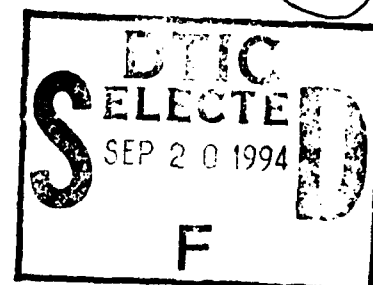AD-A284 652

UNIFICATION OF SOUTH ASIA

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

HARDEV SINGH, LT COL, INDIAN ARMY
M.Sc., Defence Studies, Madras University, 1988

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
1994

94-30136

DTIC QUALITY INSPECTED 3

3 June 1994   Master's Thesis, 2 Aug 93-3 Jun 94

Unification of South Asia

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Approved for public release, distribution is unlimited.

The thesis proposes unification of South Asia, comprising India, Pakistan,
Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Maldives into a single democratic
federal structure, like the U.S. with certain amount of autonomy to the
states/provinces. The study first establishes the major instability problems in
the region and then analyzes the feasibility and suitability of South Asia's
unification into a single nation. A detailed examination of the Kashmir problem
concludes that India and Pakistan are unlikely to find a solution to this highly
emotional issue which has its roots linked to the illogical partition of the
British India in 1947. The conclusion highlights as to why the decision to
divide British India was incorrect and how this partition has aggravated the
religious division between the Hindus and Muslims instead of resolving the same.
The detailed analysis of Hinduism and Islam in South Asia establishes that
religious division in South Asia would be reduced by unification. The study
concludes that the unification, besides bringing stability to the region, would
bring other major benefits including cutting down the defense budget of South
Asia by two-third and a reduction of armed forces by 48 Infantry/Armed/Mountain
Divisions.

Unification of South Asia, Stability to the Region

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

Name of Candidate: Lt Col Hardev Singh

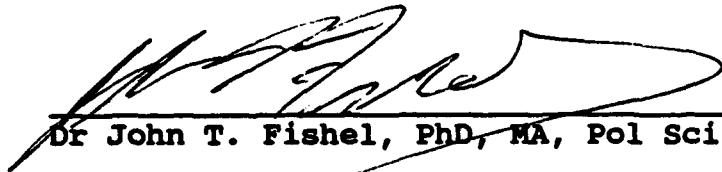Thesis Title: Unification of South Asia

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Programs

The opinion and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or other governmental agency. (Reference to this study should include the forgoing statement.)

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ABSTRACT

UNIFICATION OF SOUTH ASIA by Lt Col Hardev Singh, Indian Army,
   93 Pages.

The thesis proposes unification of South Asia, comprising
India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutar, and
Maldives into a single democratic federal structure, like the
US, with a certain amount of autonomy to the states/provinces.

The study first identifies the major instability problems in
the region and then analyzes the feasibility and suitability
of South Asia's unification as a single nation.

A detailed examination of the Kashmir problem concludes that
India and Pakistan are unlikely to find a solution to this
highly emotional issue which has its roots linked to the
illogical partition of British India in 1947. The conclusion
highlights why the decision to divide British India was
incorrect and how this partition has aggravated rather than
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South Asia establishes that the religious tensions within
South Asia would be reduced by unification.

The study concludes that unification, besides bringing
stability to the region, would bring other major benefits
including a reduction in the defence budget of South Asia by
two-thirds and a reduction of the armed forces by 48
Infantry/Armed/Mountain Divisions.

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of the millions of innocent and GOD fearing people of South Asia who because of their high human values, lived at peace with one another, for countless centuries irrespective of religion, caste or creed. And, whose descendants today, more than ever before, need to follow those values of universal brotherhood and unity of GOD.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INSTABILITY IN SOUTH ASIA

Even since becoming independent, in the 1940s, the majority of South Asian nations have witnessed the frequent employment of their security forces for both external and internal conflicts. Despite the extensive use of force, the region has remained fairly unstable. India and Pakistan, the major powers on the subcontinent, have fought three wars leading to the bifurcation of Pakistan and the formation of Bangladesh in 1971. A state of no war/no peace continues along the line of control between India and Pakistan in Kashmir region. Since 1984, these two nations have fought a localized battle in the glacial areas in the extreme north, at altitudes ranging from 18,000 feet to 25,000 feet where soldiers find it more difficult to fight the effects of weather and altitude than the enemy.

For many years, a sort of arms race has existed between India and Pakistan, consuming meager resources diverted from the development of the poor people of these countries. Both these countries possess nuclear-arms capability.[1]

The South Asian Subcontinent has and is experiencing a number of ethnic/religious movements, seeking secession or

more power in various countries or regions. In India, Kashmiri Muslims have been carrying on a campaign of violence seeking secession from India for last four and a half years.[2] Similar problems in the Indian states of Punjab and Assam seem to have been resolved to some extent. The Liberation Tigers of Eelam (LTTE), representing the Sri Lankan Tamils, have been engaged in a bitter insurgency against the Sri Lankan security forces, in the northeastern regions for nearly a decade without an end in sight. The Indian Army intervened in the island nation in 1987[3] to resolve the problem but withdrew without much success in 1990.

For the past few years, the world has witnessed some very far reaching and important events. Two German nations have reunited, and a number of others like the USSR and Czechoslovakia have disintegrated with relative ease. The Cold War has become part of modern history. However, at a time when even the world's only super power is down sizing its military forces, and the world is striving for integration of economies at regional and global levels, the on going civil war in the former Republic of Yugoslavia is a grim reminder of the potential dangers of which multi-ethnic societies present to their nations' stability. South Asia composed of multi-ethnic and socially divisive societies remains one of the most volatile, and militarized regions in the world.[4]

India's very size, as compared to other nations of South Asia, stimulates their suspicions and security concerns as they perceive India desiring regional hegemony. These concerns often compel them to counter Indian influence by fostering anti-India cooperation among themselves and at times with powers external to the region. This response often contributes towards factors which are usually not in the best interest of the regional stability.

> The ╮ has emerged in the subcontinent a pattern of thinking in which there are only two adversaries, India and its neighbors, with each regarding the other as the primary cause of regional unrest and insecurity.[5]

Major issues of South Asian instability are examined in the following pages. On the face of it, one way or the other, most of the causes of instability in South Asia seems linked to India, the biggest nation in South Asia. However, it is only after examining the root causes of instability in the region that an attempt may be made to look for the remedial measures.

Kashmir: The Core Issue of South Asian Instability

The Kashmir issue is the single most important cause of instability in South Asia. This issue has outlived the life span of the Cold War. It was a direct cause for two wars and an indirect cause for the third war on the subcontinent. Without in-depth knowledge of the history of the Kashmir dispute it is impossible to comprehend the extent of South Asia's problems.

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Prior to independence, the state of Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) was like any other state of British India, then ruled by Maharajah (King) Hari Singh, father of Mr Karan Singh, India's Ambassador to the USA, in the late eighties. On the eve of independence in 1947 all such states became free from the bondage of British India, and were required to join either of the two sovereign nations, India and Pakistan, created by British diplomacy. There were two guide lines for this decision. First, contiguity to either of the two new nations; and the second, the decision of the Ruler who was also to keep the wishes of the people in view.

All other rulers (totaling 562) decided one way or the other, but Kashmir vacillated and dreamt of remaining independent.[6] Because the Maharajah had refused to sign the Instrument of Accession by 15 Aug 1947 (the Independence Day of India), Kashmir existed virtually as an independent state for about two and a half months after India and Pakistan gained their independence.

> The state of Kashmir posed a unique problem to the merger with India or Pakistan. Led by a Hindu monarch and composed of a predominantly Muslim population, Kashmir was contiguous to both India and Pakistan. Pakistan asserted a moral claim to Kashmir because of the state's Muslim-majority population and borders, which abutted what would become Pakistan's western wing. The existence of a popular, democratic and secular movement in Kashmir Valley complicated this picture. This movement, known as the Kashmir National Conference, was led by a dynamic young Muslim, Sheikh Abdullah.[7]

> As the Maharajah waffled on the question of accession, the on-going political agitation against his misrule and repressive measures, mainly against the muslim population, turned into an uprising against his

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unpopular rule. This gave an opportunity to the
sympathizers from across the border to realize their
ambitions of merging Kashmir with Pakistan.
Infiltration of Jammu & Kashmir territory by armed
Pakistanis started long before the main invasion for
Srinagar (capitol of Kashmir) in the third week of
October 1947. On 22 October, the border town of
Muzafarabad was attacked and sacked and the tribal
raiders commenced their advance into the valley. The
Maharajah realizing the seriousness of the situation
sent a desperate call for assistance to the Government
of India. The most popular muslim political leader of
Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah flew to New Delhi to personally
appeal to the Indian Cabinet to despatch armed forces to
help Kashmir repel the Pakistani invaders. On 25 Oct
1947, a meeting of the Indian Defence Committee took
place under the chairmanship of the Governor General,
Lord Mountbatten. It was decided to rush in arms and
ammunition requested by Kashmir Government. However,
Lord Mountbatten advised that it would be dangerous to
send in troops unless Kashmir had first offered to
accede. On 26 October the Maharajah signed the
instrument of accession. The accession of Jammu &
Kashmir to the Union of India was accepted by Lord
Mountbatten on 26 October 1947. Indian troops were
rushed to Kashmir. The Indian Army was soon able to
push the Pakistani invaders out of Srinagar and by the
end of 1947 a stalemate existed in the conflict. India
was in control of over two-thirds of Jammu & Kashmir and
rest remained in Pakistan's hands. Pakistan did not
recognise Kashmir's accession to India as it was
regarded manifestly contrary to the wishes of the people
and based on fraud and violence.[8]

The government of India was convinced of the
legality of its position, arguing that India could not
have tolerated the Pakistani attempt to forcibly
influence the internal and external policies of a
friendly state. Furthermore, the treaty of accession
had given India the responsibility for the defence of
Kashmir. In those circumstances, on January 1, 1948,
India lodged a complaint under article 35 of the U.N.
Charter to persuade Pakistan to stop its aggression by
withdrawing its regular troops and denying the
"invaders" the access to , and use of, Pakistani
territory for operations against Kashmir.[9]

While India had concentrated on the issue of
Pakistan's "aggression" in the hope of Security
Council's support for a speedy censure of Pakistan, the
government of Pakistan grabbed the opportunity to
broaden the debate to address the entire gamut of Indo-

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Pakistan problems. Sir Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan and a former judge of the Indian Supreme Court, used all his skills as a lawyer both to obfuscate the immediate issue and turn the tables of India. In a speech lasting over five hours, Sir Zafrullah not only rejected the India's charge of Pakistani aggression but instead attempted to portray India as an expansionist power determined to swallow a small neighbor. By the selective use of evidence, and by combining the Kashmir dispute with the larger and complicated issue of Indo-Pakistan relations, Zafrullah won the sympathy of many of the members of the Security Council who were unaware of the situation's complexities and perceived it as a harassment by a larger state of its smaller neighbor.[10]

The differences between India and Pakistan proved unbridgeable. India saw the role of the U.N. as putting an end to "Pakistani aggression" so that it could go ahead with its plans for plebiscite under its auspices. Pakistan, it argued had no locus standi in Kashmir, and therefore India and Pakistan could not be treated at par. Kashmir had acceded to India and it could only be reversed if the people of Kashmir voted against the accession. But until then, it was India's duty to defend Kashmir against internal and external aggression and therefore the Indian Army could not be withdrawn. Pakistan rejected India's claim to Kashmir and continued to insist on a plebiscite under U.N. supervision for the entire territory. Pakistan changed to offensive tactics; instead of arguing that the plebiscite was long range problem it now claimed it to be "the very crux of the matter." As both sides remained adamant the Kashmir issue lost its urgency and became bogged down under the weight of the U.N. procedural bureaucracy. [11]

It was not until March 18, 1948, that the Chinese delegate, at the behest of the British presented a draft resolution which called for the restoration of peace and order, the withdrawal of "intruding tribesmen and Pakistani nationals", and the establishment of a plebiscite administration in the state. Nehru accepted the draft resolution but was appalled by the various amendments brought in during discussion which virtually ignored Kashmir's accession to India and consequently India's sovereignty over the state. The resolution not only failed to censure Pakistan's "aggression" but also toned down Pakistan's responsibility for withdrawing its forces and nationals. The lack of sympathy for India in the U.N. became even more manifest in July when, despite the government of Pakistan's admission that three

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brigades of its regular troops were deployed in Kashmir, the Commission virtually ignored the fact.[12]

The final, and most important, U.N. resolution which the Security Council passed on 13 August 1948 was the basis for a cease fire. This resolution called for settlement of the Kashmir problem in three phases. These phases were the cease fire and withdrawal of Pakistani troops and tribesmen from Kashmir, followed by partial withdrawal of Indian troops from Kashmir, and finally, the determination of status of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the will of the people. On the basis of this resolution the cease fire came into effect on 01 January 1949 and Karachi Agreement which delineated the Cease Fire Line, was signed between the two sides. Agreement also stated that the U.N. Commission would station observers where it deemed necessary.

With the passage of time the U.N. resolution has become defunct with both sides violating its further implementation. The resolution never went beyond implementation of Phase 1 that is effecting a cease fire. Pakistan never withdrew its troops and India, instead of holding a plebiscite, as it controlled only a portion of the state, went ahead and held a democratic election and formed a state legislature assembly, thus politically integrating the Indian controlled portion of the state with the rest of the country.

At the time of first elections in Jammu & Kashmir in 1951, the National Conference of Sheikh Abdullah won a

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majority of the seats in the Constituent Assembly on the
basis of free adult franchise. The final status of Jammu &
Kashmir with respect to India gave it a special position
compared to the other states of India. As per the Delhi
Agreement between Nehru and Sheikh Abdullah of 24 July 1952,
India agreed to give special status to Kashmir in the
constitution which assured its complete internal autonomy.
The jurisdiction of the Supreme Court was to be limited as
regards Kashmir to inter-state disputes, fundamental rights,
and the defence, foreign affairs and communications. The
National Flag and National Anthem of India were to be
supreme. In other words, Kashmir acquired an autonomous
status within the union of India. Why then has Kashmir, led
by a popular democratically elected government and enjoying
a special status within India, remained the number one
problem for Indo-Pakistan relations? The reasons are complex
and numerous.

India's internal politics created doubts in the
minds of Kashmiri leaders about the benefits of acceding to
India. Kashmir's privileged status aroused resentment in
other states of the Union. By early 1950s some communal
politicians, in India, made reversal of Kashmir's special
status a focus of agitation which spread throughout the
country and raised Hindu-Muslim tensions. In fact the real
motive of the agitators, especially the communalist Shyama
Prasad Mukherjee, was to oust Nehru from power by

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embarrassing him for his supposedly pro-Muslim bias. This prompted Sheikh Abdullah to take increasingly anti-New Delhi stance and in 1953 he publicly advocated an independent Kashmir. Abdullah's anti-Indian tirades and the severe handling of the agitation in Jammu had lost him the confidence of a number of his own party members, and he was arrested after his government was dismissed by the governor in August 1953.[13]

"Pakistan's internal struggle and ambitions also had adverse implications for the Kashmir issue." The U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, during his visit to Delhi in May 1953 encouraged Nehru to seek a bilateral agreement with Pakistan out side the U.N. The Security Council, split along Cold War lines, had become largely incapacitated, and Nehru was attracted by the idea of a bilateral settlement.[14]

By the time Mohammad Ali Bogra, the Prime Minister of Pakistan came to visit New Delhi in August 1953, the full implications of developments in Kashmir had become apparent Nehru. While the dismissal and arrest of Abdullah was constitutionally correct, India's moral claim to Kashmir had been weakened and Nehru could no longer be sure of the support of the people of Kashmir for India in view of the communal violence in India. After a period of doubts and procrastination the high-minded Nehru reasserted himself. Writing to Kashmir's new prime minister, Bakshi Ghulam Mahamed, Nehru stated:

Obviously I cannot ignore the wishes of the people of Kashmir. If our efforts thus far have been, as it now appears, in vain and the only result that we can expect is some sort of tragedy, even so we have to behave decently and honorably, adhering to what we have stood far.

The implications were obvious. He would rather lose Kashmir in a plebiscite than hang on to it against its popular will.[15]

This was a dramatic reversal of India's earlier position. The earlier insistence that any settlement of the Kashmir dispute must recognize the accession of that state to India was dropped. Indeed, Nehru was now

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willing to offer virtually everything that Pakistan had been seeking since 1947, a plebiscite for the entire state and the almost immediate, appointment of mutually acceptable plebiscite administrator. What is also significant is the fact that Nehru's offer was not made under any external or internal pressure but from a genuine conviction that India must not hold Kashmir against the wishes of its people. He was willing to risk a plebiscite even though it might mean the loss of Kashmir.[16]

Mohammad Ali Bogra returned home triumphant with the end of the conflict in sight. But once in Pakistan he began to waiver. He raised a whole array of trivial objections which were clearly intended to delay a settlement. Much time was wasted in petty quibbles during which other factors intervened to torpedo a settlement. It is one of the ironies of history that just when India appeared to be willing to settle the Kashmir dispute, the Prime Minister of Pakistan allowed the opportunity to fritter away.[17]

[What happened? Why did not Pakistan achieve what it wanted?] Mohammad Ali Bogra, a Bengali diplomat who was Pakistan's ambassador to Washington at the time when he was thrust into the prime ministerial office, had little political experience and still less political support, even among the Bengalis. The real power lay with Ghulam Mohammed and General Ayub Khan backed by the civilian-military bureaucracy. General Ayub Khan was at this time involved in his elaborate scheme to seize power by subverting parliamentary democracy; and hostility with India was needed to legitimize the role of the military and give him time to implement his scheme. Mohammad Ali, a mere puppet whose overriding concern was to remain in office, obliged his puppeteers by duly dragging his feet.[18]

The Cold War created further misunderstandings

between India and Pakistan thus making them take more rigid

and uncompromising positions on Kashmir issue. During the

early 1950s the U.S. was looking for allies in the Cold War,

and India wanting to remain nonaligned would not play ball.

General Ayub Khan, the ambitious Commander-in-Chief of the

Pakistan Army played the key role to make Pakistan a part of

the U.S. cordon sanitaire around the Soviet Union, and ultimately lead her joining SEATO and the CENTO.

As soon as Nehru got an inkling of the proposed alliance between Pakistan and the U.S., he made it clear, in no uncertain terms the consequences of such a pact on Indo-Pakistan relations. Pakistan would have to choose between India's offer of a fair plebiscite and good neighborly relations or a military partnership with the U.S.

Pakistan chose to ignore Nehru's warning, adamantly arguing that its relations with the U.S. was no concern of India, and in May 1954 entered into a Mutual Assistance Pact with the U.S. Nehru withdrew his offer of a plebiscite, since Pakistan's alliance with the U.S. both threatened India's security and brought the region within the orbit of the Cold War.[19]

Pakistan, with strong backing from the U.S. moved in the Security Council to force India to a plebiscite. India, left with no choice, sought a Soviet veto, thus shattering Nehru's dreams to keep India impeccably non-aligned.

The Chinese Factor

With the passage of time Kashmir came to be regarded in the popular perception of Indians as an integral part of India and even Nehru lost his personal authority to negotiate away what was regarded as India's "sovereignty" over Kashmir. In October 1962, the Indian Army was caught by surprise by the Chinese in Ladakh, high altitude region, east of Kashmir Valley, bordering Tibet. At times it appeared that nothing could prevent China from penetrating deep into India. Nehru turned to the U.S. for help. The U.S. eager to contain communism airlifted military supplies to India.[20]

The deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations which began in the late 1950s arising from ideological differences and subsequent border clashes between the two communist states in early 1960s, and the Soviet reluctance to use its nuclear capability to support Chinese foreign policy objectives, convinced Beijing of the limits of its pro-Moscow policy. In the aftermath of the Sino-Indian border War of 1962 when both the Soviet Union and the United States began supplying military assistance to New Delhi, China perceived it as a "collusion" for its encirclement with India as its focal point. In accordance with its counter encirclement strategy China gave up its neutral stand on Kashmir issue and started openly siding with Pakistan.[21]

It was the Soviet support for India over the Sino-Indian border which to a certain extent prompted Chinese aggression of India in 1962. After the Chinese aggression the Kashmir issue became further complicated due to military considerations. The main lines of communications for the defence of Ladakh went through the Kashmir Valley and any weakening of India's control in that region would seriously jeopardize her defence against future Chinese aggression. As the West's main concern was the containment of communism, it could not be expected to make India vulnerable to communist China. Thus, the Kashmir issue receded in importance as a global issue.

In 1965 an unfortunate incident concerned with the
disappearance of a holy relic from a mosque sparked communal
riots in Kashmir. This led to Pakistan's miscalculation
that, with its support, Kashmiris would rise in revolt
against India, something that India's armed forces, battered
in the war against China only three years back, would not be
able to quell. For this reason, a large number of military
and para-military personnel in civilian guise were sent into
the Valley to generate an uprising. In fact, however, the
uprising did not occur and the Pakistani "infiltrators" in
the Valley were apprehended and turned in by Kashmiri
Muslims in substantial numbers. Once again, it seemed clear
that whatever the state of their relationship with India,
Kashmiris did not wish to embrace Pakistan.[22]

> Another war erupted six years later. The bone of
> contention this time was East Pakistan, not Kashmir;
> but, it had serious consequences for Kashmir. Pakistan
> was bifurcated, East Pakistan claiming that they were
> Bengali Muslims, not simply Muslims, destroying thereby
> the "Two Nation Theory"[23] based on the religious
> priority over ethnicity. Moreover, the war was a severe
> blow for Pakistan's armed forces. Both ideologically
> and militarily, it was a catastrophe for Pakistan.[24]

> Following 1971 War, India obtained Pakistan's
> commitment in the form of the Simla Agreement that it
> would not use force in Kashmir. Internally, India
> reopened negotiation with Sheikh Abdullah who by now had
> given up the idea of an Independent Kashmir. Abdullah
> signed an agreement with Delhi in February 1975,
> accepting that Kashmir was "a constituent unit of the
> Union of India" and that "no law made by the Legislature
> of the State of Jammu & Kashmir, seeking to make any
> change in....the constitution of the State of Jammu &
> Kashmir....shall take place unless the bill....receives
> [the President of India's] assent." In return Article
> 370, which gave, as originally intended in 1950, more
> autonomy to Jammu & Kashmir than any other state in

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India for "welfare measures, cultural matters, social security, personal law and procedural laws in a manner suited to the special conditions of the state." was retained.[25]

Thus it seemed that Kashmir question was finally settled for ever. Kashmiri nationalism was accepted to exist as a sub-nationalism within Indian nationalism.

After the death of Sheikh Abdullah his son, Farooq Abdullah became the Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, winning the 1983 elections with a handsome majority. During this election Mrs Indira Gandhi had herself campaigned for the Congress Party against the National Conference. She tried to exploit the Hindus of Jammu using blatantly communal messages in search of votes, a trend that was to deepen later in Congress Party's electoral politics. At that time there were a number of non-Congress regional parties ruling different states in India. The Congress Party had the central government headed by Mrs Indira Gandhi. Mrs Gandhi sought to undermine the opposition led state governments.

Like other non-Congress Chief Ministers, Farooq set on a collision course with Mrs Indira Gandhi. The non-Congress parties began to come together, and Farooq became part of the emerging "opposition Conclave". The Andhra Pradesh government run by a popular regional party was sacked by the governor of the state. Similarly, in an awkward display of power, the Congress government at New Delhi violated the federal principle and dismissed the Farooq Abdullah Government and imposed a pliant Chief Minister on Kashmir. The Governor of J&K did not even give Farooq Abdullah a chance even to test his majority in the Assembly which was the standard procedure. Most observers agree that this was the beginning of alienation in the Valley.[26]

The Congress Party's undemocratic policies could have been countered effectively, had Farooq Abdullah continued to fight on principle with the support of other opposition parties. However, in a surprising volte face and defying the logic of Kashmiri politics, in 1986, after the death of Mrs Gandhi, Farooq ended up signing a deal with the Congress Party. The Congress Party under Rajiv Gandhi and National Conference under Farooq undertook to contest the 1987 state elections together and to form the government if they won. In Kashmir, orthodox Islamic parties had been electorally insignificant. No party other than the National

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Conference, based on Kashmiriat, had ever won more than 5 seats. In 1987, *Kashmiriat* was mobilized by a coalition of Islamic groups, known as the Muslim United Front (MUF). Concerned with the growing support for an orthodox Islamic political platform, Conference-Congress alliance not only rigged the vote but also several electoral candidates of MUF were beaten up. Some of those candidates crossed the ever-porous Indo-Pakistan border and joined extremist groups. The leadership of the insurgency two years later would come from some of these contestants.[27]

Farooq and Congress managed to get a huge majority, but they ruled without legitimacy. The sanctity of the electoral process and Kashmiri trust in Farooq, already declining after the agreement with Congress, collapsed after these elections. Later that year, riots against Farooq's Government broke out, Muslim fundamentalists burned the Indian flag and called Farooq a traitor to the Kashmiri cause.[28]

This was also the time of Pakistan's military revival. Ruled by a military-led government, the Afghanistan crisis restored a frayed Pakistan U.S. relationship. Unlike President Ayub Khan who was a modernist military leader, President Zia ul-Haq, the new leader, began a process of Islamization in Pakistan. As the trouble in Kashmir brewed, Pakistan exploited the situation. By 1987, two kinds of Kashmiri militant groups had started operating from Pakistan; first were the pro-Pakistan, Islamic groups like the Hizbul Mujahideen, these sought the complete merger of Kashmir with Pakistan on religious basis. Second was the more secular group like the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) wanting an independent state of Jammu and Kashmir.[29]

The alienation of the Kashmiri Muslims, due to the misrule of the governments in power and exploitation by Pakistan, led to anti-India demonstrations and small scale acts of terrorism in 1989. In early 1990, there were large scale demonstrations and acts of terrorism. Most of the Hindus living in the Valley had to move out for fear of death at the hands of pro-Pakistani insurgent groups. JKLF is the only group which is secular in nature and demands

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independence. All the other groups demand a merger with Pakistan. Finding the situation getting out of the control of the state government the Indian government introduced security forces into the Valley and also practically sealed the Line of Control by reinforcing its troop deployments. This led to Pakistan moving its troops close to the border. At one stage war seemed imminent and the situation was diffused by mediation of the U.S.

The Pakistan Government accepts that it provides political support to the militants but denies supplying arms. In any case, thanks to the situation in Afghanistan, weapons of deadly potential are so easily available that the Pakistan Government does not have to supply weapons in order for militants to obtain them.[30] Not withstanding the above, there is enough evidence of Pakistan's involvement in training and arming the Kashmiri militants. In November 1988, Hashim Qureshi, erstwhile leading figure of JKLF, wrote a series of articles for a Srinagar weekly, "Chattan," and disclosed that Pakistani military intelligence started preparing for its new phase of "Kashmir Liberation" through training and arming of Kashmiri youth in 1984.[31] Western and Asian diplomats stationed in New Delhi report that, across the border, Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI, the intelligence unit of the Pakistani Army) runs training camps for the fundamentalist guerrilla groups that favor the incorporation of Kashmir into Pakistan.[32]

During 1990/91 a large number of Kashmiri insurgents were captured, while infiltrating or exfiltrating across the line of control, by the Indian security forces. According to the J&K Police Chief, Mr B.S. Bedi,"as many as 2700 militants, including 162 top ranking ones, have been killed and nearly 13,000 sophisticated weapons have been recovered so far."[33] The insurgent movement in Kashmir has been contained by use of the security forces by India but it is far from any solution. In fact, a solution is very unlikely to come about as long both Pakistan and India wish to integrate Kashmir and the considerable following of JKLF wanting to have it as an independent state. With the ongoing "no war no peace" situation between India and Pakistan, over the Kashmir issue, for forty five years, neither country is in a position to compromise on its stand. India and Pakistan have too much at stake to forego their claim; public opinion on neither side will accept it, especially with opposition political parties continually seeking such controversial issues in order to topple governments.

Summary of Kashmir Problem

At the time of partition, Kashmir was an independent state. Its invasion, two months after independence, by Pakistan sponsored invaders compelled Kashmir to accede to India.

At the time of accession in 1947, India promised to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir after the situation was restored.

At end of the 1947/48 War, one third of Kashmir remained under occupation of Pakistan and rest under India. This remains the situation today.

A U.N. resolution, agreed by both India and Pakistan, required the withdrawal of Pakistan troops, followed by the withdrawal of Indian troops and finally, a plebiscite in Kashmir. As even the first step of this resolution could not be implemented, logically others could not follow.

With the passage of time various international and domestic complexities prevented a solution to the Kashmir problem and the Indian controlled portion of Kashmir was politically integrated with India enjoying more autonomy than any other Indian state within the federal structure of India.

During the Indo-Pakistan wars the Kashmiris fought against the Pakistanis. From the days of Pakistan's creation, Kashmiris never demanded accession to Pakistan. They sought either accession to India as a complete merger, or complete independence.

After 1977, Kashmir was totally at peace with India as its integral part and there was no demand for an independent Kashmir.

From 1983 onwards, the undemocratic practices of India's Central Government interfering with Kashmir's autonomy, the betrayal of Kashmiri people by Farooq Abdullah, and the exploitation of the situation by Pakistan led to an insurgent movement for the secession of Kashmir from India.

The insurgent movement is divided in its aim. Many people led by JKLF, want Kashmir as an independent state. Many others want it to merge with Pakistan on religious grounds. There are also many who wish to return to the normalcy as it enjoyed for so many years, as part of India.

As neither Pakistan nor India are likely to change their positions on Kashmir the stalemate is likely to continue.

Religious, Political, and Ethnic Tensions

The rise of religious fundamentalism, as well as the political aspirations of ethnic groups have also led to a number of conflicts all over the world. In South Asia, although these conflicts are generally between religious/ethnic groups themselves or with the government of their particular country, many of these conflicts encompass the concerns of more than one country of the region. For example, conflicts between Hindus and Muslims in India, seen during the incident of *Babri Masjid*[34] demolition, had repercussions in Pakistan and Bangladesh. Similarly, the

Sri Lankan conflict between the Tamilians and the Sinhalese
has repercussions in India.

> Contemporary political struggles in South Asia,
> often involving ethnic and communal conflict and
> violence, have increasingly assumed religious forms. At
> the same time, various, often dominant, religious
> positions have become increasingly politicized. During
> more than forty years of South Asian postcolonial
> history, religious-political relationships seem to have
> become increasingly complex.[35]

India is multi-religious society and it has been so
all through its known history. This pluralism has been a
strength of Indian society rather than a weakness. India
has always prided itself on being pluralistic. It is also a
fact that Hinduism has been a nondoctrinaire,
nonformalistic, umbrella religion. Even communal Hindus
keep on emphasizing its nondoctrinaire nature. Hinduism
absorbed various Indian local cults, including animistic
ones, over a period of time. Even protest movements that
sprang from its fold, like Jainism and Buddhism, remained
part of the Hindu fold. These protestant religions were
more doctrinaire than their mother religion Hinduism.[36]
However, in recent history, we have seen that there has been
both a gradual process of construction of a Hindu community
and one of rendering it militant and aggressive to the point
of terrorizing those religious communities identified as
minorities.[37] Before searching for solutions to contain
such destabilizing forces, we need to analyze the reasons
for this emerging change.

At the time of partition, India emerged as secular country with an already existing pluralistic society. For Jawaharlal Nehru, who headed the government of India after partition, secularism was a matter of creed. He was of the opinion that "it was the prime responsibility of the Hindus to make the large number of Muslims in India feel at home and not see themselves as second-class citizens existing on sufferance." The test of success of secularism, Nehru felt, was not what the majority community thought but how the minority community felt. Although it may be an appealing concept, it is difficult to follow.[38]

The recent surge in Hindu fundamentalism appears to be the result of a number of factors. The foremost reason seems to be the political exploitation of the different groups. It is difficult for illiterate masses to analyze the value of individual candidates or the political parties during elections. Therefore, they vote enbloc as per the dictates of their religious/caste leaders. Hindu society is based on a large number of castes, languages, and regions within India. Even in religious aspects the different Hindu groups worship different forms of God. It is for this reason that the BJP, the fundamentalist Hindu party, has not been able to establish mass support throughout the country even after trying for over forty years. Muslim votes on the other hand have always been united because of the highly doctrinaire nature of Islam. This unity of vote gives the Muslim community leverage to obtain concessions from the political party they vote for. For example, despite much demand by various sections of society no government has been able to do away with a separate personal law for the Muslims. In a secular country there should, logically, be

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only one common law for all citizens. However, this is not the case. For example, the Muslim personal law, any Muslim can take upto four wives and can divorce his wife at will without reference to any court of law. This legal right is one of many exclusive to Muslims.

The Hindu communalists resent such exclusive Muslim rights under the Muslim personal law. This can best be illustrated by the famous case of Shah Bano, a Muslim woman who on being divorced sought a settlement in the Indian Supreme Court granted her maintenance from her ex-husband as applicable to any non-muslim divorcee. Perceiving this to be interference in the Muslim personal law, a massive protest developed against the judgement with hundreds of thousands of Muslims pouring into the streets. The government of India had to relent and it enacted a law called The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Bill, 1986. With the enactment of this bill the ferment among Muslims died down. However, the government now had to face the wrath of the Hindus. In a religiously plural society, a concession given to one religious community evokes protest from the other religious communities.

The government could not afford to alienate the majority community and quietly arranged the opening of the doors of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh (U.P.), which the Hindu's claimed to be the birthplace of Lord Rama[39] and which they believed the Muslim King Babar

converted into a mosque. With the opening of the doors of the Babari Masjid a new, fierce controversy started between the Hindus and Muslims. The Vishwa Hindu Prishad (VHP), the fundamental Hindu religious organization, demanded that they be allowed to construct a temple in commemoration of Lord Rama at the site of the Babri Masjid, thus avenging the "insult" heaped on Hindus by a Muslim invader. The Muslim leaders, on the other hand, launched a movement to save the mosque. Both sides started aggressive campaigning and exploiting the illiterate masses in the name of God. After two years of on and off communal tension, events went out of control of the Hindu leaders when on 6 December 1992, Hindu mobs attacked and brought down the mosque. This stoked the fires of communal violence which left 1300 hundred dead in various parts of the country in December and the communal riots that convulsed Bombay and Ahmadabad in January 1993 added another 700 lives.[40]

On a wider spectrum, as a reaction to the Ayodhya incident of 6 December, a number of Hindu temples were destroyed by Muslims in Pakistan and Bangladesh. The cancellation of SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) summit in Dhaka in January reflected India's worsening relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh.[41]

In sum total, it may be stated that Hindu-Muslim tensions are a major cause of concern for the regional stability of South Asia.

South Asian countries have so many other different problems generating religious, political and ethnic tensions that a separate thesis could be written on these. In order to manage the thesis in a reasonable length, other issues are not described here.

Indian Hegemony

South Asia is a compact area of geographically proximate states that interact with each other and share common bonds of race, history, religion, language and culture. India by virtue of its size and location, and economic and military strength, occupies a pivotal position in this region.

South Asia is sometimes said to be an example of a region dominated by one power (India) whose policies determine the security of all others.[42] India the core country in the region occupies 72 per cent of the entire area of South Asia, has 77 per cent of its population and nearly 80 per cent of the GNP of the subcontinent. All other countries are the immediate neighbors of India, but not that of each other. With country of India's size, population and resources in the immediate vicinity, the small states are rendered even smaller in comparison.[43]

South Asia, as it emerged after 1947, reflected the indigenous imbalance of power following the withdrawal of Britain. India replaced Britain by assuming the "responsibility" for the security and integrity of the

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smaller powers, albeit thwarted subsequently by Pakistani policies and the interventions of extra-regional powers.

In responding to threats to the British Indian Empire from external powers, Great Britain had devised the concept of "extended frontiers." Britain's strategic interests and responsibilities included all of India's neighbors--Afghanistan, Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and Sri Lanka--in an extended security framework. India sought to continue these policies by assuming responsibility for the security of some smaller neighbors. Because of Pakistan's non-cooperation, Afghanistan's distance and difficult accessibility, China's reassertion of its sovereighnity over Tibet, only three states eventually fell within India's defence perimeter--Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. The British practice of administering Sri Lanka separately from its British Indian empire also kept this state outside India's defence perimeter. At the same time, India sought to avoid interference in the internal affairs of these countries, except during crisis situations that India perceived to affect its own national security interests. The Indian political intervention and eventual adoption of Sikkim into the Indian Union in 1983 was an extreme example and the exception to this policy.

Indian statements of this basic policy of non interference in the domestic affairs of its smaller neighbors came intermittently. For example, speaking to the

Indian Parliament during the visit of the King of Nepal, Nehru stated that "much as we stand for the independence of Nepal, we cannot allow anything to go wrong there... because that would be risk to our own security." Responding to the crisis in Bangladesh in 1975 caused by the assassination of Prime Minister Mujibur Rahman, India reiterated that it was vitally interested in the security and stability of all its neighboring countries.

From the above we may deduce that Indian aspirations for leadership, dominance, or hegemony are mainly a product of various factors such as geography, culture and history/heritage etc, rather than emanating from individual leadership or governmental ambitions. Presently, India has consistently reiterated her interests in the integrity, stability, security and prosperity of her neighbors, suspicions and prejudices persist.

Consequently, Indian strategic thinking in South Asia, seems to be conditioned by the following assumptions:[44]

1. Any system that seeks to establish a stable pattern of order in South Asia must reflect the objectives and role of the aspiring hegemon, India.

2. Peace and order in South Asia will not emerge as a product of the military balance between India and Pakistan. This is more likely to occur if India possessed a preponderance of military power because under these

conditions, Pakistan dare not attack while India need not attack.

3. India's desired objective is to maintain the territorial status quo in the region based on the principle of coexistence. India should be perceived as a benevolent giant with a role similar to that of the United States in the American hemisphere.

4. The smaller powers of South Asia should accept the Indian perception and the subsidiary roles implicitly assigned to them by the aspiring hegemon. Non-acceptance of this assigned secondary role would be perceived as "obstacles" to be overcome by diplomacy and, or even military pressure.

5. The aspiring hegemon must seek to limit or offset the potential political and military interventionist policies of external powers in the South Asian region through international diplomacy and, if necessary, by purchasing arms from one or more of the great powers.

The above perception among India's neighbors compel them to view India as being a common foe. Pakistan which is the only country in the region which can, to some extent, challenge Indian hegemony, has greatly benefitted by such perceptions of other countries. Due to the Kashmir issue, Pakistan has viewed India as an enemy country right from the time of partition in 1947 when they fought their first war over Kashmir. Pakistan's claim to Kashmir is based on the

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religion. Islam, a rallying point for separate statehood for Indian Muslims during the British days, continues to be the essential element of Pakistan's foreign policy formulation. Therefore, the fear of militarily and industrially powerful India representing potential Hindu domination has remained the essence of Pakistan's South Asian outlook. Consequently, the defence policy of Pakistan has revolved around the central theme of containing Indian attempts to achieve regional hegemony.

In practice, Pakistan's policies have led it to procure arms to match the India's superiority, and Indian ambitions have been directed at maintaining the power balance in its favor as a perceived pre-requisite for regional stability. Thus the region has witnessed an arms race which both these counties can ill afford economically. In this ongoing race, both these countries have achieved nuclear capabilities thus furthering the danger to the millions of poor people of the region. Pakistan has also adopted indirect means to reduce India's dominance in the region. Whenever the opportunity presents Pakistan aligns itself with the smaller nations of the region to foster anti-Indian postures, be it be an economic issue or any political one. Further, unable to match India militarily, Pakistan has been given support to secessionist movements in India. Pakistan's support to Kashmiri and Sikh separatists has worsened the relations between the two countries to a

point where the possibility of these two nations going to war cannot be ruled out.

To conclude, it may be seen that India's hegemonic status in South Asian region is not of such prominence that it can guarantee the stability of the region as, for example, does the status of US in northern America. Although, Indian hegemony has avoided war between India and Pakistan since 1971; however, war is likely when Pakistan perceives itself strong enough to challenge India militarily. With the situation in Kashmir being what it is, war is extremely tempting option for Pakistan and spurs Pakistan towards acquisition of modern weapons. Therefore, the region finds itself in a "Catch 22" situation where India does not have the capacity to achieve unchallenged hegemony and if it lowers its guard and allows the balance of power to tilt against itself, even a little, it is sure to be forced to fight a war to ensure its integrity.
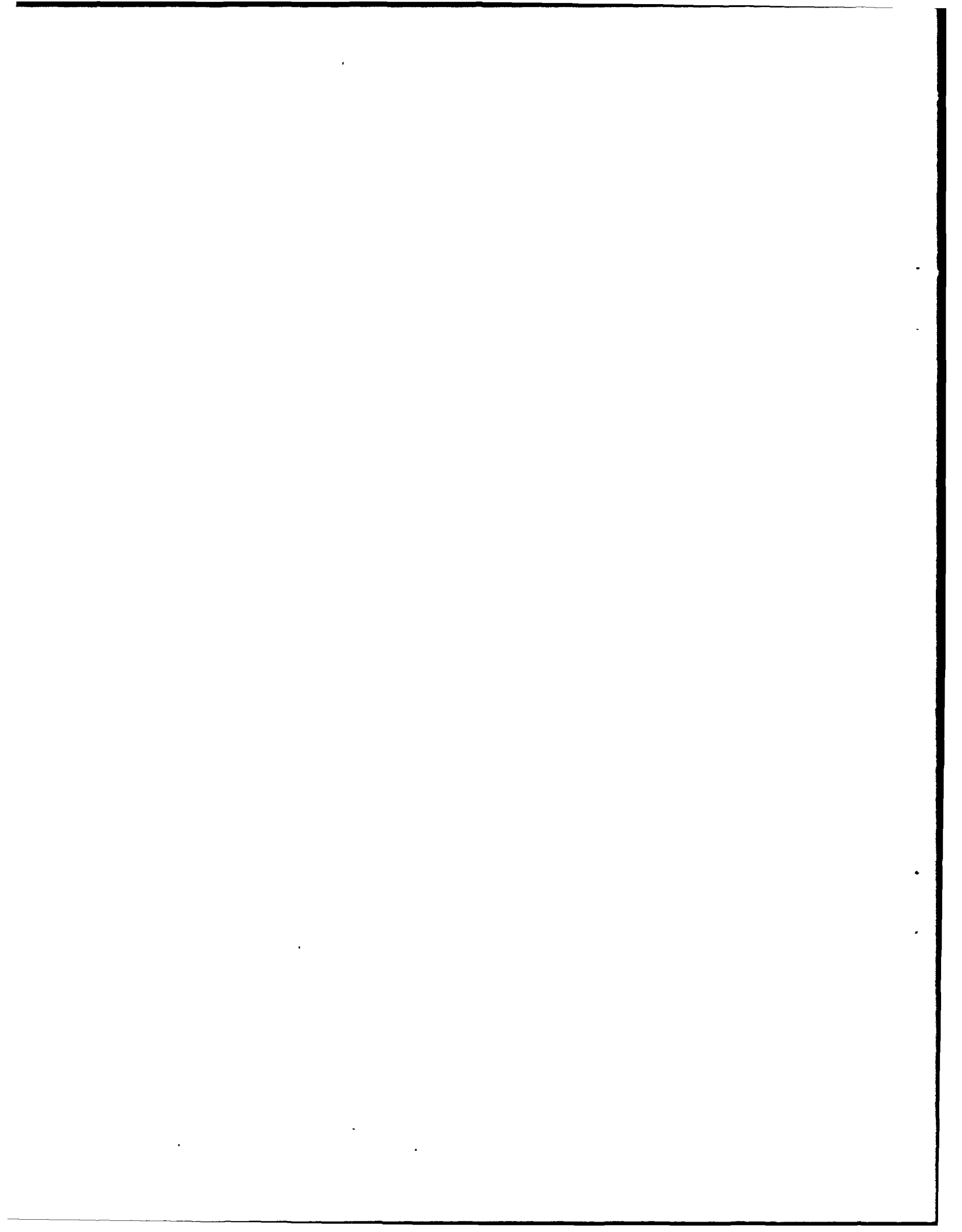
CHAPTER II

IN SEARCH OF STABILITY

The previous chapter identified that the destabilizing issues of the South Asia were very complex and generally affected more than one nation of the region. These complex issues are extremely difficult to resolve and some have outlived the life-span of the Cold War. The need for cooperation among the various nations of the region has been stressed by each of these nations, yet cooperation has rarely occurred.

Stability in South Asia is essential for the economic growth of the countries of the region. South Asian countries must curb defence expenditures and spend the money to support and improve the lot of poverty stricken people. The countries of the region must resolve their differences for rapid progress. A large number of sermons have been written on the above theme; but, how to achieve this stability? How to resolve the differences? Many leaders and an ever-increasing number of writers have answered this question with countless suggestions; resolve differences peacefully, resolve differences by bilateral talks, in the spirit of give and take, etc. Despite the rhetoric no progress is apparent.

Any number of ministerial level delegation talks and summit meetings, UN resolutions and even the wars between India and Pakistan have failed to get India and Pakistan closer to the solution of the 46 years old Kashmir problem. The on-going civil war between the Sri Lankan Tamils and the state has gone on for nearly a decade without solution. Since all the solutions advocated so far have failed to contribute towards the stability of the region, does it mean there is no answer to the this problem? Are the people of South Asia destined to be victimized by prejudices of religions generated and exploited by the politicians of their nations?

With the major political and economic changes, presently, occurring in the different parts of the world, South Asia needs to consider some bold initiatives, in its search for regional stability. This has assumed more importance as well as urgency in the back drop of the on-going anarchy in the former Republic of Yugoslavia. The political arrangements of the past half-century have failed to achieve regional stability. It is therefore, time to discard the existing political structures dividing the subcontinent and creating a new political set-up which meets the requirements for achieving stability. Keeping the above in view, an attempt has been made, in this study, to assess the potential effects of a United States type political system on the stability problems of the region when applied

to the subcontinent as a whole. It is the author's considered opinion that unification of South Asian countries into a single nation will enhance regional stability.

The above hypothesis would be validated in the event that it is established that there was a decrease in the chances of the outbreak of war and the number of secessionist movements active in South Asia, after its unification as a single unified nation. The merits of the proposal would be assessed using a strategy assessment model based on the criteria of "feasibility, suitability and acceptability."[45] If the analysis establishes that the unification is feasible geographically, politically, and religiously/ethnically, and that such a unification would contribute towards the stability and progress of the region, the proposal would be judged suitable.

As regards the acceptability criteria for the proposal there are many factors which would come into play both in favor of and against the proposed unification of South Asia. It is not intended to examine these factors here. In fact, the study of the acceptability of unification of so many nations would be a very complex issue and beyond the scope of this thesis. For the purpose of this study therefore, it is assumed that the proposed unification of the subcontinent into a single nation would be acceptable to all its member nations, provided it is feasible and suitable.

The Proposed Political Structure

This author is of the opinion that a democratic federal structure comprising various states similar to those of the USA with a certain amount of autonomy, within an overall federal structure for the entire region would be best suited for the stability of the region. The states would be composed on lines of the provinces, districts, and states as presently existing in the various South Asian countries, but not necessarily restricted to the existing ones. Some such as the larger Indian states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh etc could possibly be realigned to form more manageable smaller states. Similarly, some of the states like Indian Punjab, Haryana and Punjab province of Pakistan could be combined to form larger states. The plains portion of Bangladesh could be combined with Indian Bengal. The Chittagoan hill region of Bangladesh could be combined with Indian Mizoram. There could be a number of other realignments. This in itself is a topic for an extensive study and is not addressed in this paper.

The basic spirit of the constitution for the new unified South Asia would be to create a nation in which, as in the case of the USA, the citizens would be sovereign. The power of governing would be vested in the executive, legislature and the judiciary, not at the federal government level alone but also at district, city and village levels. The separate and the concurrent jurisdiction over various

subjects is a matter of detail to be worked out keeping the
spirit of the unification in view. People must be
absolutely free to pursue their ambitions including commerce
through- out the nation and the states must not restrict
such activity within and between them.

Finally, it must be emphasized that the scope of
this study is limited by the absence of any existing
literature on the subject of the unification of South Asia.
Therefore, the author is somewhat handicapped and must rely
on his own views and those valuable suggestions of the
thesis committee. Another, very important limitation has
been the lack of research time, due to which the author has
not been able to study the causes, complexities and
ramifications of both the unification and disintegration of
other nation states. For example Germany and Yugoslavia.
It is possible that there are certain relevant issues which
could have a bearing on the study of the unification of
South Asia.

CHAPTER III

FEASIBILITY OF UNIFICATION

Geography: Dictates for Unification

Cohen (1963) divides the world deductively into, first, geostrategic regions, and then geopolitical regions. His geostrategic regions are multi-featured in cultural and economic terms, but are single-featured in trade orientation and are also distinct arenas within which power can be projected. The geopolitical region is defined as a sub-division of the geostrategic:

> It expresses the unity of geographic features. Because it is derived directly from geographic regions, this unit can provide a framework for common political and economic actions. Contiguity of location and complementarity of resources are particularly distinguishing marks of the geopolitical region.

> The world is divided into five geostrategic regions— Europe and Africa; North America; South America; Eurasia comprising of former USSR and China; and Australia with New Zealand. South Asia is distinctive: Cohen classifies it as an independent geopolitical region, not within a strategic region. It is big enough to be a sub-continent in its own right, it has been and is guarded from the Eurasian power(s) by the massive wall of Himalayas, from the Middle East by the Hindu Kush mountains of the Northwest frontiers, and from Burma and Indo-China by lower but heavily forested jagged mountain ranges.[46]

Thus, an analysis of the geography of the South Asian subcontinent shows that where-as, there are no geographic features to form natural boundaries between different regions, within the subcontinent, the natural boundaries of the subcontinent are based on the massive

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Himalayas in the north and equally formidable Hindu Kush mountain ranges in the northwest. The examination of the international boundaries between the present seven countries of South Asia establishes that except for the boundaries of Sri Lanka and the Maldives, which are the island nations, none of the other international boundaries are based on any natural geographic features. As regards Sri Lanka and the Maldives, there are hundreds of other islands in the Indian Ocean, forming part of the mainland-countries of the region and there are no special geographic compulsions, different from other islands, which support the special nation-state status for these two islands. In fact, if being an island alone could be considered a strong enough reason for existence of a nation, the world would comprise of many thousands nations today. It is thus, seen that geographically there are no natural reasons for dividing South Asia into smaller countries. On the otherhand the natural boundaries of the region along the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush mountain ranges bound the South Asian region into a single geographic identity.

Natural geographic features do give support to the comparative permanency of inter-state boundaries. In the absence of such geographical barriers which tend to divide the countries, the inter-state boundaries shift very frequently. The figure at appendix A shows the frequency with which the boundaries between states have

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occurred/shifted in South Asia. And it also illustrates,
the fact that the northwestern, northern, and eastern
mountains have been the, comparatively, permanent frontiers
of the sub-continental.

Language: No National Boundaries

South Asia's linguistic geography is extremely
complex. There are two major language groups: the Indo-
Aryan group (derived from Sanskrit) of the North
dominates the Indus and Ganges valleys, and includes
Hindi, Punjabi, Pashtu, Baluchi, Urdu, Sindhi, Bihari,
and Bengali. This group also permeates the Thar desert
and the Deccan - Rajasthani, Gujrati, Marathi, Oriya.
'Sinhalese, spoken in Sri Lanka, also belongs to this
group.' The second group is the Dravidian group to the
south, comprising Malayalam, Kannada, Telgu, and Tamil.
In addition to these languages there are others, many
associated with small tribal groups. There are also
many scripts, and in addition, depending on the
distinction between dialect and language, somewhere
between 400 and 1000 others. In Pakistan there are four
major languages, and a fifth of significance. Even in
uniform Bangladesh there are distinct tribal languages
in the Chittagong Hill tracts.[47]

There is no nation in the South Asian sub-continent
which does not have atleast fifty percent of its languages
common with a neighboring nation of the sub-continent. On
the other hand the languages spoken by the people of South
Asia are not the same as those spoken by countries in
immediate neighborhood of the subcontinent with an exception
of Pashtu, spoken by people on both side of Afghan-Pakistan
border in North West Frontier. Language can be an important
unifying factor. Bangladesh and the Indian state of West
Bengal could happily be part of the same nation as both
sides not only speak but, also have Bengali, as their

official language. Similar is the case in many other regions such as the Punjab states of India and Pakistan, and the Tamil speaking Indian state of Tamilnadu and the northern and northeastern provinces of Sri Lanka.

Understanding the intricacies of the languages of South Asia combined with the areas where these are spoken, bring out the facts that the existing division of the sub-continent into various countries is unrealistic as it divides the people having common language, in many parts of the subcontinent. Also that, there are so many languages spoken in different parts of each of the present countries of the sub-continent that if we remove the present unrealistic boundaries between these nations, there would be no problems on account of different languages. In functioning as one single nation the people of all these countries are accustomed to people of different regions speaking different languages within their own countries. If a nation could have 16 different languages, then logically, their should be no problems for a few more languages and a few contiguous areas also, to be part of the same nation.

Religion; Common Ancestors

In order to prove that it is religiously, feasible for South Asia to exist as an unified nation, it is necessary to identify the characteristics and historic prospective of Hindus and the South Asian Muslims, as

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together, they comprise nearly 90% of the population of the Sub Continent.

South Asia is pre-eminently the land of the Hindus, a word derived originally from Indus, a river which originates in Tibet, passes through Ladakh region of India in northern areas for a few hundred miles, before entering into Pakistan controlled Kashmir and then flows in a southern direction through the complete length of Pakistan, before finally, entering the Arabian sea. Besides the Hindus, South Asia is also home to 350 million Muslims, a number that dwarfs the numbers associated with the Muslim's heartland of the Middle East. There are also many other major religions in South Asia: for example, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Christians.

> The Hindus are the descendants of the Aryans, nomadic people of Central Asia who invaded South Asia in the second millennium BC. Hinduism's philosophy of religion embraces the doctrine of the inequality of man who is a member of ritual hierarchy of caste. Doctrinally, there are four grades of castes, the Brahmins (the priest and pundit - guardian of knowledge), Kshatriyas, (or warriors), the Vaisyas (or merchants), the Sudras (or menials). Below them come groups of untouchable (now known as Harijans or Bahujans), and tribal, not normally embraced by Hinduism. The major groups are divided into 3000 sub-castes, and then into 90,000 endogamous marriage groups. Such groups have traditionally each had their own occupation, which in any one area are complementary. The untouchable carry out the most polluting jobs, such as cesspit cleaning, and laborers have always been Sudras of some type or other low caste groups. The Brahmins are the keepers of the *Vedas,* the sacred hymns of the Aryans, often recited by them in their role as priests at important life ceremonies. Though such texts exist, Hinduism is not dogmatic. It does not claim revealed truth and does not prescribe one God. There is only one force in the universe, and it is in everything,

but it has many faces hence there are many Gods. Different people worship different deities, many will worship different deities for different purposes. One of the few common threads is that all groups traditionally believe in reincarnation, and that one's obligation in this life is to carry out one's duty according to one's rank at birth. Reward comes in the next incarnation.[48]

The Muslim influence reached India through Arab traders in Sindh and in Bengal, and through the teachings of wandering Muslim saints or mystics, known as Sufis. However, Islam became a force literally, when the first of the successful Muslim invasions burst into India through the northwest in the 12th century. The Guhrids established in North India an empire, more correctly a confederacy, acknowledged by the Khalif of Baghdad as Sultanate of Delhi. Very rapidly after its establishment in India Islam was known to be precisely that - Islam in India, and not simply an extension of Islam in general. This was the beginning of 600 years of Muslim domination. As a religion, Islam was iconoclastic, and brought forcible conversion of some subjects. Many subjects voluntarily chose the new religion, and this was particularly true of the untouchable and low-caste people, perhaps attracted by the doctrine of the equality of man. But one of the central tenets of Hinduism is that one cannot renounce one's birth, hence many, especially the higher castes, resisted conversion. Muslims are concentrated in the Indus Valley, contiguous with the Middle East, and in East Bengal. These are roughly the areas of contemporary Pakistan and Bengladesh. In addition there are many Muslim populations, although not as concentrated, in many different parts of South Asia.[49]

Culture: Many Common Linkages

Religion and culture may overlap, but they cannot be seen as the same thing. In South Asia we have seen the complexity of social groups that Hinduism spawned. When some of these groups were converted to Islam, they did not abandon their origins overnight. Islam may prescribe the equality of man, but it does not command that people marry at random. Within Islam-in-India, therefore, the notional caste persists in significant ways and is usually defined by job and family rules. It even persists to the extent that persons who were once distillers, who by becoming Muslims are not allowed to drink, nevertheless continue to make and market alcohol. The caste system of Hinduism has been replaced by the

Bradri system within the Islam in South Asia. The network of families, each known as *Bradri*, is fundamental to all social and political life.[50]

On many occasions people, belonging to the Thar Desert region of Pakistan and India, illegally crossover the international border, and marry their boys and girls in their *Bradri*, not withstanding the strained relations between the two countries or the illegality of crossing over without proper travel documents. Besides the above *Bradri* system, the acceptance of Islam and the recitation of the Quran in Arabic does not deprive a man of his native tongue - so that a Bengali Muslim is first and foremost a Bengali, as shown by the separation of Bangladesh from Pakistan, and yet he is also a Muslim.

History: Unification- An Ancient Heritage

South Asia was first united by King Ashoka into an empire known as the Mauryan Empire in years 400 to 200 BC, thereafter, the Gupta Empire flourished on the subcontinent during the third and the fourth century A.D. Where as, these first two Empires were Hindu, the next two Empires were formed by the Muslim aristocracies which ruled over Hindu India. The third unification of South Asia was in the form of Sultanate of Delhi from the end of twelveth century to the middle of thirteenth century A.D. The Moghul Empire ruled over the united subcontinent in the 15th and the 16th century A.D. Finally, the British Empire united the subcontinent for nearly two hundred years before the

formation of the present day countries of India and Pakistan, in 1947. The unification of the subcontinent under different empires encompassed most areas, not necessarily all the areas of the subcontinent.

The unification or integration of a nation has to consider the various forces of integration - identitive, utilitarian, and coercive. Identitive bonds are those mutually recognized by the people as the symbols of their community, and are usually associated with the language, religion and culture. Utilitarian bonds are those of economic self-interest. The force of coercion is expensive, and fundamentally its premise is the use of force.

All empires on the subcontinent came into being because of the forces of coercion and all four Empires before the British Empire disintegrated due to the lack of the utilitarian forces of integration. The identitive forces based on religion, though not a cause of disintegration of the British Empire, were perceived to be the reason of partition of British India. There has been a considerable change in these forces of integration/ disintegration, in the context of modern day nation-state as compared to the ancient Empires in the history. An attempt is made to analyze these changes, in the later portion of this thesis.

Unification - Feasible

From the above discussion, one could deduce that the unified South Asian nation has existed for many centuries in the past. Geographically, the subcontinent is a compact land mass with its natural boundaries based on the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush ranges. Culturally the region is a kaleidoscope of many cultures which have coexisted for centuries, with a number of languages originated from common sources. Therefore, it may be concluded that the unification of South Asia into a single nation is feasible.

Not withstanding the above, to substantiate the feasibility of unification of South Asia, we need to analyze the recent history and the present day situation.

The subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan, in 1947, to resolve the problem of Hindu-Muslim antagonism within the united independent India. Hindu-Muslim antagonism had come into existence, more because of the political ambitions of two men Nehru and Jinnah, or more appropriately between INC and AIML, rather than because of the genuine differences based on the religion. After all, as noted above, the South Asian Muslims are really the descendants of the Hindus who converted to Islam, some eight hundred years ago and have many common threads of culture which help them to coexist with each other. However, instead of resolving the problem, the partition has become a rallying point for instability of South Asia, in the form of

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a perpetual antagonism between India and Pakistan. Even the conceiver of the "two nation theory" (that Hindus and Muslims of British India represented two different nations), Jinnah, would not have anticipated the amount of damage such a theory would cause to the region's progress. Jinnah was essentially a secular and political Muslim and not a religious Muslim. His basic argument for creation of Pakistan was secular and not religious: namely, if the majority Hindu population voted mainly for Hindu candidates and the minority Muslims voted for Muslim candidates, the Hindus would rule Muslims in a united India and such a rule would not be secular. Like the agnostic Nehru, Jinnah was hardly a practicing Muslim in his personal life. He married a non-Muslim, and was rarely seen in public prayer, a must for a devout Muslim. Jinnah's driving motivational force was to prevent Hindu majority rule in united India, and to gain power and prestige in his personal leadership rivalry with Nehru. After all, Jinnah was at one time the President of the INC. After Pakistan was created, all he called for were basically secular arrangements, where all religious communities could live as equals.[51] In fact, had Nehru been more considerate towards Jinnah, the partition might have been averted.

The history, since the creation of Pakistan, has proved that the "Two Nation Theory" of Jinnah was wrong. As per Jinnah the Hindus would have ruled the very strong

Muslim minority in the united India. However, the Hindus, even after best of efforts by the Bhartya Janta Party (BJP), the Hindu nationalist party, for over 45 years has failed to rule even the smaller minority of Muslims (120 million today) in India. Jinnah's Pakistan had taken away 65 million Muslims out of a total of 105 million Muslims of the British-India. One does not need great predictive power to understand that the Hindus could have never ruled the Muslims whose number today, would have risen to nearly 350 million, in the united India. On the contrary, the united India would have pushed the religion based politics away from the national scene forever as it would have been impossible for any religious political party to even think of winning a reasonable number of Assembly seats because of the division of votes between the two religions and endless number of castes and *Bradries*.

The *"Two Nation Theory"* also failed on many other accounts. If the Hindus and Muslims of British India were two different nations then all Muslims should have gone to Pakistan. Only about 6 million went to Pakistan and these, including their children born in Pakistan, are known as Muhajirs (refugees), even today and are discriminated against in their own nation.

The division of British India was wrong and demanded only by AIML. Many Muslim people like the Pathans of Northwest Province led by the "Frontier Gandhi", Khan Abdul

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Gaffar supported the INC, not the AIML. Many Muslims from the Hindu heart-land of Uttar Pradesh, led by popular secular leaders like Maulana Azad, were opposed to the creation of Pakistan. Further, in 1971, the inadequacy of religion alone, as a force of integration was proved when East Pakistan, being culturally different from the West Pakistan, seceded to become Bangladesh. As established earlier, except for religion, the people of Bangladesh and of Indian state of Bengal have a common culture and traditions. There are hundred thousands of people from Bangladesh who have, illegally, crossed over to India, over the years in pursuit of a better economic life. There are many similar situations occurring between the other neighboring countries in South Asia. For example, there are a large number of people belonging to Nepal, settled in the southern parts of Bhutan. Some of them have been forcibly expatriated by Bhutan, creating tensions between the two countries. Similarly, there are large number of Nepalese people settled in India. Again, there are thousands of Nepalese nationals serving in the Indian Armed Forces. There are a large number of Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka staying in Indian state of Tamilnadu. The state of Jammu and Kashmir with its unique culture stands divided under control of Pakistan and India. Many Sikh shrines are located in Pakistan, and are visited by Sikh pilgrims in strength every year.

To illustrate the influence of common cultural bonds between the people of India and Pakistan and between the Hindus and Muslims in India, following observations by some journalists in the very recent months, would be appropriate.

> [During October 1993] while talking to a journalist of US based weekly -India Abroad, who had gone to cover elections in Pakistan, a music store owner in Islamabad, pointing to his stock of hundreds of cassettes of Indian music and films, said, "People come in and blindly buy audio cassettes of Indian music. They don't even ask if it is good or bad. It's same with the Hindi movies."[52]

> Panaji- here Christ provides solace to Hindus and Catholics flock to temples in times of trial. That is Goa, the smallest state, where religious tolerance has become a way of life...."In northern Arambol, a Hindu family traditionally arranges the Muslim festival of Urns. Such tradition is believed common even at the few Muslim 'dargahs' at Priol Ponda and Cuncolim." "Prof Robert S. Newman, a Massachusetts researcher who has done work over many years in Goa, believes that India has long had a tradition of syncretic activity, the process by which two cultures or religious traditions mingle to become something new."[53]

The above examples are indicative of a reality which belies the more widely publicized international and inter-regional rivalry. On the basis of the above, alternate assertions it is possible to deduce that the people of the Indian subcontinent can easily live with each other. However, it is the political structures in the form of different countries which cannot live in peace with each other. The poor and illiterate people of Hindu and Muslim religions are some times exploited by the politicians as happened in India in the events which led to the destruction of *Babri Masjid*. Communal tensions do arise occasionally,

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more so just before the elections, when controversial politicians like to acquire easy votes by dividing the people on communal lines. However, the people of the region be they be Muslims or Hindus, are secular by nature and cannot be misled all the time as has been adequately demonstrated by the recent elections in India and Pakistan. In both the countries, the religious parties have been badly defeated. This reinforces, the earlier conclusion that even the exploitation of the poor and illiterate masses by politicians on religious lines will definitely reduce if not completely end, in the event of unification of the subcontinent into one single nation, thus increasing the feasibility of such an united nation.

Some could argue that South Asia could be further divided into smaller countries based on different languages, cultures and religions in various regions. After all such tendencies are apparent in many area of South Asian countries - Tamils in Sri Lanka, Sikhs, Assamese and Kashmiris in India; Baluchis and Sindh in Pakistan; Chittagon Hill Tribes in Bangladesh; Nepalese origin people in Bhutan etc. Superficially, such a possibility does appeal to certain people in South Asia as well as in the West. Such people cite examples of the former Yugoslavia, which has been in a state if turmoil for some time because of the ethno-religious wars. However, the answer to the

question of the possible disintegration of South Asia lies in the analysis of forces of integration/ disintegration.

As observed earlier, there have been and are even present today a number of secessionist movements, in different parts of the subcontinent. However, a thorough study of all these would show that to begin with none of these movements were led by forces of disintegration. In fact, all were movements headed by democratic forces with the purpose of improving the democratic functioning of their countries. Not able to realize their legitimate democratic aspirations, these movements were overtaken by the forces of disintegration. All that was demanded was a greater autonomy or readdressal of economic neglect. To begin with none demanded a separate homeland. Just to pick up some examples we could point out the Tamils in Sri Lanka and Kashmiris and Sikhs in India, the three groups who have spilt a lot of blood for the battles of secession from their present countries.

In chapter I, this thesis concluded that Kashmir is a story of economic neglect and political betrayal of the Kashmiris, exploited by Pakistan on the religious basis. Had the central government not dismissed the popularly elected state government of Kashmir in 1984 and had the state been economically integrated by infrastructure development, Kashmiris, known for their docile and peaceful nature, would not have demanded a separate nation. After

all, it was these same Kashmiris who captured Pakistani paratroopers in the 1965 war and handed them to the Indian Army.

The Sikhs of the Indian state of Punjab fought a bitter war of secession from 1982 to 1992. Unlike the Kashmiris, Sikhs are a very affluent people and represent India in many fields. In actuality, when the Sikh movement started in the late seventies, it was basically a movement for more autonomy in the management of its own state matters and gaining improved arrangements for the allocation of river waters for its agricultural community. The issue of water from various rivers arose as a result of the perception of local opposition Sikh political party, Akali Dal, which thought that their neighboring states were being given more water at the cost of their own state, Punjab. This could not have been so, had the distribution of water based n the existing legal practice, as in actuality almost 90% of Punjab's land was being irrigated by the water allotted to that state. However, the award of water was based on the decision of a "commission" appointed by the central government and therefore, perceived as illegal. The central government was considered too powerful and interfering in the state matters and becoming hinderance in the rapid progress of the state. However, the center being too powerful and unyielding, responded in terms of force of integration, described earlier as coercion. That is, it

used its security forces to quell the movement. After a couple of years the involved people realized that center would not listen to their demands if expressed peacefully. They took up arms to fight back the police excesses, only to find more security forces deployed by the government. Passions were aroused and the movement for more say in the management of its own affairs was converted into a movement for secession, of course, with the ever available help of Pakistan. Had the Indian government been considerate towards the concerns of the Sikhs, and handled the situation in a tactful manner, it is unlikely that they, would ever have demanded secession.

In the case of the Sri Lankan Tamils, a similar story exists. The Sinhala dominated successive governments promulgated such ordinances which deprived the Sri Lankan Tamils of equal opportunities and equal education facilities. As the list of Tamil grievances against Sinhala domination increased, political options were attempted. With the failure of political initiatives, the Tamils coalesced into a single national movement in 1976 and formed the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF). In 1977, it fought elections with the demand for secession and won 18 of the 24 seats it contested. This gave momentum to the secessionist movement. Had the Sri Lankan government not discriminated against the Tamil minority and even in later years had it given the Tamil dominated provinces some sort

of an autonomy, the movement for secession might not have emerged.

Why have these movements for secession not succeeded so far? The answer to this question is relevant to question of the possibilities of South Asia's further subdivision into smaller countries. As noted earlier, there are three forces of integration: identitive which when applied to a local group could also force disintegration, utilitarian, and coercion. An analysis of the changes in these forces, since the times of various historic empires in South Asia, reveals that there has been a quantum jump in the strength of the forces of integration in modern times. The only integrative force applied in establishing the empires in the history was that of coercion. Kings with stronger armies would integrate regions to establish empires and rule over them for hundreds of years. There were many differentiated local communities. There was no mass identitive integration and the empires relied on integration through fealty by subsidiary chief to the emperor. There was no, or very little, utilitarian integration, the technology did not allow it. These empires did not disintegrate due to the identitive force of disintegration, but due to lack of utilitarian forces of integration. Though the large areas could become incorporated by force, given that there were few utilitarian bonds that could develop because of inadequate transport, what was to prevent regional

aristocracies breaking away, once established? An aristocracy, once seated and landed, rapidly became more and more rooted in its own locale, seeing less and less interest in distant centers of taxation.[54]

Compared to the forces of integration in the days, of empires, today the utilitarian forces of integration are extremely strong and getting stronger daily. There are railways, airways and moterways in all areas of South Asia. People have economic interests, not only in their own areas or countries but also in the rest of the countries in the subcontinent. There are many people who work in different parts of the subcontinent, far away from their region of origin. Similarly, the forces of coercion at the disposal of the present day governments are many times stronger than those available to the rulers of the empires. As evident from the examples of Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, and Kashmir there is no way to win against the forces of coercion available to the present day governments of various nation-states. Lastly, the forces of identitive disintegration as compared to identitive integration seems to have grown stronger in the present days as compared to the empire days. The many secessionist movements occurring in different countries of South Asia, supports this assertion. However, as asserted earlier, all these secessionist movements are fueled by an inappropriate sharing of power between the central and state governments

of these countries. Given increased autonomy to the various states, the identitive forces of disintegration would give way to the identitive forces of integration at the national level. Thus, to conclude, with mighty forces of coercion available to the present day governments and ever increasing utilitarian forces of integration, the further Balkanisation of South Asia is extremely remote. However, the present political systems with extremely strong central governments capable of coercing the local state governments are a source of destabilization. Such political systems give impetus to localized forces of disintegration. The political structure with greater autonomy given to local governments would convert these very forces of disintegration into forces of integration. Therefore, it may be concluded that the unification of South Asia into a single nation is feasible and would result in a stronger and a stable nation, provided a certain amount of regional/state level autonomy is also granted.

CHAPTER IV

SUITABILITY OF UNIFICATION

Ever since the end of the British Empire, South Asia's stability has been adversely affected mainly due to the internal factors of the subcontinent. Everlasting dispute over Kashmir, between India and Pakistan, has ensured the continued instability of the region. Unable to obtain a tangible decision during the three previous conventional wars, a proxy war is presently, being fought between these two countries in Kashmir. Externally, this very rivalry between these two major countries, has often invited extra regional powers to intervene on their behalf. It was this rivalry which forced India to seek Soviet help for nearly three decades, to retain the diplomatic and military balance of power against Pakistan evenly balanced or perhaps tilted in its own favor. It is this rivalry which has compelled Pakistan to develop strong relations with China hoping to tie down Indian forces in the distant northeastern Sino-Indian frontiers, in the event of Indo-Pakistan armed conflict. In 1963, it was the same Indo-Pakistan rivalry which made Pakistan to cede to China, 4850 sq km of territory under dispute between India and Pakistan, along the Karakoram mountains. Unification of South Asia

would end this rivalry. This unification would also make
the present dependence on external forces meaningless, thus
promoting the stability of the region.

Unification and Internal Stability

Unification of South Asia, would dismantle the
bipolar and confrontational political structure in South
Asia, thus giving way to a durable internal peace and
stability in the region. Because of the complex composition
of South Asia with its people enjoying diverse religions,
languages and cultures in various parts of the country, a
strict centralization of government at the national level as
enjoyed by almost all the present countries of the region is
neither desirable nor practical. The experiences of the
last 45 years, demonstrate that such strict centralization
of power gives rise to many secessionist movements, having
many adverse effects on the stability of the region. Given
that a reasonable amount of autonomy, within the overall
federal structure of a unified nation, to the various
regions would fulfil the cultural, economic and political
aspirations of the people and curb the secessionist
movements. A unified South Asian federation would ensure
prosperity of the largest true democracy in the world. In
the new political structure, the central government would
not be able to unreasonably meddle with internal state
matters, thus giving a sense of involvement to the people

for their right to participate and determine how to look after their local community affairs.

The unification of South Asia would ensure a demographic compositions, based on religion, at more stable levels, where no fundamental political party of any religion could even dream of coming to power. The diversity of regional cultures would ensure that fundamental forces would not receive nation wide support and prevent the political exploitation of the poor and uneducated masses. There are many other countries in the world, where people of different religions races and in many cases, with no cultural or historical bonds, live together. For example, to quote from the Kansas City Star of March 3, 1994, on the issue of the bitterness of minorities towards the Whites in the US:

> Minorities harbor deep prejudices toward one another but are united in their bitter feelings towards white people, according to a nationwide poll released on Wednesday. When asked whether white people are "insensitive to other people and have a long history of bigotry and prejudice, 66 percent of all minorities surveyed agreed."

Compared to these people, because of the common heritage and similar appearance of the people of the South Asian countries, their problems would possibly be lesser. In any case, the futility of the division of South Asia has been amply demonstrated, in the form of India-Pakistan rivalry. Because of the demographic balance in the unified South Asia, the fundamental religious forces would not be capable of destabilizing the whole region.

In the unified nation local regional politics would
become decentralized at state level and national politics
centralized at the federal level. The diverse groups from
the different regions would ensure balance at the federal
level and the political parties with all South Asia
base/popularity, would only be returned to power. Due to
the inherent incapabilities of any one of the regional,
cultural or religious groups to dominate the entire national
scene, ruling political parties would, per force, have to be
secular and democratic in nature. Thus, there would not be
a Sinhalese Federal government where Tamils would be a
suppressed minority. It would be a Sinhala state in the
southern portion of the present Sri Lankan island and a
Tamil state in the northern part of the island -which may
even unite with the present Indian state of Tamilnadu.
Baluchis or Sindhis people of present provinces of
Baluchistan and Sindh would no longer feel dominated by the
Punjabis of the present Punjab state of Pakistan. As noted
earlier, in such a diverse nation of South Asia, such
domination would simply, not be possik .. In the unified
South Asia, the people of the present sta _e of Indian Punjab
would achieve their local political and economic aspirations
due to the greater autonomy at the state. They could,
possibly unite with the present Punjab Province of Pakistan,
to form a more prosperous state of Punjab. Similarly, the
Kashmiris presently divided, on both side of the "line of

control" between India and Pakistan would be able rejoin to reform their state and fulfil their political ambitions without the meddling of an manipulative central government.

With South Asian unification, most of the causes of strain between the present countries of South Asia would cease to exist. The problems of refugees/ migrations from - Bangladesh into the Indian states of Bengal, Assam and Tripura; Sri Lanka into the Indian state of Tamilnadu; and Nepal into India and Bhutan--would all cease to exist, as all these regions would be the different states of the same nation, where people would be free to live in whatever part of the country they chose. The problem of Muhajirs, the Muslim people who migrated from India at the time of creation of Pakistan, would be solved as there would be just one country and they could go back to their ancestral homes to live forever, if they so chose. There seems no ethnic problem on the subcontinent which would not be resolved or at least mitigated by the unification of South Asia.

No Hegemon Anymore

The unified South Asian nation would also put an end to the present problem of India trying to acquire the status of a hegemon among the other smaller South Asian countries. The problem of Indian hegemony is such that it can not be resolved easily under the present political division of South Asia. Presently, to end this problem, it requires, that either India become extremely strong compared to her

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neighbors, so that they start acknowledging India's hegemon status or some other state, most probably, Pakistan becoming equally strong as India. However, there is not even a remote possibility of either of the above occurring in a foreseeable future. Compared to its neighbors, India's elements of national power are much greater and it would be extremely difficult for Pakistan to acquire status equal to that of India.

On the other hand, despite her strong elements of national power, India is still ridden with too many problems to achieve an absolute hegemony in the region. In any case such an absolute hegemony may be impossible to achieve because of the international politics such as aid to Pakistan from the Islamic countries, China or the USA. In an unified South Asian nation, the people would be able to identify themselves with the nation, more intensely, due to its strength and size. There would not be any compulsions, like the present, for the smaller nations to gang up to counter the hegemonic tendencies of the big neighbor, India, as there would be just one unified nation, of which they and India would be parts of.

Since the departure of the British from South Asia, there have been military coups in some of South Asian countries. Such incidents too, have helped in keeping the South Asian subcontinent fairly unstable. This author is of the opinion that the nascent democracies, in under-developed

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countries with not very large areas, are more vulnerable to their own military forces over-throwing the democratically elected governments. On the contrary, despite so many internal problems larger developing countries like India are not vulnerable to such undemocr~' ' ~vents. This is because a country with very large areas and population, can not practically be controlled by force by the military authorities. Therefore, the people of a unified South Asian nation are likely to avoid the nightmares of military coups. An unified South Asian nation would have nearly 1.2 billion people and area bigger than the western Europe. Thus making it a nation, too big to be vulnerable to its own military forces. The unification would enhance the stability of the region. Any future conflicts between India and Pakistan could assume very dangerous dimensions, specially in view of the fact that both of these countries are believed to have stockpiles of nuclear weapons. The unification would ensure the removal of conflicts within the South Asian region, thus removing the dangers of a nuclear war on the subcontinent. The proposed unification would end the present arms race between the two main antagonists on the subcontinent, India and Pakistan.

Externally Less Vulnerable

Presently, India shares a 3840 km border with China (Tibet) along the Himalayas. China has six and a half army divisions deployed in Tibet along its borders with South

Asian countries namely India, Nepal and Bhutan. India has a
major part of its three Corps consisting of 11 Mountain
divisions deployed along the border with China. Due to the
underdeveloped lines of communications in Tibet, China would
need at least one full summer season to build up a major
offensive capability, against a potent force of 11 Mountain
Divisions. By the time it built for an offensive, it may
find the going impossible due to the onset of winter. China
whose foreign policy is presently, driven by its economic
interests and is focused on West and the Pacific rim, seems
to have realized that the Indian Army of today is an
entirely different proposition from the ill equipped and
small army, they routed in 1962. This is probably the main
reason for the Sino-Indian Peace Accord, signed in Beijing
in September 1993 during the Indian Prime Minister's visit
to China. The highlights of the accord are:

> Both sides agreed to abjure use of force by any
> means and to respect the line of control until the
> border issue is resolved through negotiation;

> Mutually agreed troop reductions to maintain
> bare minimum forces along the borders;

> China promises not to use the Pakistan card
> against India and India reassured China on the Tibet
> question.[55]

With the signing of this historic agreement, between
India and China, the sources of threat to the stability of
South Asia, from across the Himalayan border have been
minimized. China, has no religious or ethnic ties with
South Asia which it could exploit. As a matter of fact,

even if it could, China would not venture to fish for trouble in the united South Asia, because such an act could invite South Asian retaliation in the form of fermenting trouble in vulnerable Tibet

On the western side of the subcontinent, but for a brief period of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, there have never been a concern for a military threat. Iran being a Muslim nation of Shia Muslims with different languages and culture would not be able to exploit Islam-in-South Asia, comprised mainly of Sunni Muslims. In any case, with nearly 350 million Muslims, the unified South Asia would become the country having the largest Muslim population in the world, too large and too diverse to be exploited by external powers. On the other hand the secular Islam on the Indian subcontinent would be of great assistance to mellow the influence of Islamic fundamentalist forces, the world over. The unified South Asia would therefore, be much more stable being least vulnerable to external powers and having geographically secure borders.

Military Expenditure

The present South Asian countries spend large amounts of their budget funds, badly needed to develop their economies, for defence budgets. Presently, there are approximately 2.09 million men serving in the armed forces of various South Asian nations. Nearly 10 million are reservists and another approximately 2 million are serving

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in the paramilitary forces. The combined yearly defence expenditure of the present South Asian countries is approximately $15bn.[56] This amount of $15bn for a year seems petty, when compared with the US defence expenditure. However, it is actually an awesome amount of expenditure, when compared with the overall GDPs of these countries, which is approximately $350bn. Figures can be deceptive. On the face of it percentage wise (5% of the GDP) the defence expenditure of these countries is not very alarming compared to the US (4.7% of the GDP.) However, in actuality there is no simple way to compare the two. For example, in the US defence budget, the yearly expenditure under the heading of "personal" is approximately $77bn. In case the South Asian countries were to pay salaries to their soldiers, comparable to that of the US soldiers, the total expenditure under the heading of "personal" for these countries would amount to $85bn. This would amount to 24% of their combined GDP or percentage wise five times that of the US.

There are many other factors which, if considered, would reveal the alarming consequences of the expenditure on defence, by these countries. For example, the $350bn GDP of these countries must be seen in the light of approximately 1.2bn mostly poor and uneducated people who have to be supported as compared to the US GNP of $5700bn and population of only 252 million, almost a ducated and very

few poor people. It is therefore, not a simple phenomenon of looking at the figures and percentages. Suffice it to say that considering the very poor economies of the South Asian countries and urgent need to raise the living standards of millions of people living below the poverty line, the present amount of defence expenditure by these countries is a grave crime against humanity.

Requirement of Armed Forces

The armies of various South Asian countries comprise of 20 Corps HQs, 66 Armoured/ Infantry/ Mountain Infantry Divisions and 29 Independent Brigades. Out of this impressive tally, the only forces deployed/meant for the external South Asian borders are the three Corps Hqs and eleven divisions of India deployed against China and one Corps Hqs and two divisions of Pakistan for its western borders with Afghanistan and Iran (Though there is no threat from the west, this deployment is a legacy of the time of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.) This implies, that all other forces are meant for intra South Asian conflicts. Even if the proposed unified nation keeps strategic reserves, the equivalent of two Corps to cater for any threat and for internal security reasons, the total requirement of forces for the unified nation would not exceed six Corps Hqs and 19 Divisions. Therefore, the unification would render as many as five Field Army Hqs, 14 Corps Hqs, 47 Divisions and 29 Independent Brigades

missionless. Considering all the frontiers of the unified nation would be based on rugged mountainous terrain, the majority of the present 5500 tanks and other expensive mechanized equipment could be reduced drastically. A similar exercise for Air and Naval forces would also result in the lesser defence needs for the unified nation. The unification would also make the South Asian nation stronger than any of its present constituents because besides combining the resources, it would be less vulnerable to attack on multiple fronts. Such reduced armed forces would also impose much less of a burden on the scarce resources of the unified nation. Defence expenditure could easily be reduced from the present $15bn to $4bn per year.

Relations with the US

Unified South Asia would rightfully, have the best of relations with other democratic countries, particularly the US, the strongest democracy of the world. There is no reason to predict anything else, the relations would develop between these two democracies. As noted earlier, during the nineteen fifties, it was the US support for its friend Pakistan, which forced India to seek help from the Soviet Union. It has been the same US-Pakistan ties which have been coming in the way of improvement in the India- US relations. Even today, as the Clinton administration's efforts to sell 38 F-16s to Pakistan are causing concern to India. Unification of South Asia would make such

apprehensions meaningless as both present day India and Pakistan would form part of the same country. Unified South Asia with its strategic location, between China, the largest communist country in the world, and the oil rich Persian Gulf, would be of immense importance to the US national interests. Regionally powerful nation of South Asia with its proximity to the Indian Ocean, would be able to ensure the freedom of east-west shipping routes, important for the world commerce. Unified South Asia would also be beneficial to the economies of the US and other developed countries. With its middle class strength of nearly 360 million, the new nation would provide tremendous market for the goods from the developed countries. In fact, the US Under Secretary for International trade, Jeffrey Garten, asserted "the US is going to focus on the world's 10 big emerging markets for gains in the U.S. exports, and India was one of them."[57] Compared to India alone, a unified South Asia would definitely, throw open a much bigger market which would help the economies of the developed world as well as that of the united South Asia.

The national interests of the US and that of the unified South Asian nation are bound to coincide. The present causes of friction, such as human rights violations, Non Prolification Treaty (NPT) and Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), would all diminish. Since, the greater autonomy at state level and dismantling of bipolar

political structure in South Asia, would reduce secessionist tendencies, there would be no need to deploy security forces for coercion. This would automatically ensure reduction in the human rights violations in the region. As regards NPT and MTCR are concerned, with the dangers of a nuclear flash point, from within the subcontinent, having ended, the US would realize the potential of a big, stable and friendly democratic country, against nuclear capable communist giant, China. In any case, the US would not have to be concerned about the present potential for a nuclear war within South Asia between India and Pakistan.

Economic Benefits of Unification

Regional cooperation has been an objective of the foreign policies of many nations, especially since the 1970s. The 1980s saw the emergence of the Gulf Cooperative Council, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on the lines of highly progressive forum of European Community. All of these except SAARC have made tremendous progress in economic cooperation amongst their member countries. Due to the lack of results, there are a number of critics who question even the relevance of SAARC, given the number of differences and tensions affecting relations between member countries of the SAARC. Since its inception, nearly a decade ago, SAARC has shown little progress to justify its formation or existence. South Asia is home to

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nearly half of the world's poor, and in such a scenario a
united effort of the SAARC countries to secure a sustainable
share of the world trade could make a singular impact in
alleviating poverty. However, such a united effort has not
emerged so far. South Asia's share of global trade is too
small, generating only 0.8 percent of exports and 1.8 of
imports.[58] This lack of economic cooperation, despite the
fact that today, as indicated by the acceptance of GATT by
126 countries, the entire world is marching towards the
integration of economy at the global level. The lack of
SAARC's success is amply demonstrated by Nepal's figures of
earning perhead of $141 in 1989 as compared to the income
perhead of $180 in 1988. This drop in earnings was mainly
attributed to the disastrous economic effects of the trade
dispute with India. In Nepal the poorest live in the
western part of the country, and in particular in the hill
region. Their plight was made worst than ever in 1989 and
1990 by the trade dispute with India which virtually cut
western Nepal off from the outside world. Such a lack of
economic cooperation is a crime against the millions of poor
people of these countries, who are badly in need of economic
development. The lack of much needed economic cooperation
between the present South Asian countries is also amply
reflected in the tables of important trading partners of
some of these countries given at appendices B and C. From
the study of these tables it would be apparent that there is

a total lack of trade between the SAARC countries.
Unification of South Asia would remove all trade barriers
within the subcontinent and give a much needed boost to the
economy of the region. Such an unification would also
provide the economic strength to deal with, the frequently
recurring natural calamities in the different parts of the
subcontinent. For example, in the past, there have been
times when sudden floods have severely disrupted the economy
of small countries like Nepal and Bangladesh. In the case
of an unified nation, such localized calamities could
easily, be mitigated through the federal aid of a big
nation. Thus, the unification of these countries would
ensure economic stability of the region, which in turn would
help the over all stability of the region. Good
relationships with the US and other developed nations would
help the economy of unified South Asia tremendously as this
would bring in the latest technology and investments, which
in turn would develop economic and industrial
infrastructures, generating millions of jobs for the poor
people of the unified country.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION: "CHANGE" IS THE WORD

British India was inappropriately divided into India and Pakistan in 1947. The demand for the creation of Pakistan was not a grassroots one, and was mainly a result of political rivalry between Jinnah and Nehru. The division was unrealistic and incomplete, as it left forty million Muslims in India and formed Pakistan in the Muslim dominated areas in northwest and in the east Bengal region with sixty five million Muslims. The very fear of Hindus ruling over Muslims, in a united India, was misconceived. First, because the Hindu society composed of a very complex and diverse caste system which could never be united politically to come to power as purely Hindus. Second, Muslims in the British India were approximately 32% of the population, too strong a minority to be dominated by the majority. Today, the Muslim are nearly 34%, of the entire population of South Asia and the other minorit   are approximately 5%. In any case, there was no point   arving out a separate state of Pakistan as the Muslims in these regions were, as it was, in absolute majority and obviously could not have been ruled by the Hindu minority. The problem, if at all, was in the Muslim minority states which remained part of India even

after the partition. The division of British India along communal lines has created more instability in the region because it gave rise to permanent and competitive rival centers of powers, India and Pakistan. The division on religious grounds was incomplete as well as unrealistic. That is why, today there are more Muslims in India than there are in Pakistan. The unrealistic nature of the division was further demonstrated by the creation of Bangladesh in 1971.

The present political set up in South Asia, comprising seven countries has proved highly instable. Inter country rivalries has enabled extra-regional powers to support one country or the other. Also, the present political governments in these countries are too fixed and rigid to meet the legitimate political, cultural and economic desires of their people. As a result there are a number of secessionist movements occurring in these countries. The permanent Indo-Pakistan rivalry has adverse effects on the Hindu-Muslim population of the subcontinent. Unification of South Asian countries into a single nation comprising of a number of states, each with a certain amount of autonomy, seems the best solution to bring an enduring stability to the region. Such a unified nation is feasible as geographically the complete subcontinent is a single identity. Historically too, though the people of the subcontinent have diverse cultures they share a common

heritage. Religiously, the composition of the population in the unified South Asia would have better balance and ensure that only secular and democratic parties rose to power, as the fundamental religious parties would not be able to achieve an influential power base in the national parliament. The unification would also reduce the Hindu-Muslim tensions, as at present the Indo-Pakistan strained relations exploit the religious sentiments of these communities. The minority Muslims would grow from 11% in India to nearly 34% in the united South Asia, thus reducing their fears as a minority community.

The unification of South Asia is not only feasible but also desirable for achieving an endurable stability in South Asia. The unification would result in a decrease in secessionist movements in many parts of South Asia. With the end of intra-regional conflicts the region would experience a more durable stability. The unification would result in a strong nation with borders resting on the natural geographic features of the Himalayas in the north and the Hindu Kush mountains in the northwest. This would ensure downsizing of the defence forces from the exceedingly high levels at present to nearly one third and a significant reduction in the defence expenditure.

The basic premise of the idea of unification of South Asia is the conviction that the people of India and Pakistan, the two major countries with strained relations

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wish to live in peace, amity and good neighborliness. This
is so despite the differences in the national ideologies of
these two countries. This premise is amply endorsed not
only by many Indians but also by many well known Pakistanis
as illustrated by the Iqbal Khan in his article titled "The
Need to Transcend The Past" which appeared in the Pakistani
Daily, The Frontier Post of 28 December 1990. Two extracts
from this article are quoted below:

> At the official level, the two countries live in a
> permanent state of paranoia in relation to one another
> and every now and then this paranoia pushes them to the
> brink of war and occasionally to war itself. This
> paranoia is, however, largely the creation of the ruling
> establishments in both countries and of the propaganda
> and pressures of the reactionary sections of their
> populations which although powerful do not represent the
> two nations.

> On the contrary, as the successive governments in
> the two countries have failed again and again to improve
> the conditions of the people and solve the countries'
> problems, the people have increasingly grown suspicious
> of the official propaganda and the upper class (and
> caste) oriented political and military establishments.

> Hence the surprising fact that despite having been
> subjected to relentless anti-India or anti-Pakistan
> propaganda for forty five years the vast majority of
> people in the two countries bear little animosity
> towards each other. Indeed it is hardly any secret
> that in practically all classes of population in
> both countries, there is a hankering after closer
> cultural contact with each other and free movement
> of people across the borders.

In this author's opinion, the unification, would be
welcomed by the majority of the people of South Asia. They
would prefer replacement of seven centers of power, capable
of doing nothing but propaganda against each other, with a
single political structure representing the people of the

complete subcontinent in its march towards progress and stability.

Where as, the above views illustrate that the people to people bonds within the majority of the population on the subcontinent, there would also be many people, particularly those belonging to fundamentalist parties who may oppose proposals for unification. Reaction of the political leaders particularly those presently, in power in various South Asian countries may also be negative due to their vested interests. However, the topic of 'acceptability' of the unification of South Asian countries is not part of this thesis and requires a separate research. A research on the attitudes of the seven countries of South Asia, research on the attitudes of the ruling class of politicians of South Asia who may not be willing for a change. That "change" because of which they may loose their seats of power.

> In the twentieth century, war will be dead, the scaffold will be dead, hatred will be dead, frontier boundaries will be dead, dogmas will be dead; man will live. He will possess something higher than all these -a great country, the whole earth, and a great hope, the whole heaven.

> Thus wrote Victor Marie Hugo in the mid-nineteenth century. The twentieth century is drawing to a close, but for the developing part of the world at any rate, this dream is far from being realised. Never has war appeared more endemic, nor hatred more viciously alive; dogmas retain their parasitic grip on minds and despite the technological assault on the concept of inviolate, sovereign national boundaries, states vigorously resist considering them afresh. For the majority of countries in the South, military power and capability continues to constitute the most significant indicator of power and the primary bulwark against threats to security.

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Nevertheless, if there is a word which could
characterise the [need of the] era we live in, it is
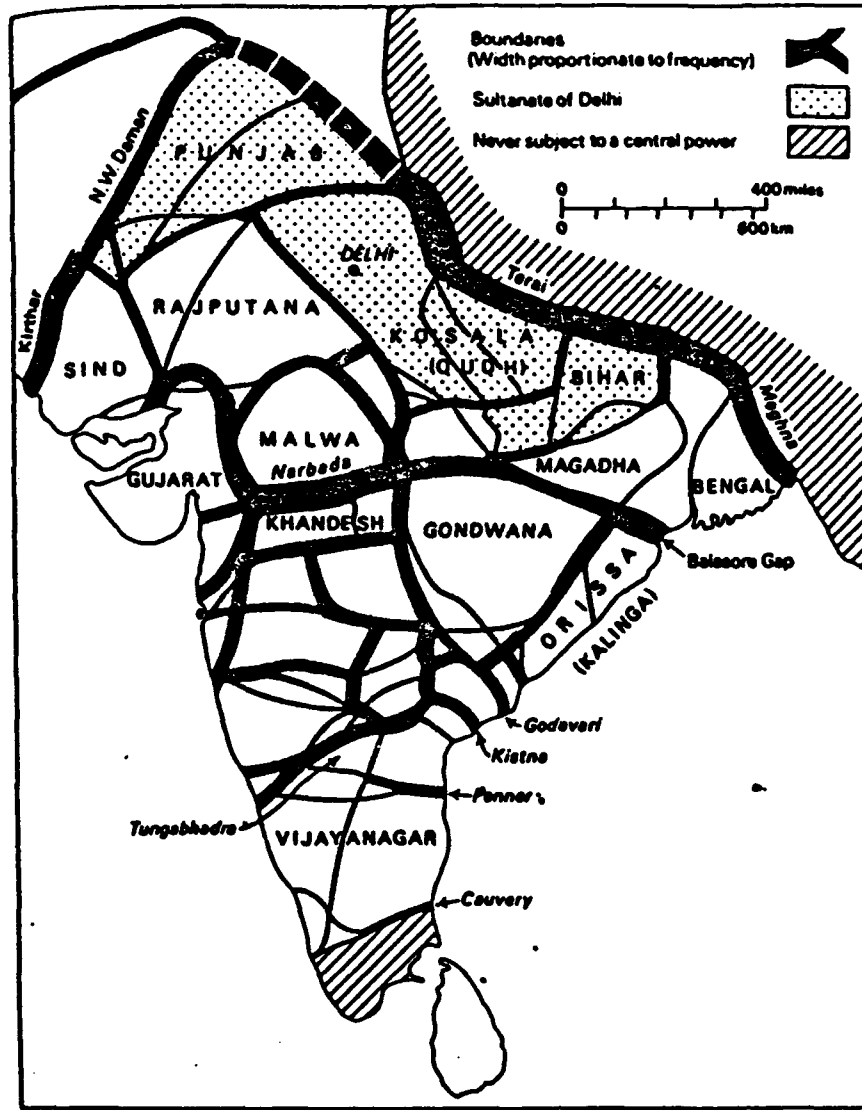"CHANGE".[59]

APPENDIX A

Figure: Relative frequency of boundaries in South Asiam from 300 BC to 1750 AD.

Source: Graham Chapman, "Religious vs regional determinism: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh as inheritors of empire," in <u>Shared Space: Divided Space</u>. ed. Michael Chisholm and David M. Smith, 1990.

APPENDIX B

India-Main Trading Partners, 1991/92

(% of total value)

Imports from:		Exports to:	
EC	29.2	EC	27.0
of which:		of which:	
Germany	8.0	Germany	7.0
Belgium	7.0	UK	6.4
UK	6.2	Eastern Europe	10.9
OPEC	19.7	of which:	
Non-OPEC LDCs	15.5	USSR	9.2
USA	10.3	Non-OPEC LCDs	16.4
Eastern Europe	5.1	USA	16.4
of which:		Japan	9.2
USSR	3.8	OPEC	8.7
Japan	7.1	Others	11.7
Others	13.1		

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit- 1993/94.[60]

APPENDIX C

Pakistan-Main Trading Partners, 1990/91

(% of total value)

Imports from:		Exports to:	
Japan	12.0	USA	11.4
USA	11.7	West Germany	9.2
West Germany	6.4	Japan	8.2
Saudi Arabia	6.5	UK	7.8
China	5.0	Italy	4.2
UK	4.6	France	4.1
Malaysia	3.7	Saudi Arabia	3.3
South Korea	2.5	UAE	3.2
Australia	1.6	South Korea	3.1
Kuwait	1.0	Hong Kong	0.4

Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit- 1991/92.[61]

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13. India has a democratic form of Government, with the President as head of the state. The Parliament, composed of two Houses, namely the Rajya Sabha or the council of states, and the Lok Sabha or the House of People, is the legislative body of the Government. The Prime Minister is the leader of the majority party and is the executive head of the Government. A similar system exists at the state level with a Governor and a Chief Minister. Where as the state Chief Minister is the leader of the majority party in the state assembly, the Governors are appointed by the President on the recommendations of the Prime Minister, who also has the powers to recommend a change of Governor before the expiry of his/her tenure. In this situation, the Governors although, supposedly neutral and above the party politics, do at times tend to toe the lines of the ruling party, by bringing down the duly elected state governments.

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15. Ibid., 58.

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21. Samina Yasmeen, _The China Factor in the Kashmir Issue_, in _Perspectives On Kashmir: The Roots of Conflict in South Asia_, (Colorado: Westview, 1992): 318-40.

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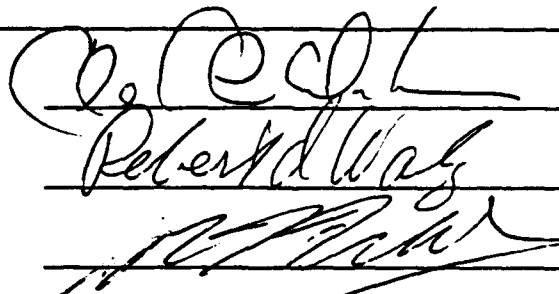
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