2 per cent) and the second largest minority in Sri Lanka (9.7 per cent) and Nepal (4.4 per cent). In Nepal, Buddhists (9 per cent) constitute the largest minority.³

¹ Zillur R. Khan, “Ideology and Internal Dynamics of South Asian Regional Cooperation,” in Zillur R. Khan, ed., *SAARC and the Superpowers* (Dhaka: The University Press, 1991), 48-50.

² Shiv Sahay Singh, “Language Survey Reveals Diversity,” *Hindu*, July 22, 2013, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/language-survey-reveals-diversity/article4938865.ece>.

³ The data has mainly been collected from CIA, *The World Factbook 2013-14*, (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2013), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/>. In case of religious population in Pakistan, see Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, GoP, “Population by Religion” (Government of Pakistan), accessed February 20, 2018, <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/tables/POPULATION%20BY%20RELIGION.pdf>.

Diverse religious and ethnic minority groups residing in different SACs pose perceived or real threats and create problems and grievances, generate and stir up tensions within and between regional states. The religious and ethnic divisions (besides other issues) mainly cause intra and interstate conflicts and sometimes contribute to internal strife and international wars in South Asia.⁴ The inability of the ruling elites of SACs to grant or successfully guard the political and economic interests of their religious and ethnic minorities generally cause displeasure and uprisings in their countries. The religious and ideological differences, perceived political estrangement, ethnic and socio-cultural sensitivities, economic exploitation and overall sense of deprivation or dissatisfaction with the existing system impels the citizenry to ultimately revolt against the state, seek autonomy or even complete separation. Internal conflicts have over and over again challenged the national security and territorial integrity of SACs, and occasionally ignited interstate tensions in South Asia. Though, the political elites are mainly responsible for contributing to these conflicts,⁵ the role of neighbouring states in inflating them has also been instrumental. As Gonsalves notes, non-state actors (NSAs) posed serious threats to the stability and territorial integrity of SACs and some of them were supported by neighbouring countries. 'No major country in the subcontinent can claim to have clean hands in this context.'⁶ In this perspective, New Delhi's role and behaviour towards internal problems including armed revolts, insurgencies, and terrorism of diverse nature faced by smaller regional countries (SRCs) is worth pursuing.⁷ The article explores India's involvement in internal conflicts and political problems of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan by asking what motivates a regional power to intervene in the internal affairs of its neighbouring states; and how and

⁴ Khan, "Ideology and Internal Dynamics of South Asian Regional Cooperation," 48-49.

⁵ Rehman Sobhan, "Regional Cooperation in South Asia: A Quest for Identity," *South Asian Survey* 5, no. 1 (1998): 3-26.

⁶ Eric Gonsalves, "Regional Cooperation in South Asia," *South Asian Survey* 13, no. 2 (2006): 203-209 (207).

⁷ All SACs smaller than India are referred in the article as smaller regional countries (SRCs).

why it would support armed rebels, militant groups, insurgents and terrorist organisations in its neighbourhood.

Role and Motives of ‘Bad Neighbours’ in Internal Conflicts

Internal conflicts are ‘violent or potentially violent political disputes’ mainly originating from ‘domestic rather than international systemic factors, and where armed violence takes place or threatens to take place primarily within the borders of a single state.’ They may include or involve a ‘violent power struggle’ between groups led by either military or civilian leaders on one side or both, civil wars, fierce ethnic or religious conflicts, secessionist or liberation wars, armed ideological movements, attempted or failed revolutionary struggles, revolts and failed military coups, assaults by terrorists or criminal groups, and insurgencies by guerilla groups of various sorts. The key actors are generally governments and rebels but, in case of state collapse or weak governmental structures, NSAs or non-governmental groups can also fight with each other.⁸ Roderic Alley broadly identifies three types of internal conflicts: resource-based involving legitimacy struggles over government authority; those based on ideological grounds; and identity conflicts.⁹ Internal conflicts generally find traction when there are: nations or communal groups without a state; communal competitors for state power; militant religious groups; frontier people; regional autonomists; class differences; and dominant minorities.¹⁰

T.R. Gurr has argued that communal groups, defined in terms of religious or ethnic and linguistic similarities, in their bid to defend and promote their collective self-interests are a major threat to intra and

⁸ Michael E. Brown, introduction to *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, ed. Michael E. Brown (London: MIT Press, 1996), 1.

⁹ Roderic Alley, *Internal Conflict and the International Community: Wars without End?* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 2.

¹⁰ Amy L. Freedman and Sarah Davies Murray, “Theories, Tools, and Lenses,” in Amy L. Freedman, ed., *The Internationalization of Internal Conflicts: Threatening the State* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 18.

interstate peace and stability in the world.¹¹ He notes that communal groups are 'constituted not by the presence of a particular trait or combination of traits, but rather the shared perception that the defining traits, whatever they are, set group apart.' Thus, instead of identifying characteristics, perceived differences among groups are important.¹²

Several studies have identified the indigenous causes of internal conflicts. For instance, Gurr statically analysed 227 communal groups and notes that their grievances were generally rooted in their concerns over cultural identity, political and social exclusion, economic disparities and lack of political empowerment. Sometimes, such conflicts arose due to deliberate efforts of the political elites to use identity politics in their bid for power. However, state power, democracy and institutional changes determine if such conflicts result in protest or rebellion.¹³ There can be multiple underlying or permissive causes (independent variables) due to which violent conflict (dependent variable) can potentially arise, but proximate or immediate causes (intervening variables) are more important as they can spark and ignite wars. Brown lists 12 causes categorised under four types of factors each as underlying and proximate causes of internal conflicts. Underlying causes include weak states, intra-security concerns, and ethnic geography under structural factors; discriminatory political institutions, exclusionary national ideologies, inter-group politics and ethnic politics under political factors; economic problems, discriminatory economic systems and economic development / modernisation under economic/social factors; and patterns of cultural discrimination and problematic groups histories under cultural/ perceptual factors. Proximate causes include collapsing states, changing intrastate military balance and changing demographic patterns (structural factors); political transitions, increasingly influential exclusionary ideologies, growing inter-group competitions and intensifying leadership struggles (political factors);

¹¹ Ted Robert Gurr, "Why Minorities Rebel: A Global Analysis of Communal Mobilization and Conflict since 1945," *International Political Science Review* 14, no. 2 (1993), 161-201.

¹² Ted Robert Gurr, *Minorities at Risk: A Global View of Ethnopolitical Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1993), 4.

¹³ Gurr, "Why Minorities Rebel."

mounting economic problems, growing economic inequalities, fast-paced development and modernisation (economic/social factors); and intensifying patterns of cultural discrimination and ethnic bashing/propagandising (cultural/perceptual factors).¹⁴

Several studies have also suggested a link between or interplay of domestic and international factors that can generate internal conflicts in a state. Lobell and Mauceri argue that weakening state institutions paralleled with disruption in previously agreed inter-group arrangements, particularly a major change in communal balance, can trigger intrastate conflicts with the potential to escalate and diffuse into an international conflict. A marginalised or threatened communal group can invite outside help from a religious or ethnic community that can internationalise the conflict. Thus, they posit that ‘intermestic’ forces, that is, interplay of international and domestic factors and their external and international ‘reverberations’ intensify and spread ethnic conflicts.¹⁵ Foreign intervention in internal conflicts is also motivated by diverse factors and various actors can be involved in it. Özerdem and Lee point out that internal conflicts can invite intervention from international or regional organisations as well as states, such as former colonial powers, concerned neighbours and the regional hegemon.¹⁶ Belammy, Williams and Griffin note that the regional hegemon having vested interest in regional peace and stability plays its role in peacekeeping in the internal conflict ‘in order to press their own claims to territory, economic benefits or access to natural resources, or support to the socio-political ambitions of the allies.’¹⁷ Freedman finds that due to illegitimacy or weak governance,

¹⁴ Michael E. Brown, “The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict,” in ed. Michael E. Brown, *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict* (London: MIT Press, 1996), 577.

¹⁵ Steven E. Lobell and Philip Mauceri, eds., *Ethnic Conflict and International Politics: Explaining Diffusion and Escalation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Lobell and Mauceri noted that various domestic groups strive to shape state’s foreign policy and position in the world system. Meanwhile, external actors can form domestic political coalitions either through direct intervention or by supporting / opposing them.

¹⁶ Alpaslan Özerdem and SungYong Lee, *International Peacebuilding: An Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 35.

¹⁷ Alex J. Belammy, Paul Williams and Stuart Griffin, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), 44.

some governments find themselves unwilling or unable to address their internal problems, and thus, provide 'an opening for others to use the conflict for their own purpose.' These outsiders may be individual fighters who share ethnic or religious affinities with the groups in conflict with the rival groups or serve as proxies for a neighbouring state. The actions of an intervening state may be motivated by various factors including:

- their suspicion and enmity towards rival powers or groups;
- to stop perceived oppression of their ethnic or religious brethren;
- regional or international balance of power considerations; and,
- power ambitions.

External involvement makes it difficult for the parties to reach a settlement and sometimes spoils the agreement, if concluded.¹⁸

Research on internationalisation of internal conflict represents two perspectives: affective and instrumental. The affective perspective holds that external powers generally intervene because of their communal linkage or shared identity – religious, ethnic or linguistic – with one or another group, historical injustices, and humanitarian considerations etc. Instrumentalists hold that external powers intervene in internal conflicts motivated by their thirst for rewards in the shape of material gains, such as accessing resources, or strengthening their political power domestically and increasing influence regionally or internationally. Political elites can use communalism – ethnicity or religion – to produce, stimulate, or activate political action. They can also exploit communal differences, through fear mongering, scapegoating or dividing people in order to gain or retain power.¹⁹

¹⁸ Amy L. Freedman and Sarah Davies Murray, "Explaining the Internationalization of Insurgencies," in Amy L. Freedman, ed., *The Internationalization of Internal Conflicts: Threatening the State* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 9-10.

¹⁹ David Carment and Patrick James, "Explaining Third-Party Intervention in Ethnic Conflict: Theory and Evidence," *Nations and Nationalism* 6, no. 2 (2000): 173-202.

Internal conflicts also arise because of greed/opportunity and grievances arising out of inequality and injustice. More specifically, they may be caused by collapsing institutions, political exclusion and repression, economic inequalities, and socio-cultural discrimination that creates a sense of relative deprivation and frustration. In such cases, rebellion is deemed as a means to redress grievances. The stronger the repression and discrimination, the higher would be the likelihood of revolt. Grievances based on political and economic inequalities alone cannot create turbulence until there are resources and expectations of higher return or payoff from the conflict. Rational calculation on the part of participants on the basis of potential material benefits and incentives to participate in a conflict are the key variables. Religious and ethnic differences impel political exclusion and discrimination that implant internal conflicts. The rebel groups fearing that they do not have sufficient power to match the capabilities of the state seek outside help. Neighbouring states ruled by religious or ethnic kin are more likely to intervene which can also generate interstate conflicts. The ruling elites of neighbouring states may be induced because of affective or instrumental motives or can act under pervasive domestic pressure to help the allegedly beleaguered minority group across the border. Sometimes, an external power intervenes in order to pursue or promote its own foreign policy objectives.

This role of the external power can either be positive or negative. It can play the role of an interlocutor to help resolve the problem or to suppress conflict escalation. Otherwise, it can encourage conflict expansion. Its motives can also be affective or instrumental: pursuance of military and security interests, economic benefits, international political compulsions, and, domestic political considerations. However, the decision to intervene is made on the basis of rational calculation, and only when it is considered less costly.²⁰ Internal conflicts can arise due to any of the four sets of immediate causes:

²⁰ David Carment, Patrick James and Zeynep Taydas, "The Internationalization of Ethnic Conflict: State, Society, and Synthesis," *International Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (2009): 63-86 (64-71).

1. internal mass-level factors like domestic problems;
2. external mass-level factors like the role of neighbouring states or 'bad neighbourhoods';
3. internal elite-level factors like bad leaders; and,
4. external elite-level factors or 'bad neighbours.'²¹

Brown argues that though internal mass-level configurations and external factors such as neighbours' related mass-level 'diffusion,' 'contagion' or 'spill-over' effects can be immediate causes of internal conflicts, most of them are mainly triggered by the domestic, elite-level or leader-driven actions and deliberate decisions of some neighbouring states. Thus, the decisions of bad leaders and actions of bad neighbours are more important factors that cause or intensify internal conflicts.²²

Neighbours can occasionally be passive and 'innocent victims' of internal conflicts,²³ but generally, they actively contribute 'to violence, escalation and regional instability' caused by such problems. In several cases, internal conflicts are a product of the deliberate acts and discrete decisions made by important regional players:

Bad neighbours are a big problem, much bigger than conventional thinking would lead us to believe.²⁴

The response and actions of external powers (including neighbouring states) to internal conflicts may involve interventions of five types defined in terms of the motives that drive them (Table 1):

²¹ Brown, "The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict," 575-80.

²² Brown, "introduction," 23-6; and Brown, "The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict," 590-9.

²³ Ibid., 590-9. Brown noted that internal conflicts can have five types of effects on neighbouring states, which include: international war; instability; military problems; economic troubles and refugee problems.

²⁴ Ibid., 600.

Table-1
Response and Actions of External Powers (including Neighbouring States) to Internal Conflicts

Humanitarian Intervention: In order to bring an end to human miseries, death and destruction arising out of an internal conflict, a state or group of states, with or without authorisation of an international organisation, intervene in a country with relatively 'benign and altruistic' intentions, e.g. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) took action in Bosnia in the 1990s.

Protective Intervention: Neighbouring state(s) may intervene in a country in order to protect or assist ethnic or religious brethren, generally a party to or victim of a violent internal conflict. In the 1990s, Serbia and Croatia intervened in Bosnia to support Bosnian Serbs and Croats, respectively.

Defensive Intervention: Sometimes states intervene and take action in a country affected by internal conflict in their 'self-defence' - in order to prevent, cease and curb cross-border problems, such as refugee issues, threats of regional or internal instability, subversion or spillover effects of conflict. For instance, Turkey took action against Kurdish groups in Iraq in 1995.

Opportunistic Intervention: Intervention by an opportunistic state in a neighbouring country aimed at exploiting the domestic disorder and turmoil of the latter for furthering its own military, political and economic interests and to enhance its position in the regional power equation. Since, internal conflicts and domestic problems create a 'window of opportunity' for opportunistic neighbours - ever ready to exploit them - to advance their ideological, political or economic objectives, therefore, permissive causes provide the potential to exploit and get benefit of the weaknesses of the conflict-ridden country. It involves use of proxies to wage war on an enemy country to substitute direct wars or invasions. The intervening state can support its proxies by various means including through provision of training, manpower, leadership, money, weapons, communication apparatus, sanctuaries, and logistic support of various sorts. The intervening state can support rebels, insurgents or any belligerent group to pressurise and coerce its rival country in order to extract concessions of various sorts; retaliate over one's support for a cause or movement; force change in policy on a particular issue; keep it 'preoccupied' with domestic turmoil, weaken it and even bring it to the verge of complete collapse and dismemberment. The state, however, can try to cover or legitimise its 'opportunistic actions' by portraying them in 'self-serving' disguise of protective, defensive or humanitarian measures.

Opportunistic Wars: These include all the motives and reasons that cause opportunistic intervention by a state, but differs from the latter only in terms of degree and form. Instead of pretending to 'maintain an innocent public façade' and using proxies to advance one's objectives, it involves an invasion, a 'full-scale military assault' by armed forces in another country with open intentions and actions. For example, India dismembered Pakistan, Syria intervened in Jordan during its civil war and Vietnam invaded Cambodia in the 1970s.

Source: Brown, "The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict," 590-9.

This article employs an eclectic approach and mainly uses the model developed by Brown to explore India's interference in the internal affairs of its neighbouring South Asian countries. The author also uses insights from other studies including the concept and role of the regional hegemon in internal conflicts used by Belammy, Williams and Griffin. The study posits that a regional power can pursue various policies, including direct or indirect intervention in its neighbouring states, in order to establish or reinforce its hegemonic position; to coerce them about an unfriendly policy and to seek their deference; to project power; to broaden its influence; to promote foreign policy objectives; to extract concessions; and keep influence of rival powers out of the region. Indirect intervention takes precedence over direct intervention because the use of militant groups as proxies is cost-effective in terms of resource commitment as it only involves assurance of equipment, finance, training, advisors, and logistic support in a secret way making it relatively more difficult to gauge.²⁵

India's Foreign Policy towards South Asia

A brief discussion of India's foreign policy towards South Asia will be helpful in comprehending its motives and actions in the region. In the post-independence period, India's foreign policy was guided by the five principles or *Panchsheel* (panch-sila).²⁶ India's leadership strove to play the role of leader of the Third World by either championing the cause of anti-colonialism or non-alignment. Non-alignment was believed to be the

²⁵ Idean Salehyan, Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and David E. Cunningham, "Explaining External Support for Insurgent Groups," *International Organization* 65, no. 4 (2011): 709-704 (712-4).

²⁶ N. Jayapalan, *Foreign Policy of India: 1947-1987* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2001), 54-8; and K. R. Gupta and Vatsala Shukla, *Foreign Policy of India*, vol. I (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2009), 103-7. The name finds its origin in the five rules of conduct prescribed in Buddhism but the five principles of Nehruvian foreign policy found their first expression in the Sino-India Treaty of 1954 and included: 1) Mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. 2) Non-aggression. 3) Non-intervention in each other's internal affairs. 4) Mutual benefit and equality. 5) Peaceful co-existence.

best way to guarantee the country's sovereignty²⁷ and to keep it away from the Cold War power politics. This helped India act out the part 'as a champion of peace and freedom.'²⁸ In the post-Cold War era, India's policy has transformed from non-alignment to courtship of countries like the United States (US) because of the former's quest to become a major player in world politics and the latter's policy to contain China.²⁹

Stable and rapid economic growth is the key to India's global ambitions which necessitates peace at home and stability in the neighbourhood. The Republic wants to pursue regional connectivity and economic integration to augment its growth process, while seeking to play the role of a regional stabiliser in South Asia.³⁰

India's policy towards South Asia since its inception has been motivated by power and security considerations. In fact, Nehru's foreign policy was mainly a blend of idealism and realism, but not exclusively the former to present the country's soft image to the world, and the latter to pursue the country's objectives in the region. The country's realist course of action was veiled under the guise of idealism during the Nehru era, transformed into hard realism by Indira Gandhi.³¹

In the post-independence period, India's leaders 'perceived themselves to be inheritors of the rights and privileges the British used to

²⁷ Citha D. Maass, "South Asia: Drawn between Cooperation and Conflict," *South Asian Survey* 3, no. 1 & 2 (1996): 259-276 (270).

²⁸ I. P. Khosla, "Constructing the South Asian Community," *South Asian Survey* 6, no. 2 (1999): 181-196 (185-6).

²⁹ Harsh V. Pant, *Indian Foreign Policy: An Overview* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 23-35.

³⁰ Ibid., 197-211; and Prakash Nanda, "India's Global Dynamics," *South Asian Journal* 32 (2011): 18-28, <https://www.rcss.org/admin/fckImages/issue-32.pdf>.

³¹ David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan, "India and the World," in David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 12; For detailed analysis see, Andrew B. Kennedy, "Nehru's Foreign Policy: Idealism and Realism Conjoined," in David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 92-103; and Surjit Mansingh, "Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy: Hard Realism?" David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan, and Srinath Raghavan, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 104-16.

enjoy' in the subcontinent.³² New Delhi strove to continue imperial policies towards regional states, particularly Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim which were virtually British protectorates in the past. India not only inherited British strategic thinking but also imitated the US imperialist dogma – the Monroe Doctrine. As Khosla observes, its foreign policy towards South Asia is based on the security concepts initiated under British India. It has two 'core perceptions.' First, not permit its neighbours to pursue any defence or foreign policy that could potentially be 'inimical' to its own security. Second, not allow any unfriendly external power to establish its influence or presence in any of its neighbouring state.³³ Under this strategic dogma, India views South Asia as a 'single strategic unit and itself as its custodian of security and stability.'³⁴ The doctrine opposed any external involvement in the region. If and when there is some outside involvement, 'it must be for and with India.' The Republic and its leadership also wanted to expand this doctrine to the Indian Ocean region.³⁵

In order to consolidate its security considerations and hegemonic position in South Asia,³⁶ the government signed various agreements with its neighbours: with Bhutan in 1949 which provided that the Bhutanese foreign policy would be guided by India's advice; with Nepal in 1950 which said that neither party would tolerate any threat to the security of

³² Bhabani Sen Gupta, Amit Gupta and Prakash Handa, "Regionalism in South Asia: Roles and Behaviour," in Bhabani Sen Gupta, ed., *Regional Cooperation and Development in South Asia*, vol. I (New Delhi: South Asian Publishers, 1989), 18.

³³ Khosla, "Constructing the South Asian Community," 185.

³⁴ A. K. M. Abdus Sabur, "Management of Intra-Group Conflicts in SAARC: The Relevance of ASEAN Experiences," *South Asian Survey* 10, no.1 (2003): 85-100 (87-8).

³⁵ Robert A. Scalapino, "US-PRC Relations and South Asia," in Zillur R. Khan, ed., *SAARC and the Superpowers* (Dhaka: The University Press, 1991), 24.

³⁶ Marina von Neumann Whitman, *Reflections of Interdependence: Issues for Economic Theory and U.S. Policy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), vii. Hegemony can be defined as 'the leadership of a country that plays a special role, enjoys unique privileges, and takes special responsibility of a successful operation of a [a political or economic system].' Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little-Brown, 1977), 44. Keohane and Nye observe that a hegemon 'can change the rules rather than adapt its policies to the existing rules.'

the other by any external power; with Bangladesh in 1972 which stated that neither party would join a military alliance or permit its territory to be used against the security of another state; and with Sri Lanka in 1987 which provided that both parties would not allow the use of their territories for activities detrimental to the security, unity and territorial integrity of other state.³⁷ India also offered Pakistan the Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation in 1949 and repeated this offer in response to Pakistan's no-war pact in 1981.³⁸ Earlier, Indian leaders had not accepted the existence of Pakistan sincerely, and saw the Partition as an 'unavoidable expedient' which would be 'short lived.' At worst, they hoped that Pakistan would 'settle down as a deferential junior partner within an Indian sphere of influence.'³⁹ Besides, India also signed a 'secret' arms supply agreement with Nepal in 1965 which severely undermined the latter's autonomy. In 1990, the Singh government forwarded Kathmandu a draft treaty whose provisions, if accepted, could have resulted into loss of Nepalese sovereignty.⁴⁰ Thus, Muni rightly observed, at different times and on different issues that 'Indian policy and diplomacy' towards its neighbours, reflected 'a colonial mindset and a domineering personal style.' It did not heed to the Nepalese demand of revising their bilateral agreement of 1950 and opposed Bhutan's aspirations to establish direct diplomatic relations with other states, including China.⁴¹ Occasionally, its policy was characterised by 'an attitudinal aggressiveness and a value-oriented arrogance' that was interpreted by SRCs as Indian 'hegemonism.'⁴²

India strove to impose its hegemony in the region through direct or indirect use of force. It forcefully annexed several princely states soon after Partition in 1947, and also Sikkim, a tiny state in the Himalayas, in

³⁷ Khosla, "Constructing the South Asian Community," 185.

³⁸ Douglas C. Makeig, "War, No-War, and the India-Pakistan Negotiating Process," *Pacific Affairs* 60, no. 2 (1987): 271-94 (279-81).

³⁹ Selig S. Harrison, "Fanning Flames in South Asia," in Aslam Qureshi, ed., *Pakistan and South Asian Environment* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications, 1991), 22-3.

⁴⁰ Rabindra Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," *Asian Survey* 44, no. 5 (2004): 627-46 (632-4).

⁴¹ S. D. Muni, "Problem Areas in India's Neighbourhood Policy," *South Asian Survey* 10, no. 2 (2003): 185-196 (195).

⁴² Gupta, Gupta and Handa, "Regionalism in South Asia," 23-7.

1974. New Delhi used brute force to occupy and then retain its unlawful control over Jammu and Kashmir from the onset. It 'midwifed' the creation of Bangladesh by supporting Mukti Bahini - a militant rebel group, and then by openly intervening in East Pakistan in 1971. The country has political problems and bilateral disputes with most of its neighbours and generally does not enjoy good relations with them. New Delhi also used armed rebels, insurgents and terrorist organisations in SRCs in order to coerce them to change their policies, extract concessions or to project power, and increase its influence in the region.

India and Insurgencies in Neighbouring Countries

This section elucidates how internal conflicts arose in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Pakistan and offered openings to opportunistic neighbours like India to intervene. It also illuminates how, and why, New Delhi responded to these internal conflicts in its neighbourhood:

Chakma Insurgency in Bangladesh

Being grateful for its 'key role' in the creation of Bangladesh, Bengali leaders sought to establish friendly ties with New Delhi. They, however, also wanted to preserve their political identity, national sovereignty and economic independence which did not match India's expectations. Their gratitude could not help them escape India's designs of imposing hegemony over their country. When they strove to distance themselves, New Delhi attempted to exploit their weaknesses and coerce them through sponsoring insurgency rooted in religious, ethnic and ideological differences.

Bangladesh's first Prime Minister, Sheikh Mujib-ur-Rahman strove to impose Bengali nationalism which estranged the minorities, particularly the 11 ethnic groups popularly known as the hill people who live in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in southeastern Bangladesh.⁴³ In

⁴³ K. C. Saha, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord: A Landmark Model for a Viable Solution to the Refugee Problem," *Refuge* 18, no. 2 (1999), 10-15, <http://refuge.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/refuge/article/viewFile/22008/20677>.

response to Bengali nationalism, Chakmas – the largest ethnic group in CHT – formed a political group, the Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) led by Manabendra Narayan Larma in 1972, and then its military wing Shanthi Bahini (SB) or Peace Force in 1973.⁴⁴ PCJSS had severe reservations over neglect of their identity as a separate ethnic group as well as settlement of Muslim Bengalis in CHT that could permanently change the demographic composition of the area. Highlighting these concerns, PCJSS demanded that Dhaka bring an end to the settlement of Muslim Bengalis in CHT, and to give the Chakmas and other native groups the preferential treatment and autonomy encompassing wide political and economic powers, etc. However, Dhaka refused to accept these demands⁴⁵ that led SB to start armed attacks and full-scale insurgency in CHT by 1975.⁴⁶ This gave an opportunity to India to intervene in the internal affairs of Bangladesh.

After Sheikh Mujib's assassination in a military coup in August 1975, India cultivated an alliance of SB and supporters of Mujib's Awami League (AL), against the new government in Dhaka. New Delhi was annoyed over the regime change and assassination of a pro-India leader in Dhaka. At one point, India even considered intervening militarily in Bangladesh to foil the coup, but refrained fearing international condemnation.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, after the coup, PCJSS leader Larma

⁴⁴ Amena Mohsin, "Regional Cooperation for Human Security: Reflections from Bangladesh," *South Asian Survey* 13, no. 2 (2006): 333-7 (334); and also Syed Anwar Husain, "State and Ethnicity: The Case of Bangladesh," *South Asian Survey* 4, no. 2 (1997): 221-34 (223).

⁴⁵ Sanjoy Hazarika, "Bangladeshi Insurgents Say India is Supporting Them," *New York Times*, June 11, 1989, <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/06/11/world/bangladeshi-insurgents-say-india-is-supporting-them.html>.

⁴⁶ Mohsin, "Regional Cooperation for Human Security," 334; Husain, "State and Ethnicity," 224. Media in Bangladesh and Pakistan reported that India attempted to intervene after the coup. However, India denied these reports.

⁴⁷ Ministry of External Affairs, GoI, *Annual Report: 1975-76* (Government of India, 1975), 4-5; 18-9. Also see, B. Z. Khasru, "Why Bangladesh Feared Indian Invasion after 1975 Coup," *Indian Defence Review*, April 28, 2014, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/why-bangladesh-feared-indian-invasion-after-1975-coup/>; and R. K. Radhakrishnan, "U.S. Feared India would Intervene in Bangladesh after Coup," *Hindu*, April 20, 2013,

escaped to India⁴⁸ where he was sheltered and supported by its intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW). Pro-Mujib Bengali elements and AL activists in India also supported SB against the 'usurpers' in Dhaka.⁴⁹

Bangladesh believed that India had raised, trained and sponsored SB though New Delhi officially refuted these allegations.⁵⁰ With the regime change in Dhaka and subsequent shift in its policies, India reacted strongly and decided to support SB. RAW contacted Larma and began sponsoring SB insurgents with weapons, training, finances and shelter etc. The rank and file of about 50,000 Chakma militants were trained in India⁵¹ and the 'entire insurgency was carried out' with Indian help.⁵²

India's support of the Chakma insurgency was confirmed by the international media, local Indian officials and the rebels. For instance, in 1989, *New York Times* cited both the insurgent leaders in CHT and local officials of Indian paramilitary forces in Agartala, India, as saying that Indian agencies and forces were providing the rebels sanctuaries in border areas as well as arms, training and money.⁵³

Bangladesh raised this issue at various international forums including South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) summits which 'irked' New Delhi.⁵⁴ The insurgency left about 25,000 people dead and displaced thousands who lived in camps in Tripura, India⁵⁵ and whose number rose to over 60,000 by 1997.⁵⁶ India strived to

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/us-feared-india-would-intervene-in-bangladesh-after-coup/article4634329.ece>.

⁴⁸ Mohsin, "Regional Cooperation for Human Security," 334.

⁴⁹ Partha S. Ghosh, *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1989), 73-81.

⁵⁰ Samir Kamar Das, "ULFA Indo-Bangladesh Relations and Beyond," in Sanjay Hazarika and V. R. Raghavan, eds., *Conflicts in the Northeast: Internal and External Effects* (New Delhi: Vij Books, 2011), 35-6.

⁵¹ Mohammad Zainal Abedin, *Chittagong Hill Tracts: A Victim of Indian Intervention* (London: Eastern Publications, 2003).

⁵² Mohsin, "Regional Cooperation for Human Security," 334.

⁵³ Hazarika, "Bangladeshi Insurgents Say India is Supporting Them."

⁵⁴ Ghosh, *Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia*, 73-81.

⁵⁵ SATP, "Bangladesh Backgrounders," *South Asia Terrorism Portal*.

⁵⁶ Saha, "The Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord," 11.

highlight the plight of refugees on its territory and politically and diplomatically pressurised Dhaka to accommodate the concerns of Chakmas and give them autonomy – a demand which India herself has denied to the people struggling for it in several of its own states.⁵⁷

New Delhi sustained its support to SB throughout the 1980s, 1990s⁵⁸ and beyond. In December 1997, the PCJSS and Government of Bangladesh led by Sheikh Hasina Wazed of AL signed a peace agreement which was subsequently implemented and a regional council was established in May 1999. However, it did not bring peace.⁵⁹ In fact, the agreement created disunity among the insurgents and SB broke into several groups, including the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) that operated in CHT after 1998. It continued to get support from India. In 2013, a report claimed that rebels from UPDF were using Indian soil (particularly several areas in Mizoram) for channelling weapons to Bangladesh.⁶⁰

India had various motives for supporting the CHT insurgency in Bangladesh. New Delhi was annoyed over regime change and wanted to punish those who had overthrown a pro-India government in Bangladesh. Through the use of proxies, India sought to influence Dhaka's policies. Besides these political motives, New Delhi also had strategic interests. CHT is rich with oil and gas resources and strategically important due to its proximity to the Chittagong Port. CHT can also be used as a military base.⁶¹ India also wanted to 'weaken it slowly and swallow it finally.' It also used the Chakma rebels to infiltrate into and root out the guerillas fighting for liberation of Tripura, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Assam.⁶²

⁵⁷ Abedin, *Chittagong Hill Tracts*.

⁵⁸ Mohsin, "Regional Cooperation for Human Security," 334.

⁵⁹ The agreement provided for the creation of 22 member CHT regional council to maintain law and order, impose taxes and supervise development work in the area.

⁶⁰ "Chakma Rebels Use Mizo Route," *Telegraph*, April 26, 2013.

⁶¹ Amena Mohsin, *The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On the Difficult Road to Peace* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2003), 30.

⁶² Abedin, *Chittagong Hill Tracts*.

Tamil Insurgency in Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country. The Sinhalese, who are a predominantly Buddhist community, form 75 per cent of the population. The Tamil community, chiefly Hindu, forms 15.4 per cent of the country's populace, includes Sri Lankan Tamils (11.2 per cent) and Indian Tamils (4.2 per cent) and enjoys majority in north and eastern parts of the country. Indian Tamils were brought as labourers to Sri Lanka by the British rulers in the later Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century. Meanwhile, the Muslim community constitutes 9.2 per cent of the country.⁶³ Religious and ethnic differences, coupled with rising nationalism, between the Sinhalese and Tamils gave rise to the conflict that provided India an opportunity for internal interference.

The gulf created by British policies between the two dominant ethnic groups in the country - Sinhalese and Tamils - was further aggravated in the post-independence era. The language issue and the government's resettlement policy which enabled about 165,000 Sinhalese to settle in the Tamil-dominated eastern and northern areas between 1953 to 1981, and the rise of Sinhalese-Buddhist nationalism created identity concerns amongst the Tamil population. They regarded various government moves as efforts aimed at denying them their political and economic rights and 'cultural oppression.' But, they were mainly concerned about the demographic changes due to the government's resettlement policy and non-recognition of Indian Tamils as Sri Lankan citizens. The Sri Lankan government was not ready to ensure the due political and economic rights of the Tamil minority groups since the growing Sinhalese nationalist leadership was not willing to accommodate them. The Tamils also feared that their identity or culture was also at stake as the government pushed to impose Sinhalese language on all

⁶³ Joanne Richards, "An Institutional History of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)" (paper no.10, Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, Graduate Institute, Geneva, 2014), 8, <https://repository.graduateinstitute.ch/record/292651/files/CCDP-Working-Paper-10-LTTE-1.pdf>.

citizens. These state policies sowed the seeds of conflict that ultimately led to a bloody civil war and created the space for India to intervene.⁶⁴

Initially, the Tamils demanded creation of a Tamil province under a federal system, termination of the resettlement policy, acceptance of a two-language policy, and abolishment of nationality laws that did not recognise Indian Tamils. In the early 1970s, they demanded creation of a sovereign Tamil state (country). In 1972, in order to press forward their demands, they formed the Tamil United Front (TUF), and renamed it the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) in 1975. They also formed scores of Tamil militant groups (TMGs), of which the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) emerged as the strongest. TMGs started attacking police and armed forces, political leaders, and civilians.⁶⁵

India supported the Tamil separatists through provision of military training, equipment, and financial, political and diplomatic support. The general public, leaders and political parties in the neighbouring Indian state of Tamil Nadu were generally sympathetic to the Tamil cause. In 1979, Sri Lanka deployed its troops in Jaffna – the capital of the Northern Province – that forced the LTTE leader Prabhakaran to flee to Tamil Nadu which he used as a safe haven to direct terrorist activities against the Sri Lankan government. New Delhi stepped up its support to TMGs as the conflict intensified in 1983 when the Tamils launched a full-fledged war against the government.⁶⁶

India's then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi used RAW to train and arm TMGs. She was also Prime Minister when India militarily intervened in Pakistan and disintegrated it in 1971, and also when India forcefully annexed Sikkim in 1974. Reportedly, she had a 'secret plan to invade' Sri Lanka which could not be executed because of her assassination in 1984.⁶⁷ In the 1980s, RAW trained tens of thousands of Tamils in bases

⁶⁴ Ibid., 6-14.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid. For an in-depth analysis of India's role in the Sri Lankan civil war, see Rohan Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Role of India's Intelligence Agencies* (Colombo: South Asian Network on Conflict Research, 1993).

⁶⁷ Rohan Gunaratna, *Sri Lanka, A Lost Revolution? The Inside Story of the JVP* (Colombo: Institute of Fundamental Studies, 1990), 243-4, quoted in Owen Bennett, "The Patriotic

along coastal areas in Tamil Nadu. The agency focused more on the LTTE and helped establish its command centre, enabling the latter to seize full control of the Jaffna Peninsula in 1985. By the late 1980s, the LTTE transformed itself into a force resembling a conventional army commanded by Prabhakaran,⁶⁸ due to the Indian support that enabled it to completely seize the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka.⁶⁹

During this period, India's support and designs became more pronounced when it openly infringed Sri Lanka's sovereignty. In 1987, when Sri Lankan forces besieged the Jaffna Peninsula and imposed the blockade to crush Tamil rebels, India broke the blockade by airlifting supplies to the Peninsula in the name of humanitarian assistance.⁷⁰ Colombo condemned this move and termed it as a 'naked violation' of its independence and 'unwarranted assault' on its 'sovereignty and territorial integrity.' India's actions compelled Sri Lanka to lift the blockade, terminate the military operation in Jaffna and agree to a negotiated settlement.⁷¹

After the bilateral talks, both India and Sri Lanka reached an agreement signed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and President J.R. Jayewardene on July 29, 1987.⁷² Both countries agreed on certain

Struggle of Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna: A Reappraisal" (BA diss., RMIT University, Melbourne, 2013), 48-9,

http://jvpthesis.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/9/5/26951649/jvp_thisis_final_1.pdf.

⁶⁸ Richards, "An Institutional History of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)," 13-37.

⁶⁹ Gunaratna, *Sri Lanka*, 238; and Richards, "An Institutional History of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)," 14-6. Reportedly, from 1983 to 1988, RAW trained and armed about 15,000 Tamil militants in military camps in India.

⁷⁰ Sandra Destradi, "India and the Civil War in Sri Lanka: On the Failures of Regional Conflict Management in South Asia" (paper no. 154, German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Hamburg, 2010), 9,

https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/system/files/publications/wp154_destradi.pdf.

⁷¹ P. Venkateshwar Rao, "Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: India's Role and Perception," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 4 (1988): 419-36 (433-4).

⁷² *Ibid.* The agreement mainly provided for an immediate ceasefire, surrender of arms by Tamil rebels, withdrawal of the Sri Lankan army from operations, merger of northern and eastern provinces into a single unit with provincial autonomy and holding elections for the provincial council under Indian observation.

obligations with security and foreign policy implications.⁷³ The agreement prescribed ‘several ground rules’ for Sri Lanka to conduct its foreign policy.⁷⁴ Some of the terms were clear manifestations of India’s hegemonic ambitions in the region.

The agreement paved the way for even greater direct Indian intervention in Sri Lanka. New Delhi made a commitment to militarily assist Colombo on the latter’s request. Subsequently, 80,000 troops were deployed as Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to ‘supervise a ceasefire and to disarm the Tamils rebels.’⁷⁵ This fulfilled India’s desire to play its role as a regional ‘policeman.’ But, the move backfired and created strong resentment among both the Sinhalese and the Tamils.⁷⁶ India had to withdraw its troops in March 1990. After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in a suicide attack by a Tamil tigress in 1991, the Central Government decreased its support for LTTE but several factors (mainly domestic political dynamics) kept Indian interest alive in the 1990s.⁷⁷

During the 2003-09 phase of the conflict, India supported a ‘negotiated political settlement’ with power decentralisation and autonomy for the Tamils. In October 2008, it protested Colombo’s conduct of the war and its External Affairs Minister explicitly threatened to ‘do all in its power’ in order to improve the humanitarian situation in

⁷³ Rao, “Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka,” 433–4. There was a mutual understanding with regard to recruitment of foreign intelligence and military personnel; Colombo’s commitment to not allow Trincomalee or any other port for military use by any external power ‘detrimental’ to India’s security concerns; and, that foreign broadcasting services would not serve intelligence or military goals, rather only serve public purpose. India agreed to deport Tamil insurgents living on its soil.

⁷⁴ John Gooneratne, “Sri Lanka and Regionalism,” in Alyson J. K. Bailes, John Gooneratne, Mavara Inayat, Jamshed Ayaz Khan and Swaran Singh, *Regionalism in South Asian Diplomacy*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 15 (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2007), 55.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Karl DeRouen Jr. and Uk Heo eds., *Civil Wars of the World: Major Conflict since World War II*, vol. I (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2007), 722. The deployment of IPKF gave rise to the nationalist militant Sinhalese group Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) or Peoples Liberation Front. The terrorism JVP unleashed, along with the government’s counterinsurgency campaign, claimed the lives of 40,000-60,000 people. Meanwhile, the LTTE started attacking Indian troops, and later killed Gandhi in a suicide attack in 1991.

⁷⁷ Gooneratne, “Sri Lanka and Regionalism,” 55.

Sri Lanka.”⁷⁸ By 2009, the LTTE was finally defeated by the Sri Lankan forces. This Tamil insurgency that lasted for about 26 years took the lives of 100,000 people, and internally displaced 300,000.⁷⁹ In 2011, Sri Lanka's Prime Minister, D. M. Jayaratne claimed that he had ‘intelligence reports of three clandestine training centres operated by the LTTE in Tamil Nadu’ to revive the separatist movement in the country.⁸⁰

The Tamils killed or tried to assassinate highest level government personalities including Presidents and Prime Ministers. In 1993, they killed Sri Lanka's President, Ranasinghe Premadasa, besides ten others in a suicide attack during the May Day parade. Earlier, they gunned down one of the country's main opposition leaders Lalith Athulathmudali.⁸¹ In 1991, they assassinated Rajiv Gandhi. They were also part of a failed coup against the President of the Maldives in 1988.

India had diverse political and strategic motives behind its support for Tamil separatists. It attempted to disintegrate Sri Lanka, as it did against Pakistan in 1971, to increase/widen its influence in the region. The Tamils, who were mostly Hindus, were naturally inclined towards India, and thus, could possibly be included into an Indian Union at a later stage. India strove to change Sri Lanka's foreign policy making it more sensitive to its concerns and interests in the region. Thus, New Delhi also endeavoured to establish some ‘ground rules’ for its relations with Colombo aimed at reinforcing itself as a ‘regional policeman’ at the expense of the independence and sovereignty of Sri Lanka.

Coup in Maldives

Indian-trained Tamil guerillas not only challenged the territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, but also threatened the security of other regional states.

⁷⁸ Destradi, “India and the Civil War,” 12-6.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 8-11; and “Sri Lanka Tipped to Raise Defence Spending,” *Daily Times*, November 22, 2011.

⁸⁰ “Tamil Tiger Rebels Training in India: Sri Lanka PM,” *Dawn*, March 10, 2011, <https://www.dawn.com/news/612121>.

⁸¹ Edward A. Gargan, “Suicide Bomber Kills President of Sri Lanka,” *New York Times*, May 2, 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/05/02/world/suicide-bomber-kills-president-of-sri-lanka.html>.

Some of them offered their services as mercenaries to be used by disgruntled elements to destabilise regional states. For instance, the armed group that attempted to overthrow the government of President Maumoon Abdul Gayoom of Maldives in 1988 included the Tamil mercenaries initially trained in India.⁸² Around 400 armed men who attacked Male were Sri Lankan Tamils and belonged to LTTE. They killed dozens of people, besides taking hostages that included members of Parliament and government officers, civil servants and police officials. They seized control of the international airport and radio station. Luckily, President Gayoom was able to escape on whose appeal India sent 1600 paratroopers and commandoes to crush the attempted coup.⁸³

Some political analysts opine that this attempted armed coup and the consequent Indian troop deployment was part of New Delhi's power-hungry designs. Nevertheless, India was credited for thwarting it.⁸⁴ The Republic has always believed that being situated at the centre of South Asia makes it its 'job to protect it from outside.'⁸⁵ In this context, some analysts explained Indian intervention in the Maldives as a continuation of, along with its role in 'creation' of Bangladesh in 1971 and 'interjection to resolve' the Tamil issue in Sri Lanka in 1987, as its assertion of regional dominance.⁸⁶

Maoist Insurgency in Nepal

India's intervention in Nepalese domestic affairs has been a recurring phenomenon throughout its history, given its support of, either overtly or covertly, dissident political groups, violent democratic movements, armed rebels, terrorists and insurgents for various reasons. India played a crucial

⁸² Devin T. Hagerty, "India's Regional Security Doctrine," *Asian Survey* 31, no. 4 (1991): 351-63(362).

⁸³ "India Sends Troops to Maldives to Crush Coup Attempt by Invading Mercenaries," *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 1988, http://articles.latimes.com/1988-11-04/news/mn-961_1_coup-attempt.

⁸⁴ Hagerty, "India's Regional Doctrine," 358-60.

⁸⁵ Veena Gill, "India as a Regional Great Power: In Pursuit of Shakti," in Iver B. Neumann, ed., *Regional Great Powers in International Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 58.

⁸⁶ Gill, "India as a Great Power," 49.

role in bringing down several governments in Nepal by using armed groups against them, such as in 1951, and occasionally imposed 'unjust and unequal' treaties on crumbling regimes in Kathmandu, as in 1950. New Delhi also strove to bring pro-India elements into power to increase its influence and extract various concessions from indebted rulers.⁸⁷

The Maoist insurgency and conflict in Nepalese politics was deep-rooted. It had mainly stemmed out of socio-economic disparities, horizontal inequalities, injustice and oppressive economic and political system that had marginalised poor segments of the people who were, thus, attracted towards revolutionary ideologies. Socialist and communist tendencies in Nepalese polity grew stronger after communist takeover in neighbouring China. The Maoists were attracted to the idea of a peoples' war⁸⁸ and opposed to New Delhi's influence and intervention in Nepalese affairs as well as imposition of several unequal treaties on Kathmandu.

The opposition of several Indo-Nepalese treaties and persistent Indian interventions in Nepalese affairs resulted in the growth of 'strong nationalist-minded politics in Nepal, especially for the left movement' that ultimately gave rise to the Maoist insurgency.⁸⁹ They gave the government an ultimatum to accept 40 demands. Three were directly related to India, and two about Indo-Nepalese 'unequal and unjust' agreements: to delete the 'unjust' terms of the 1950 treaty, and; to nullify Tanakpur Water Project Agreement (1991), and the Integrated Development of Mahakali River Treaty (1996).⁹⁰ Kathmandu rejected their ultimatum after which the Maoists launched terrorist activities in the country in February 1996 that lasted for nearly a decade and took the lives of over 13,000 people.⁹¹

⁸⁷ Manzoor Ahmad, "Nepal: A Persistent Victim of Indian Interventions" (paper, *Pakistan Horizon*, forthcoming).

⁸⁸ S. D. Muni, "The Maoist Insurgency of Nepal: Origin and Evolution" (paper no.111, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, 2010), 4-11, <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/ISAS%20Reports/ISAS%20Working%20Paper%20111%20-%20The%20Maoist%20Insurgency%20of%20N.PDF>.

⁸⁹ Gopal Siwakoti Chintan, "Nepal: Under Big Neighbour's Shadow," *South Asian Journal* (2003): 73-9 (75).

⁹⁰ Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," 634-5.

⁹¹ "Insurgency in Nepal," *GlobalSecurity.org*,

India's role in this entire episode was quite dubious and the nature of the relationship between New Delhi and the Maoists remained suspicious. The Maoists who had launched their peoples' war in the name of Nepali nationalism and 'anti-Indianism' gradually became soft towards India which used the former to increase its own interests and influence in the country.⁹² The Maoists used India's border areas as 'safe hideouts' from the beginning of the insurgency. Their training camps were located on frontier areas, wounded rebels generally received medical treatment in hospitals, arms and weapons' shipments were hidden, and their leaders frequently held meetings in different locations in India (including its main cities).⁹³ Some even roamed freely under the protection of the Indian Security Forces.⁹⁴ At times, the government arrested a few Maoists and handed them over to Nepal, but most of the time, New Delhi did not cooperate with Kathmandu on its demand to check or exchange information about Maoist activities. Some political parties, mostly leftists openly supported the Nepalese Maoists, while the security agencies turned a blind eye to their activities. The Nepalese government raised this issue at the highest level, but apart from the occasional supply of weapons and endorsements of the support Kathmandu sought from the US and the United Kingdom in its counterinsurgency campaign, not much changed.⁹⁵

Finally, India played a key role in cultivating an alliance of the Maoists and other groups to abolish the institution of monarchy in Kathmandu, which it looked at with suspicion and viewed its Kings as unreliable and detrimental to its interests. While earlier New Delhi had been relatively successful in dealing with them, King Gyanendra Bir

http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/nepal_insurgency.htm; and UNHCR, *Nepal Conflict Report (2012)* (Geneva: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2012), 13,

http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/NP/OHCHR_ExecSumm_Nepal_Conflict_report2012.pdf.

⁹² Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," 636-42.

⁹³ Bishnu Raj Upreti, "External Engagement in Nepal's Armed Conflict," in Mahendra Lawoti and Anup K. Pahari, eds., *The Maoist Insurgency in Nepal: Revolution in the Twenty First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 221-25.

⁹⁴ Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," 638-9.

⁹⁵ Upreti, "External Engagement in Nepal's Armed Conflict," 221-25.

Bikram Shah Dev was not so forthcoming. Infuriated by various policies of the King, New Delhi cultivated an alliance of Maoists (which it had previously declared a terrorist group)⁹⁶ and seven Nepalese political parties to reach a 12-point agreement, signed in New Delhi in November 2005 that ultimately brought an end to the institution of monarchy in Nepal. India's role and influence was crucial in the agreement.⁹⁷

There were complex motives behind India's role in the Maoists insurgency in Nepal. New Delhi kept its ties with the Maoists in order to create insecurity in the country, and then provided assistance to the Nepalese government to ensure perpetuation of its dependence on its security apparatus. Mishra claims that India used the Maoists to 'keep the Nepali state in a constant state of fear in an effort to extract continued subservience',⁹⁸ and 'as a bargaining tool.'⁹⁹ The 'most controversial' Indo-Nepalese agreements were concluded by insecure rulers in Kathmandu who were 'threatened by externally backed opposition.'¹⁰⁰ New Delhi used its links with the Maoists to demand withdrawal of the

⁹⁶ Baburam Bhattarai, "The Letter of Dr. Baburam Bhattarai on the Palace Massacre in Nepal," *Monthly Review*, June 21, 2001, <https://monthlyreview.org/commentary/the-letter-of-dr-baburam-bhattarai-on-the-palace-massacre-in-nepal/>; "India, US Behind 2001 Palace Massacre Conspiracy: Ex-Minister," *India Today*, April 2, 2010, <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/india-us-behind-2001-palace-massacre-conspiracy-ex-minister-70812-2010-04-02>; "The Palace as I Saw It," *Nation*, March 18, 2011, <http://nation.com.pk/letters/18-Mar-2011/the-palace-as-i-saw-it>; and D. R. Prasai, "India's Hand in Nepal Royal Palace Massacre-2001," *NewsBlaze*, August 9, 2009. Some in Nepal suspected that RAW was responsible for the murder of the former Nepalese king and his family in 2001 in order to bring his younger brother Gyanendra as the new monarch. Leadership of the Nepal Communist Party (Maoists) strongly held this view. Later, Chakra Prasad Bastola, a former Foreign Minister of Nepal, Gen Bibek Shah, a former aide of deceased King Birendra and D. R. Prasai, a member of Parliament also endorsed this perspective. The details of the incident were quite suspicious.

⁹⁷ Upreti, "External Engagement in Nepal's Armed Conflict," 221-25.

⁹⁸ Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," 645.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 634.

¹⁰⁰ Saubhagya Shah, "A Himalayan Red Herring? Maoist Revolution in the Shadow of the Legacy Raj," in Michael Hutt, ed., *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist Rebellion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 204.

US advisors in order to decrease Washington's influence in Nepalese affairs and to increase its own.¹⁰¹

Terrorist Activities in Pakistan

Pakistan, too, is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. It was ruled by military governments for about half of its history that prevented growth of democratic traditions. Even its civilian rulers lacked democratic credentials and strove to concentrate power around themselves instead of strengthening institutions, empowering people and promoting socio-economic justice in the country. Before the disintegration of Pakistan in 1971, the people of East Pakistan generally perceived themselves as politically marginalised, economically deprived and culturally alienated. This provided India an opportunity to first support the Mukti Bahini for rebellion against Pakistan, and then to openly intervene to disintegrate the country.¹⁰² Such perceptions also developed in various political units in West Pakistan. The leadership of these political units remained equally responsible as they tried to make Pakistan's establishment or the larger province, Punjab, a scapegoat for their failures when they had the opportunities to rule in their respective provinces.

Pakistan's ruling elite could not address problems of the masses which continue to provide opportunities for exploitation to nationalist and separatist leaders. This is the main reason behind the present conflict in Balochistan province which was inflamed after the killing of Akbar Bugti in August 2006.¹⁰³ The ideological divide between religious and secular classes and use of religion for political gains coupled with imprudent domestic and foreign policies bred violent religious extremism and terrorism. Pakistan's decision to join the US-led War on Terror was the main reason behind the rise of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in

¹⁰¹ Mishra, "India's Role in Nepal's Maoist Insurgency," 640.

¹⁰² M. Nazrul Islam, *Pakistan and Malaysia: A Comparative Study in National Integration* (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1989), 37-64; 97-168.

¹⁰³ Shah Meer Baloch, "Akbar Bugti's Death and the Revival of the Baloch Insurgency," *Herald*, September 16, 2017, <https://herald.dawn.com/news/1153862>.

2007.¹⁰⁴ India saw this as an the opportunity and soon started supporting both the Baloch separatists and TTP terrorists by using the territory of Afghanistan. In fact, India has had an old nexus with Afghanistan which it has been intermittently using to undermine Pakistan's security.

India-Afghan Nexus

India used the Pakhtunistan issue to challenge Pakistan's territorial integrity in two ways: using Pakhtun nationalists within Pakistan and encouraging Afghanistan to repudiate the 'Durand Line' and raise the Pakhtunistan issue. 'It was in the nature of a last gesture of despair' on the part of India's leadership that it promoted the issue of Pakhtunistan that affected its alliance with Afghanistan.¹⁰⁵ With apparent Indian and Soviet backing, Afghanistan refused to accept the Durand Line as a legitimate border, and raised the issue of Pakhtunistan at global forums aimed at infuriating Pakistan and undermining its stance on Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover, this diverted Pakistan's attention and military resources towards its Western border to the advantage of India. After the Soviet withdrawal and beginning of civil war in Afghanistan, India supported the Ahmad Shah Masood-led Northern Alliance which was hostile to Pakistan.¹⁰⁶

In the post 9/11 scenario and the US invasion of Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance grabbed power in Kabul which provided India the much awaited opportunity to play against Pakistan's security. India had close ties with several key government dignitaries, including a few ministers and then-President Hamid Karzai, whom New Delhi successfully used against Pakistan's interests. Under the guise of development, reconstruction work and diplomatic activities, India created an adequate 'diplomatic and intelligence network' in Afghanistan in order

¹⁰⁴ Saiful Islam and Muqarrab Akbar, "Taliban's Activities in Pakistan: Impact on the Society," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 53, no. 1 (2016): 55-7.

¹⁰⁵ B., "The Implications of 'Pakhtunistan': Prospects for Pakistani – Afghan Relations," *The World Today* 11, no. 9 (1955): 390-398 (393-4).

¹⁰⁶ Nicholas Howenstein and Sumit Ganguly, "India - Pakistan Rivalry in Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs* 63, no. 1 (2009): 127-140.

to ‘monitor’ and ‘curtail’ Pakistan’s influence in the region. It built road networks, including the one on the Pak-Afghan border that could serve, besides other purposes, to ‘pursue intelligence-gathering operations or espionage.’¹⁰⁷ It has established several consulates, apparently to issue visas to Afghan nationals, but, Pakistani officials believe that the four Indian consulates in Afghanistan (besides the two in Iran) are fanning terrorism. It used some of these consulates as ‘meeting places of Baloch separatists and operation centres for their terror operations’ in Pakistan. The Indian consulate in Kandahar was ‘actually a control room of all the terrorist activities organised by the separatist Balochistan Liberation Army.’¹⁰⁸

Several Western scholars and leaders endorsed Pakistan’s claim that India was sponsoring terrorism in the country. Christine Fair of Rand Corporation has observed that it was ‘unfair to dismiss the notion that Pakistan’s apprehensions about Afghanistan stem in part from its security competition with India.’ She maintains that some of India’s consulates such as those situated in Mazar-e-Shareef, Jalalabad and Qandahar in Afghanistan, besides the one in Zahedan in Iran were ‘not issuing visas as the main activity.’ Some officials working in these consulates confided privately to her that they were ‘pumping money into Balochistan.’¹⁰⁹ Rozen cites a former US intelligence official, who served in the past in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, as saying:

The Indians are up to their necks in supporting the Taliban against the Pakistani government in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The same anti-Pakistan forces in Afghanistan are shooting at American soldiers...India should close its diplomatic establishments in Afghanistan and get .. out of there.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ameen Izzadeen, “Balochistan Burning: Great Game over Gwadar Port,” *Sunday Times*, August 23, 2009, <http://www.sundaytimes.lk/090823/International/stint-05.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Muhammad Feyyaz, “The Global War on Terror in South Asia,” *Pakistan Horizon* 62, no.4 (2009): 39-53 (42).

¹¹⁰ Laura Rozen, “Can the Intel Community Defuse India – Pakistan Tensions? *Foreign Policy*, February 16, 2009, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/02/16/can-the-intel-community-defuse-india-pakistan-tensions/>.

Pant notes that India's embassy in Kabul was involved in spreading anti-Pakistan propaganda and its consulates in Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat, Jalalabad and Qandahar were sponsoring activities to create unrest.¹¹¹ In 2011, Chuck Hagel, who later became the US Defense Secretary, stated in a speech that India had 'financed problems for' and sponsored terrorism in Pakistan by using Afghanistan as a second front for many years.¹¹² Quite recently, an India analyst endorsed Pakistan's view:

TTP is useful as an Indian counterpart of the various militant groups operating against Indian forces in Indian-held Kashmir... Severing relations with TTP will mean India surrendering an active card in Pakistan and a role in Afghanistan as TTP additionally provides access to certain Afghan Taliban factions.¹¹³

This statement also explains India's motives behind supporting TTP in Pakistan.

RAW collaborates closely with Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS) and both use TTP and other militant groups including Baloch separatists for terrorism in Pakistan. Connections of RAW and NDS with TTP were also disclosed by the captured terrorists and would-be-suicide attackers. Such connections were confirmed by a former TTP senior commander Latif Mehsud who was captured in Afghanistan by the US forces, and later, handed over to Pakistan. He was collecting funds and instructions for RAW. In his confession, he confirmed India's role in

¹¹¹ Harsh V. Pant, "India's 'Af-Pak' Conundrum: South Asia in Flux," *Orbis* 56, no. 1 (2012):105-117.

¹¹² "India Financed Problems for Pak in Afghanistan, Says US Defence Secretary Nominee Chuck Hagel," *Times of India*, February 26, 2013, <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-financed-problems-for-Pak-in-Afghanistan-says-US-defence-secretary-nominee-Chuck-Hagel/articleshow/18694475.cms>.

¹¹³ Bharat Karnad, "Afghanistan, Pakistan and the F-16: Mattis has to Hardsell these Issues on his Visit to India," *Hindustan Times*, September 21, 2017, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/afghanistan-pakistan-and-the-f-16-mattis-has-to-hardsell-these-issues-on-his-visit-to-india/story-qvL9NS6wgl17sy756hE2WN.html>.

fomenting terrorism in Pakistan.¹¹⁴ Quite recently, Ehsanullah Ehsan, the former spokesman of TTP also confirmed Indian and Afghan role in sponsoring terrorism in the country by providing travel documents and establishing ‘committees in Afghanistan through which they communicate and coordinate with RAW.’ Before moving anywhere in Afghanistan, TTP leaders contact Afghan and Indian security officials, who ‘grant them passage and guide their infiltration attempts into Pakistan.’¹¹⁵ In 2016, Pakistan security forces captured Kulbhushan Yadav, a senior Indian intelligence officer from Balochistan, who in his confessionary statement confirmed his and RAW’s involvement in the subversive activities, mainly in Karachi and Balochistan.¹¹⁶

In 2015, a letter from the Sindh Home Ministry revealed that RAW had provided PKR 20 million for sponsoring terrorism in Karachi.¹¹⁷ In 2016, Aftab Sultan, Director General of the Intelligence Bureau informed the Senate Standing Committee that ‘Out of the 865 terrorists arrested during the last three years, a significant number had connections with India’s RAW and the Afghan NDS.’¹¹⁸ Earlier, in 2009, a Pakistan military spokesman informed the media that ‘large caches of weapons of Indian origin’ were recovered from the TTP militants during a military operation in Mingora, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.¹¹⁹ RAW also used the LTTE

¹¹⁴ “Striking Revelations: Hakimullah Mehsud’s Top Aide in US Custody,” *Express Tribune*, October 12, 2013, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/616941/striking-revelations-hakimullah-mehsuds-top-aide-in-us-custody/>.

¹¹⁵ “TTP has Links with India RAW and NDS: Ehsanullah Ehsan,” *Pakistan Today*, April 26, 2017, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/04/26/pak-army-releases-ttp-jua-spokesman-ehsanullah-ehsans-confessional-statement/>.

¹¹⁶ “Confessional Video of In-Service Indian RAW Terrorist Kulbhushan Yadav,” *YouTube*, March 29, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NQ0KeXtrjfo>.

¹¹⁷ “RAW Funded Rs.20 Million for Attacks in Karachi: Sindh Home Ministry,” *Pakistan Today*, November 26, 2015, <http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2015/11/26/raw-funded-rs-20-million-for-attacks-in-karachi-sindh-home-ministry/>.

¹¹⁸ Sanaullah Khan, “Indian, Afghan Agencies Supporting Terror in Pakistan: IB Chief,” *Dawn*, October 18, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1290745>.

¹¹⁹ Feyyaz M. Pasha, “India is not Just an Enemy,” *Financial Daily*, accessed March 21, 2017, <http://www.thefinancialdaily.com/RSS/RSSNews.aspx?newsid=105432>. Also see, “Army Takes ‘Complete Control’ over Mingora,” *Dawn*, May 30, 2009, <https://www.dawn.com/news/964353>.

for an attack on Sri Lanka's team in Lahore in 2009 that closed the doors of international cricket in Pakistan.¹²⁰

Since 9/11, Pakistan has faced serious problems of militancy and terrorism in tribal areas, in which it has lost over 80,000 civilians and over 5,498 military personnel.¹²¹ Pakistan also suffered over USD 123 billion in losses till June 2017 due to Indian-financed terrorism in the country.¹²² As of today, more than 200,000 troops¹²³ are deployed in tribal areas to curb terrorist networks supported, funded and nurtured by India from across the border.

Successive Pakistani governments have raised this issue with India, as well as at several global forums by providing dossiers containing evidence of Indian interference in Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Balochistan and Karachi to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in 2015. Meanwhile, Pakistan has also provided evidence to the Afghan government and demanded dismantling of RAW's training camps and other terrorist network on its territory.¹²⁴ India has multiple motives behind sponsoring terrorism, which include (amongst others) to:

- Undermine its security and territorial integrity by dismembering it and imposing hegemony in the region.

¹²⁰ "India Involved in Manawan, Lankan Team Attacks: Police," *Aaj News*, April 10, 2009, <http://www.aaj.tv/2009/04/india-involved-in-manawan-lankan-team-attacks-police/>; and "Pakistan Police: Indians Directly Involved in 3/3 Attack on Sri Lankan Team," *LiveLeaks.com*, April 11, 2009, http://www.liveleak.com/view?i=05e_1239428664.

¹²¹ PSR, *Body Count: Casualty Figures after 10 Years of the 'War on Terror'- Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: Physicians for Social Responsibility, 2015), <http://www.psr.org/assets/pdfs/body-count.pdf>.

¹²² Israr Khan, "Pakistan Suffers \$1231bn Losses in Terror War," *News International*, May 26, 2017, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/206709-Pakistan-suffers-1231-bn-losses-in-terror-war>.

¹²³ Tariq Butt, "PM's UN Address Well-Received in Pakistan" *News International*, September 23, 2016, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/151989-PMs-UN-address-well-received-in-Pakistan>.

¹²⁴ "Afghan Govt must Abolish RAW's Training Camps," *News International*, May 16, 2015, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/12496-afghan-govt-must-abolish-raws-training-camps>.

- Keep Pakistan weak and transient and damage the process of economic development such as implementation of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and other mega projects.
- Divert the country's resources and attention towards its Western border.
- Engage militant groups in Afghanistan to relieve pressure in IHJ&K.
- Create trouble in Balochistan to force Pakistan to compromise its stance on IHJ&K.

Conclusion

Being multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-ethnic countries with diverse political and ideological orientations and competing interests of domestic political forces, particularly minority groups, poses serious challenges of national integration to SACs in general, and SRCs in particular. The latter being less resourceful and having weak political institutions remain vulnerable to internal dissent, political violence, armed rebellion, terrorism and civil wars. They have the most fertile spaces that can give rise to internal conflicts, such as weak states, religious divisions, ethnic rivalries, exclusionary national ideologies, inequitable political institutions, unequal economic systems and discriminatory social structures. Mounting economic problems and perceived or real disparities, inequitable distribution of power and resources, intensification of socio-cultural discrimination, and concentration of political power aggravate the problem further. Failure on the part of the leadership of SRCs to adequately address the genuine concerns and grievances of minority groups ultimately gave rise (among the latter) to feelings of political exploitation, economic deprivation, social estrangement and identity deterioration triggering widespread unrest, political violence, insurgencies and terrorism of varying scale and intensity.

India, being the most powerful and highly resourceful state, and mainly because of its huge size and central position, could have played a positive role to help SRCs resolve their internal problems. However as this article has shown, India has pursued the course of exploiting their

weakness to its advantage in order to extract concessions and impose its dictates on them. It has played the role of an opportunistic state or a 'bad neighbour' by exploiting, cultivating and inflaming the domestic disorder, turmoil and instability of SRCs by various means in order to advance its political and strategic interests in the region. India's leadership did not miss any 'window of opportunity', and instead created many more by using its secret agency RAW that played a notorious role in several SRCs since its inception to breed, export and sponsor terrorism in its neighbourhood. Since direct military intervention is quite expensive and highly unacceptable internationally, India used different terrorist groups in SRCs to advance its national interests. Through coercive means, RAW created, financed, trained, and equipped terrorist groups such as SB in CHT, Bangladesh; LTTE besides three dozen other Tamil terrorist groups in Sri Lanka; and TTP and Baloch terrorist outfits in Pakistan. It also co-opted Maoist insurgents in Nepal who had initially launched their 'peoples' war' on the slogan of 'anti-Indianism.'

Using terrorism and coercive means as tools of its foreign policy, it supported the Chakma insurgency in CHT for decades after the pro-India government of Sheikh Mujib was overthrown in a military coup that had significantly reduced Indian influence in Bangladesh. The main purpose was to weaken and to keep the new rulers in Dhaka under pressure to force them to accept India's big-brotherly role in various matters; extract concessions on different matters; and to undermine territorial integrity of the country. India used Maoists and other militant groups over the years to undermine incumbent governments in Kathmandu to force it to change foreign and security policies such as the latter's relations with China and Pakistan; extract political and economic concessions of diverse nature; conclude unequal and unjust treaties such as those signed in 1950, 1965, 1991 and 1996; impose its dictates and increase political and economic influence in the country. In case of Sri Lanka, RAW supported LTTE and other Tamil groups in order to (besides certain domestic political considerations of the ruling political party) punish Sri Lanka for its pro-West policies and ties with China and Pakistan; force Colombo to accept some 'ground rules' that could decrease 'external influence' in the region;

increase India's sway in Sri Lankan affairs; and also help fulfill the former's long desire of playing the role of regional 'policeman' in South Asia. New Delhi also sought to weaken Pakistan to widen the power gap and keep the latter preoccupied with domestic problems mainly by opening 'two-front war scenario' by using Afghan territory to divert its attention and resources away from India as well as to force Islamabad to change its support for the Kashmir cause.

India generally strove to shield its true intentions under the cover of some noble causes. For instance, it declared its support for democracy in Nepal, and political empowerment and regional autonomy in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. It took actions portrayed in 'self-serving' disguise of protective, defensive and humanitarian measures such as plight of Bengalis (1971), Chakma (1975-97), Tamils (1983-2009) refugees on its territory and its adverse implications for its national security.

India's close relations with global powers, including the United States of America, and in the past, the former Soviet Union helped New Delhi to broaden its agenda. For instance, in 1971, it signed the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation that deterred China and the US from helping Pakistan when Indian forces invaded East Pakistan. In the past, the US and its allies supported Sri Lanka against Tamil rebels, as well as the Nepalese government against Maoist insurgency.

Now, however, Washington seems less concerned about India's interventions and interference in neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan because of growing Indo-US ties that have evolved into a strategic partnership. In order to destabilise Pakistan, India uses Afghan soil where thousands of the US troops are deployed and it does not seem logical that New Delhi does so without Washington's approval. Pakistan raised this issue with the Afghan and US officials, but to no avail. On the other hand, New Delhi uses the terrorism card to isolate Pakistan regionally and globally. It strove to build alliances with various countries including China, Russia, Israel and the US by exploiting the threat of 'Islamic militancy' or terrorism. Given its Machiavellian policies, it accuses Pakistan of harbouring terrorism to camouflage its interventions in the neighbouring countries. It also strives to project the ongoing freedom struggle in IHJ&K as Pakistan-sponsored militancy in order to

malign the country on the one hand, and to conceal its massive human rights violations, on the other.

India generally advises its neighbours to grant political and economic autonomy to their minority groups, but it neglects such demands within its own borders. There are several separatist movements going on in its various states with people struggling for political and economic rights. New Delhi has been suppressing such movements through military means, such as in Indian Punjab, IHJ&K, Assam, Nagaland, Orissa, besides other territories in the Union. Muslims in all parts of India are relegated as second-class citizens and are among the most backward segments of society. Instead of putting its own house in order, New Delhi suggests 'noble solutions' to the SRCs, which it has no right to do until it improves the human rights situation and political and economic conditions of religious and ethnic minorities who are politically alienated, economically deprived, and socio-culturally discriminated by its own communal Hindu majority.

The SRCs also need to take practical steps to close the window of opportunity opened for India to intervene in their internal conflicts and domestic political affairs. They need to improve governance, administration and their judicial system in order to integrate all segments of society in their respective countries. They need to accept wholeheartedly the religious and ethnic diversity of their territories and refrain, for example, from imposing a monolithic culture and language on the citizenry. They must take concrete measures in order to accommodate the genuine demands and allay the concerns and grievances of minority groups. The religious, cultural and ethnic identity of minorities must be respected and their political and economic rights guaranteed bringing them at par with the majority groups. Internal political problems must be solved politically and domestically through peaceful means. These countries are going through the difficult task of nation-building and prudent policies on the part of their leadership can make this process achievable more quickly so that no space is afforded to any regional or extra-regional state for interference.

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