



Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures
Polish Academy of Sciences



ACTA ASIATICA
VARSOVIENSIA
No. 31

Warsaw 2018

Editor-in-Chief
NICOLAS LEVI

Editorial Assistant
IGOR DOBRZENIECKI

English Text Consultant
JO HARPER

Subject Editor
KAROLINA ZIELIŃSKA

Board of Advisory Editors
ABDULRAHMAN AL-SALIMI
MING-HUEI LEE
THUAN NGUYEN QUANG
KENNETH OLENIK
JOLANTA SIERAKOWSKA-DYNDO
BOGDAN SKŁADANEK
HAIPENG ZHANG

*Acta Asiatica Varsoviensia no. 31 was granted a financial support of the
Ministry of Science and Higher Education, grant no. 772/P-DUN/2017.*

© Copyright by Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures,
Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw 2018
PL ISSN 0860-6102
eISSN 2449-8653
ISBN 978-83-7452-091-1

ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA is abstracted in
The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities,
Index Copernicus, ProQuest Database

Contents

ARTICLES

- ROBERT WINSTANLEY-CHESTERS, Fish, Subterfuge and Security in North Korean and Soviet Institutional Interactions in the 1970s 7
- MARIA GRADJAN, Gender Acrobatics: The Questionable Liberalism of Popular Culture and the Emergence of Alternative Masculinity Patterns in Late-modern Japan 26
- ARNAUD DOGLIA, Ōkunoshima and Japan's Chemical Arsenal: 1900-1945 47
- MARIA SOLDATOVA, Visualizing Poetry in Urban Space: The Gwanghwamun Poetry Placard 64
- BYRAPPA RAMACHANDRA, Precursory Study on South Asian Security and Geopolitics 82
- KRZYSZTOF IWANEK, Interests before Ideas. Does Hindu Nationalism influence India's Foreign Policy? 97
- ÁDÁM RÓMA, Sino-Indian Standoff on the Doklam plateau 114
- MICHALEWICZ KATARZYNA, The image of China on the pages of the periodical *Naokoło Świata* 132
- JAKUB ALI FAHRAN, "Century of humiliation" and its influence on modern Chinese politics with special emphasis on China-Japan relations 149

BOOKS REVIEWS

Kim Myung-ja. The Korean Diaspora in Postwar Japan - Geopolitics, Identity and Nation-Building, London: I.B Tauris, 2017, 304 pages. ISBN: 978-1784537678– rev. Nicolas Levi	164
Kim Byung-Yeon. Unveiling the North Korean economy, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017, 329 pages. ISBN: 978-1-316-63516-2– rev. Nicolas Levi.....	167
Editorial principles	170

Precursory Study on South Asian Security and Geopolitics

Abstract

Abstract

Security issues in South Asia could be the key to world peace. Understanding the particular dynamics of security creation and its provision in the region has therefore become extremely important. That said, there are major hurdles to a proper comprehension of the underlying complexities. Most of the home-grown security studies and analyses are sponsored or directly provided by the security establishment, focusing mainly on the tactical capacities of the military apparatus. The outside academic community, mainly the Singapore-Australia-USA triangle, tend to concentrate on the global perspectives with predominance given to the India-China aspect of the security configuration. For these reasons, vital and insightful concepts are missing for the proper and realistic understanding of the security policies and configuration of South Asia. The purpose of this essay will be to introduce some of these analytical concepts and give a deeper understanding of the issues at work, in short to provide a historic background to the conflict and security configuration of South Asia.

Keywords: Bengal, Curzon doctrine, geopolitics, India, Indian Ocean, South Asia.

Introduction

South Asia is a sphere of multiple and multi-layered ambiguities, a treasure trove of misconceptions and dislocated realities in space and time. In most subjects it is difficult to dissipate the clouds of confusion and falsification from the inherent realities. The difficulties increase as one moves to more rigid topics like security policies, strategic outlays and configurations. When we talk about strategic thinking and its implications on geopolitical realities, we have to be sure of knowing certain key elements of it. South Asia is no different in

* Associate professor at the History Institute, Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest.

terms of this primary demand. We, as historians, academics, analysts and related public have to know: who is providing the security to a specific geographic entity? Based on what priorities? And to whose benefit and at whose expense? Paradoxically, some historians and ultra-nationalists on the one side stress the indivisible civilisational nature of South Asian tradition and society, upon which all their argumentations or justifications are based; and at the same time they over-emphasise the irreconcilable nature of the now existing state structures with one another. For example, throughout the millennial history of South Asia, Bengal as a whole was a single and strong entity, but today West Bengal is irreconcilable with East Bengal (now Bangladesh).

The consequences of these perceptions for strategic thinking is as follows: Firstly, if we take a civilisational perspective then South Asia is in a state of civil war. And as happens with all civil wars, they have to end one day and the myriad of concerns are rarely particularistic, with South Asia as a whole taking centre stage. If we see things from this angle, taking into account the eventual unification of South Asia, the nationalist outlay of policies is self-defeating because they are mutually destroying all the irreplaceable strategic options of the South Asian subcontinent. Secondly, if we accept the continued digressions into particularistic nationalist narratives, conquest and war become inevitable since no one country can ultimately defend its territory without the territorial integrity of the whole of the South Asia, a situation where the strongest state becomes structurally imperialist.

Geographic delineation and definition

There is no one way to delineate South Asia. As mentioned earlier, ambiguities abound in geographical and geopolitical terms. The fairly recent European tradition bequests borders everywhere, especially when security policies are concerned. After all, the defence of a country's borders is considered the first and foremost priority of the state. Just as in the dominant religious beliefs in the west, theoretically there exists a clear boundary between good and bad. In Asia, and especially in South Asian political and philosophical tenets, the notion of borders is relatively ambiguous. Yes, the idea of borders is not new to Dravidian philosophy and political theories but it is a more dynamic notion than the static western conception. In the South Asian conception everything depends upon the hierarchy of power and civilisational expansion of a paramount power. During the reign of emperor Ashoka

(265-238 BCE) on the western flank, border regions were assumed when South Asia's civilisational expansion came into contact with the Greek or Persian civilisations, where a certain equality of status was assumed. In the north and east, for example, much of these territories came under Ashoka's civilisational paramountcy with the exception of a local civilisational temptation by the Tang dynasty, which was exclusively northern. Although, British colonial policy was designed to secure more or less well defined borders, it was nonetheless obliged to follow the traditional South Asian notion of border regions. This is very much what the so-called Curzon Doctrine (1904-1905) bequeathed. After Independence, something strange happened, learned as they were, the incoming elite decided to partially abandon the notion of "South Asia" and its civilisational sovereignty.

A strict physical geographic definition of South Asia

In physical geographic terms the definition of South Asia could be easiest to establish, although here too there are ambiguities to be dealt with. If the definition of a 'continent' is a continuous stretch of land mass, then one can easily assume a 'sub-continent' to be a sub-system of this with particular characteristics that distinguish it from the greater part. In this sense, geographers tend to base their analysis upon the work done by geologists. It has now been established that for millions of years the Indian tectonic plate crossed the Indian Ocean encrusting itself into the larger Eurasian Plate, and the movement is still continued, in the process giving the Himalayas a few centimetres in height each year. This geological collision has overtime reinforced the Indian plate's past as a virtual island, with the creation of high mountain barriers across its Eurasian encounter. Although adjoined to the larger Eurasian continent, the Indian subcontinent not only maintained its specific geographic characteristics, it further added others to make its specificity much stronger. South Asia, for millennia, had remained an impregnable fortress and to this day it retains this character.

In an ongoing debate on what belongs to South Asia and what doesn't varies ranges from ethnical to socio-religious reasons and I am sure that the debate will continue. However, we can make some logical assumptions. When the Indian tectonic plate nested itself into the Eurasian plate, it created a range of mountains. The logical question is: can we separate these ranges, geographic and geological elements from the region that was the basic cause of their creation? The answer to this

question has far-reaching consequences in terms of South Asia's geopolitical situation and thus on the security implications of the region. Like the Carpathian basin in central Europe, it becomes extremely difficult to defend the lowlands if someone else is located on the mountain ranges that form the northern arc over the subcontinent. Beyond security issues, the livelihood of millions in the subcontinent depends upon resources from these mountainous regions, an essential part of the natural and productive cycle. Indeed, the monsoon that is synonymous with South Asia, makes these ranges a vital catchment area of rain water forming reserves above and underground. For South Asia, delineation is not an appropriate term.

It was probably to circumvent this problem that the renowned British military geographer, Sir Thomas Hungerford Holdich, talked of a 'frontier', 'borderland' and 'transfrontier'¹ rather than the simple, straightforward and mean 'border'. The many decades that Hungerford Holdich spent in the Subcontinent were actually spent mapping out the borderland, which sometimes took him into lands that were more than 500 miles beyond what was actually British India. In effect what Hungerford Holdich is saying is that if we can envisage South Asia as a house, the walls naturally belong to it, and it is not unreasonable to think that the perimeter of the land that surrounds the house belongs to its natural environment. If we consider the walls to be part of the house, which is evident, and the land surrounding it as an integral part, then the whole system becomes one indivisible unit. So it is with South Asia and the regions surrounding it, that they become part and parcel of the South Asian eco-system. It is not a question of core and periphery but one integrated functional system. Other authors and historians have taken a similar attitude when pushed to define the perimeters of South Asia. It was with this in mind that the veteran geographer, Hungerford Holdich, summarised the situation as follows: "A boundary is but an artificial impress on the surface of the land, as much as a road or a railway, and, like the road or the railway, it must adapt itself to the topographical conditions of the country it traverses. If it does not, it is likely to be no barrier at all."² Geographically therefore it is extremely difficult and arbitrary to draw lines of delineation. And as Hungerford Holdich

¹ Thomas Hungerford Holdich. *The Indian Borderland 1880-1900*, Methuen and Co., London, 1901, p. 5.

² Thomas H. Holdich. *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making*, MacMillan and Co., London, 1916, p. 184.

emphasises, in security terms a border makes no sense in South Asia.³ For this reason geography has a profound influence upon the history, politics, economics, sociology, culture and the security of South Asia.

Shifts in the historic and strategic definition and delineations of frontiers

Geography is one thing and the movement of history is another. As the regular flow of news items from the subcontinent shows, problems of historic definitions and delineations are one of the biggest and most serious problems plaguing South Asian territorial integrity and security. Concepts of security are very interesting and could be extremely useful, but can become useless and potentially dangerous if we do not take into account a whole range of realities on the ground. This is what happened with the subcontinent when the freedom fighters refused to accept the fact that South Asia could not be divided and appropriated on a conceptual basis. Dividing or delineating on a religious basis was anathema to the whole South Asian system. Moreover, the burdens of division and dislocation were imposed mainly on those who had nothing to do with the overall process. In this sense, the shifts in delineation, rather than solving anything tangible, generated a whole new set of security risks unheard of before. The departing British colonials are often blamed for this but in my opinion it would be inappropriate to put the whole blame upon them.

Historically speaking, the British Indian Empire came close to giving a meaning to the South Asian identity forged by Emperor Ashoka's reign (275-232 BCE). For the first time, British rule in India tried to reflect the complex strategic and defensive security structure put in place by Ashoka. Compared to the Moghuls, who tried to forge a trans-Pamir empire, the British annexed Sri-Lanka, Burma, Tibet, and parts of Persia and Afghanistan, treating these acquisitions as an integral part of the defensive perimeter of South Asia. However, there was a slight difference between the security system conceived by Ashoka and the British colonials.

When Ashoka took control of the perimeter he did not work to alienate the local people, he did not expand his own state-system, rather he integrated the periphery through monetary and religious systems, leading to long-term bonds of trust. The East India Company, to a certain degree, paid attention to this fact and left the sovereignty of

³ Rob Johnson. *South Asian Conflicts Since 1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2005, p. 7.

these border nations intact as long as the paramountcy of the company was acquiesced. This attitude was a result of two factors: firstly, there was no impending economic need or rationality to invade these territories, since they produced little that the company needed or consumed almost nothing in terms of goods sold by the company. Secondly, due to the nascent condition of its administrative consolidation in the Subcontinent proper, it was not prepared to come into direct contact with the other imperial powers of the region, notably Qing China in the east and Persia in the west. The result of these ponderings was that the Ashoka security configuration was not disturbed and the traditional pact between the paramount power and the border nations was left intact.

Long after the Ashoka period, Arab sultans dominating the Indo-Gangetic plains were particularly keen to protect the western gate against the threats of the Mongols and other incursions from central Asia. What the Arab Sultans did was to populate the border regions with Turkic populations coming from the southern Caspian areas. The ethnically Turkic population was deemed to have better knowledge of the Central Asian hordes and was therefore better trained to confront with them.⁴ “Although Mongol raids into north India continued through the second half of the thirteenth century, there was considerable migration of Mongol and Turkic groups searching for Sultanate patronage and instances of disaffected Sultanate amirs looking for allies in Mongol camps. The old traditions of policing the frontier by slave commanders slowly shifted to include new bodies of immigrants who had intruded into the region.”⁵ In this way a new physical and conceptual security policy and frontier delineation was put in place, but this came at a cost, ethnic conflict was created in the frontier and a safe delineation was transformed into a troubled and porous trans-border region.

When analysing South Asian defence policies and problems one has to pay attention to this fundamental change. As John F. Richards explains: “Expansive early modern states imposed new types of territoriality on frontier regions. Settlers and colonial regimes refused to recognise any existing property rights among indigenous peoples (or if

⁴ Thomas H. Holdich. *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making*, MacMillan and Co., London, 1916, p. 184.

⁵ Thomas H. Holdich. *Political Frontiers and Boundary Making*, MacMillan and Co., London, 1916, p. 41.

they did so initially, these were soon abrogated). Instead, they viewed these lands as empty, to be claimed by the encroaching state. In turn, the colonising state conferred property rights on its frontier settlers.⁶ The Turkic tribes were supposed to be socially better equipped than the Pathan (Pashtun) tribes that had resided in the frontier valleys for thousands of years. The reality on the ground was that it created an unbridgeable enmity between the new arrivals and the Bhumiputra (sons of the earth).

The British Crown, after the coup d'état against the East India Company, openly espoused the same policies as the Arab Sultans, strengthening the ethnically foreign elements to South Asian culture, ethics and attitude to life. Indeed, the British Crown adopted an open policy to promote certain segments of migrant populations sitting on the perimeter of the Subcontinent.⁷ It recruited a tiny minority, beside itself, that never considered itself to be ethnically part of South Asia. Tan Tai Tong calculated that between 1858 and 1910 the recruitment of Punjabis increased by 309% to 93 295.⁸ And by ploughing in the tax revenues from all over South Asia into the development of Punjab, the British Crown had forged an identity, and given it an economic salience, that was antagonistic to the rest of the Subcontinent. This fact had a major implication during and after the 'struggle' for independence, and of course had a profound impact on post-independence strategic thinking; this structural antagonism put Nehru under huge pressure after the British packed up and went home.

Characteristic security threats and region-specific geopolitical problems

From afore mentioned historic and structural developments, one is able to get a better insight into the dilemmas weighing upon the new Indian republic and its prime minister. On the one hand he had the armed forces that did not belong to him, since they en bloc belonged to

⁶ John F. Richards. *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World*, University of California Press, Berkley, 2003, pp. 4-5.

⁷ Amar Farooqui. 'Divide and Rule'? Race, Military Recruitment and Society in Late Nineteenth Century Colonial India, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 43, No. 3/4 (March–April 2015), pp. 49-59, pp. 50-52. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24372935>, (accessed 25.11.2017).

⁸ Tan Tai Yong, *The Garrison State - The Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849–1947*, SAGE Publications, New Delhi, 2005, pp. 70-71.

one hostile community that had never given up its own colonial ambitions within South Asia. The division of the Punjab was intended to solve this problem but one has to realise that the Northwest gateway to India had become a hostile zone. And on the other hand Nehru was confronted with regional players like China who were willing to use salami tactics to dig deeper into the South Asian sphere of influence. The Chinese method of colonialism is silent sequencing doctrines. It designates a core territory as indivisible and consequently builds and bestows buffer state status to territories surrounding it and then with time lapse designates the newly acquired territory as an indivisible core element of the Chinese territorial integrity. Trying to stop China militarily in Tibet would have increased the power of the Punjabis over the core of South Asia. So rather than lose the core to his inner enemies he decided to allow the Chinese to occupy Tibet in the hope that it would satisfy their appetite, at least for a couple of decades; he obviously misjudged this eventuality. These inner structural problems of delineation at all levels led Nehru to re-evaluate and to temporarily abandon the well-tested defence and security arrangements in South Asia. The ensuing chaos is something common to all South Asian countries, a characteristic that is still persistent in the security configuration of South Asia.

Interstate conflicts

Following on from the previous section, the big question concerning conflicts and wars in South Asia is: Can the conflicts between some of the South Asian countries be considered civil wars? The following quote from Rob Johnson corroborates that logic: "A regional study enables us to make some general comments about the nature of conflict. The term 'conflict' has been selected deliberately, not because of a problem with the definition of war in any legalistic sense, but because the number of deaths caused by politicised violence in 'unconventional' settings often far exceed those that occur during interstate or 'conventional' fighting. Conflicts embrace armed confrontations, insurrections, communal rioting, insurgencies and episodes of terrorism, as well as wars."⁹ The division of South Asia was artificial and it consequently follows that the ensuing conflict to date is

⁹ Rob Johnson, *South Asian Conflicts Since 1947*, Reaktion Books, London, 2005, p. 7.

artificial, although in security terms these conflicts can be deemed 'civil war'-like in their nature.

India –Pakistan conflict and rivalry

The conflict between India and Pakistan is composed of a sequel of logical calculations by different political and military communities in the months and years leading to the independence of both countries. As such, these acts could be seen both as a line of coincidences, but at the same time the result of some 'higher-up' planning. The first thing to know about the conflict between India and Pakistan is that it is artificial, but nonetheless, in a perverse sense, constitutes the national interest for both countries. India needs the conflict with Pakistan to keep a strong grip on some of its federal states who demand more autonomy and less concentration of power in New Delhi. In the same manner Pakistan needs the conflict with India to trample separatist ambitions nurtured by some of its provinces. This is especially true when both countries, in the immediate aftermath of the British withdrawal, lacked legitimacy and viability.

It is a fact that, in whatever perspective we analyse the situation, both countries were artificially created in the period 1945-1950. In a sense, the conflict was conceived and built to oppose each other for a special and specific reason, namely that of legitimising their existence over their constituent parts. For this reason, until the day India and Pakistan stop having legitimacy problems, the Indo-Pakistan conflict will continue. In this way, inner structural tensions are diametrically aligned to the conflict.¹⁰

Being continuously prepared for a possible transfer of power, Nehru did not wield the necessary legitimacy in India, at least not in the same manner as Gandhi had; and he did not have a political organisation that could integrate the local elites and bring about a political consensus and thus create a strong territorial unity. The saga of the 'partition' did have an immediate impact in the areas concerned but nationally petered out. Embarking on high profile military engagements with Pakistan to build national consensus at home was not to Nehru's taste, apart from a few incidents like the invasion of the State of Hyderabad and the fait

¹⁰ K. P. Misra, *Intra-State Imperialism. The Case of Pakistan*, Journal of Peace Research, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1972), pp. 27-39. Sage Publications, Ltd., page 27. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422970>.

accomplis of the 1962 Indo-China War. Nehru never really wanted a military conflict with Pakistan however much it was a thorn on his side, instead it seems that he was expecting political rivalry at worst. Religious rhetoric was never his cup of tea, especially given the fact that his origins are blurred, he was not a champion of a Hindu India against an Islamic Pakistan. As explained earlier, the conflict's structural roots lie before the post-independence settlement. One could actually go back to the early days of the crown rule and find evidence for the outlines of two different and distinct entities, in their administrative and judicial forms. A defence community was built-up in the north-west as a barrier against a combined Persia-Russian invasion. In essence what happened during the final months of independence and afterwards is that this military community, which had power through conquest as its *raison d'être*, had to reassign itself. The Sikh community, which had large control of this martial entity, tried to create an independent state. Whatever historians might say, in strict security terms, it would have been suicidal for Nehru to accept an independence settlement where one of the biggest military strengths was concentrated at the gates of India. Nehru, to further his personal ambitions, accepted settlement by integrating half of the Punjabi population into India. This community mirrors exactly the same methods used by the Pakistani military establishment, with a predominant position of the military establishment in further economic consolidation as in India.

Structurally it is anyone's guess what will happen if this Punjabi community is forced to relinquish its preponderance over the Indian and Pakistani armed forces. The whole nature of the conflict will change to one of cooperation. This is not some sort wishful thinking, it is an impending structural reality, if the Punjabi community is sidelined. When this will happen none can foresee, but signs are that changes will first come from the Indian side because of the increasingly international outlook of the Punjabi (Sikh) diaspora. It would be structurally dysfunctional to maintain the predominance of a community that has 'integrative' relations with a diaspora that is increasingly building strength in the armed forces of other world powers.

India –Bangladesh conflict and rivalry

The partition of the Indian subcontinent was devised to destroy one of the strongest nationalisms in the whole of Asia in the early 20th century – namely that of the Bengali people. Religious divisions and

communal conflicts between Hindus and Muslims was only a side show while the real struggle was happening on two fronts. One, as earlier mentioned was taking place between the Fringe Mesopotamians¹¹ (the elite of northwest of India) and the Punjabis, who were the main military contingency of South Asia and the backbone of British military might in the region and beyond. The Punjabis as an ethnic group was composed of a powerful Sikh community, a sizeable Hindu community and a very large Muslim community. They had their differences but they were well cemented by their common adoration for their British masters. This the other Fringe Mesopotamians were unwilling to leave intact, as it became evident that the British had decided to leave. It was evident they were going to split the mighty Punjab, so the creation of Pakistan was the consequence of this and not the other way round. This decision had a parallel development on the eastern front; and the ingenuity of Nehru and Gandhi was to link both fronts and win the day for Fringe Mesopotamia as a whole.

In 1757, precisely one hundred years before the Indian Mutiny, when the East India Company conquered Bengal, willingly and most of the time unwillingly, it was unleashing a powerful phenomenon thence unheard of in the Subcontinent – modern nationalism. Indeed, Bengali resources and arrogance served the company well when they offered it the entire subcontinent on a silver plate. Bengal became the backbone of the East India Company and in return a powerful and extremely articulate Bengali elite emerged that even had the British aristocracy starting to feel unsure of its own high-handedness, hating them and the East India Company that stood behind them. The masquerade of the 1857 Sepoy Mutiny was to reduce both aspirants to rouble.

The company vanished overnight and so did the Bengalese as a military force; but Bengali nationalism had deep roots, made of strong fibre. The best minds might come from South India but Bengal had meticulously woven its administrative fabric deep into the heart of British India. The Sikhs and Punjabis with their military might, the Bengalis with their unparalleled control over the administration,

¹¹ *Fringe Mesopotamia* is the defence and alliance community that the British had nurtured in the north-west of British India. Since their origins, customs, culture and posture towards South Asian civilisation this community can be considered as pertaining to the Mesopotamian sphere, on the fringe of it. Today it is Pakistan and the north-western states of India, from Gujarat right up to Kashmir. The only problem was and still is that this community is not uniform and is prone to rivalry.

judiciary and the organs of the press and the remaining section of Fringe Mesopotamians had nothing except Gandhi, Nehru and British sympathy. Its interest was thus intertwined with that of the British aristocracy; Bengali nationalism had to be destroyed and Bengal divided. The British tried to do this in 1905 and failed as both Hindu and Muslim Bengalis united to defend the integrity of their nation but not for long. Gandhi and Nehru were masters in the art of deception and intrigue, and they got the job done; Bengal was divided. While both of them played a serenade to the principles of nonviolence, Bengali blood was flooding the streets of Calcutta like a monsoon in deluge.

As if this was not enough, a plan was drawn up to make eastern Bengal a colony to Pakistan, a master more brutal and unapologetic than the worst of the Bengali nightmares.¹² The initial partition plan did not include Bengal. The name 'Pakistan' holds a secret in the sense that it is a compound of the names of provinces of today's Pakistan, with no mention of Bengal. Logic says that it must have been added to the list of demands at the last moment, at the request of Nehru. What he feared most was not Pakistan or even China, it was the return of Subhas Chandra Bose¹³ to a united Bengal, making it his base to challenge Nehru. Every patriotic family in India had a picture of Bose hanging on their wall. This paper is too short to elaborate how Nehru used his power to further enslave and antagonise the divided parts further. It took the courage of the first and truly Indian leader, Indira Gandhi, to come to the rescue of an economically decimated Bangladesh (East Pakistan) in 1972. Dividing Bengal into two can only be seen as a temporary measure to hold Bengali nationalism in check. Today, since Bengali nationalism was never based on religious beliefs, there is a chance that cultural and linguistic nationalism could stretch across the artificial borders.¹⁴ Bangladesh has been one of the best managed economic growth stories in the whole of South Asia. And if this success continues

¹² K. P. Misra: Intra-State Imperialism. The Case of Pakistan, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1972), pp. 27-39, Sage Publications, Ltd., p. 28. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/422970>, (accessed 27.11.2017).

¹³ Subhas Chandra Bose a Bengali nationalist leader who disappeared mysteriously on a Japanese plane at the end of WWII. The evidence concerning his death is still contested.

¹⁴ Zillur R. Khan. Islam and Bengali Nationalism, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 25, No. 8 (Aug., 1985), pp. 834-851, University of California Press, p. 838. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2644113>, (accessed 27.11.2017).

there is a strong possibility that the two Bengals would like to resurrect some sort of cultural reunification.

Fringe Mesopotamia hope that the anti-Muslim trend in the world at large and Hindu nationalism in India may keep tensions high and make a rapprochement between the two Bengals (West Bengal and Bangladesh) difficult if not impossible. This could do the trick, but together the Bengalis constitute a linguistic community of more than 400 million people. In 1972, when Bangladesh was created, Indira Gandhi hoped to consolidate India's eastern flank by having a friendly and grateful country there. And the first Bangladeshi foreign policy initiative led to the later creation of the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation), to definitively end the Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru era of communal divisions and mutual mistrust. This path to peace was always marginalised by Fringe Mesopotamia as both Indira Gandhi and her son Rajeev Gandhi were assassinated. They and South Asian unity were victims to a fanaticism inaugurated by the great Mahatma himself, so rapprochement between the two Bengali communities might not be easy, but structurally it could happen. The Bangladeshi foreign policy attitude and posture is one of the most accommodating. Fringe Mesopotamia has conquered most of India and might use a conflictual path to consolidate South Asia further. This posture might push Bangladesh to do the same. A miscalculation on the part of Fringe Mesopotamia could be one of the biggest risks that haunts India – Bangladesh security concerns.

India-Nepal conflict

Nepal is a land-locked country and prone to buffs of panic and suffocation. It cannot sustain uncertainty; it needs long-term assurances from its two big neighbours. On the domestic side, Nepalese politics has been tumultuous and its relations with India have taken the same turn. And there is a reason for that. Although the population of Nepal in its majority is Hindu, ethnicity plays a bigger role, with stark differences between what is called Hill Hindus and Valley Hindus. The Valley Hindus feel more affinity to the neighbouring Indian provinces than with the customs and ways of life of the Gurkha Hill Hindus. In the 1950s Nehru tried to fiddle and pull strings in domestic issues and enhance the position of the Valley Hindus who preferred closer association with India. This was not to the liking of the Hill Hindus, the independent spirited Gurkhas. More recently Nepal has accused India of imposing

a whole scale embargo to twist its arm, not even taking into account the shock and devastation caused by a deadly earthquake. The Nepalese consider this to be a form of declaration of war. From its perspective, India is using the only peaceful method that it can to effective means.¹⁵

India –Sri Lanka conflict

India's conflict with Sri-Lanka is a turning point and a milestone in South Asian security policy. India started to see its defensive and security priorities in terms of the whole of South Asia again.¹⁶ To this extent, it was a long awaited structural adjustment from a historian's point of view. There was precedence, both in India's continued involvement in Nepal and India's liberation of Bangladesh from the clutches of Pakistani repression and brutality. The 1980s are seen as a more assertive foray into an attempt to define the security perimeters of South Asia as the indivisible part of the Indian sphere of concern and primacy. Of course the reality on the ground was different since the United States was heavily implicated in Pakistan and the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. This said, with Nepal and Bangladesh tightly pulled into the Indian sphere, the eastern front was more or less consolidated.

The India and Sri-Lanka conflict is built at several levels, as is customary in South Asia. Tensions at any one level could easily spill into others, leading into a generalised conflagration. One of the priorities of security policy in the region is to keep these levels compartmentalised and isolated. As with the other instances, here too events and the pattern of actions and reactions is dictated by the structure of historic build-up. A love-hatred relationship between the two countries is a fact. The reasons for this contradictory picture is not all too evident to understand, but we have to isolate certain trends. As Sasanka Perera argues: "In the final analysis, both Sinhala and Tamils of today are descendants of immigrants from mostly southern parts of India. At the level of popular perception, Sinhala believe that they belong to a superior ethnic group called "Aryans", who trace their descent from northern parts of India."¹⁷

¹⁵ Anumeha Yadav. Is India really behind Nepal's economic blockade?, Scroll.in online periodical, Feb 04, 2016, <https://scroll.in/article/802653/is-india-really-behind-nepals-economic-blockade> (accessed: 2017-11-27)

¹⁶ Devin T. Hagerty: India's Regional Security Doctrine, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (Apr., 1991), pp. 351-363, University of California Press, p. 352. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2645389>, (accessed 27.11.2017).

¹⁷ Perera, Sasanka: The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka : a historical and sociopolitical outline. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2001, p. 6. URL

So structurally, the Indian involvement in the Sri-Lankan conflict was bound to fail because it was difficult to take sides or keep equidistance for long. That is exactly what happened with Rajiv Gandhi's policy, but there were other ingredients that led to the poisonous atmosphere that arose.

The Sri-Lankan situation has to be understood from another perspective, from that of nascent nationalisms. Up to the 1950s the whole of the Indian Ocean rim and the Indian Ocean islands came under direct or indirect influence of British India. But this changed as every single territorial unit openly celebrated nationalism and became temporarily insensitive to pan-regional alliances and irksome to the slightest insinuation of outside influence. As William L. Dowdy and Russell B. Trood point out: "Today the ocean littoral is composed not of dominated colonies but of proud, independent nation-states jealous of their prerogatives and suspicious of the intentions of all outside."¹⁸ It was for this reason that most of the South Asian nations entertained a deep suspicion of India's benevolent intentions and Sri-Lanka was the best example.

Conclusion

Geography is a defining element in the history of South Asia, and consequently the role played by geopolitics is quite substantial. It is for this reason that any outside analyst or policy maker inside South Asia should have an intimate understanding of the geopolitical aspects of the region and how they have been transformed over the centuries and to what consequences. The geographic delineations in South Asia have also reflected the mosaic of ethnic input into the defensive security arrangement for more than 2000 years from the times of Emperor Ashoka to as recently as 1904 when the Curzon Doctrine took centre ground. Unfortunately, the break-up of this security configuration has led to a dysfunctionality of purpose. Rather than recreate, in one way or the other, the protective system after 1947, the South Asian components

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/727811468302711738/The-ethnic-conflict-in-Sri-Lanka-a-historical-and-sociopolitical-outline>

¹⁸ William L. Dowdy and Russell B. Trood. *The Indian Ocean: An Emerging Geostrategic Region*, *International Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 3, *Ocean Politics* (Summer, 1983), pp. 432-458, Sage Publications, Ltd. on behalf of the Canadian International Council, p. 437. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40202160>, (accessed 01.12.2017).

have constantly eroded the outer walls of the indivisible South Asia. From a geopolitical and geostrategic point of view, the interstate conflicts between the so-called South Asian conflicts are 'structurally' nothing more than civil wars on the political level and ethnic wars on the socio-religious level. India as the biggest player in the game should have taken the lead for the creation of some sort of pan-South Asian security arrangement. But unable to perform the mission because of its time-consuming democratic set-up, and more importantly India fell into the ethnic trap as some ethnics nurtured for security purposes became sovereign states in which the martial elements dominated the political structures. The sovereignty of the new states in reality meant nothing more than the primacy of military establishments. Nationalism was gathered to support this position, making any form of military cooperation impossible. This structural dysfunctionality is supported and used by China to enhance its own designs in South Asia but these violations could lead India to seek more concrete and radical solutions to recreate the long due South Asian security configuration. And in this endeavour cooperation with the United States can be an option, although India would like to keep its independence in terms of security, and not make the mistakes committed by Europe after the Second World War.

