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## RESEARCH REPORT

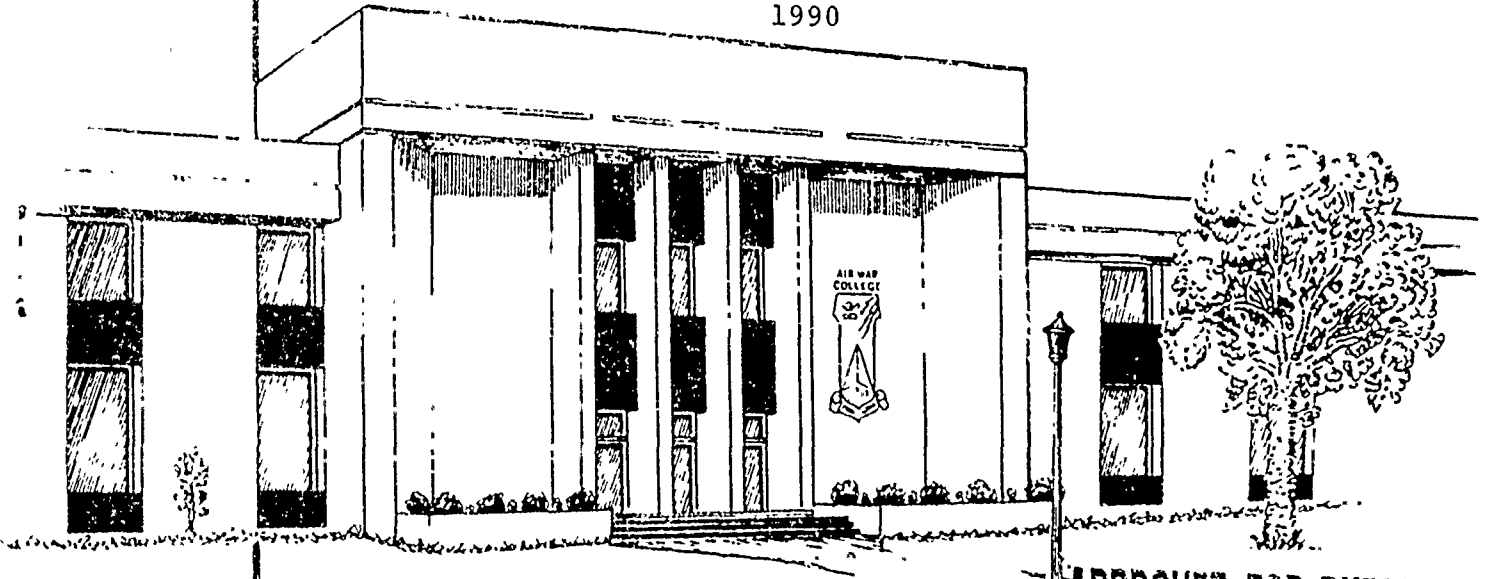
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INDIA'S MILITARY BUILDUP--IS IT JUSTIFIED BY  
SECURITY NEEDS IN THE COMING DECADES?

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1990



AIR UNIVERSITY  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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**INDIA'S MILITARY BUILDUP--IS IT JUSTIFIED BY  
SECURITY NEEDS IN THE COMING DECADES?**

by

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A DEFENSE ANALYTICAL STUDY SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN  
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM  
REQUIREMENT

Advisor: Colonel Douglas B. Cairns

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

April 1990

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: India's Military Buildup--Is it Justified by Security Needs in the Coming Decades? AUTHOR: Sunil K. Malik. Group Captain Indian Air Force.

→ India's military buildup, which has of late, attracted the attention of the world's elites is in keeping with her security implications in the coming decades. Since her independence in 1947, India's military potential has not been strong enough to deter her adversaries against dragging her into wars on several occasions. India is geographically a big country, surrounded by sea on all sides, and has a vast coastline and remote island territories to defend. India has a large population of varied religions and cultures. As India strives for unity in this diversity and struggles to grow economically stronger, she needs to be insulated from external pressures. Security is a prerequisite for development. If India aspires to achieve the eminence of the leading powers of the world, her military capabilities must be in consonant with her size and population, and her policies of nonalliance. Her economy, as it grows, will be more and more dependent upon the sea lanes and consequently India will be required to protect her maritime rights. Historically, India has never exerted any territorial influence across its borders, and in the future too, a stronger India can be relied upon to have but only a stabilizing influence in the region.

→ Keywords: India, Military force levels, Foreign Policy, Pakistan, China, United States, Australia, U.S.S.R, Nuclear weapons, Theses. (RWJ) \*

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

**But abstinence is forgiveness only when there is the power to punish, it is meaningless when it pretends to proceed from a helpless creature. A mouse hardly forgives a cat when it allows itself to be torn to pieces by her.**

**I am not pleading for India to practice non-violence because it is weak. I want her to practice non-violence being conscious of her strength and power.**

#### **Mahatma Gandhi**

Having created a fairly firm base in the first 30 years after independence, India has gone about consolidating its position in the decade just concluded. India today has the 12th largest industrial base in the world, the 4th largest standing army in the world, a self-sufficient food base for its approximate 800 million inhabitants, and a democratic system which has taken firm roots. In the consolidation process, India has also been engaged in a steady military buildup including the introduction of state-of-the-art weapon systems. The country manufactures frigates, gunboats, tanks, and a vast array of other defense products. It has also purchased some of the most modern fighter aircraft, tanks, combat vessels, and long-range heavy transport aircraft. India has also embarked upon an ambitious project to build its own light combat aircraft

(LCA). This fighter aircraft, which is drawing heavily upon technologies imported from the United States, is expected to roll out by 1995. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the defense expansion has been the Navy. The Indian Navy has doubled its fleet in the last decade. The Navy's expansion plan calls for a cruiser program and negotiations are on for construction of an aircraft carrier, which could well have nuclear propulsion. India already possesses two aircraft carriers which were purchased earlier from the United Kingdom. In 1987, India became the first country in the Third World to acquire a nuclear submarine. (2.20) Discussions are also on for the acquisition of three more nuclear powered submarines.

This dramatic military buildup has raised concerns among neighboring countries that India may well be tempted to use its increasing military prowess to assert influence in the region. (3) Even the Asian states of Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, and Indonesia have been vitally concerned by India's growing strength and expansion of its naval fleet. A tiny defense elite in Australia has also been fomenting concern; from their perspective, India's general approach to security relations with the outside world are both obscure and confusing. (4.22) In fact, in September 1988 India's defense buildup became the subject of an Australian Parliamentary inquiry and consequently the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke visited New Delhi in February 1989 as a confidence building measure. (5.12) A better understanding of Indian strategic



outlook followed this visit because of the opportunities it afforded to explain India's defense requirements, as well as capabilities.

Similar concerns are expressed in the United States where policymakers are divided on the proper response to India's arms buildup. Stephen P. Cohen, a leading US scholar on the South Asian region said:

A strong India could act as a regional stabilizer, and this would be in the US interest. But, an India that is a regional bully threatening China or Pakistan would not be in American interest. Until India makes its long-term intentions clear, the United States and other countries are likely to continue to prepare for either possibility. (6.24)

As India's military muscle has grown, so, it appears to the world, has grown its willingness to employ force in disputes with other nations. In July 1987, Sri Lanka permitted India to deploy forces in the northern and the eastern parts of the island to suppress Tamil separatists guerrillas. In November 1988, India sent troops to quell a coup attempt by mercenaries in the south Indian Ocean nation of the Maldives. These interventions had become the focus for debate among India's increasingly nervous neighbors in the region. Some view India as fast emerging as a regional superpower. Richard Armitage, former US Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs said:

It doesn't make sense for the United States not to have a congenial relationship with the largest democracy and the dominant military power in the subcontinent--and with a country that will clearly take its place on the world stage in the 21st

century... .

The Indian politicians, on the other hand, claim that their roles in Sri Lanka and Maldives were merely responses to calls from neighbors in difficulties. They disavow any desire to play the role of a regional policeman. The previous Defense Minister, Mr. K. C. Pant mentioned in an address delivered on 1 July 1989 at Massachusetts Institute of Technology that the role of India's Armed Forces is strictly defensive, it is to ensure that the turbulence in the countries around her does not spill onto her territory. (7.4.89)

My investigation to analyze the Indian military buildup has led me to a conclusion that it is justified in terms of her historical experiences and future security implications. It may be noted that the author, being an Indian military officer, has made cautious efforts to be objective in his research and has been sensitive to impartiality. Let us then go on to examine the past to see what security issues led India into an arms buildup process and evaluate the implications for future security. The views expressed in this thesis are purely personal and have no official sanction.

## CHAPTER II

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### Initial Security Issues

To obtain correct perspectives as to what led India into a perceived spectacular modernization program of its military forces during the 1980s, its growth has to be seen in the historical context. The force levels existing at the time of Indian independence, by themselves, were grossly inadequate. The substantive component in the form of British forces was withdrawn and the balance was split between India and Pakistan. India's defense problems were rapidly aggravated by Pakistan's aggression in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in 1948. In spite of meager and dissipated military forces, India was poised to drive the Pakistani forces out, but a cease-fire was accepted as an act of generosity meant to contribute to confidence-building between the two countries. This gesture failed to achieve its purpose. Despite India's pleas, during the mid-1950s, Pakistan joined the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and started receiving massive military aid from the USA under the Mutual Security Assistance Agreement. This in turn, created pressures on India to prepare adequately for defense and

the first phase of expansion was initiated. Although the pressures of this conflict created a need to expand its military forces, Indian policy objectives remained focused on the primary need of economic development and political consolidation of the state.

Having acquired independence after an arduous, albeit nonviolent struggle, the new Indian leadership underestimated the role of military power in international relations. With the result that the Indian military remained essentially ill-equipped and somewhat disorganized. At the same time, Indian leaders questioned the utility of Western-led military alliances to contain communism in the new states of Asia. India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, even announced officially that India would "keep itself free from the great power groups"<sup>(3, 182)</sup>--thus, prefiguring nonalignment. In the United States there was, however, a widespread acceptance of then Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' belief that nonalignment was "neutrality between right and wrong" and a sign of anti Americanism.<sup>(3, 182)</sup> Due to this perception, Pakistan got substantial military aid while India had to go begging. This, to the good fortune of India, applied only to military aid. In the late-1950s, India got substantial economic aid from the United States, mainly as a result of East-West competition in the Third World, which at that time was to be decided by a comparison of development performances of democratic India and communist China.<sup>(3, 182)</sup>

### 1962--A Watershed in Indian Security

The Chinese attack of 1962 caught India unprepared and ill-equipped to take on the onslaught of the massive Chinese forces. The aftermath of the war left India humiliated and poised for some fundamental changes in force levels, structures, and postures. When approached this time by Mr Nehru, America immediately responded to his plea for support planes, light equipment, and infantry weapons. Yet, Washington rejected a subsequent request for long-term defense support, including heavier arms and assistance in creating an arms industry. Ultimately, a projected aid requirement for billions of dollars was whittled down to only \$500 million worth of arms and equipment. All this was mainly as a result of Mr Nehru's policy of nonalignment. Mr Nehru also refused to support the US policy in Vietnam. At the same time, smaller and more dependent Pakistan was continuing to offer the United States some important immediate security benefits, such as permitting U-2 reconnaissance planes operations from Pakistan airfields for flights over Soviet territory. Thus, from the beginning Pakistan obtained better arms from the United States to build its forces. While at that time India had only one armored division, Pakistan managed to raise two armored divisions by 1965. Pakistan got substantial aid to buildup its air force as well, which included F-86 Sabre Jets and air defence radar systems.

## Second Kashmir War

The leaders of Pakistan possibly took advantage of the debacle of Indian military in 1962. Many Pakistani politicians argued that India was still militarily weak and as such, Pakistan could successfully defeat India. In a speech before the National Assembly, the then leader of opposition, Shah Azizur Rahman said on 13 July 1965,

India, as yet has not been able to complete its defense plan. . . . After five years, India might emerge as one of the Great Powers and get back some of our rights in Kashmir. (111100)

It has now been well publicized in Pakistan that "Operation Gibraltar" to liberate Kashmir was deliberately planned and executed by Pakistani leaders in 1965. (111107) Early realizations of the Pakistani strategy and the limitations of the Indian Armed Forces--as it became evident from the reverses Indian military suffered in the initial stages of the war--manifested themselves. The massive thrust, supported by the United States supplied M47/48 Patton Tanks, had the Pakistanis almost succeed in achieving their objectives. It was the Indian decision to extend the war into other areas of Punjab that weakened the intensity of the Pakistani offensive and safeguarded Indian security in Kashmir. (111100-107) What added to the magnitude of Pakistan's threat was the support it also received from China, Indonesia, and Iran. Indonesia supplied Pakistan with its stock of MiG-15s, MiG-19s, and MiG-21s. (12144) In addition, Indonesia offered to capture the Andaman and

Nicobar Islands, as according to them, 'the islands were situated between the then East Pakistan and Indonesia and did not belong to India.'

#### The Soviet Link

India was still looking for modernization of its military forces. It still lacked the funds to buy outright sophisticated material from the western countries, even if some were willing to sell them against US wishes. Opportunities finally arose by way of USSR. As early as 1956, the Soviet Union formally endorsed the principles of peaceful coexistence accepted by India and China. Its aim was to keep Asian states out of America's alliance system. (9) (10) Almost immediately, India began to woo the Soviet Union by refraining from public condemnation of Soviet policies. This included denunciation of the British, French, and Israelis during the Suez crisis in 1956 and abstention later on the UN resolution condemning Soviet intervention in Hungary. This approach had its own pitfalls, as the Americans, who had already been wary of India's policy of nonalignment, viewed these developments as positively unfriendly. A further drift took place in the American and Indian relations. Having been denied American military assistance, the smarting Indian politicians, perhaps, became over zealous in expressing dissent over some of the American policies in the world fora. Such rhetoric was viewed as vitriolic and only contributed in stiffening further the American attitudes towards India. On the other side, by the

late-1950s, the Soviet Union had put India in a special category in its foreign relations and also endorsed India's nonalignment as a "peace-loving" policy. With these doctrinal barriers down, the Soviet Union stressed the principle of equality in bilateral relations and started supporting India's aspirations to become a dominant power in the region.

Between 1955 and 1971, the Soviets not only provided credits for major projects in heavy industry and thus laid a foundation for Indian self-reliance, they also supplied about \$1.1 billion in military equipment. (10, 187) Thereafter, they became India's principal source of modern arms and helped New Delhi develop a defense industry capable of building highly sophisticated weapons, including jet fighters. Around the same time, Pakistan started receiving arms from western sources. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) recorded that immediately after the September war (1965), Pakistan received arms and ammunitions from Turkey, Iran, France, and West Germany. (12, 422)

Among the US equipment supplied to Pakistan from Europe was the widely known 90 F-86s Sabre fighters from West Germany, sent through Iran, even though during the war the United States had placed arms embargoes on both the nations. (14, 100) During this period, China also transferred massive arms to Pakistan, which included T-59 tanks and MiG-19 fighters. (14, 100)

#### Bangladesh War

In the late-1960s, Pakistan started to establish a



Washington-Islamabad-Peking axis. It was their confidence in this relationship that led the Pakistani leadership to launch a genocide of Bengali Muslims in the then East Pakistan. This resulted in an exodus of refugees into India which, after some time, became an economic burden. In spite of Indian efforts for a negotiated settlement, the Pakistanis kept forestalling the issue. (6.159) The crisis soon exacerbated and resulted in another war between India and Pakistan in December 1971. During this war, Indian security was further compounded by the strategic consequences of the Sino-American normalization of relations heralded by the visit of Henry Kissinger. From Kissinger's account in his book, The White House Years, one is led to believe that during this war, he had encouraged China to move militarily against India and had reassured Huang Hua, the then Chinese representative to the United Nations, that if the Soviet Union were to act against China as a consequence of its move against India, the United States would not be indifferent. (12.307-310) On the Indian side, embracing the Soviets was viewed as a necessity to help forestall the possibility of a two-front war with Pakistan and China during the Bangladesh War. Thus, New Delhi signed the Twenty Years Treaty of Friendship with Moscow in August 1971. (16.62)

#### Arms build-Up of the 1980s

Soviet military aid to India has been largely influenced by its own geopolitical and strategic stakes and interests in the Indian subcontinent. Superpower rivalry remained

responsible in the 1970s and 1980s for their far increasing military and strategic role in the subcontinent. Thus, as the United States backed up Pakistan militarily, it became virtually obligatory on the part of the Soviet Union to provide military aid and equipment to India. The quantity and quality of such assistance has depended on the nature of the governments and leadership in India and Pakistan. When the Carter administration approved \$1.6 billion in military aid to Pakistan in 1980, and at the same time showed reluctance to meet India's requirements for modernization under the then Janata Government, India resumed negotiations with the Soviet Union. Of particular concern was the US decision to sell F-16 aircraft to Pakistan. Mrs Gandhi, on returning to power, clinched a then record arms deal with the Soviet Union which was pegged at \$1.5 billion, its real market-rate value probably higher. The agreement provided India with some of the USSR's most advanced weapons, including MiG-23 fighters.

The arms buildup of the 1980s was also due more to the removal of several constraints. Before the 1980s, India's hard currency holdings were low, preventing it from purchasing arms from the West. The Indian Air Force, for example, had expressed an interest in the Jaguar aircraft as early as 1968, but negotiations fell through because of shortage of hard currency. Similarly, efforts in the early 1970s to buy the Sea Harrier were halted. However, in the late 1970s, foreign currency holdings began to rise substantially due to influx of foreign

investments from the Persian Gulf states. The Reagan administration's commitment of an aid package of \$3.2 billion for a period of 6 years to Pakistan also gave stimulus to an arms race. (7-103) America's military aid and supply of sophisticated armament to Pakistan, under the pretext of dealing with the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan, heightened India's security concerns. Meanwhile, in the 1970s the Soviets had started to constrict the flow of weapons and spare parts to India because of India's unwillingness to grant any concessions asked for by the Brezhnev Government. This included a naval base at Visakhapatnam and endorsement of Brezhnev's Asian Collective Security Plan. The Asian Collective Security Plan, first mooted by the Soviets in June 1969, entailed a vague proposal for a friendship treaty among the Asian states. It called for noninterference in each other's internal affairs and was an implied security pact with the Soviets. It is important to note that the Indian leaders viewed this proposal as directed against the United States and China and did not offer it any support.

Access to hard currency allowed India to cut deals with the western countries, the first being Jaguar aircraft, followed by the Sea Harrier, a second aircraft carrier, and submarines from West Germany. A deal with France for the Mirage 2000, as a counter to the new Pakistani F-16s, was also signed. The Soviet Union viewed these purchases from the West with concern, fearing a reduction in influence. Thus, by 1979, they made some

tempting offers in efforts to retain the Indian market. In the early and mid-1980s, they offered virtually every conventional weapon system available. This resulted in India purchasing MiG-29s, Kilo-class submarines, T-72 tanks, and the maritime reconnaissance Bear aircraft. India's improved foreign exchange position and firmer economic base, also allowed it to diversify sources for its purchases and to build an indigenous arms industry. Despite all these attempts at diversification, the majority of Indian military equipment is still of Soviet origin. Missiles are yet another area in which the Indian arms industry had some successes in the 1980s. In 1986 it tested a 250 km surface-to-surface missile. A short-range surface-to-air missile, a medium-range air-to-surface missile, and an antitank missile are under development. Test firing of an intermediate-range missile was also successfully done in April 1989.

#### Evaluation

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to highlight some of the post-independence events and the security issues which led to the arms buildup in the 1980s. Explanations have also been offered to the extent, source, and the thrust of the arms buildup. The key issues have been that, just since independence, India has been involved in the international use of force in defense of her own interests on five occasions. Earlier, India had been perpetually lagging in her modernization programs, mainly due to closed windows of opportunities and lack

of finances to purchase equipment in the Western World. Windows of opportunities opened for her in the 1980s, as a result she was able to update most of her antiquated equipment. This has attracted the attention of much of the world, mainly the other countries of the region, as to her further intentions. An attempt will now be made to study the effects of this acquired status before analyzing the future of India's security environment in the coming decades.

## CHAPTER III

### POWER PROJECTION

#### India's Defense Posture

India has strived to avoid presenting itself as a nation that would use military force. The views of the Indian leaders have been based on two assumptions. First, that the nation needed a strong military capability to guard against the external threats, and second, that the country's military posture was essentially defensive. Let us now analyze the intent of the Indian leaders, which has also been equally in the focus of the world fora.

All along, the Indian government has relied on the sheer size and potential power of the country to get its neighbors to behave in a particular way. However, after Rajiv Gandhi came to power in 1984 and General Krishnasami Sundarji was appointed Chief of the Army Staff, a seemingly major change came about concerning the use of military force. In retrospect, some of the Indian media has observed that, with much of the military machine already in place, the general was inclined towards using India's military strength to achieve political goals. In 1987, India came close to a war with Pakistan; it sent troops to Sri

Lanka and then, in 1988, to the Maldives. These are the issues which appeared in most of the leading news media of the world. (3.12.88, 8.12.88, 10.12.88)

The concern that India and Pakistan were close to a war in 1987, came about as a result of tension along the borders which was precipitated during routine preparations and forward deployments for a triennial Indian military exercise. During that time, Pakistan also mobilized its Army formations, postulating that India was preparing for war. However, since neither had any intention of going to war, the situation was averted from deteriorating further. That episode, in fact, highlights that mistrust among both the nations continues and will do so until the fate of Kashmir is settled, one way or another.

#### Sri Lanka and Maldives

The question of Indian involvement in Sri Lanka is a vast chapter in its own right. The island of Sri Lanka has a large population of ethnic Tamils, a group who migrated to that country centuries ago from the southern parts of India. Expressing extreme dissatisfaction and claiming discrimination, they rose against the government and engaged in ethnic clashes, demanding a separate state. The clashes took place mainly with the Buddhist Sinhalese group constituting 70 percent of the population. Despite the potential for dissent from among its own Tamil population in the South, India agreed to assist the efforts of the Sri Lankan Government to contain the Tamil

separatist movement on the island. The island was locked in an intractable civil war for almost four years until July 1987, when the India-Sri Lanka peace accord was signed. Under the terms of the accord, India was given responsibility for maintaining peace on the island and an Indian peacekeeping force of 50,000 men was dispatched to Sri Lanka. The main Tamil guerilla group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), refused to abide by the cease-fire and started attacking the Sri Lankan Army. Since then, India has been caught in a political, as well as virtual, cross-fire.

Though very much more prolonged than initially expected, India was able to keep peace to enable the holding of provincial elections in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka, the security of autonomy and the devolution of powers of the Tamil minority, and holding of presidential elections in spite of threats from LTTE and JVP (a local Sinhalese political group). It was subsequently because of political bungling that withdrawal of Indian troops became an embarrassing issue between the new Sri Lankan president, Mr Premadasa, and the Indian Government. The cost to India, in money and manpower, for this assistance has been far greater than expected. Finally, after a substantial achievement of her objectives, India has recognized the pitfalls of the intervention and has already withdrawn its forces. (20.8\*) A major objective was achieved in that India was able to prevent any external power from exerting influence in its own backyard.



Then on 3 November 1988, India was again committed to intervene militarily. This time in the Maldives, just off the southwest coast of India. Within hours of an attempted coup in Maldives, Mr Gandhi, on a request from the president of the Maldive Government, Mr Gayoom, despatched 1,200 Indian troops to Male, the capital. In a brief military action, the Indians quickly overcame the mercenary forces behind the coup attempt and restored the country to its elected president. The Maldive operation signaled India's ability to deploy forces outside its borders within hours. President Ronald Reagan congratulated New Delhi for a "valuable contribution to regional stability, both for its actions at Sri Lanka and Maldives."

#### Evaluation

These shows of force have had mixed results. The Indian leadership has learned that there could be serious consequences from its efforts to stabilize internal matters in its neighboring countries. While, on request, it may be easy to send troops into another country, keeping dissident populations under control was far more difficult than anticipated. Nevertheless, as events have shown, India went in to help on the request of the elected governments and not for any hegemonic designs. It is also clear that Indian leadership has emphasized diplomatic contact with its neighbors as amply exhibited by Rajiv Gandhi. He visited China in 1989, a meaningful step toward normalization of relations with that country, and he also

met with Pakistan's new Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, and initiated useful talks. India's military power, however, remains in place and we will now look at India's future security issues in the coming decades and analyze the role of its military as it fits in the scheme of the involved issues.

## CHAPTER IV

### FUTURE--INDIA'S SECURITY ENVIRONMENT IN THE COMING DECADES

National security has been defined as the preservation of the country's territorial integrity and sovereignty and the ability to pursue its development process without external intervention and pressures. As Walter Lippmann puts it,

A nation has security when it does not have to sacrifice its legitimate interests to avoid war and is able, if challenged, to maintain them by war. (23, 18)

Total security has rarely been possible even for most powerful nations. Achieving security with minimum expenditures on the Armed Forces, the basic dilemma of defense policy, has never had a simple solution. Every contingency cannot be provided for, and strategy, like politics, is too often a choice between various incomplete alternatives. The security problems of India continue to arise out of various factors with both external and internal complicities and each complementing the other. Let us now analyze these threat perceptions separately, with the internal issues first as they have external complicities and are a hindrance to the Indian developmental process.

#### Internal Security Issues

India is now a little over 43-years-old and in these

years has gone through some traumatic experiences and has had some laudatory achievements to its credit in the process of nation-state building. India's major accomplishment has been that some 800 million people composed of different religions, nationalities, and racial and cultural backgrounds have worked together to maintain the world's largest and most complex democratic structure. The strains that India frequently exhibits with respect to many unresolved internal problems reflect the enormity of the task rather than innate intolerance. Indians are proud that virtually every major religion in the world enjoys indigenous standing and reception in India. Like democracy, the idea of secularism has been a product of long Indian history and traditions, and quite simply, no other notion can make India work. (24, 110) But within this diversity lie the seeds of sectarian, insurgent, and secessionist movements. While striving in the process of nation building, at the political level, India is threatened by deeply rooted racial, tribal, religious, and caste differences. Militant Sikhs have been fighting for a separate state in Punjab since 1983, claiming discrimination by India's Hindu majority. Indiscriminate acts of arson and killing are also common in the northeastern corner of India where separatists are demanding pieces of West Bengal, Assam, Mizoram, and Nagaland. In Kashmir, India's only Moslem-majority state, young Kashmiris have been rioting in the capital city of Srinagar against the central government. (25, 18) Unfortunately, as India grapples

with these issues, the problems are further aggravated and fueled by external complicities. The internal situation in the Indian territory on and near the Indo-Burmese border has been marked by open rebellion against the Indian authority by the Nagas and the Mizos for more than two decades. Since 1963, Beijing has been eagerly providing both ideological guidance and military assistance to the rebels. (1963, 53) Similarly, Indian leaders claim that they have concrete proof that Pakistan has been training and arming the Sikh extremist groups and providing free access and sanctuary to the infiltrators in Kashmir.

Superimposed on this turbulence within the country are the problems of immediate neighbors who are even worse off than India in regard to national consolidation and integration of their societies. There exists a basic dissonance between India and its neighbors in regard to paths adopted for nation-state building. India's neighbors are not secular, most of them are not even democratic, nor do they allow linguistic autonomy. The Indian population, however, shares languages, religions, cultures, and ethnicities with the populations of the neighboring countries--a large number are even related by blood ties. India is not a closed society as some of its neighbors are. This situation has led to stresses and strains between India and its neighbors. Very often these neighbors seek to counterbalance India through their linkages with extra regional powers. In this way, apart from direct military threats, India has also to take into account various nonmilitary threats posed

to its security. The past has shown that developments in one South Asian state produce repercussions in the neighboring states. Communal riots in India between Hindu and Muslims produce strong reactions in Pakistan. The riots in Sri Lanka in which the Tamils are involved, had their backlash in the state of Tamil Nadu in India. India's problems are more political in nature and pertain to the difficulties of national governance, rather than the religious differences that enjoy a ready foreign press. Regional interferences in India's internal matters will continue to add to her major internal security concerns in the coming decade.

#### Pakistan and India's Security

Leaders of both the nations are now fully conscious of the evils of another war. However, in the past, in 1948, in 1965 and in 1971, the Pakistani leadership had initiated conflicts on the basis of mistaken calculations of India's capability to thwart Pakistan's military action. (20, 20) The Kashmir issue is still alive in Pakistan and it continues to be a matter of contingency in the future also. Kashmir is the only state in the northern part of India which has a predominantly Muslim population, but its Hindu leader chose to join it to India soon after India and Pakistan were created in 1947. At that time the United Nations resolutions of 1948 and 1949 called for a plebiscite in Kashmir. The voting could never be held as Pakistan, failing to comply with the precedent conditions imposed by that resolution, did not withdraw its troops from the

Pakistan occupied Kashmir after the invasion earlier in 1948. From the Indian point of view, a plebiscite today, more than 40 years later is out of the question, thus Kashmir is now an inseparable part of India. From the Pakistani point of view, however, gaining all of Kashmir continues as a foreign policy objective. What then? Mutual discussions after the last war in 1971, between the Prime Ministers of both the countries, known as the Simla accord, bound both the nations to settle the Kashmir issue bilaterally, through peaceful means. The threat of another war will always linger until the dispute is settled once and for all.

#### Pakistan and India Nuclear Potentials

The prospect of a nuclear Pakistan and India will bring in qualitative changes in the strategic environment of the region. Through the efforts of Dr. A. A. Khan, Pakistan may acquire nuclear capability in the near future or may have already acquired it. (1972) The possession of nuclear weapons with one side will create problems of morale for the other side's armed forces. It will be difficult to concentrate forces for a counter attack for fear that this may provide a convenient target for a nuclear weapon. The escalation control and disengagement capability will be with the side which has the weapon. Consequently, the side which has the weapon can tease the other through conventional forays and intrusions with full confidence that the other side could not afford to escalate beyond a particular level. (1974) If Pakistan goes nuclear, New

Delhi would have to increase its defense spending and would also be compelled to exercise its option of going in for nuclear weapons. Mr Rajiv Gandhi, the earlier Indian Prime Minister, said in the third United Nations special session on disarmament,

Left to ourselves, we would not want to touch nuclear weapons but when tactical considerations, in the passing play of great power rivalries, are allowed to take precedent over the imperatives of nuclear non-proliferation, with what leeway are we left? (7.4.82)

If Pakistan exercises its nuclear option, Indian leaders would follow suit, and this is bound to accelerate the arms race in the region.

On the other hand, the Pakistani leaders' claim that development of their military nuclear capacity is in direct response to India's own nuclear program and India's refusal to offer credible evidence that it was not pursuing a military nuclear option. For many Pakistan planners, nuclear weapons are the only response possible in face of an overwhelming superior and hostile Indian threat. (2.9) The late President Zia saw in starkly clear terms the fact that any future conflict with India was unwinnable. Pakistan's incoming Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has also reportedly said the same. (2.9) However, whether both nations have nuclear weapons or not cannot be at present substantiated, but it would be correct to assume that if it became known that one nation has a bomb, the other would certainly follow suit. It would be correct to say also that India has pulled well ahead of Pakistan in overall military



potential, but India's security issues are gravely compounded when seen in the perspective of a joint threat from China and Pakistan in collusion.

#### Implications of China's Capabilities

China became a source of military strategic threat to India largely on account of its growing overall defense strength, placing of its missiles in Tibet, and the buildup of a network of roads and communication system in the Sinkiang region. Defense is one of the four modernizations China is aiming at. So long as China has the capability to pose a threat, India will not be in a position to reduce its defense preparedness on the northern borders.

The strategic linkage between Beijing and Islamabad, on the other hand, is far more significant for India. This linkage has, time and again, threatened India. The Karakoram Highway, jointly built by Pakistan and China through the Pak-occupied areas of Jammu and Kashmir, has given leverage for China to intervene in the event of any future Indo-Pak crisis in this sensitive region. (11115)

#### Chinese Challenge at the Contiguous Level

The Chinese challenge to India's security and power position has been much more dominant at the contiguous level. China's policies towards the two monarchies of Nepal and Bhutan fall into a very different category than the one pursued for India. China has yet to demarcate its boundaries with Bhutan, but is making all efforts to destabilize the monarchy by giving

shelter and training to various conspirators and revolutionaries who are trying to overthrow King Jigme Wanchuk of Bhutan. (111124) Beijing is pursuing a different line with Nepal and is encouraging King Birendra's concept of Nepal as a "zone of peace" and is also rendering assistance in their development activities. Their basic thrust has been on weaning Nepal away from India's sphere of influence. Nepal, initially accepted membership in the Indian security system, but in the early 1960s began to modify its independent status. (111125) Bhutan initially sought to avoid any direct involvement in the Indian security system by maintaining a traditional policy of isolation, but since 1960, it has clearly integrated both its economic development and defense policies with those of India. China's frequent attempts to destabilize this part of the region have always been a security threat for India and similar attempts are likely to continue.

Bangladesh is another country where China's policies have undergone a dramatic turn following the political changes of 1975 when Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated. China, who earlier opposed the emergence of Bangladesh, has apparently been concentrating on developing strong ties with that country. The dispute between India and Bangladesh over the sharing of Ganges Waters (also known as the Farakka Dispute) became one of the key issues on which China began to support Bangladesh. This issue has been amply exploited not only to strengthen its relations with Bangladesh, but to tarnish India's image in the

region. (30.1.69) With the coming of power of General Zia-ur-Rahman, relations with China further improved with assistance offered for economic and industrial development. (11.1.77) The present Ershad regime in Dacca is also resistant to involvement in any Indian devised regional security system and has abandoned the pretense of being a secular Bengali state and tends to emphasize Islamic traditions. India has been concerned with the general trend of developments in Bangladesh's foreign policy and a potentially disruptive role, with possibly China's backing, that Dacca could play in that region.

#### Chinese Influence in Southeast Asia

Chinese policy towards Southeast Asia is also of immense interest to India and has vital bearing on Indian national security. China, as a dominant power in the region with strong influence in Thailand, Kampuchea, and Burma, is not likely to be viewed with equanimity in India. China's continued support to the Pol Pot regime, its supply trail through Thailand to support Pol Pot forces, the Chinese links with the Burmese Communist Party and through it to other insurgents in North Burma all fall into an overall pattern. India will be assessing the future role of China in Asia with reference to its policy in Southeast Asia and especially in Burma. The post-Ne Win future of Burma is full of uncertainties and it is in this context that the Chinese linkage with the Burmese Communist Party becomes significantly relevant.

### China's Naval Capabilities

China's effort to buildup a blue water navy has been a major area of attention of the Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in recent years. The naval fleet has grown with the inclusion of medium-sized and large submarines. (311433) The main naval vessels have been equipped with missiles, a mix of French Crotale Navale and the American Harpoon, and the submarines with advanced torpedoes. The United States is reported to have agreed to transfer technology for manufacture of Mark 46 anti-submarine torpedoes. China's new destroyers and escort vessels will be equipped with an advanced command and control system. China also has one known ballistic missile, utilized for submarine launches known as CSS-NX-3. It has, reportedly, a long-range capability of 1800-2000 km, and it is estimated that 14 missiles are carried on their Xia-class SSBN. (311434)

China's new forward-looking naval strategy has also been increasingly evident in naval operations in the South China Sea and in visits by PLAN ships to Karachi, Trincomalee, and Chittagong ports in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh respectively in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. With China's trade, economic, and military interests growing in the Far East, Pacific, Southeast Asia, and the Gulf, a growing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean region is to be expected. China has been reported to have encouraged Pakistan to play a larger naval role in the region, thus, Sino-Pak naval

cooperation is expected to grow in the coming years. China is a major arms supplier to the Gulf countries, Pakistan, and the Afghanistan rebels. It also supplies arms and is trying to build strong political ties with Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Its expanded naval presence is in keeping with its rising profile in the region around India, but its strategic aims, its nuclear weapons program and growing missile reach and the goal of attaining not only major power status in Asia, but in the world have serious implications for the security environment in and around India.

Therefore, it is in the longer run, China who will count more in India's security calculations. At present, China has a lead over India in missile<sup>ry</sup>, nuclear weapon technology, nuclear propulsion and electronics, including computers. In terms of conventional equipment, however, India is relatively more favorably placed. India has to make all efforts to catch up in those areas of technology where they lag. This does not mean that India has to treat China as an adversary or engage in an arms race with it. It is just that, in the present times, technological gaps vis-a-vis nations of similar size and population, if not corrected, lead to adverse impact on a nation's economy, its exports, and its standing in international affairs. On the other hand, there have been many positive changes in China in recent years that have raised prospects for friendlier ties between India and China, and a peaceful settlement of outstanding disputes. Unfortunately, China has

been known to be somewhat unpredictable in its relations with India, and therefore, India has to tread with caution.

#### Maritime Security Issues

The Indian Ocean is one of the five great oceans of the world, with its own distinguishing features. This ocean, which once was a vital lake for the very existence of the British Empire, is now a very important zone for the security of many countries bordering it. India, like the United States, has a peninsular character, since it is surrounded by water from three sides, and has a 7000 km long coast line. It was America's own Alfred Thayer Mahan who said in the late 19th century that

a nation so situated like the United States must build itself a navy, which if not capable of reaching distant countries, shall at least be able to keep clear the chief approaches to its own.

He also added that

it was essential to the welfare of the whole country that the conditions of trade and commerce should remain unaffected by an external war. In order to do this, the enemy must be kept not only out of our ports, but far away from our coasts. (32, 78)

These arguments seem to apply to India as well.

To India the security of this region is of paramount importance, as routes across this ocean carry the bulk of her overseas trade. If these routes come under the control of countries not friendly to India, it could threaten her economic development. The vulnerability of India to enemy naval action is also evident from its peninsular character. India has many ports in the two regions of the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian

Sea, and they are all vulnerable to outside naval attacks from high seas. India has also made a beginning in offshore oil extraction near the port city of Bombay and adjoining areas. More such ventures may be forthcoming in the near future. The catastrophic situation which would be caused by sudden damage to these installations makes them a strategic target for enemy attacks.

India had a taste of naval war in 1971, when one Pakistani submarine, the Gazni, sneaked in very close to its shores. To safeguard her interests, India is developing separate fleets for eastern and western fronts in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. India also has island territories, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Lakshwadeep Islands off the western coast of India in the Arabian Sea. Both groups of islands are at considerable distance from the Indian mainland and their defense, including the protection of the sea lines of communications from the mainland, are a significant security responsibility.

#### Influence of Extraneous Powers

If there is one thing which has not changed, it is the vital nature of the sea lanes through the region of Indian Ocean. It should not be forgotten that even though the USSR has withdrawn from Afghanistan, the bulk of the Soviet logistical support for the Soviet far east and the Pacific Fleet reaches by sea through the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean. (23:10) The Soviets will continue to have high stakes in this ocean. To

contest the Soviet influence and safeguard its own interests in the Middle East, the United States has built and maintained a major naval base at Diego Garcia. The base gives the United States tremendous intervention capability throughout the entire Indian Ocean area, no major littoral country being more than 1000 miles away. Long-range bombers and maritime reconnaissance aircraft have been operating from this base. These, combined with aircraft carriers, give the United States an awesome capability for projecting air power in the littoral areas. Similarly, Moscow has significant facilities at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. A power play of these great powers in the Indian Ocean region could become a cause of maritime concern for India in the coming decade.

On the other hand, the United States-Soviet relationship is in for major changes, given the recent happenings in the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc countries. It is difficult to predict at this stage as to what the outcome of Gorbachev's efforts at perestroika will harbringer, but the indications are very strong that there will be radical force reductions on both sides. The Gorbachev initiative has already given a great opportunity for US politicians to help balance the budget by reducing defense spending. What has this to do with the Indian Ocean region? Simply, that in the near future it is very likely that the United States will start pulling back its foreign military deployments. This is likely to affect Indian Ocean deployments by the US Navy, and its forces based at Diego



Garcia. (33, 12) A gradual decline in the superpowers' presence in the Indian Ocean will create a vacuum which will further create a competition amongst the lesser powers. We are already seeing the development of regional military capacities from Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Australia. (33, 12)

Until the internal battles are resolved in Iran, Saudi Arabia is wise to prepare itself for possible conflict with Iran. But in so preparing, Saudi Arabia has developed the tools to reach out and protect its sea lanes well into the Indian Ocean. In this regard, the Saudi Navy is indirectly important, but what is critical is its air force with its long range Boeing E-3A AWACS aircraft, and its long-range Tornado strike aircraft with in-flight refueling capacity. It has a fledgling ballistic missile capacity, which is likely to grow in the years to come. This would, in turn, provide comfort to Pakistan, which, as in the past, can count on Saudi Arabia for support in any future conflict. Saudi Arabia's long-range strike capacity can extend up to Bombay. The previous Indian Defense Minister had noted that one of the grave concerns emanates from the fact that long-range naval missiles are available to various countries in the Indian Ocean area. These missiles fired from submarines can pose serious threats to Indian shore installations, such as atomic powered electrical generation plants, chemical plants, etc. (7, 1000) Consequently, India is compelled to pay increasing attention to anti-submarine warfare.

## CHAPTER V

### ROLE OF THE INDIAN MILITARY

#### Security and Development

In the analysis so far carried out, it has been highlighted that there have been ups and downs in India's security situation, both externally and internally. The country is undergoing and will continue to grapple with major political, economic, and sociological flux, and, notwithstanding a promise of a positive change in the international strategic environment, India's security situation is likely to continue to be delicate for quite sometime to come. Security is a much larger concept, and defense is only a component of it amongst many others, though it is a crucial one. National security also encompasses development, it creates an environment under which a nation can develop unimpeded by threats; not merely economic development but also in political and social spheres.

India is yet a poor country as it evolves as a nation-state. Compressed in just half a century, India is experiencing all the turbulence and internal violence which the western nations went through in the last three centuries when they transformed from various kingdoms into modern

nation-states. The process of modernization is even more difficult in the present times due to the fact that the developed world with its high standards of living raises expectations for a quick remedy in the developing world. The problems are further compounded by policies of the major powers of interventionism by deployment of forces close to the developing nations, selective arms supplies, and support to insurgents and dissident elements within. In these circumstances, India is compelled to shield its political, social, and economic developmental processes from the turbulence and hostility of its neighbors and from the interventions of major powers of the world.

During this interim, India has to be on guard and, therefore, a certain level of defense effort is inescapable. What is that certain level? If India is to develop it should insulate itself from the political turbulence around. The democratic forces within India can have their full play only if its security forces are strong enough to fend off and keep such democratic contests insulated from external involvement or intervention. India is also a big country and its defense forces have to be commensurate with its size and population. In the international system, any country which does not have adequate power to hold itself together and exercise it in an apt manner, will be cut down to a size which will match its power. If India starts discussing force levels, not with China but with Pakistan, then there will be demands in due course for similar

discussions on force levels from other smaller nations of the region. (122) Those who complain that India does not clearly articulate the direction its defense buildup is taking must keep that in mind. India should have no intention of creating capabilities surpassing that of China, but its forces have to be large and capable enough to deter any regional power from acts of adventurism. If deterrence fails, India should be prepared to fight a defensive war on its two fronts with China and Pakistan for a short period of time while continuing to guard its coastline and island territories. What sorts of force levels are required quantitatively and qualitatively to achieve this objective is difficult to pen-down, nor is it the intention of this paper to do so. It is to be noted, however, that India has chosen not to enter into any military alliance with another country, counting on none to formally come to her direct assistance in case of war. There are many elites in Indian military who believe that treaties and defense pacts are but poor substitutes for possessing independent armed strength--"They may be a good umbrella but a bad roof." (123) Consequently, India needs a stronger military capability than if it were aligned.

On the other hand, a modernized defense capability, appropriately deployed within India's own territory, can be worth many treaties with its neighbors and provide them security from external threats. Once India is seen to be in a different league in terms of power and capabilities, dealing confidently

with the United States, USSR, and China, South Asian neighbors should give greater weight to the common civilization and cultural heritage they share with India. A good modernized military force is also a stabilizing factor within the country against anti-national and successionist elements. Thus, the Indian military has twin roles to play. It is not only required to create a secure environment in the region but, also, to foster a climate internally for India to grow stronger.

#### Nuclear Options

In "real politik," no nation can give absolute commitments to the security of other nations. India, especially being so large a nation, cannot think of relying on any other nation for its security against nuclear<sup>4</sup> threats without losing its credibility both internally and externally. The Asian environment has been significantly nuclearized, it has four nuclear weapon powers-- USSR, China, United States, and Israel. Pakistan is today an incipient nuclear power, and though India has lived with the Chinese nuclear capability for the last 25 years or so, it cannot permit a nuclear weapon asymmetry vis-a-vis the more volatile Pakistan. In this case, Pakistan could certainly be expected to exploit their possession of nuclear weapons to exercise coercive diplomacy on India. India and Pakistan have already signed an agreement not to attack each other's nuclear facilities, thus India is in no position to prevent Pakistan from acquiring nuclear weapons if it chooses to. And if Pakistan goes nuclear, India should hasten to

acquire nuclear capability, which should not take long as India has already demonstrated the know-how.

The Chinese nuclear capability cannot be ignored for long, as the growing Sino-Soviet rapprochement is another cause of concern for India. It appears rather remote that they will resume the old ties of the 1950s, but one can expect that their relations will improve. If this happens, though remote for the time being, then there would be no check on China, and India then could be manipulated. Thus, India has to wait and watch, in the interim try to acquire and perfect a delivery system and if the situation so develops in the region, she should be ready to go nuclear at the earliest possible time.

#### Summation

In my opinion, the Indian military buildup has been consistent with her security perceptions and its growth and modernization has been in keeping with creation of an environment for development. India maintains a large size of military forces in the context of its extensive defense perimeter. Even the growth and development of the Indian Navy must be viewed in the context of the virtually nonexistent base from which it started after independence. It must be appreciated that Pakistan was the first country to acquire a submarine in South Asia. In 1971, India also had to reckon with very near US military intervention in the shape of task forces led by the USS Enterprise, which transformed Indian thinking on the subject. (20122) Until then, the weakest service had been

the navy, deliberately starved of funds for the simple reason that strategic threats were thought to be exclusively across land frontiers. Naval assets are also not only capital intensive, but require a long time to obtain. The Falklands War of 1982 also highlighted the effectiveness of sea-skimming anti-ship missiles and the need for updated anti-submarine warfare capability. In addition, the acquisition of the Harpoon anti-ship missile by Pakistan, with its air-to-surface, surface-to-surface, and submarine-launch capabilities from submarine torpedo tubes added a new dimension to the threat. Adequate air-to-air warfare and ASW capabilities integral to the surface fleet, therefore, became essential. It is in the backdrop of this that India chose to expand its Navy and acquire aircraft carriers and ASW capabilities.

As regards the nuclear powered submarine, an old model on lease from the USSR, the issue was that of cost effectiveness, as it provided India with an added capability of requiring higher level of ASW capability with an intervening force for its success. While examining the development of the Indian Navy and its force composition objectively, the defensive nature of the maritime strategy becomes evident. There is only a marginal capability for amphibious operations, and it is debatable, whether it could survive against modest opposition, especially if that opposition includes land-based combat aircraft of even modest performance. This capability is just adequate to guard island territories against low-level threats.

Historical evidence, force structures, and force postures all confirm to an essentially defensive national strategy of India, aiming to protect national frontiers against external threats.

Traditionally, the tendency for most Americans has been to view international relationships in terms of clear black and white, and judge a friend of their enemy as a nation against US interests. India, by default and not design, fell into this category. Events are proving this not to be necessarily so. Academicians in the United States now espouse that a stronger India can only be an added strength to the American interests in the region, even though it has nonalignment as a bedrock of its foreign policy.(28:134) In any case, there are very positive indications of US-USSR relations improving beyond all realms of earlier imagination, which would be followed by substantial force reductions. India, as the largest democracy and historically self-centered, and if assisted by the United States to grow stronger economically, can only be a reassuring and stabilizing factor in the region.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

India, since acquiring independence in 1947, has been involuntarily drawn into five armed conflicts involving her territorial integrity and national security. Her security concerns have centered around Pakistan and China and the strategic linkages between them, and will continue to do so in the coming decade. The dimensions of the threats to India's security have been extended to include the Chinese support to the other countries in the region and the growing military linkages between Pakistan and the Gulf countries.

In the face of the above threat, India's defense spending had undergone a significant growth in the 1980s, and particularly after Rajiv Gandhi took over office in 1984. Also, the expansion of defensive capabilities followed as a response to threats that India faced in the 1960s along its borders. Yet, while Indian power has grown, India has realized that the problems which India now faces with its neighbors, such as ethnic disputes cannot be resolved by the use of military force. The previous Indian Defense Minister did acknowledge that military power, as a component of overall strength, is fast losing its earlier preeminence when compared to economic and

technological power. (7:444) The popular media have, of late, tended to sensationalize India's military role. Militarist regimes often interpret the Indian defense effort on the basis of the historical imperialistic experiences of the major nations of the earlier centuries and, thus, tend to ascribe similar motivations to India. What is not appreciated is that India has enough problems of its own in integrating the country and no one in India advocates adding on any territory or even population which are unassimilable. India has made it quite clear that, barring the legal settlement of the Pakistan occupied Kashmir, it has no territorial claim against any of its neighbors. Most of the talk of Indian expansionism and hegemony has no basis. India has a self-contained civilization and philosophical tradition, distinguished from the other civilizations around, and nonalignment is a product of this tradition. It is this feature which has enabled India to internalize democratic values and has also made the Indian military a totally apolitical institution, a somewhat rare phenomenon in the developing world.

This expansion of Indian military power should not be seen to conflict with any other countries' security interests. Even what is now being publicized as India's massive naval buildup is only a long overdue modernization and upgradation of naval power, commensurate with her national requirements. It is due to the broader threat perception, the expansion of the security perimeter and the technological imperatives that India's military power has grown in the absolute terms. As

tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union reduce in the coming decade, India can be expected and relied upon to have a stabilizing influence in that part of the region, permitting turning of the US attention to the other more volatile parts of the world.

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