

# India's Foreign Policy Options in the 1990s\*

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## INTRODUCTION

A few decades from now the rapid changes in the world during the eighth and ninth decades of the 20th century will provide a delightful, yet bewildering study to a scholar of international politics and security. The end of the Cold War, the termination of the Warsaw Pact, the unification of Germany, the virtual comity of interests across the board in terminating Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, are events which could not have been visualised even a short while ago. Who for instance would have visualised the Soviet President and Chief of the CPSU stating "...the (communist) model that has been imposed on the party and society for decades has suffered a strategic defeat...indeed this is a crisis of socialism and socialist idea...It is of exclusive significance that we speak about ourselves as a party of democratic reforms...it is only the plurality of opinions and the democratic comparison of views within the framework of constitutional law that will make it possible to find the truth"<sup>1</sup>

The emerging kaleidoscope of scenarios - pushed somewhat by Saddam Hussein's occupation of Kuwait and its aftermath - offers new challenges to India's policy makers. Some of the emerging images are indeed confusing eg has the United States emerged as the only Super Power? Has the world finally moved from bipolarity to multi polarity? How relevant is the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) with the seeming emergence of multi polarity and end of the Cold War? What is the emerging "New World Order"? Do its ramifications suit us? Will regional conflicts, stay regional and localised when greater interests are involved, or has the Gulf War set a model for wars to come? The spectre of terrorism and narcotics, quite often caught in a puzzling combine with its declared opponents, continues to loom large. The advent of democracy in Eastern Europe has manifested itself negatively in the rise of violent sub nationalism... One could go on. Closer home the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka, the continued Pakistani support to terrorists in Kashmir and Punjab poses a serious threat to our national and regional stability.

Ironically while major changes in the world's scenario call for alert, concrete, rapid and concerted foreign policy projection, Indian responses

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\* This essay has won the second prize in group "A" of the USI Gold Medal Essay Competition 1991.

have been seemingly confused, dictated often by internal rhetoric. We are perhaps the only major country to have gone through the world wide turmoil of the Gulf War without even a full time Cabinet Minister for Foreign Affairs, and this at a time when major realignments were so obviously in the offing." A total marginalisation of India may have been avoided by the "damage control" actions taken at the bureaucratic level later but the obvious denial to India of the "largesse" bestowed by Kuwait in its reconstruction programme, and the "cold shoulder" from the USA are bitter pills which the country has had to swallow.

George Modelski writing on the theory of foreign policy defines it as... "the system of activities evolved by communities for changing the behaviour of other states and for adjusting their own activities to the international environment. Within it two types of activities may be singled out for special attention: the inputs flowing into it, and the output it produces. The foremost task of foreign policy analysis must be to throw light on the ways in which states attempt to change, and succeed in changing the behaviour of other states."<sup>2</sup> Thus while foreign policy objectives may have a certain commonality between states, viz the protection and furtherance of national interests, changes in the international and internal environment necessitate changes in policy options. More than at any other stage in the second half of the 20th century international and domestic developments - the latter linked in our case to transborder regional problems - call for changes in our foreign policy options. The subject thus merits a study of both the international and internal scenario.

### AIM

The aim of this paper is to evaluate India's Foreign Policy options between now and the turn of the century.

This paper is laid out in the following parts :-

- (a) The Emerging International Order.
- (b) India's Security Compulsions and Stature as a Regional Power.
- (c) Possible Foreign Policy Options for India.

### THE EMERGING INTERNATIONAL ORDER

Even a cursory glance at India's Foreign Policy postulations since Independence would discern four clear points viz:-

- (a) Protection of India's interests through the Cold War without getting

embroiled in Super Power rivalry both in the international and regional arena. This would be evident in India's refusal to be drawn into any Super Power sponsored regional pacts eg the ASEAN, the Baghdad Pact (later CENTO) and its neutral stance.

(b) Meeting, or pre-empting a possible Sino Pak combine; evident notably in the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1971.

(c) Seeking an economic and political role for the Third World within a bipolar world order; and obtaining for India the stature of a Third World Leader; the setting up of the Non Aligned Meet, the Africa Fund and strident posturing in matters relating to the independence of Zimbabwe, Namibia and other colonies, North South dialogue, South - South dialogue.

(d) Establishing and furthering India's role as a regional power in South Asia, particularly in the Indo Pak sub continent; intra regional interventions in East Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, the efforts to keep the Indian Ocean free of Super Power rivalry.

However some of the above constants have certainly changed. The Cold War has ended, the bipolarity of the world order is certainly over, the USA has positively emerged as a military power, a thaw in Sino Soviet relations perhaps makes guaranteed Soviet support in preventing a Sino Pak collusion a bit less realistic, just as India is perhaps a bit less relevant to the Soviet Union in the global order. Regionally tensions have escalated over territorial, extra territorial and ethnic issues eg in Kashmir and Sri Lanka. These issues are involved, vexing and due to their ethnic nature also linked to internal Indian-Pakistani-Bangladeshi or Sri Lankan policy.

With this as a backdrop we can now proceed to examine the changes in the international Order and their effect on our International, Extra Regional and Regional Policy options.

#### THE NEW WORLD ORDER AND CENTRES OF POWER

During the last four decades it was quite possible for the Third World to identify the two basic centres of power ie the USA or the USSR. This bipolarity imposed certain restrictions on the foreign policies of the Third World ie these countries had to align themselves with one of the power blocs for their economic development and security. To some extent this meant accepting tacit domination or self imposed curbs, often at variance with the

avowed national ideology. Egypt offers an extreme example of a country forced to align itself with one camp or the other. Bilateral economic relations were also deeply affected by cold war considerations. Economic assistance from the Super Power blocs was linked to their strategic interests.

If the bipolarity of the world order somewhat circumscribed foreign policies of the Third World, it also imposed certain compulsions on the Super Powers. The USA for example was forced to support dictatorships and unpopular regimes in power eg in the Philippines or in Pakistan against its declared norms of support to democratic values and human rights. The disappearance of the Soviet Union as a countervailing force has certainly changed this situation. In the aftermath of the Gulf War there appears to be only one Super Power in the world. The complete sidelining of the Soviet Union's efforts to broker a peace in the Gulf, and the Chinese act of abstaining from voting in the security Council when it could have vetoed the use of force has made one thing clear - neither the Soviet Union nor China had the will to oppose the United States even before the Gulf War actually broke out. The 'Rambo' image of the USA is further strengthened by the statement of President Bush that he might have said "to hell with" the UN and sent troops to Iraq, if the Security Council had not authorised the use of force against Iraq.<sup>3</sup>

To the Third World looking for security, the image of a single power dominating the world is certainly not reassuring. The issue therefore is quite simple - can some other power blocs arise to countervail the United States, and derivatively can Indian Foreign Policy be shaped to utilise a new developing power balance in the international arena.

#### THE UNITED STATES : LIMITS TO POWER ?

While the military dominance of the United States and its unfolding national confidence is undeniable some indications that it is not, and cannot be absolute, are also obvious.

Militarily it would be interesting to note that after inciting the Kurds to rebel against Saddam Hussein's regime and having obtained the resulting military advantage the US and its allies quietly backed out when a civil war situation which could have sucked them into a protracted low intensity conflict situation, wherein the advantages of hi tech and manoeuvre warfare would not have been derivable, seemed to be developing.<sup>4</sup> The United States has announced that it is not a global policeman. The realisation that on overstretching of resources may perhaps lead to a reversal in the presently upbeat national mood will perhaps now force a balancing act. Within the country strong sentiment against display of military muscle and taking on more than

what is strictly necessary is beginning to assert itself. Noted 'think tanks' like Alan Tonelson of the Economic Strategy Institute denounce the "...irrelevance of our foreign policy, and even its victories to the concerns of most Americans. The US he says, should junk the idea of something called leadership and "insulate" itself from the disasters of the Third World. He would also have the US abandon "overseas missions that however appealing bear only marginally on protecting and enriching the nation".<sup>5</sup>

It would also be pertinent to note that after Vietnam US military involvements have been cases of overkill, in brief operations eg in Grenada and Panama. When confronted with a possible protracted casualty heavy situation in Lebanon the US withdrew after a single major terrorist attack.

US analysts appear to be conscious of the limits to power and Harvard's Joseph Nye is quoted as defining power as being of two kinds "hard" and "soft"! Hard being derived from a combination of military and economic clout, giving it the ability to force its will on others. Soft power being a country's ability to lead because others want to follow depends "on the appeal of culture, society and ideology". Over the years the US has relied upon a combination of 'hard' and 'soft' power to maintain a leading edge. However at the present juncture while the USA stands out as a symbol of hard power its soft power shows a different profile. As Nye states, "Our low saving rate and high deficit have diminished over hard power... By consuming too much and investing too little, we're risking our capacity to stay on the edge of the third world technological revolution... In 'the 80's we went from being the biggest creditor nation in the world to being the biggest debtor, and that has cost us a further degree of political influence... As far as soft power, we'll begin to see that erode too if our cities fall apart, if we no longer can offer our citizens upward mobility because our economy is stagnant in short a healthy economy is a precondition for a successful foreign policy."<sup>6</sup>

The condition of the US economy thus seriously curtails its dominance of world affairs. In 1988 its per capita GNP was \$ 19,770 in comparison to \$ 14,340 of Japan and \$ 13,987 of United Germany.<sup>7</sup> Thus while the US still leads the industrial developed world the gap is closing rapidly, and has in some ways been closed. Taking investments in, and aid to South East Asia for example; Japanese corporate investment in the eight fastest growing economies in 1991 stands at \$ 26.8 billion in comparison to the US investment of a mere \$ 7.4 billion. Japan has already replaced the USA as the biggest aid giver. Newspaper and political magazine editorials now speak of the 'Yen Bloc'.<sup>8</sup>

Sheer economic reality therefore indicates the emergence of atleast two

alternative economic centres of power ie Japan and Unified Germany. The reunification of Germany and the end of the Warsaw pact, the signing of the START as also the gradual move towards a unified Europe will mean a gradual reduction of the United States role in the 'Security of Europe'. This of course is dependent on the extent to which sub nationalism and secession is controlled in the Soviet Union and its former allies. Escalation of violence may invite intervention to restore stability. By all accounts a resurgent Germany will become a European power by the turn of the century. This would involve a competition of interests within the EC.<sup>9</sup>

Whatever be the ultimate fate of NATO, it is quite obvious that a new chapter in the US - Europe linkage is now opening up. As Europe moves towards economic unity and prosperity its dependence on the US decreases, as it forms an economic continuum it will also form a competing economic bloc. US authors in fact have already begun to speak about possible areas of conflict and "European protectionism". Writing in the *Journal Foreign Affairs*, Hoffman forecast in 1990... "If the Soviet - American contest should cease being the most important issue in world affairs, conflicts of economic interest among allies might well escalate, and both sides might behave more like blocs competing for economic and financial preponderance than like partners submitting to the same rules of fair competition, free trade and cooperation". Hoffman also warns, "... Also likely is the continuation in Japan, of a strategy aimed at maximising the global power of industries in which it has the lead. A world economic recession could only turn the world economy into a contest of protected regional blocs..."<sup>10</sup>

An obsession with formation of economic blocs seems to have afflicted American writing of late. The *Time* magazine issue of 29 July 1991 commenting on Japan's emerging economic might states "...Japanese exports to its neighbours now exceed those to the US or the European Community. Tokyo is also concerned that two potentially hostile trading blocs might be forming in the West, as the EC moves towards full integration and a proposed North American free-trade zone linking the US, Canada and Mexico takes shape. If these trade groups become too exclusive, Japan would not mind leading a bloc of its own in Asia".<sup>11</sup>

It thus appears that while militarily the US might be a Super Power, other power blocs based on economic power have begun to emerge. Even in terms of military power the US is not totally absolute. The Russian Republic still retains sufficient military strength. Although the emerging pattern indicates a shift to economy related politics, with visions of "trade wars", the possibility of growing economic powers translating themselves into military powers also cannot be ruled out. It therefore follows that while a visible

military unipolarity may have emerged, an economic and political multi polarity has also emerged.

On 5 Mar 91 President Bush told the US Congress that the Gulf War was the first test of "a new world coming into view, a world in which there is a very real prospect of a new world order".<sup>12</sup> Although he did not elaborate upon the idea he has spoken about it often; in terms of collective security, unfettered communications, enforcement of democratic values, human rights etc. While this does point to growing US aggressiveness in foreign policy and trade it does not appear that its attempts at international domination will go unchallenged. The resistance in Thailand to the pushing of US cigarettes into the country by US cartels to make up for a shrinking domestic market is a case in point.<sup>13</sup>

#### CHINA : THE DARK HORSE ?

The above discussion largely relates to the USSR, USA, Japan and Europe. It is interesting to note that since 1990 China seems to have occupied a comparatively lesser prominence in the media. Throughout the Gulf War the Chinese profile has been low. Sweeping changes in the world seem to have passed by China. In fact the Chinese would appear to be the greatest beneficiaries from the change. The threat from the Soviet Union has ended, aid from the USA continues to roll in, a gradual US military withdrawal from the Asia Pacific denudes the region of Super Power presence, while the USSR and the USA set about reducing conventional and nuclear forces, Chinese nuclear capability stays intact. And all this seems to be occurring without a single worthwhile concession or compromise.

As China shares the longest, and disputed border with India its postulations are of special relevance to India's policy makers - both regionally and globally. It would be of interest to take note of Chinese perceptions of the "US Global strategy and International Environment" in the 1990s for the enunciation of their "Basic Policy".

Chinese political scientists strike combined notes of caution and optimism. Huang Zhengji, Senior Adviser, Beijing Institute for International Studies opines that in the emerging scenario... "the United States will consider<sup>14</sup> itself as the leader of the world, it will master the contradictions by employing tactics of maintaining balance, unite Germany and Japan to hold China and the Soviet Union in restraint, and restrict Germany and Japan by drawing support from China and the Soviet Union, so as to continue intervention in world affairs in a vain attempt to realize its dream of dominating the world".

The statements of President Bush about human rights and market economy, about a "beyond containment strategy" are seen as an attempt to attain unanimity with allies like Germany and Japan. Zhengji in fact sees current US policy towards China as... "to maintain a normal or even relatively good relations with China on the one hand, while on the other to exert pressure over developing rapidly. It is not willing to see China really strong and prosperous."<sup>15</sup>

A definite caution and apprehension of US efforts at domination of the world therefore tinge Chinese perceptions. These perceptions are even sharper in official Chinese writings. Most Chinese commentators however appear to be obsessed with the progress of their "four modernisations".

In terms of security the Chinese still see the need to balance between the USA and Russian Republic and assert that... "in the field of military security the Peoples Republic of China will continue to maintain the best security environment since its founding more than forty years ago", and... "the trend of multipolarization of the force structure of the world will be further developed and the pattern of multipolarity of the world will gradually be formed".<sup>16</sup> Cai Mengsen Secretary General of the BISS in fact asserts.. "The most spectacular phenomenon in the 1990's will be rise of Europe and Japan... taking the world as a whole there will be five main power centres: the United States, the Russian Republic - CIS (or Germany), Japan and China. In the meantime some regional forces will also begin to show their capabilities and will play a decisive role in their respective regions."<sup>17</sup>

It is significant that the Chinese have seen no need to let down their nuclear or military guard. Nor has the country's cautious stance in terms of either information flow, or political ideology been given up. Dissent in fact was absolutely stifled. An indication of Chinese status as a power in the US scheme of things also becomes evident from the fact that despite the brutality of suppression unleashed in 1989 no worth while sanctions were imposed against China and protests made only for the sake of record.<sup>18</sup>

It is however in the regional perspective that the Chinese view of things becomes even more relevant to us. While the Chinese take note of what they feel is a limited detente promoted in the South Asian region by the US and Russia, the existing situation is seen as volatile and subtle characterised by changes in the "quadrupartite relations among the United States, the Russian Republic, India and Pakistan".<sup>19</sup> The structure of this quadrangular relationship is seen as an important factor affecting the development of the situation in South Asia.



Intra regionally the continued friction between India and Pakistan as also other countries is seen as potentially dangerous as "none of the religious, ethnic and territorial disputes as well as the issues handed down by history between India and its neighbours was resolved". In Chinese views the region perhaps stays an unstable backyard where "relative stability" might be maintained, some move towards relaxation may take place but in which.. "the strategic pattern... that has been shaped up over a long period of time can hardly be fundamentally changed".<sup>20</sup>

We can therefore draw a few deductions from the emerging global scenario:-

(a) While a military unipolarity has emerged with the USA emerging as the predominant military power a multi polarity is already emerging in terms of economic power.

(b) The unipolarity of US military power though a pragmatic reality is curbed by its inherent economic situation. Furthermore while Russia may have drastically negated its role globally and gone on the strategic defensive it still stays a strong military power with the ability of military deterrence.<sup>21</sup> China too stays a credible military power; even a power to be courted by the USA and Russia.

(c) The emerging unified Europe will gradually see a reduction of dependence on the USA, and in due course become totally competitive with it.

(d) The pressure of economy and trade will see new patterns of trade wars. Linked, as they are, with the developed world the Third World will find itself subjected to increasing pressures to open up its economy to the economic powers. The formation of joint blocs against such pressures will be exceedingly difficult due to reasons of individual economic survival. In any case economic powers will make every effort to deal with countries bilaterally, rather than with economic blocs.

(e) Militarily the developed world seems to be moving towards greater level of military detente. However the gradual decline of communist power has given rise to a cycle of sub nationalism in Europe. There appears to be a convergence of interests in all factions towards limiting sub nationalism. The pronouncements of President Bush on the Russian soil against secession by former Soviet Republics are an extreme illustration. Similar efforts are also on in Yugoslavia.

(f) Overall world effort and attitudes now indicate a desire to control aggression, eg as in Kuwait. Military effort when undertaken will be under the garb of legitimacy and international consensus. Even democratically the use of force now requires internal consensus.

(g) While the threat of global war has reduced, the threat of regional wars has not. In fact regional tensions have increased due to the availability of surplus military stocks from the Western and Eastern powers, rise of sub nationalism, forced mass emigrations of population (eg the Kurdish migration), ethnic and communal tensions.

(h) Greater flexibility is now available to the Third World countries in international politics and the need to be allied to one of the Super Power blocs is now over. Conversely the need for a Super Power to support regional powers in intra regional conflicts to 'contain' the opposing Super Power by proxy is also over.

#### SOME CONTRADICTIONS

A peculiar mix of global stability vis-a-vis regional instability, an attitude of global balance vis-a-vis bilateral competition and aggression both military and economic seems to be emerging.

While globally there appears to be an urge towards stability, the rise of sub nationalism, terrorism especially narco terrorism, religious fundamentalism will threaten international stability.

These contradictory pressures are perhaps most evident in South Asia; with the Indo Pak subcontinent providing a striking example of an arena in which perhaps every contradictory pressure, as also extra regional alignments are in focus. These affect both India's security and status as a regional power - if it chooses to call itself one.

#### INDIA'S SECURITY COMPULSIONS AND STATURE AS A REGIONAL POWER

The Indo Pak problems over Kashmir, the Sino-Indian border dispute are perhaps too well known to merit elaborate description. While these will be discussed in this part, the emphasis is on bringing out the newer problems affecting India's security, as also the changes in its security environment.

That India's land mass, population, industrial base and strategic location amongst numerous small states gives it a kind of a dominant status in

the perceptions of its neighbours is undeniable.<sup>22</sup> However this very size appears to be a major reason for generating surprising insecurity in its neighbouring countries. The ethnic, economic and communal issues generating trans border conflict in the region are a consequence of the close affinity, and to some extent of the fact that ethnically, culturally and religiously the entire subcontinent is perhaps one entity; thus the internal Tamil problem of Sri Lanka affects India, the Mohajir problem in Pakistan affects India (as a high proportion of Mohajirs have ties and family linkages in India), internal problems of Bangla Desh leading to trans border migration affect India, friction between Nepalese factions affect India.

Ethnic commonality generates fears of elimination<sup>23</sup> of identity in neighbouring countries especially Pakistan, and leads to a cultural and ethnic assertion. Trans border ethnic affiliation is thus a major part of the first security compulsion of India - its internal security and instability.

India's multi ethnic and multi religious society possesses the roots of strident sub nationalism. This inherent centrifuge is being skilfully exploited today by Pakistan to contain India. State sponsored terrorism is a major threat to India today.

While the above problems are basically internal in nature though being exploited by Pakistan in full, a major linked issue now is of narco terrorism. Narco terrorism is all pervasive; its ramifications ultimately extend to politicians, terrorist groups, anti social gangs, bureaucracy (including law and order forces) and social front organisations. Fuelled initially by Afghan Mujahideen groups and Pakistan, narco power promises to be India's biggest single security concern linked to terrorism. The necessity of keeping drug traffic moving will, or rather has already made the "business" a bit of a rogue. Hypothetically even if India and Pakistan are able to settle their differences some day, it is doubtful if the drug barons will be easily curbed.<sup>24</sup>

#### THE SINO-PAK FACTOR

Having touched upon the internal security threat to India - albeit with regional connotations we can now turn to the two basic problems of Indian policy.

The division of India and the creation of Pakistan are historical facts. Visions of "Akhand Bharat" may have existed in the minds of a few for some years after Independence. It is doubtful that they exist today. The underlying issues to the Indo Pak conflict are basically rooted in history, an artificial division and the Pakistani psyche. Fears of reabsorption initially geographi-

cally and politically, and now culturally and in terms of identity continue to dominate Pakistani actions. Thus while in the initial years Pakistani leadership chose to establish linkages with the Western powers<sup>25</sup> to secure a guarantee for their security, in the current scenario the demise of the cold war is now forcing them to seek linkages with Islamic forces, with a combination of inspired insurgency in India.

In concrete terms the single most destabilising factor in Indo Pak relations is the Kashmir issue. Both countries have taken strong positions on the issue and it is unlikely that the leaderships of both countries can make any worthwhile compromise on the issue. Pakistan's unleashing of the war by proxy and the blase rabble rousing screams of "Azadi" by Benazir Bhutto define the Pakistani attitude. Within Pakistan perhaps no political force is as strong as the Army, and it is unlikely that a compromise can be effected with a highly nationalist and motivated Army, especially when it has reason to believe that it has gained a certain amount of military advantage by sponsoring terrorism and insurgency to contain India. Internally in India also a certain segment of the majority community too has pushed to an extreme posture and it is doubtful that even a minor concession can be made by any Government in power.

While till now Pakistan could tout an alignment with the USA to obtain political and military leverage vis-a-vis India, the decrease of Pakistani relevance to the USA is pushing it towards an increased alignment with the Islamic countries. Recent Pakistani media blitzes at the Organisation of Islamic Countries Conference in Turkey and repeated harpings on the solidarity of the "Ummah" show Pakistani attempts at garnering support from this quarter. It is however unlikely that Pakistan will be able to obtain the mantle of leadership of the "Ummah" or that it will receive unqualified support from them on generated issues like "human rights". Not only is the Islamic movement deeply fissured by partisan and national considerations, it also has ethnic divisions. Furthermore it has strong internal contests and blocs. The Iranian contest with Pakistan over a role for the latter in the Gulf is a case in point. In any case it is doubtful that a "human rights" plank can really survive; given Pakistan's and the Islamic countries own doubtful record. However in a religiously charged atmosphere the possibility of a convergence does lie.

The other Pakistani card so far has been its alignment with China. This has served them well as their commonality of interest in containing in India has continued to match. Pakistani perceptions of China being Pakistan's friend as also its generous military aid, underscore this relationship.<sup>26</sup> However it is also significant that both in 1965 and 1971 the Chinese did not intervene militarily. In fact since 1987 and subsequently it has been possible for India

to mobilise troops from the East for internal security duties in the West. Even on Kashmir Chinese statements have tended to treat the issue as bilateral between India and Pakistan. There are thus limits to the kind of support Pakistan can expect from China. This of course does not underestimate Sino-Pak friendship.

As the main issue behind the Sino-Pak axis is the convergence of Sino Pak interests in containing India it would be relevant to examine the status of bilateral relations between India and China.

#### BILATERAL RELATIONS : INDIA AND CHINA

The resurgence of Indian military power became evident in 1987-88. Even if termed as an over reaction, the placement of a credible force in a reasonable time span on the Sino Indian border makes a repeat of 1962 impossible. What does stand out is a gradual thaw in Sino Indian relations. It is significant that Indian responses to the 1989 internal Chinese repression were muted, treating it as a purely internal matter.

The Sino Indian Summit of 1988, the setting of a joint Working Group to sort out the border dispute, the holding of Flag meetings, exchanges of civil and military delegations and the recent (semi official?) visit of the retired Indian Chief of the Army Staff General K Sundarji are illustrative of changes in Chinese thinking. It is significant that the Chinese for the first time chose to discuss nuclear strategy with a visiting Indian<sup>27</sup>.

Domestically too Indian polity and public opinion are perhaps in a better and appreciative mood for a dialogue with China. There is thus a possibility of compromise between the two countries. A convergence of Indian and Chinese interests seems to be occurring in spheres larger than purely regional. To list a few points of convergence:-

- (a) Both countries will seek to resist US hegemony under the garb of sanctions and aid disruptions on issues like "Human Rights", "Intellectual Property Rights", "Trade Mark and Patents", "Domestic Reform" etc.
- (b) Both countries need technology, foreign investment and hard cash inflow. They stand to benefit by mutual interaction.
- (c) Additionally, meeting grounds exist in cultural areas, sports medicine, hi-technology transfer or cooperation.

It would also be pertinent to note that the Chinese have stabilised their stranglehold over Tibet. Although the presence of a large Tibetan refugee population alongwith the Dalai Lama continues, its potential as an irritant or a destabilising factor has drastically reduced. The studied ignorance accorded to the Dalai Lama during his recent visit to the UK makes it evidently clear that in the perceptions of the Western powers Tibet is no longer an issue. However diplomatic necessity - or convenience may lead to the issue being exploited at a later date.

### THE NUCLEAR FACTOR

The last major regional development is the fact that Pakistan has emerged as a Nuclear Weapon state in the sub-continent. This status is quite evident from the fact that the US President has been unable to give the necessary certification of Pakistan being a Non Nuclear Weapon State in the current year. The recent Pakistani efforts to induce a dialogue with India on Nuclear Non Proliferation were perhaps meant to provide a new factor in US perceptions.

Although the Pakistani nuclear weapons programme has been undeclared and ambiguous, the much exposed Pakistani attempts at securing the necessary materials and knowhow are sufficient pointers towards the end result of Pakistani efforts. Yet again the Pakistani effort is not in response to, but precedes the Indian explosion of 1974. In real terms Pakistani nuclear ambiguity is purely notional.<sup>28</sup>

Dr Stephen P Cohen, whose books on the Indian and Pakistani Army are regarded highly, visited Pakistan in early 1980 and interacted with Pakistani Army and defence officials. According to him many Pakistanis felt the necessity of a nuclear device to... "neutralise an assumed Indian nuclear force. Others point out, however, that it would provide the umbrella under which Pakistan could reopen the Kashmir issue; a Pakistani nuclear capability paralyses not only the Indian nuclear decision but also conventional forces and a harsh, bold Pakistani strike to liberate Kashmir might go unchallenged if the Indian leadership was weak or indecisive".<sup>29</sup>

Coupled with the fact of Chinese nuclear domination, the Pakistani possession of nuclear weapons is a serious threat to regional stability. Focussed, as the threat is, on India it calls for a response, and questions the declared non nuclear weapon stand of India.

With the backdrop of the foregoing discussion and deductions thereto we can now discuss the possible foreign policy options for India.

## POSSIBLE FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS FOR INDIA

A historical analysis of Indian Foreign Policy since independence would reveal a strong blend of Nehruvian idealism and native Indian pragmatism. The former was most evident upto 1962, or perhaps upto 1964. This is perhaps a natural outcome of Nehru's personality and the fact that he also held the foreign affairs portfolio. The phase since 1964 to 1971 was largely dominated by the need to safeguard India's territorial integrity and nurse its national and military power to a state of 'health'. From 1972 to 1987 Indian foreign policy entered a more pragmatic state conscious of its own pre-eminence in the region. 1987 perhaps marks the peak of India's military revamping, with phrases like "coercive diplomacy" being banded about. The period since 1987 has once again, apparently focussed Indian attention on internal needs and seen a gradual retardation of power display - marked by the withdrawal from Sri Lanka, a rapid deployment and withdrawal from the Maldives, with basic policy declarations of the fact that India was not interested in a "regional role" or becoming a "regional policeman". Since then we have largely been involved internally in fending off domestic or economic crisis. Our role in the Gulf War was confusing, despite our military status we continue to beleaguered by security problems. All this calls for an internal examination of our very system of policy formulation. The issue of our structure for policy formulation is beyond the scope of this essay, however it is quite evident that we do not appear to have a cohesive or integrated structure for the purpose. The stance of the Chief of the Army Staff in 1987 was at sharp variance with that of the External Affairs Ministry during the Ex Brass Tacks and post Brass Tacks crisis if it may be called that. Yet again when ordering the IPKF to Sri Lanka the foreign policy postulations and ground reality appeared to be at variance.

Commenting on the apparent mismatch Air Commodore Janak Kapoor writes "The Policy Planning and Review Division of the MEA, does not have any military specialists, and naturally avoids planning on politico-military issues".<sup>30</sup> This compartmentalisation is also evident in the areas of economic relations, publicity abroad or even in the composition of Indian delegations proceeding abroad. From news items appearing in the Indian media it appears that a proportion of Indian delegations are mere pleasure junkets bestowed as largesse on political and bureaucratic followers. The need to set our house in order is obvious.

## FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS FOR INDIA

The changed context in which foreign policy is now to be conducted would appear to be international, extra regional and regional.

## INTERNATIONAL

Internationally our foreign policy would call for adjustment to the Post Cold War world, the changed situation of the USSR, the tilt of the military balance in the favour of the USA and the rise of competing economic blocs.

The first question this situation throws up is the future of the NAM. By appearances NAM seems to be irrelevant as bipolarity has disappeared. Yugoslavia the present leader is deeply mired in a Civil War. The NAM initiatives to prevent the Gulf War were brushed aside by Saddam Hussein. All these would indicate that NAM has ceased to be a reckonable force. Conversely the stance of the group of 77 and NAM did much to restore the freedom of Zimbabwe and Namibia.

Given the current situation NAM will have to reorient itself for the protection of economic interests of the developing member states against exploitation by the emerging economic blocs. A related area would lie in intensifying South - South dialogue and cooperation in terms of economic aid, raw material, mutual investment, movement of skilled manpower, technology, information flow. This is not a new thought process, the Indian External Affairs Ministry's report of 1964-65<sup>31</sup> in fact paid attention to it. The pressure on economy will now need greater orientation of NAM as a trading bloc. This will face pressures from the economic blocs and member states will have to indulge both in bilateral and group dealings. The opportunity for a North - South dialogue seems to be decreasing, however internally NAM could form a loose mutually supporting trading bloc.

Another possible role still lies in preventing regional conflicts within member states. The possibility of influencing world public opinion by use of the media, formation of voting blocs in international fora still remains. NAM will have to move to a newer functional model. It still remains a major platform for the LDCs and Newly Industrialised Economies.

Attempts will have to be made to create a common bargaining platform to face the unified European Market from 1992. NAM in its modified form will continue to be a foreign policy plank for India.

## EXPLOITING THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

With the end of bipolarity and the termination of Super Power animosity a convergence of almost all major power interests has occurred. These interests lie in developing economy, preventing conflict and protecting the integrity of nation states. This convergence will enhance the role of regional



security pacts. In any case the US, China, and Russian Republic will continue to retain an element (albeit consciously avoiding tension) of balance.

Internationally the US will remain a global military power, with a strong presence in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean. On the positive side this will imply a benign, perhaps partially coerced stability in West Asia. The US in fact seems to be working towards this objective in its attempts to broker a peace between Israel and the Arabs.

Hard realism, both economic and military, thus forces us to modify our policies to look for points of convergence with the USA. Even for the USA, India is a key factor in South Asia. Briefly the points of convergence would appear to be as under:-

- (a) Combating narcotics traffic emanating from the Pak Afghan border, ultimately destined for the West.
- (b) Curtailing fundamentalist Islamic convergence or unity.
- (c) Curbing terrorism in all its forms.
- (d) Enlarging trade relations; the US as on date is India's largest trading partner.
- (e) Both countries share democratic traditions; Indian intra regional interventions in South Asia have invariably been forced by the need to provide support to democratic institutions. Both the Sri Lankan and Maldives interventions received US support.
- (f) The US is looking for markets in the Asia - Pacific - Indian Ocean region, in the face of stiff competition. This necessitates regional stability and a search for allies. India as the largest industrialised, and military power would appear to fit US needs for a regional power capable of providing stability. This need will accelerate with the growth of internal pressures towards isolationism in the US, as also its withdrawal from the Asia Pacific progresses.

#### THE INDIAN OCEAN

The presence of the US in the Indian Ocean, or in its immediate vicinity is now a reality. We have so far concentrated on issues like "Zone of Peace" to keep the region free of Super Power rivalry. With the rivalry having demised this issue appears to be over. However the region continues

to require a stabilising force to prevent situations like the Gulf War from arising, to keep trade and oil moving. India does not have the sea power to keep the region under check nor does it have the ability to contest US domination over the region. Pure reality therefore demands adjustments by India on this count.

#### NON PROLIFERATION : A POINT OF DIVERGENCE

India's refusal to submit its nuclear facilities to an examination or to sign the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty are based both on self respect and pragmatism. Pakistan is an "ambiguous" nuclear weapon state, China a confirmed power. It is obvious that the Indian land mass lies under a nuclear threat both from Pakistan and China. It therefore follows that any attempt at curtailing the spread of nuclear power in the region must include China. The USA has included China in such discussions for the first time.

Chinese apprehensions have been covered earlier in this paper. Thus while the Chinese will continue to exploit their relationship with the USA for some time to come they will not let their guard down. In such circumstances India cannot sign the NPT. This is a point of divergence. This is one issue where India will have to identify a foreign policy line to make itself acceptable to the USA. If Israel with a well known nuclear status can be a US ally, why cannot India be a friend?

This ground for divergence in fact offers an interesting possibility, that of balancing US vis-a-vis China. Both may have to woo India to balance each others influence in the region, China motivated by its apprehensions of US domination and the US ultimately viewing China as a potential threat. We will have to walk this local Asia - Pacific partial bipolarity; and this balancing will have to be another foreign policy thrust.

The next area of divergence with the US so far has been in the US irritation on Indian protectionism and refusal to open its economy. While the New Industrial Policy does not convert India into a market economy, it substantially removes some irritants and opens itself to investment.

#### BALANCING THE ECONOMIC POWER BLOCS

A major foreign policy thrust will have to be the exploitation of and balancing the "Economic Power Blocs" as they have begun to emerge. The Indian market will ultimately have to open up. SAARC offers an opportunity for the region to emerge as an Economic Bloc. The main hinderance so far has been Pakistani refusal in matters of industrial tie ups, or trade. Logically

an economic bloc can emerge in the region only with the co-operation of Pakistan. As this is not likely to be forthcoming, India may well look beyond its immediate region into South East Asia and the Asia Pacific. We are in a position to enter in economic tie ups with ASEAN. Japan offers another opportunity to secure aid, technology and investment.

The real challenge will however come as the competing trade blocs of North America and Europe come into conflict. For the time being these blocs may operate to salvage East Europe and utilise its market potential.

A major thrust of India's foreign policy will now have to be in the economic sphere; exploiting it, and preventing a damage to Indian industry and market.

#### THE RUSSIAN FACTOR

It is quite evident that Russia has overcome initial problems of sub nationalism and is not in the danger of imminent collapse. It still stays a military force, with a clout, even if reduced. It also stays a major balancing factor in our relations with China, a source of military hardware and technology. India will thus have to continue the maintenance of its relations with Russia. In fact our relationship with Russia will continue to be of use both regionally and extra regionally.

#### EXTRA REGIONAL AND INTRA REGIONAL THRUSTS

To a substantial extent India's extra regional and intra regional thrusts are interrelated. To the West, Pakistan's attempts at enlarging the scope of conflict and involving Islamic countries in the dispute poses a threat extra regionally. To the East the impending collapse of Mynamar in the face of US sanctions will set loose sub nationalism just across India's disturbed Eastern borders. The armed Kachin and Shan groups are already well organised. A reduction of the already fragile central authority will plunge the country into armed chaos, with possibilities of a spill over into India. The situation may invite Chinese intervention.

Indian foreign policy makers will thus have to now reanalyse the state of India's relations with the Islamic world. Although the OIC is quite vocal about India's internal affairs, the internal poverty and dissensions within its member states will prevent unified action. It however presents a potentially destabilising threat to India internally, apart from raising the possibility of arms transfers or funding of Pakistan.

The scenario therefore calls for a containment of the threat. In terms of foreign policy this will imply:-

- (a) Engaging in and cultivating bilateral relations with individual Islamic countries, to reduce Pakistani influence and possibility of an Islamic front emerging against India.
- (b) Developing a Russian - US - Chinese convergence against Islamic fundamentalist unification.
- (c) A possible alignment or easing of relations with Israel and development of relations with Syria; the two major opposing and stabilising forces in the region.

In so far as Mynamar is concerned Indian policy makers would do well to evolve a consensus with China to contain potential sub nationalism and violence in the region.

#### INTRA REGIONAL THRUSTS

Intra regionally the situation has changed drastically. Bangladesh has converted into a democracy, Nepal into a constitutional monarchy, and Pakistan to a democracy of sorts (with the military as the guiding light and senior partner). These changes for the first time in the last four decades imply that the region has a common democratic ideology.

As basic fears in the region emanate from common ethnicity and geographical, mostly riparian issues, and fears of India's size, it would perhaps be best to choose a thrust to reassure the countries in the region that India stands by their territorial integrity. The next step should be the fostering of vested economic relationships in which regionally a mutual dependence is developed. The problem in the latter case is that none of the countries of the region have a common border except with India. Yet again none of these countries has the potential to match India in terms of economic or military power. The resultant insecurity forces them to adopt intransigent attitudes towards India as also attempts to internationalise even minor bilateral issues. The signals that should emit from India should be categorically reassuring yet specific on the count that the spill over of their domestic ethnic compulsions and conflicts into India is not acceptable, nor is the intervention of external powers in the vicinity of India.

India for its part will have to contain its internal politics and regional assertiveness firmly to prevent ethnicity and local political rhetoric from threatening regional stability.

## THE PAKISTAN FACTOR

A major factor in the region however is India's relationship with Pakistan. While other countries in the region do not have open conflicts with India, Pakistan is not only openly hostile but also confrontationist in approach. In dealing with Pakistan therefore we have to take into account its real centre of power, ie the Army. The only meaningful dialogue with Pakistan -- the Shimla agreement-occurred when the Pakistani Army was out of power and discredited. Such a situation is not possible to arise in the near future. The only possibility which may arise is of a partial eclipse of military dominance if political authority asserts itself.

In dealing with Pakistan India's foreign policy will have to be oriented towards reassuring Pakistan about India's fullest desire to see it secure and cohesive. This is necessary as Pakistani insecurity stems from its fears of identity and legitimacy.

A second thrust should aim at stressing the points of convergence of Indo - Pak interests viz in containing narcotics traffic which has begun to threaten Pakistan internally. Ameliorating the problems of divided Pak-Indian muslim families is another area needing attention.

In all probability growing economic pressures will force a de-escalation of tensions and initiate some kind of economic accommodation.

Terrorism, Low Intensity Conflict in Kashmir and problems in Punjab are however issues which will involve firm face offs and concerted action both by diplomats and the defence forces. At the diplomatic level this will involve exposing Pakistani sponsored narco terrorism and isolating it internationally. The changes in the Post Cold War scenario no longer make Pakistan a key factor or ally for the USA. Concerted Indian diplomatic pressure at this stage would do much to bring international pressures to bear on Pakistan forcing it to reduce and perhaps stop its aid to Kashmir and Punjabi terrorists. The Pakistani stance of now separating the two ie treating Kashmiri terrorism as distinct from that in Punjab and intensifying the insurgency in Kashmir is perhaps aimed at presenting the fait accompli of a Kashmiri uprising to the international community before pressure begins to act on it.

In terms of nuclear ambiguity it would be best to match Pakistani ambiguity, as long as India is in a position to go "nuclear" (in the sense of weaponry) should the situation arise. Pakistan will for all purposes have to be treated as a nuclear weapon power.

## THE SINO-PAK AXIS

It would be quite clear to Pakistan that despite its cordial relations with China, and the flow of military aid, that the emerging commonality of Sino-Indian interests make the use of military force against India unlikely.

India would do well to further the impression by increasing the pace of the Sino-Indian thaw and building bridges with China. A vested interest should be created in Sino-Indian stability.

## CONCLUSION

The preceding two years have thrown up radical and sweeping changes in the global scenario. While on the one hand these changes have unfettered international diplomacy from the shackles of bipolarity, on the other hand they have thrown up a series of new challenges. Indian political commentators and 'think tanks' appear to be well aware of the hard nature of options ahead. As the noted commentator S Nihal Singh has written in the *Hindustan Times*... "India will have to pursue a new foreign policy because the basic assumptions of its traditional policy no longer hold good... It is time India's political leadership got away from the clichés of the past to look the present and future boldly in the face".<sup>32</sup> The new Indian Prime Minister Shri Nar-simha Rao has announced that he, his government and his party have a "vision of the world" and that "they are working towards that vision".<sup>33</sup>

The changed context of international relations requires an effort to rise above party dogma and internal rhetoric. More than ever before the future of India beleaguered by an economic crisis, terrorism, and low intensity conflict is at stake. In the recent past India has sent out confusing signals on issues of foreign policy due to internal rhetoric and compulsions. Indian political leadership and foreign policy mandarins are now faced by a situation which demands that they rise above internal rhetoric and face new challenges. The question is: Will they?

## NOTES

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turned their revolt into a rout. Church quotes Mary Mcgrory the Post columnist as stating that the Kurds were..."abandoned by Bush on the 18th hole of a Florida golf course".

5. Strobe Talbot, 'The Delicate Balancing Act', *Time* (US) 29 Jul 1991 p. 17, Alan Tonelson as quoted.
6. Strobe Talbot *ibid*; Joseph Nye 'Bound to Lead' as quoted.
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11. News Item 'Learning to Speak for Asia', *Time* (US) 29 July 1991 p. 8.
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13. *Ibid*.
14. Huang Zhenji: 'A Tentative Study of the New US Global Strategy'; *International Strategic Studies Journal*: (Beijing Institute of Strategic Studies, Beijing) September 1990 p. 13.
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16. Cheng Feng and Cai Mengsen Secretary General Beijing Institute of Strategic Studies 'The International Environment in the 1990s and China's Basic Policy' (Journal, BISS, Beijing) September 1990 pp 1-6.
17. Cheng Feng and Cai Mengsen *ibid*.
18. Shekhar Gupta, 'The War Within', *India Today*, New Delhi 30 June 1989 p. 29..."While New Delhi's silence was crippling, the US and UK promptly imposed symbolic sanctions against China".
19. Yang Haisheng and Chun Chun, 'The Present Situation of South Asia and Its Prospects', *BISS Journal* Beijing No. 2, 1990 (June) pp. 31-36.
20. Yang Haishen and Chun Chun *ibid* p. 36.
21. The START cuts the US strategic arsenal from 12081 warheads and bombs down to 10,395 and Soviet arsenal from 10481 to 8040. It does not stop the Strategic Defence Initiative, qualitative improvements in armaments. War heads will only be detached from their missiles and stored elsewhere..."The fact remains that the two countries can blow each other many times over - and with them the world". *Newsweek* (US) 29 July 1991 p. 10.
22. Typical of such views is that of Mizanur Rahman Khan; 'Bangladesh Perception..."My country Bangladesh and India are very much unequal nations. There cannot be any match between the two". *India's Foreign Policy in the Nineties* Ed Rasgotra, (Patriot Publishers; New Delhi) p. 258.
23. Pakistani quests for identity are confusing and reflect their inner contradictions. Shri SK Singh mentions a research paper which... "suggested that which is South Asian, and which is Islamic but which cannot be identified as Indian may be considered Pakistani". Article Profile of Pakistan - Perceptions and Relations with India; *Trishul* July 1991, p. 43.
24. Bhutto Benazir '*Daughter of the East*' (London; Hamish Hamilton 1980) names a Governor of the Frontier Province as the linchpin of the drug trade; another influential person Abdullah Bhatti is stated to have been pardoned by Zia. Brig

- AR Siddiqui, Drugs and National Security 'Defence Journal 1988' laments the impact of drugs on national security. Shri SK Singh puts narcotics related earnings at US \$ 5 billion to US \$ 8 billions. *Trishul* ibid.
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  27. Sundarji K Gen, *The Hindu*.
  28. K Subrahmanyam (as quoted USI of India Seminar No 9; 'Nuclear Shadow over the Sub Continent' 09 April 1991 p. 8.
  29. Janak Kapoor, Air Commodore 'Bringing Diplomacy and Military Power Together in India', *NDC Journal 1990* (Journal National Defence College; New Delhi) p. 79.
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  31. The Indian External Affairs Ministry's Report for 1964-65 while highlighting the handicaps of lack of skilled manpower and financial resources as also the fact that these could not be overcome also states... "It has come to be recognised that these handicaps cannot be overcome without the assistance of developed countries on the one hand and a cooperative effort by the developing countries themselves on the other". Cited Dewan C Vohra 'India's Aid Diplomacy in the Third World' (New Delhi; Vikas 1980) p. 186.
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### USI GOLD MEDAL ESSAY COMPETITION - 1991

On the recommendations of the Evaluation Committee, the USI Council during its meeting on 18 December, 1991, selected the following officers for the award of prizes in the USI Gold Medal Essay Competition - 1991:

#### Group 'A' - "FOREIGN POLICY OPTIONS FOR INDIA DURING THE 1990s"

Wg Cdr SC Sharma, VrC	First Prize	Rs. 2,000/-
Major Rajiv Kumar	Second Prize	Rs. 1,000/-

#### Group 'B' - "MILITARY LEADERSHIP IN TODAY'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT"

Captain Akshaya Handa	First Prize	Rs. 2,000/-
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