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Perspectives on India's National Security Challenges in South Asia

Nanda Kishor MS

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

— Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*.

The question of security is one of the most debated topics in International Relations (IR) and often people are accused for an obsession with it. The concept of security undoubtedly has continued to remain a State centric subject, though many scholars have observed that as traditional security. As the demarcation between traditional and non-traditional security seems to be fading, still the reference point for the concept of security continues to revolve around the State. Whether it is military oriented security, environmental security or food security, the decision making authority still continues to remain with the State. It is under this pretext that we assume that security is still a State centric approach and without the State the discussion on security would be incomplete in IR. An interesting paradigm often observed in the post-cold war era has been the broad definition of security and adaptability of IR scholars to the new multifaceted concept of security conceiving both traditional and non-traditional concepts of security

equally. It is also important to note that there is nothing called security of the Western World or the Third World, as far as security is concerned, security is common in all nations but it varies only in degrees.

Many a times, the word security is very difficult to explain as there is no single definition of it. This does not mean that it is vague, but it is certainly in-depth that many a time's people try amalgamating several notions to it. A question that often arises in the debates on security is whether defining what insecurity is the best way to explain security? One would hesitate to agree with this question but the reality would make us to ponder upon it and we eventually accept it so. It is this concept of insecurity that evokes what security is and often what it has to be. No country in the world would say that security is not important to them, rather would probably like to define it in a different way. The world in the twenty first century, though not prone to the type of wars the twentieth century witnessed, unfortunately is not free of fear and insecurity. It is this nature of insecurity that makes the states and the scholars working on security in International Relations to work and assess the nature of security in the world and in their respective States.

The tectonic geopolitical shifts after the Cold War era and post 9/11 have given new dimensions to the concept of security in the world. The States have become conscious of their sovereignty, existence and also their stature often being tested due to insecurity. India is no exception to this problem and with the change of political leadership in 2014 general elections the new government has been posed with many national security challenges by the South Asian neighbours. Though India's national security challenges encompass the South Asian region, Southern Asia, Indian Ocean region and beyond, this paper is limited to exploring India's national security challenges in South Asia. There are certain geopolitical characters associated with India which are of the colonial construct. The very idea of creating Pakistan, the first seed of geopolitical rivalry has pushed India to militarize itself heavily. It is also an issue which India has not come to terms with even today. Off late, India has learnt to live with these geopolitical realities though she is blamed on several occasions due to the geographical size and demographic diversity on which it has no control nor has the ability to alter. There are few questions which are essential to be considered in the discourse before debating Security Challenges in South Asia. What is the role of perception, power and politics in the South Asian region with regard to India? Are Indian priorities in conflict with other States of the region? Is India constructing a hyper national security sense within the region? Are India's apprehensions towards its security justified?

Each of these questions would form part of this paper, though they might not essentially be dealt in the mentioned order.

Perceptions have a direct bearing on discussing India's national security challenges in South Asia. The most interesting part of the nature of perception is the striking contrast in understanding of different states within South Asia on a similar action of India. As Madhavi Bhasin puts it, 'advice is viewed as interference; assistance is viewed as instigation; guidance is viewed as domination. The manner in which policies are projected and interpreted by the South Asian states clearly demonstrates a lack of understanding of the concepts of power, leadership, hegemony and formation of perceptions. Issues like relativity of power, perceptual biases, responsibilities of leadership and challenges to hegemonism need to be examined for a better understanding of the South Asian affairs.' This statement speaks against the popular notion of similarity in culture and connection through civilizational roots. Scholars have assessed that perception and threat go hand in hand. India has been a victim of misperceptions by its South Asian neighbours most of the time. There are several historical anecdotes to prove it but at the same time there are well founded fear perceptions on some occasions such as India going nuclear. It was one occasion that had escalated the threat perception of South Asia to a large extent as having a nuclear neighbour is certainly not normal. India termed it as a prerequisite for its national security by quite blatantly expressing its realist tendencies. A few years ago, Subrata Mitra argued that 'India's preponderant size relative to its neighbours which does not translate into overwhelming power over them is one of the main causes of the stalemate in South Asia. A quintessential successor state, India is keen to retain the status quo which its leaders understand in terms of its relative power and territorial boundaries that it was privy to prior to the end of colonial rule. India's neighbours (prominently China) contest this status quo, which they see as tainted by imperial rule.' What Mitra seems to have missed out or what would have made him to assess India as status quo power in South Asia would have been his limited imagination of India's rise over the years and not assessing a single party gaining power at the centre. Both these concepts were treated as distant dreams to India. The question of perception is central to understanding security challenges as Pakistan has a fixed perception of India as a hegemon and would try to unsettle India even at the cost of domestic unrest and getting branded as a safe haven for terrorists and violence. One striking example of change in perception leading to change in relationship is that of Bangladesh. Bangladesh started from the point of gratitude towards

India for help it received in its creation as a state, moved towards turbulence and a skewed view during the military regime, furthered the same sentiment and helped in building anti India elements during the Zia regime and, finally, it is back to the beginning sentiment of gratitude under Hasina's regime. The case of Sri Lanka also strengthens this argument. Under Rajiv Gandhi, a section of Sri Lankan population thought of India as an enemy supporting the Sinhalese government but simultaneously India was the home to thousands of Sri Lankan refugees without signing the 1951 convention. Though on several occasions India and Nepal are seen as the closest among South Asians due to the commonality of a particular religion, Nepal has always perceived India as a power that is interested in Nepal's domestic politics and has been resisting India in international forums. India was never seen capable of becoming part of development of a war torn Afghanistan till the war on terror took place and India played a positive role in building Afghanistan rather than just fight terror. Bhutan and Maldives have been a bit exceptional as India's relationship with them has been predominantly peaceful.

Power is one of the most central and yet problematic concepts in International Relations. Baldwin opines that 'from Niccolo Machiavelli and David Hume to E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau, power has been an important (some would say too important) variable in international political theorizing. Although some may regard power analysis as old-fashioned and outdated, recent refinements in social science thinking about power suggest the possibility of revitalizing this approach to understanding international relations'.¹ Robert Gilpin defines power as an actor's ability to impose his or her will despite resistance. There are other scholars who express that 'power always depends on the context in which the relationship exists.'² If these are general ways of terming what power is, the realist school of thought much more upfront and has been brutally honest in accepting what power is in International Relations. Morgenthau declared that 'international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power.' He further argued that 'whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim.'³ Echoing the same Carr argued that 'politics are, then, in one sense always power politics.'⁴ Carr argued that power was indivisible, yet he claimed that for purposes of discussion it could be divided into three categories: military power, economic power, and power over opinion. Taking this argument further and contextualizing would lead us to a predominantly accepted notion of power. India is successful in two aspects mentioned above, but it is still grappling with the third aspect of 'power over opinion.'⁵ Morgenthau's

assumption of man's inherent lust for power to describing the behaviour of states in the twenty first century may not give us the real picture of the present scenario in South Asia as geopolitical realities would not allow such use of power among states, but it is not far from realization in the domestic context of some countries in South Asia. The context of India's 'power' in the region is shaped by a mix of historical experiences, national priorities, regional compulsions and ingrained perceptions.⁵ It is a fact that India due to her size or because of her military might has not imposed any of her values on the neighbours. Though India has been attributed with the credentials of largest practicing democracy, till date there have been no instances of India pushing the democracy agenda with any of the countries, in general, and South Asian neighbours, in particular. This is a fine example of historical experiences coupled with regional compulsions. Whereas citing examples of being reluctant on water sharing, boundary disputes and securitizing human movement across the border have been her national priorities and partially due to her own ingrained perceptions. India's role in creating Bangladesh in 1971 is often cited by many scholars as an example of her willingness to take up challenges during necessity but one would hardly see such behaviour beyond an example or two. This also essentially draws ones attention to the founding principles of the state and core values. India's power is more often expressed by the neighbours than herself. It is the neighbours who talk about power of India with its military might, its ability to remain democratic in character, handle huge institutions and to a large extent maintain its diverse culture and character. This point only proves to us the relation between power and perception forming the bedrock for politics.

The notion of politics is extremely diverse in South Asia. Though, ideally, all the nations aspire to be democratic, quite often they have failed to be so. A few of them have just come out of the clutches of monarchy and have introduced themselves to the new institutions of democracy and are yet to consolidate. Three other countries started off with democracy as their aspiration but very soon fell in to the trap of military rule which was ultimately instrumental in changing their perception, power and politics. One country was even ruled by a party which is also often called as a violent non-state actor. The threat to democratic politics is generally emphasized by such regimes as they would seek help from non-state actors to sustain in power and later struggle to mend ties with them and finally become victims of their own policy. Detailed account of how politics is leading to the threat perception of India in the South Asian neighbourhood would be discussed. After gaining

a certain amount of ground on what perception, power and politics is, the inquiry would move further to take some empirical evidences to reiterate what these three concepts are to India in terms of its national security in South Asia.

The early part of the twenty first century started off with terrorist organizations making their mark in the world politics by attacking the United States of America. Soon, India also had to bear the brunt of it through an attack on its parliament. With India acquiring nuclear weapons and declaring herself as a full-fledged nuclear weapon state did not deter its adversaries the way it was anticipated. Rather, it led to asymmetric conflicts taking place at regular intervals as wars between nations have been largely ruled out. The use of terror to attain political objectives is essentially visible in every action so far and they seem to be growing transnational in character. If the state has intelligence, the terrorist organizations have counter intelligence. The use of technology has grown equally among terrorist organizations. India has been a victim of terrorism ever since its birth as a modern nation in different ways. Terrorism has been the most important security concern for India in the last 15 years. Time and again Prime Ministers of the country have been reiterating their stand at different forums. In fact, one can even say that India visualizes terrorism as the major hindrance in maintaining its sovereignty and social fabric. Terrorism in any form leads to tensions within India due to its multicultural character. Addressing the 68th UN General Assembly session at the United Nations headquarters in New York, the former Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, declared in UN that terrorism remains a grave threat to security and stability everywhere and extracts a heavy toll of innocent lives around the world. From Africa to Asia, we have seen several manifestations of this menace in the last few days alone. State-sponsored cross-border terrorism is of particular concern to India, also on account of the fact that the epicentre of terrorism in our region is located in our neighbourhood in Pakistan.¹⁶ He also reiterated and called for zero tolerance towards states sheltering, arming, training or financing terrorists. The present Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, very recently pointed out that 'every now and then Pakistan keeps disturbing India, creates nuisance, promotes terrorism and such incidents keep recurring. Terrorism has no boundaries. India has been troubled by it for the last 40 years. So many innocent people have died and what did those associated with terrorism gain and what have they given to the world. Terrorism has no values, no principles, no traditions and it has only one motive and that is enmity against humanity.'¹⁷ The rationale behind quoting the Prime

Minsters is to highlight the utmost importance they have been giving to end the menace of terrorism on Indian soil. Unfortunately, Pakistan uses it almost like a state policy. Pakistan sponsors terrorism for subversion, sabotage, destabilization and fragmentation of India in order to achieve its foreign policy or political objectives. This action includes providing logistics, training, weapons, camps and financial assistance to terrorist groups that amounts to almost a full protection to terrorist outfits and individuals. For many years Indian leaders even convinced themselves that terrorism is a law and order issue. Pakistan provides safe heavens on the basis of mutual interest. Pakistan categorically denies its soil being used by terrorist organizations but gets trapped in a contradiction when a leader of a terrorist organization listed as wanted by the United States gives a public speech from the country's capital. It is about time for the whole world to understand Pakistan's role in international terrorism and stand up against it. State sponsored terrorism is a form of war that cannot be countered by conventional war.⁸ Needless to say that Pakistan always invokes the Kashmir issue and reiterates its stance on the issue at regular intervals. It essentially believes that Kashmir should be part of Pakistan and not of India. In the verge of realizing this objective, it has cultivated and deployed numerous so-called Kashmiri *tanzems* (organizations) to pressure India to resolve the ongoing Kashmir dispute in Pakistan's favour.⁹ Pakistan's implacable hostility towards India and its unwillingness to rein in cross border terrorism has made India militarize Kashmir and protect herself. India wants Pakistan to realize the damage terrorism has done to its own society but Pakistan seems to ignore any such suggestions and continues with inflicting aggression on Indian soil in one or the other way.

Since the earliest years of the conflict, Pakistan has used Islamist militant groups to conduct a variety of low-intensity operations in India in an effort to coerce India to concede to Pakistan's territorial claims. The two most active groups in Indian-administered Kashmir are Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen.¹⁰ Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen both have the distinction of spewing venom at India on every occasion they get. The Pakistani military undertook operations against groups that conducted attacks within Pakistan such as TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan), but did not take action against other groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, which continued to operate, train, rally, propagandize and fundraise in Pakistan. Recently on 26 May LeT (Now called as Jamaat-ul Dawra) carried out an attack on the Indian Consulate in Herat, Afghanistan. The most problematic area of Pakistan's

involvement is its inability to understand India's efforts and help to Afghanistan. ¹¹ Though the security forces were successful in killing the terrorists, the problem will continue to haunt India as its footprints in Afghanistan are firm and it has the willingness to engage with Pakistan, partially for the welfare of the region and neighbourhood but also self interest of using Afghan soil to reach to Central Asia for its energy requirements. The enormity and brazen nature of Lashkar's November 2008 Mumbai terror attacks focused international attention on the group. The Mumbai attacks brought the LeT to global prominence among militant Islamist groups, with its capabilities, intentions, and international linkages attracting worldwide attention.

One important development in recent times and a big relief for India is the political regime of Sheik Hasina in Bangladesh. Though the problem of terrorism towards India is not completely rooted out from Bangladesh, still the magnitude of the problem has drastically come down. Harakat ul-Jihad-i-Islami/Bangladesh (HUJI-B) was formed in April 1992 by a group of former Bangladeshi Afghan veterans to establish Islamic rule in Bangladesh. According to the database of South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), 2010, by December 26, the government had arrested some 958 cadres and leaders of the Islami Chhatra Shibir (ICS), the student front of the JeI and the JeI in 2010. Along with these cadres the Security Forces also arrested 43 JMB and nine Harkatul-Jihad-al-Islami-Bangladesh (HuJI-B) militants. ¹² Though the Islamist extremists have not carried out any major strikes in the last few years, it will be not be right to say that they have been completely wiped out. One should keep in mind that the militant outfits like JMB and HuJI-B have the capacity to undertake major attacks since reports suggest that the JMB has gone for a major recruitment drive in the year 2010. Moreover, foreign funding for militant outfits has not been drastically checked and this continues to be a matter for worry. While dealing with the JMB militants, the Sheikh Hasina government should not forget the serial bomb blasts by the JMB and JMJB in August 2005. Similarly, HuJI-B continues to maintain close links with a number of Pakistani militant outfits determined to expand their base in the country. ¹³ On 2 October 2014, an improvised explosive device (IED) explosion killed two men, alleged to be terrorist conspirators in the process of handling the device, in the town of Burdwan in West Bengal, about 70 miles northwest of Kolkata. Subsequent investigations by the Indian and Bangladeshi governments alleged the involvement in the blast of an interstate terrorist network believed to have been run by Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen

Bangladesh (JMB). Police arrested two females and a male from the blast site who were found destroying evidence, and seized IED components and violent extremist literature. India is aware if this problem and continues to rate the menace of terrorism as the highest security threat in South Asia.

Apart from terrorism, there are threats emanating due to a variety of reasons for India in the South Asian region. The issue of water sharing, illegal migrants, support to Maoist movements, illicit human and drug trafficking, border disputes, environmental security are few among many security threats India faces.

The issue of water sharing has been taken to the level of war between India and Pakistan. There is growing feeling in Pakistan that while India is increasingly building dams on its western rivers, it is simultaneously engaged in activities aimed at stopping Pakistan, the lower riparian, from building storage dams on Pakistani rivers. The water dispute between India and Pakistan is serious not only because of water, but also due to the political rivalry between the two countries.¹⁴ Their rivalry has made things more complicated than they really are. Islamabad has been attempting to include water as a core issue and to internationalize this bilateral matter.¹⁵ One can even say that there might be a day when some of the Pakistani radicals may call for destroying some of the dams and other hydroelectric projects of India to vent out their frustration and inflict pain on India. Unfortunately, over the years the IWT, too, has failed to pacify the water conflict. Hindu right-wing groups in India call on [the government] to stop flow of water to Pakistan or flood it. In the meantime, Islamic radicals in Pakistan call for water jihad against India. Moreover, the water dispute between the two countries is embedded in their political relationship.¹⁶ There are other scholars within Pakistan who are of the opinion that the problem is not exactly due to India but due to the bad management of available water within Pakistan. Aziz Nayani, an independent consultant, advising businesses on South Asian social trends observed that Pakistan's water woes are exacerbated by other factors as well, including the government's erratic water management policies, poor infrastructure and wasteful farming practices. India was one of the first to respond when floods hit Pakistan and this gesture only reiterates that India is aware of the lower riparian status of Pakistan as India is also a victim of such situation being a middle riparian state. The security threat one can anticipate in the water issue is: what if Pakistan equates its land dispute with India and uses its sponsored terrorist groups to attack water installations?

The second important case in water dispute between India and Bangladesh is that of Teesta being the fourth major trans-boundary river in Bangladesh. According to the Bangladesh Water Development Board, the country is dependent on the Teesta for its pressure irrigation projects covering 750,000 hectares of land and has accordingly built a barrage (1st Phase) on the Teesta. Any water shortage in the Teesta very often disrupts irrigation in the vast tracts of land and undermines Bangladesh's agriculture. As a lower riparian under pressure from the fluctuating flows on the Teesta, Bangladesh is keen to reach a deal. Water sharing of Teesta River is one of the thorny issues between New Delhi and Dhaka. In this respect, a water sharing agreement was supposed to be inked in 2011, but due to the West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, it could not be implemented. Ms Banerjee's apprehensions in regards to Teesta are well-founded as the Northern region of West Bengal also faces major issue of water scarcity and it is the only source of water to agricultural crops. With the reduced flow it would further inhibit the prevailing hydro deficit situation of the northern region which may lead to domestic tensions and may create major problem for governance itself. The creation of an artificial canal at the Teesta (Gajoldoba) Barrage in Jalpaiguri to irrigate Northern Bengal was the only option left before the West Bengal Government. Bangladesh calls this as unilateral as its share of water has been reduced largely due to the Gajoldoba canal. Though one can locate larger politics associated in the issue by West Bengal government in keeping pressure on the Union government in India, one cannot completely ignore the problems faced by the north Bengal region. Some recent statements by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on her visit to Dhaka were positive with regard to finding amicable solution to the Teesta issue.¹⁷

It is also equally important to take note of the water crisis India is going through in recent years. As a middle riparian state even India is struggling to meet the expectation of the agriculture sector. The water demand projection is quite alarming and India is making efforts to manage it and failure to do so would lead to domestic unrest. The World Bank in its 1999 report indicates that the overall water demand will increase from 552 BCM (Billion Cubic Metres) to 1050 BCM by 2025, which will require the use of all available water resources in the country.¹⁸ According to The World Bank, India is the largest user of ground water in the world, after China. If something is not done soon, an estimated 114 million Indians will soon face desperate domestic, agricultural and industrial shortages.¹⁹ There are real pertinent issues which are directly linked to India's economic progress. Lack of water resources has

taken it towards facing food crisis and failing to act on water conservation and innovative methods would very soon make it a food importer. Government agencies say that by 2050 India must nearly double grain production, to over 450 million tons a year, to meet the demands of prosperity and population growth.²⁰ India being a middle riparian state faces tremendous pressure from the upper riparian states such as China. India's dependency on the rivers originating from the Tibetan plateau is a well-known fact and China is pursuing major inter-basin and inter-river water transfer projects in the region which has evoked a very negative response in India. As an alternative, the Indian policy makers came up with a plan to link major rivers of the country. The plan has not seen the light of the day as there are several issues between several states within India. Bangladesh needs to understand these dynamics India has been facing for a long time. Bangladesh, instead of being only emotional the need of the hour is being realistic in terms of India's problems. As India is developing better relationship with Bangladesh in recent times and giving adequate importance, there is hope that the issue would be resolved very soon like that of the land issue which got resolved recently during the Prime Minister's visit to Bangladesh in June 2015.

The issue of flow of illegal migrants into India from Bangladesh has been an irritant in the relationship between India and Bangladesh. It has been a burning issue in the North East of India, especially in Assam, and has serious socio-political implications. India's plans of constructing 4000 km border fence to seal India-Bangladesh international border is essentially to break the movement of the militants and curb infiltration. Apart from these issues, there is also a major problem of smuggling and circulation of fake currency notes, human trafficking, cattle trafficking and illegal arms. One can always understand the sentiments of the people from Bangladesh on more cooperative behaviour from India but it poses serious threat to India's national security. According to an affidavit submitted by the Ministry of Home Affairs in the Supreme Court in 2014, out of the 3326 km of fences along the India-Bangladesh border (including reconstruction of damaged fences) that has been sanctioned, construction of 2828 km has been completed and another 78.8 km will be completed by May 2016. Widespread illegal immigration into India's north-eastern states comes from Bangladesh and it has even lead to communal tensions in the state of Assam. The Supreme Court of India in the month of April 2015 observed that both the Centre and Assam government should stop 'dragging their feet' on the illegal migrants issue and rejected their affidavits on steps taken to check influx of illegal Bangladesh

nationals into the north-eastern states through the porous Indo-Bangla border. The issue of illegal migrants does not essentially come up for discussion in summits except the issue of stopping fake currency and human trafficking to India. India is generous enough to extend its help to Bangladesh but equally sensitive to the issue of illegal migrants as it directly affects its national security.

The porous border between India and Nepal has created problems that have adversely affected the relations between the two neighbouring countries. India faces major issue of smuggling, women trafficking, crime and easy transition for terrorists. A tight-knit network of informal traders is exploiting a vacuum of law enforcement in southern Nepal to generate significant operating capital for the Pakistani militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba.²¹ The arrest of Yasin Bhatkal, the brain behind the Indian Mujahedeen, has alerted the Indian government of the primacy of national security in the India-Nepal border. Often, the porous border between India-Nepal with the absence of an extradition treaty with has complicated the issue further. There are serious concerns on Nepal in India as it works as a source of drugs, counterfeit currency, and many a times used as a transition by the jihadi elements who perpetrate acts of terrorism. Reportedly, the Pakistan intelligence agency, the ISI is exploiting the vulnerability of the India-Nepal border to pump in fake currency, arms, drugs and terrorist elements into India. A stable Nepal with a government and constitution is of utmost importance for India as it poses a major threat to India's national security.

The geopolitical location of Afghanistan is very crucial to India for its economic growth and stability but at the same time it also poses serious security problems for India. President Ghani's interest in engaging Pakistan to provide political space for the Taliban in the existing framework has come as a big surprise to India and India would not want to see a extremist group like Taliban in power sharing or in any other capacity in the mainstream politics as it only aggravates its security concerns in Kashmir. Apart from this, India also has speculation of what would be the political condition of Afghanistan after the planned withdrawal of the United States. Even though India wants to play a very positive role in Afghanistan, Pakistan would virtually become uneasy and start inflicting India through asymmetric ways. A *Talibanized* Afghanistan is certainly not in the interest of India. India would rather want to engage with Afghanistan and realize its energy requirements by utilizing Afghan territory with cooperation. There are always possibilities of Pakistan influencing the radical elements in Afghanistan to fight against India and this is a grave national security issue for India.

In the present scenario, Sri Lanka seems to be in transition as the new regime of Maithripala Sirisena has taken the centre stage. The major concern in the post LTTTE era has been the rising influence of China in Sri Lanka and its adverse effects on India. There are scholarly works stating that going too close to China was the detrimental factor in the defeat of Rajapaksa. It is due to this particular factor, the new government seems to be guarded in embracing China compared to what it was in 2014. There are some real concerns of fishermen from Tamil Nadu but there is a hope that it would be solved in the course of time. Sri Lanka has shown signs of interest in better cooperation with India in recent times. The issue of Tamils in Sri Lanka is also an important factor for India, but it is sagacious for India not to interfere in the internal matter of Sri Lanka. The gravest security concern for India continues to be China's presence in Sri Lanka and India is certainly looking to balance it by going closer to Sri Lanka.

Bhutan and Maldives do not pose a major security threat to India but India would only wish that both of them grow in democratic path. Maldives is going through political instability and it has major issues to handle such as rising sea water level and safety of its citizens. Maldives also needs to check the radicalization of its society as not acting at the appropriate time would probably turn it into a grave situation and there would not be an option to return to normalcy.

Conclusion

It is certainly not an easy issue for India to govern herself in the geopolitical conditions of South Asia. The national security of India concerns need to be prioritized. The case of Land Border Agreement between Bangladesh and India can be taken as a good example of how to resolve issues of grave concern with bold decisions. What one never saw as a possibility could happen with the political will in a span of one year of the new government in office. This proves time and again that with the ability to influence the others positively and take the counterparts into confidence, most of the national security issues can be resolved. There would be certain irritants in every scheme of things like that of Pakistan, but the best way to deal with Pakistan is to ignore it and take the other South Asian neighbours into confidence. India seems to be also learning to treat countries with different size of geography, resources and political conditions equally with that of bigger nations or great powers. This in itself is a positive move in terms of addressing some of the core national

security problems. One would also be reminded that after finding relative or permanent solutions to external threats to national security, there is no guarantee that internal security issues would not haunt India. A fine balance of managing national security concerns considering both internal and external conditions would allow India to grow geopolitically, geo-economically and geo-strategically. Remembering Leon Megginsons quote that 'it is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change.' India needs to constantly remind herself and behave appropriately to take South Asia along with it in growth, peace and prosperity.

NOTES

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